

THE UPSTART

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THE UPSTART



"Thank you for helping me."

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THE UPSTART

BY
HENRY M. HYDE



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OLIVE ORCHARDS FOR BOBO

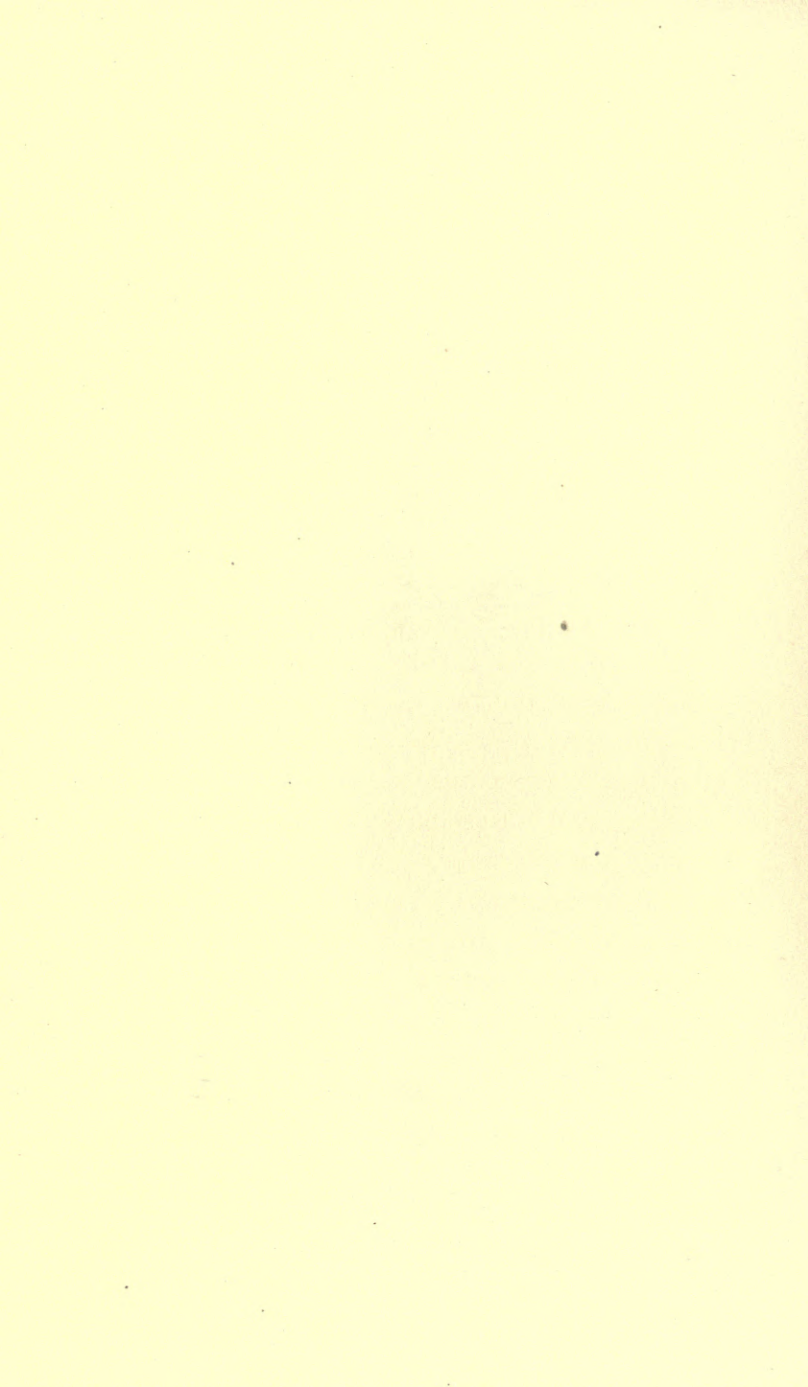
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LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

“Thank you for helping me”	<i>Frontispiece</i>
	FACING PAGE
“Tracing imaginary cruises over all the seas”	8
“In front of Aunt Bridget’s box-car”	26
“By Gott! I teach you a lesson”	128
“Men and women of Liberty County!”	214
“Here it is, yer Honor!”	250
“Then suddenly he took her tightly into his arms”	288
“Presently King Anders came, closely followed by his six sons”	314

THE UPSTART



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I

THE boy was lying on the low bank of the crooked little prairie creek, the shallow channel of which cut off the Main Street of Liberty from the fat, black, farming country beyond. His bare feet almost touched the oily, brown water and his face was buried in his arms, which were crossed over the gnarled root of a willow tree. His slight figure was shaken at intervals by half-suppressed sobs. Now and then he raised his head, brushed the tears from his eyes with a torn blue gingham shirt-sleeve and looked about him defiantly. He feared witnesses of his unmanly weakness.

But the early August twilight had been kind to him. Already the gray shadows had half

hidden the whitewashed shanties of Killgrubbin, that were scattered irregularly over the brown mud-flats about him. To the left the yellow light of a smoky oil lamp shone dimly through the open door of a green box-car, now retired from the vicissitudes of an active railroad career and raised up high on stilts to do permanent duty as a dwelling. On the other side grew a tangled screen of yellow and green willow shoots, beginning at the very edge of the water and turning inward in the shape of a half crescent. Black and white pigs were rooting in the mud of a narrow lane which twisted about among the shanties and, a little farther off, a slatternly woman was throwing bits of driftwood at a marauding goat that had ventured to invade her cabin.

To the ears of the boy came the hiss of geese, marching up in long lines from the river to their night shelter, and the occasional raucous hoot of a switch engine in the railroad yards which separated Killgrubbin from the village of Liberty proper. Nearer at hand sounded the voice of a shantytown

virago, answering the drunken profanity of her husband with shrill reproaches.

When the boy raised his head he could look over the railroad track up the long stretch of Main Street, along which the prosperous people of Liberty lived in trim wooden cottages, setting far back from the roadway, each in its own shady, well-kept lawn. At the far end of the street the red disc of the sun was dropping behind the elms. In the middle distance the white bulk of the Grecian courthouse loomed vaguely.

IN the soft mud of the bank behind the boy a red, flat-bottomed skiff landed noiselessly. Out of the boat stepped a thin, wrinkled old man, with a dark face, a hooked nose and a pair of sharp gray eyes under bushy gray brows. With one hand he dragged after him a long string of slimy black cat-fish. As he left the boat he caught sight of the boy and stopped short, pursing his lips contemplatively.

“Well, Pat,” he said sharply, “you missed the biggest ketch o’ the season.”

The boy started up.

“I took twenty-four off the set lines and one of ’em ’s a mud cat that ’ll weigh ten pounds or I ’m a sucker. Hed your supper?”

“Yep,” answered Pat, getting to his feet. “Aunt Bridget give me some grub.” He walked over and “hefted” the big fish.

“Gee!” he said. “That ’n’ is a whopper!”

“You come right along with me, Pat,” said the old man with a shrewd glance at the swollen face, “and we ’ll go on a vyidge. You c’n carry th’ fish.”

The old fisherman and the small boy walked a couple of hundred feet down the curving river bank to a knoll, where, safe above high water, stood a curious structure of driftwood and refuse lumber. Its roof was little higher than a man’s head, but it stretched back for forty feet, like a section of a tunnel. In front of it was a little platform, supported on piles over the oily stream, to reach which it was necessary to descend the bank and then climb a ladder of six steps.

“Climb right up on the bridge, Fust Mate,” said the old man, turning to the back of the cabin, “while I open the hatch.”

The boy climbed the ladder and sat down on the edge of the platform, his feet dangling over the water. Presently the old man reappeared, opening a narrow door from within.

“Haul up the ladder and come into the cabin,” he said.

In the center of the long, box-like room and from the low ceiling hung a miniature ship in full sail. “Annie B.” was lettered across the stern. At one side was a narrow bunk, built up three feet from the floor. On a shelf opposite perched a curious object which its owner was accustomed to refer to as a mermaid, though a shrewd observer might have suspected the body of a weazened monkey, skilfully attached to the tail of a big cat-fish. The smell of the place was tarry and nautical.

“Come right through into the chart-room,” said the old man.

Even small Pat had to duck his head to pass through the little doorway which led into this curious apartment. Its long, low wooden walls were papered with lithographs and pictures, cut from the illustrated weeklies, showing ships at sea and all manner of

nautical scenes. Among them was a biblical engraving, revealing Jonah, in a long, red night-gown, about to be swallowed by a yellow whale not more than half his own size, and a somewhat scandalous poster, displaying a brown South Sea maiden, attired chiefly in a bunch of green seaweed and a string of coral. Across the wall hung a whaler's long harpoon. The whole was garnished with dried starfish, sea-horses, curiously colored shells and fans of coral.

On a box in one corner rested a big brass compass, and on another, in the center of the room, stood a large globe, with a telescope and other mysterious brass instruments lying beside it.

The place and its master seemed strangely misplaced there on the bank of a muddy inland creek, in the midst of an Illinois prairie, a thousand miles from salt water.

The old man drew the globe close up to the narrow bench, which ran along one side of the room, and fell to tracing imaginary cruises over all the seas.

“Cap'n,” said Pat, as the sailor paused to



“Tracing imaginary cruises over all the seas.”

break a piece from his twisted rope of tobacco, "kin I bring Tom Hahn down here some day?"

"Look here, Fust Mate,"—the old man turned on him sharply,—"have you been talking about our vyidges?"

"No, I hain't," the boy answered indignantly. "Outside I always call you 'Paddy Mack,' like everybody does. And I 've never spoke of the 'Annie B.' to anybody. But I wisht I could bring Tom down."

The old man shook his head slowly, a far-away, reflective look in his eyes. "I 'm an old fool to take any chances," he muttered, speaking to himself. "It ain't fair to *her*."

"You ain't goin' to git mad at me, Cap'n?" said the boy, starting up anxiously. "I 'll never give nothing away. Here! Let 's shake on it."

The Captain looked up and a slow smile of tender affection illumined his rugged face. Impulsively he took the boy's dirty fist in his own gnarled hand.

"Shake, then, shipmate. Some day I 'll tell you why nobody must know I 'm an old

sailor. I 've got my reasons. Ten years I 've lived here"—he paused and looked about the cramped little room—"and you 're the only human 's ever put his nose inside. It 's a long cruise I 'm sailin'—an' there ain't no home harbor at th' end of it."

The old man seemed to lose all consciousness of his present surroundings. His deep-set eyes looked past the boy into the years that were gone—or was it into the future? A deep, slow sigh escaped him.

"What 's the matter, Cap'n?" asked the boy, half-frightened, his freckled face reflecting the trouble of his friend.

"Nothin'," answered the Captain, briskly, throwing off his preoccupation with an effort, "nothin' 's the matter. I was jest thinkin' it 's worth consid'able to a lonely old skipper to have a Fust Mate he kin tie to, that 's all."

Clearing his throat loudly, the old man got up and bustled about the cabin to conceal his agitation. Finally he struck a light in a brass ship's lantern, drew the globe still closer to the bench on which the boy sat, and put a

gnarled forefinger on its surface, just where Cape Cod stuck its green nose into the yellow ocean.

“We sail from Bedford, as usual, Fust Mate,” he said, “and lay our course a little east of south so ’s to stay in the stream. It ’s yere second vyidge as my Fust Mate. We ’ve got plenty of grub and water and a crew of twenty. Rounding the Horn”—the forefinger traces the path of the ship on the globe,—“we strike a nasty gale,—you recollect that night?—but the ‘Annie B.’ ’s stanch, and in three months we ’re sailing the South Pacific with a man in the tops looking for sign o’ whale.

“Right down here—midway to the Fiigis—we sights a coral island. Six of the men goes ashore looking for water and greenstuff. Late that night the long boat comes back to the ship, with nobody in it but Pedro, a Portugee sailor. Pedro says the other five are captured by the niggers and tied up in a row to the palm trees, while the fat brown king and his warriors and women dance around ’em. When Pedro got off with the

boat they were getting ready to bile and eat the hull bunch of 'em.

“I was mighty glad then I had n't let you go ashore in command of the long boat, like you wanted to. A nice, juicy, tender, young Fust Mate would n't 'a' stood no show at all. Most likely they 'd 've et you alive jest to work up a' appetite.”

The Captain paused, a twinkle in his eye, to let the joys of the situation sink home. The boy's face was shining. “And then?” he urged, breathlessly.

“Pedro says they 's more than three hundred niggers, armed with spears and bows and arrows. They 're camped along the shore on the opposite side of the island.

“We 're getting a reskying party ready when one of the crew comes up from down in the hold, where he 's been sorting and packing a lot of dried fish. When he steps out on the dark deck, somebody gives a yell and we all turns to look at him. He is shining all over like he was on fire and when he waves his arms he looks like a Fourth of July pin-wheel in full blast.

“The sight of him gives me an idee. Twelve of us men strips to the skin and rubs each other with that phosphorescent fish. Then we lies down in the long boat and four of the crew rows us—with muffled oars—round to the other side of the island, leavin’ you, in charge of the ship. We kin see the niggers dancing around the fires on shore and hear them yelling and we ’re afraid we ’re too late to resky anything but cold vittles. When we git in pretty close, the hull dozen of us nekid, but able-bodied seamen, stands up in the boats and gives a yell. Then, with a pistol in each hand, we jumps overboard and starts for the niggers, firing a shot at every jump and looking—I make no doubt—like a dozen fiery devils just let loose from hell.

“The sight and the sounds of us scares them niggers into fits. The fat old king gives one yelp and with his three hundred loyal subjects starts for the thick bush like a dory running before the wind, leaving our five ship-mates strung up to a row of palm-trees.

“They was just about as scared as the niggers was. One of ’em—a tall, bony man from

Martha's Vineyard, named Ebenezer Hall—says, when we 're cutting 'em loose, 'Wall,' he says, 'I 'd just as leave be biled and et as scared to death, anyhow.' And Gershom Brewster, th' bos'n, he speaks up an' says, 'We only reskied you to save the niggers from suffering, Hall,' he says. 'The nigger that et you would have dyspepsy the rest of his life.'

"As quick as we kin then we rows back to the ship and sails away to the north, killing sixty right whales, biling down nine hundred barrels of oil and stowing away fourteen hundred-weight of bone an' a big chunk of ambergris. We ties up again at Bedford after a prosperous vyidge of two years and three months, the share of the Fust Mate in the profits bein' three thousand, four hundred and sixteen dollars and forty-seven cents. Will you take it in cash or leave it on dee-posit to your credit?"

"I don't care about drawing out any of it jest now," answered Pat, his lips twisted in a grin and fun twinkling in his eyes.

"Well an' good," answered the Cap'n sol-

emly, taking down an old log book from the shelf and proceeding to make an entry with a stubby lead pencil. "August 28, 1860," he wrote. "Patrick McCormick, First Mate of the bark 'Annie B.' of Bedford. His share of the profits in the whaling cruise ended this day, \$3,416.47."

"How 's my account stand, anyhow?" demanded Pat, pompously, crossing one bare leg over the other.

Still solemn, the old Captain made some apparently complicated calculations, his gray brows pulled far down to hide the laughter in his eyes. "There 's some thirteen thousand odd on the books to your credit, Fust Mate," he said. "I 'm afraid," he went on, heaving a deep sea sigh, "that I 'll have to be signin' a new Fust Mate before long. You 'll be wantin' to take out your own ship soon, I cal'a'late."

II

FOR a moment the Captain and his First Mate sat smiling at each other, wrapped in that delightful mutual understanding which needs no words. Then the old man spoke sharply.

“Where ’d you git that welt on yere face, son?”

The boy’s eyes darkened and an ugly scowl drove away the smile. Instantly he left the pleasant land of enchantment and became again a son of shantytown—a small human animal, older than his years, aggressively ready to defend himself by force or cunning against a world that was mostly hostile.

“Old King Anders give me that—dang him!” he said, sullenly.

“H-m-m!” grunted the Captain, reflectively. “Seems like a feller like him might leave us poor folks alone, don’t it? If I

owned mighty nigh all the farmin' land in the county I don't cal'a'late I 'd be covetin' this little patch of black mud we 're squattin' on, too. But how 'd he come to git after yer?"

"I went over to the tannery to take the old man's lunch to him this noon. Jest as I got there he come flyin' out of the big door and lit all in a heap in the road. When I raised him up there was blood runnin' down his face and old Anders was standing back in the door shakin' his fist at us."

"Was yere dad hurt much?"

"He could n't hardly talk straight at first," the boy answered. "He must 'a' lit so hard on his head that he got stunned."

"Rum, I cal'r'late," said the Captain, in a half-aside.

"I was bringin' him home, when King Anders come along, drivin' his big grays and hoggin' all the road. I cussed him out and he leaned over and slashed me acrost the face. Gol dang him! If he had n't dodged I 'd 'a' laid him out with a rock!"

The boy's face was distorted with rage and

his hands were tightly gripped in remembered and renewed anger. The Captain looked at him for a moment in silence, an expression of pity and of understanding sympathy on his face. Then he reached into the box under the seat on which they sat and produced something which he held out in his hand.

“Here ’s a ship’s knife I ’ve been a-meanin’ to give you for some time,” he said. “It rightly belongs to the Fust Mate of the ‘Annie B.’ ”

The boy took the knife cautiously and examined it with eyes of awe. The handle was of ivory, curiously carved in the likeness of a dolphin.

“Gee! That ’s a daisy,” he said.

“She ’s got four blades and a gimlet to her,” the Captain went on, cunningly. “What ’s more, she ’s been to Asiay, South Ameriky and the Gold Coast. I killed a shark once with that biggest blade jest as ’t was about to turn over and bite me. If you look close mebbe you kin see the stain of the blood yit.”

“I guess that ’ll put the other kids to sleep,” said Pat, boastfully.

“Now look here, son,” smiled the old Captain. “You don’t want to go and git all swelled up about owning ship’s knives and other real and pussanal property. They ’s too many people sufferin’ from that complaint already.”

The little clock which hung at one end of the chart-room struck nine.

“I guess I ’ll be going home,” said Pat with a yawn. “I ’m kind a-tired.”

“All right, son. I ’ll go out and sit on the bridge a minute ’fore I turn in.”

When the man and the boy went out on the narrow platform, a thick gray mist was rising from the river. It was impossible to see more than a few feet, but the quick ears of the Captain detected the muffled sound of oars.

“I wonder who ’s out a night like this?” he said. “It ’s coming across from the tannery.”

The soft sound of oars striking the water grew gradually more distinct. Suddenly it ceased.

“It ’s landed, Pat,” said the Captain.

At the foot of the big willow tree, down

stream, where Pat had been found by his ancient friend, a match flared up, making a yellow blur in the grayness of the night. By its light the two on the bridge plainly made out the features of Mike McCormick, as he held the flame to his short clay pipe. He was crouching down in the center of the boat, the bow of which rested in a cushion of soft mud. Watching, they could see him muttering to himself and shaking his head from side to side in a maudlin way. Then the match went out and the mist shut down like a thick shade, blotting out the picture.

The Captain and Pat listened, but they heard only a muttered curse as the man's unsteady feet sank into the soft mud. He had merged into the silence and shadows which covered the flats of shantytown.

"I did n't know your old man had any set-lines out, Pat," said the Captain, finally.

"Neither did I. I don't think he was fishin'. I guess mebbe I 'd better wait a little till he gits to bed."

For some minutes the two strange friends sat side by side on "the bridge," silently

watching the mists deepen. From behind them came the muffled noises of the men and animals of Killgrubbin, settling themselves for sleep.

Then suddenly the thick silence which hid the river was broken by a startled yell from the opposite bank, and, against the black background of night, a quivering red flame shot up, growing, almost in an instant, to a roaring blaze.

“Douse my binnacle! It ’s the tannery,” cried the Captain in awe.

Small Pat sprang to his feet, throwing up his grimy hands in a convulsive movement of excited interest. Then he slowly sank back again upon his box, tensely still, watching the lurid scene in utter fascination.

From behind them, along the dark stretches of Main Street, came distant shouts that quickly grew into a shrill, frightened, many-voiced alarm; a far-off bell rang faintly; then the thrilling reverberations of the great gong on the tower of the court-house shook the night.

The air grew thick with sound and luminous

with flame—a quick crescendo of noise and light that came to a climax with the falling in of the tannery roof. As it crashed down there rose a shower of brilliant sparks, that drifted lazily westward on the gentle breeze. Then all was blackness again and quiet, but for the confused murmur of many voices on the opposite bank.

The boy turned to the old man with a slow, deep-drawn sigh. “ ’T was a bully show, wasn ’t it, Cap’n?”

“Aye! Aye! But”—a deeper tone came into the old voice—“I ’m thinkin’ King Anders ’ll make somebody pay for it. Looks to me like that tannery must ’a’ been set afire for spite.”

“Well, then,” answered Pat, with a pathetic wisdom beyond his years, “I ’m glad we seen the old man in the boat just now. If he ’d been over on the other bank there, I guess old Anders ’d ’ave done for him sure. But you and me can prove an alibi for him, can’t we?”

“We kin swear to it, son, all right, but I ’m afraid our word would n’t count for much,” muttered the old man bitterly. “I ’m sech

a shif'less, wuthless, old cuss that what I swore to would n't count fur nothin'; and you," he went on with cruel candor, "you 're jest a little shanty mick."

WHEN the fire was at its height there came a deep sound from the south, which made itself heard even through the prevailing din. Presently the spectators made out a long green farm wagon coming furiously along the rough dirt road. It was drawn by two huge gray Norman stallions, galloping heavily. Standing up in the front of the wagon and brandishing a black-snake whip was a giant of a man, more than six feet tall and massive about the shoulders. His broad, whiskered face was red with excitement and he urged his great horses forward with deep roars of anger.

Crouching in the wagon were four half-grown boys, hardly less gigantic than their sire.

"Here comes King Anders!" cried some one in the crowd, and the panic-stricken people made way for him.

He leaped from the wagon and the boys

followed him, one of them stopping to hold the frantic horses. A glance showed him that the fight was hopeless. The tannery was already ruined. He ran to the office, thrusting men and women out of his path with the sweep of his arms. There, standing on the top of the steps, he turned and faced the crowd.

“By Gott!” he roared in his deep voice, shaking his fist in the face of the people nearest him, “I sent somebody by the penitentiary for dis!”

III

OVER across the river smoke was still rising from the blackened ruins of the tannery. In front of Aunt Bridget's box-car a little group of people—including Pat McCormick and his mother—was gathered to discuss the exciting events of the evening.

“I wonder now,” said Mrs. McCormick, a tall, raw-boned woman with a tired, pathetic face, “I wonder how it got itsilf burned down?”

“Annyhow,” broke in Aunt Bridget, ramming a fresh load into her clay pipe, “’t was good luck for us Irish. I ’m thinkin’ old Anders—bad ’cess to him—won’t be so anxious now to make us git off the flats.”

“Sure, you can’t till,” said old Mrs. Hogan, pulling her green and black checked shawl tighter about her head. “Anders—the ould divvle—is mane enough to evict us jist for

the fun av it. And that Lawyer Wagner is the wust av thim all."

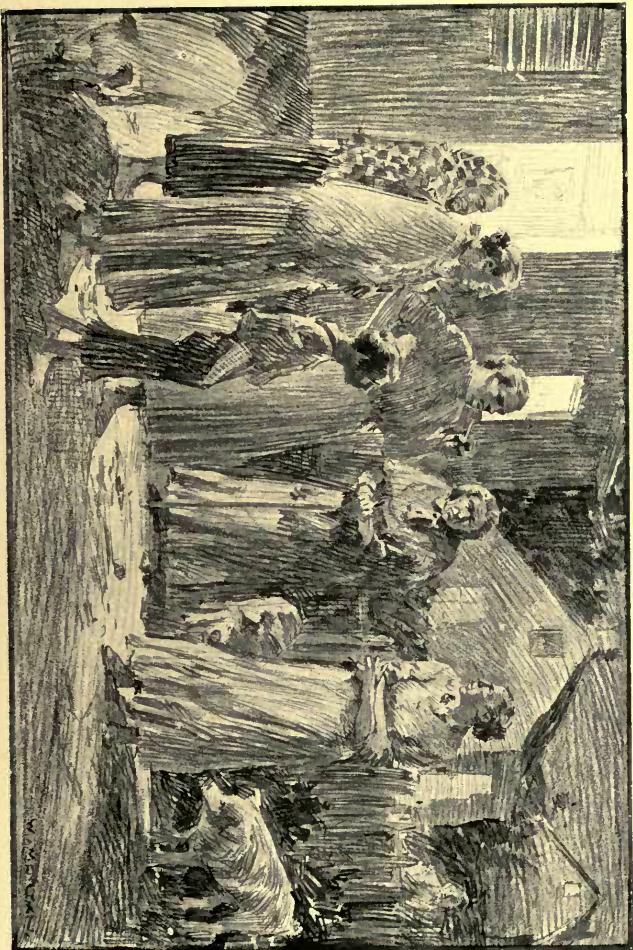
" 'T was for new buildin's for th' tannery he wanted our land," insisted Aunt Bridget. "Now it 's burned down he 'll not be spindin' money fer nothin'."

" 'T is good enough for him, annyhow," went on Mrs. Hogan, sitting down on the edge of a retired washboiler. "Him, wid his two thousand acres of farm lands, thryin' to drive daycint peepul off the little patch where they been livin' fer tin years!"

"I wonder now," repeated Mrs. McCormick from her seat on the top step, "I wonder how it got itsilf burned down? Somebody must have set it on fire, I dunno?"

"That 's sure," promptly assented Mrs. Hogan. "There 's plinty 'd be glad to hilp the old Dootchman to a piece av bad luck. Thim min over town, now, that Anders beat out av their money in the tannery?"

"Ann Hogan," old Bridget spoke up sharply, "'t was a good thing for Killgrubbin the tannery burned. Lave it go at that and stop thryin' to blame annybody for the blessin'!"



“In front of Aunt Bridget’s box-car.”

A half-grown pig thrust a curious snoot out from beneath the box-car and began to investigate Mrs. Hogan's bedraggled black calico skirts. That lady, smarting under Aunt Bridget's rebuke, kicked out viciously, and the porker precipitately retired with shrill squeals of pain and fright.

"'T is a cannibal pig you 're kapin' under th' house, Bridget Mahin," said Mrs. Hogan, sharply.

"Ah-wah," Aunt Bridget countered grimly. "A pig 'll ate annythin'."

Then she relapsed into silence to let the blow sink home.

Mrs. Hogan spoke quickly, anxious at the same time to change the issue and to show how little she was affected by old Bridget's command to stop the voice of suspicion.

"Thin there 's that Paddy Mack," she went on calmly, "the Frinchman, or whativver he is. Sure he 's not anxious to have that long, lean shanty of his—built like a sausage it is—moved from th' flats. Begob, it must be full av silver and gold, he 's that careful nivvir to lit a white man stick his nose inside th' dure. Lived here tin years, he has, and not

one av us leddies knows th' real name av him. Whin you 're lookin' fer th' lad that hilped th' tannery burn down, you—"

"Aw!" Pat McCormick broke out indignantly in defense of his ancient friend and shipmate, "I was sitting out in front there with him when the fire started!"

Just then the bell in the court-house tower began to ring the hour. With a gesture which commanded silence, Aunt Bridget took her pipe from her mouth and counted the strokes.

"Nine—tin," she concluded. "Full time daycint peepul were in bid. Be off wid ye all. And you, Norah," she said to her sister, as the rest scattered, "go home and to slape. 'T was a big wash you had at th' Hahn's to-day?"

"Yis," answered Mrs. McCormick. "Miss Jack's wearin' more an' more of thim white skirts and things. To-morry I 'm ironin' there. But I 'm thinking I 'd betther stay up until Mike comes back."

"You 'll not," declared Aunt Bridget firmly. "Whin Michael gits home he 'll find a raycption committee, consisting av me, waiting to bid him th' top av th' mornin'."

With the habit of obedience to the iron will of her sister strong upon her, Mrs. McCormick bade her son good-night, picked her way across the muddy lane and went into the door of the whitewashed cabin opposite. Old Bridget blew a long puff from her pipe.

“Come here to me, Pat,” she said. The boy sat down on an empty nail keg beside her.

“Whin ar-r-e you dining agin at Judge Hahn’s, Misther McCormick?” she asked, with a note in her voice that was half pride and half laughter.

“When I ’m invited,” Pat answered, smiling shrewdly up at her.

“ ’T will not be long, nivr fear. Faith, Mrs. Hahn was tellin’ yere mither this mornin’ she was that glad you and her son, Tom, was sich good frinds. ’T is nothin’ she cares for th’ coat on a man’s back or th’ house he lives in—and her misthress av’ th’ foinist place on Main Sthreet. Thim Hahns ar-re th’ salt av th’ earth!” Aunt Bridget stood up and waved her hands in fine, dramatic gestures. “Mrs. McCormick an’ Aunt Bridgit doin’ th’ washin’ out in th’ summer kitchin

an' Mither Pat McCormick eatin' supper in th' big dinin'-room."

Playfully she poked the boy with her pipe.

"Aw-w, you 're a sly lad—you an' yere fine frinds."

"Tom Hahn 's a lucky boy," stid Pat, with a note of envy in his voice.

"Luck is ut?" went on Aunt Bridget. "Listen to me now. The day before Mike and your mither and me left the County Roscommon on our way to Ameriky, old Granny Clancy, she that was great-grandmither to us girls and older than any of us could count, come hobblin' over to the cabin to say us good-bye. I mind she wore a long green cloak the day, with the hood av it pulled over her head. Her pipe was in her mouth and she carried a long blackthorn stick. 'T was the talk among the cabins that Granny Clancy always drissed that way whin she wint out into the bog on moonlight nights to dance with the litthle peepul be the light av the fireflies.

"'Nora,' she says to your mither that was to be, 'your first-born 'll be a bye and you 'll have no other though you live to be as old

as I am. He 'll be a bit av a lad and you 'll call him Pat. His hair will be rid and the freckles on his face as thick as the hidge-roses in June on Omaugh Common. He 'll be born neither in a house nor out av doors, and ye must watch over him carefully and bring him safely through the measles, for, in the grounds av me tay cup the other night I see him wearin' a long black coat and standin' up on his feet, wid a thousand min and women cheerin' and batein' th' flure before him.'

“ ‘ ’T is a priest the boy 'll be, I dunno? ’ ” says your mither.

“ ‘ Faith, ’ says Granny Clancy, ‘ how inquisitive we be. A priest mebbe or a mumber av parliment, who knows? Nobody but me and the litthle peepul and we won’t till. ’ ”

“ ‘ There ’s luck for you, my bye, ’ ” Aunt Bridget went on. “ ‘ And it ’s all come thru so far, too. You were born at sea and your rid head and the freckles on your face are plain for annyone to see. You ’re your mither’s only child and, bechune us, with the hilp av th’ litthle peepul across the sea, we must come be th’ long coat yit. ’ ”

As Aunt Bridget finished speaking a tall figure staggered across the railroad track and started unsteadily down the narrow lane between the cabins. At the sight she laid down her pipe, picked up the long oak staff which lay beside her chair and, without a word to Pat, advanced grimly to meet his father.

"Mike McCormick," she said, as she barred the pathway of the approaching man, "you 're slapein' the night on the flure av me box-car. Come in wid ye!"

"Why, it 's Bridget," answered the man, straightening up. "Good-evening, Bridget. Can you kape a saycrit, Bridget?"—his voice dropped to a husky whisper. "I know how ould Anders' tannery come to burn itsilf down this avenin', Bridget."

"Thin you bettther forgit it, ye fool. Into th' box-car, now, till ye come to yere sinses!"

The man drew himself up in drunken dignity and waved one hand in a lordly gesture. "I 'm goin' home, Bridget," he said, thickly. "Git out av me way."

"Ye 're goin' where I tell ye," declared the old woman, shaking an accusing fore-

finger at him. "In wid ye an' thank God 't is not th' flure av th' calaboose. Ye talk too much, whin ye' re drunk, Mike McCormick."

The man staggered across Aunt Bridget's little yard and sat down in the open door of the box-car.

"All right, Bridget," he said, looking up furtively at the old woman's wrathful face. "All right. I 'll do ut, to oblige ye."

Without wasting further words Aunt Bridget gave him a shove and Mike McCormick rolled over and collapsed on the floor. The old woman quickly turned the key in the lock.

"Come, Pat," she said to the boy. "We 'll go to bed now." The two walked across to the whitewashed shanty into which Pat's mother had disappeared an hour before.

"In th' name av the Lord, Pat," the old woman said solemnly, as she stopped to open the door, "nivr touch a drop av th' creetur! 'T is th' divvle's own ile fer greasin' th' hinges av hell!"

IV

EARLY on the morning after the fire King Anders drove in from the country to hold a conference with his lawyer, Henry Wagner. Before leaving home he laid out the work for the day for his six big sons and the ten hired men who helped in cultivating the huge farm. His wife sat beside him at the front of the long green wagon. Behind, on the straw, surrounded by cases of eggs and butter, was perched his little daughter Antje, a dainty, yellow-haired little maid—in striking contrast to the other members of the gigantic and swarthy family.

A wave of comment followed the king as his great gray stallions trotted slowly up the dusty stretch of Main Street. In front of the two- and three-storied brick store buildings men stood in their shirt-sleeves and gossiped of the burned tannery and its owner.

No man in all northern Illinois was better known than he.

“I remember,” said one graybeard, tilting back in his chair, “when King Anders come to this country, fresh from Holland, in his wooden shoes. He was nigh as big then as he is now. He come to work for his uncle, old Geerds, out the river road. Inside of five years he marries the Geerds’ girl. Then when the old man dies he steps right into six hundred and forty acres of Pecatony bottom land. And him only twenty-one. It ’s been the same way ever since. He ’s et up everybody that come near him.”

“Well, he ’s likely to lose a lot on the tannery burning, anyhow,” put in another. “They say he did n’t have no insurance.”

“Tannery ’s just a piece with the rest of it,” went on the oracle. “John Higgins and Henry Kramer organizes the company—no better people in Liberty, you know that—and takes in King Anders. What happens? Huh! That was only two years ago and last month Anders tried to squeeze ’em out, and, what ’s more, he done it. Course there was a h—l of a

row. But Lawyer Wagner and the King was too smart for 'em. Higgins and Kramer are just about bound to lose every cent they got on earth. And now I s'pose he 'll be trying to trace the tannery fire to them."

TYING his horses, King Anders climbed up the steps leading to Henry Wagner's office and sat down heavily in a chair close to the lawyer's desk. At a glance his little eyes took in every corner of the room. Then, with his broad shoulders bent forward over the desk, he spoke in what was intended to be a whisper.

"I send Higgins and Kramer by the penitentiary," he said in broken, guttural English.

"Right away?" asked the lawyer, in ironical response to the King's positive announcement.

"I got me the proof by them," declared Anders emphatically, striking the desk a blow with his fist. For half an hour he went on, triumphantly reporting the evidence he had gathered. "When you have them arrested?" he concluded. "This afternoon?"

Wagner smiled at the King's ferocious ear-

nestness. "What do you figure your loss in the fire?" he asked.

"Twelve thousand dollars."

"It 'll cost half that much more to convict them, even if they 're guilty."

"You send them by Joliet," said the King, grimly, "and I pay the bills."

"Well, we must go slow. It 's a serious thing to charge men like Higgins and Kramer with arson. They stand high in town here and it 'll be hard to make people think they 're guilty. First of all, we 'll put some detectives on the case and see what more they can find out."

Two sleuths from Chicago spent several months working in Liberty. Finally they succeeded in twisting such a rope of circumstantial evidence about John Higgins and Thomas Kramer that Wagner felt justified in taking the case before the grand jury. He did it reluctantly, for he knew that the public generally looked upon the accused as victims of King Anders' abnormal greed. They had been the original promoters of the tannery enterprise and had been forced out just before

the fire, after a bitter struggle, in which charges of treachery and dishonesty had been made by both sides. Both of them had lost all the money they had invested.

Indictments for arson were promptly returned against Higgins and Kramer, and on a Monday evening the village of Liberty shook with the sensation of their arrest and subsequent release on bail.

But, within twenty-four hours, the startling news had been lost sight of and forgotten in the tremendous shock of a national crisis, which stirred the whole country to its profoundest depths.

Sumpter had been fired on and President Lincoln had issued his first call for volunteers. That night a great mass-meeting was held in the court-house square. Huge flags were stretched across Main Street, and under them, from the top of the stairs leading to the court-house, the leading citizens of Liberty spoke to the thrilled crowd, denouncing the South, pledging the men and money of the North to the defense of the Union, and, in tones which vibrated with patriotic enthu-

siasm, calling on volunteers to answer the President's call.

Among the first to respond was Mike McCormick. He was at once enrolled in a company made up of men from Liberty and, a little later, incorporated into a regiment of Illinois Volunteers.

For weeks after the outbreak of the war little else was talked of in the village. In Liberty, as elsewhere all over the country, business was neglected and the nation hung breathless on the issue. But gradually life accommodated itself to the new conditions and commonplace, but necessary, transactions were carried on as before, with one great vital question ever in the foreground.

When the call came for reinforcements, Liberty sent many more of her men to the front, among them Pat's old friend, the Captain, who, in spite of his age, succeeded in getting himself accepted, and was assigned to the same regiment with Mike McCormick. Thus the two men became neighbors once more—this time under arms.

In the fall the indictments against Higgins

and Kramer were taken up again and the case was set for trial at the December term of court. Judge Hahn was retained to conduct the defense, with Anders' lawyer, Henry Wagner, assisting the state's attorney in the prosecution.

On the opening day of the trial, the courtroom was packed, most of the spectators being friends of the two defendants, who came expecting an early and triumphant vindication. Pat and his friend, Tom Hahn, by favor of the latter's father, sat together inside the railing, in the space reserved for lawyers.

Wagner and the detectives retained by Anders had pieced together an extremely strong case for the state, and before the first week was over the partisans of Higgins and Kramer began to shake their heads in doubt. The prosecution proved the bitter feeling existing between the two defendants and King Anders; they produced a witness who testified that in his hearing Higgins had sworn to get even with Anders at any cost; they proved that on the day before the fire Kramer had bought five gallons of coal-oil, and that on the evening of the fire, and

not more than an hour before it broke out, a white horse drawing a surrey with yellow wheels had been driven across the river and down the road leading to the tannery. Higgins owned the only horse and surrey in Liberty which answered that description. Finally they produced a white silk handkerchief with Kramer's initials on it, which the watchman at the tannery swore he picked up the morning after the fire just outside the stock room, where flames had first appeared. When the state closed its case after three weeks of testimony, it seemed certain that a conviction would result.

Several times during the progress of the trial Pat wrote to the Captain at the front, telling him the case was going against Higgins and Kramer, and that everybody expected them to be found guilty.

The defense contented itself with putting the defendants on the stand, introducing but two or three minor witnesses. Higgins and Kramer admitted practically everything that the state's witnesses had charged. They even swore that they had driven together to the

tannery on the night of the fire and had visited the stock sheds and other outbuildings, because they believed Anders had lied to them about the amount of tan bark and other raw stock on hand, and they wished to see for themselves, pending final settlement of a suit for an accounting they were about to press against the King. They had been refused admission to the tannery buildings by Anders' orders, and were, therefore, forced to visit them secretly. Of course they both denied, as strongly as possible any responsibility for the fire.

So keen was the interest in the trial, and so eager was the prosecution for a verdict, that court did not adjourn for the Christmas holidays. Henry Wagner began the week by a two days' speech for the state, in which he wove the separate strands of evidence into a tight web of guilt about the two defendants. On the morning before Christmas Day Judge Hahn rose to reply. He pointed out that Higgins and Kramer were men of the highest standing and reputation in the community; that they had been made the victims of the

notorious greed and cunning of the prosecuting witness, who now, with the vindictive spirit of a savage, was trying to punish them for a crime they had not committed. Against them there was nothing but some scattered bits of circumstantial evidence, suspicious, perhaps, in themselves, but perfectly explained by the voluntary testimony of the defendants. In conclusion he referred to the holy day so near at hand; how at a million firesides little children would be gathered together in mirth and happiness, and how it rested with the jury to decide whether not only this Christmas, but all Christmases to come, should be sad or happy ones for the children of the two defendants.

He spoke but two hours. Then court adjourned and the judge announced that he would deliver his charge to the jury that afternoon.

When Pat got back to Shantytown, after listening to the speech, he found—his mother being out washing—that Aunt Bridget had something to eat on the table. But, what was more important, she had two letters which

she had got at the post-office in the morning. One of them was for Pat. He knew the writing. It was from the Captain. The other, addressed "Mrs. Michael McCormick," in a large, clerkly hand, was marked "Official Business."

Before he sat down to dinner, Pat read his letter.

"Dear Pat," the Captain wrote. "Since I got your last letter, I 've done a lot of thinking. I finally showed the letter to your father. When he read it, I said: 'What were you doing out on the river the night of that fire?'"

"For a minute he was still, then he spoke up: 'I suppose you saw me when I lighted my pipe. Well, I 'd just got back from setting the thing on fire. I knew Anders was going to evict us on account of the damned old thing, so I just set a match to it. I did it so that nobody could prove it on me, either, but I ain't going to see these fellows sent down for my job. If they convict Higgins and Kramer I 'm going back and 'fess up to it.'

"We talked about it almost all night. I made your father see that it would be too late

to confess after two innocent men had been convicted. So we finally decided to draw up a paper, stating the facts. I send it with this letter. It 's signed by two witnesses and fixed up in proper form, as near as we could make it. Use it if you have to; I leave that all to you.

“Perhaps you wonder why I take such an interest in clearing John Higgins and his partner? There 's a long story behind that, and some day I 'll tell you all about it. I wish, though, it was n't at your expense.”

Pat ate no bite of dinner. Instead, he thrust the Captain's letter into his pocket and hurried up to the house of Judge Hahn, where he knew his mother was at work.

The old woman was busy in the summer kitchen, just at the rear of the house. She was stooping over the wash-tubs when her son came in.

“Here 's a letter for you, mother,” he said, holding out the big envelope with its official stamp. He even tried to force a smile.

“Open it for me, Pat, darlin',” she said, wiping the suds from her hands on her blue

apron. "I wonder who kin be writin' to th' likes av me? We 're not owing a cint to a soul, at all. Now read me th' letter."

So Pat began.

"Army of the Mississippi," was the legend engraved across the top of the sheet. "Mrs. Michael McCormick, Liberty, Ills.," the letter began in formal style. "Dear Madam, I am directed by Col. Forsyth, commanding the—th Regiment, Illinois Volunteers, to express to you his—"

Pat hesitated, then stopped. "Go on, bye," his mother urged. "Why, what 's the matter wid ye?"

"—to express to you his regrets and condolences"—the boy choked up again.

"What is ut? What is ut?" cried Mrs. McCormick. "Hurry up!"

"—condolences at the death of your husband, Private Michael—"

"Kilted!" screamed the old woman, and, collapsing in a chair, she threw over her head the blue gingham apron she was wearing, and so swayed back and forth, screaming, "He 's kilted! My Mike is kilted!" Then the un-

happy woman slipped to the floor, where she groveled in her abject grief.

Pat dropped the letter and knelt down beside her.

At the first sound of her scream, Judge Hahn and the rest of the family came hurrying from the dining-room. The Judge picked up the letter and glanced at its contents. Meanwhile Lucy Wilson, Mrs. Hahn's sister, had dropped on her knees by the side of the clothes-basket and was giving old Mrs. McCormick the comfort which only one woman can give another in such an emergency.

"Here, Mrs. McCormick," said Judge Hahn, finally, when she had been persuaded to take her head from under her apron and to quiet her shrieks to a series of heart-rending moans, "let me read this letter. You should be a proud as well as a sad woman this day. Listen."

Then he read the concluding paragraph of the official letter:

"The Colonel instructs me to say that Private McCormick lost his life while attempting an act of great daring and courage. Had he

survived he would have been recommended for a commission. The Colonel instructs me to say that while you have lost your husband, the nation has added one to its list of heroes."

Judge Hahn lifted the old woman to her feet. The others crowded round, offering her a mixture of congratulation and condolence. They wrung her hands, they patted her on the back, and pressed upon her cups of tea and other stimulants, until, finally, Mrs. Hahn carried her away to rest in her own bed-room.

Pat sat beside his mother until she fell asleep, with the Captain's letter burning in his pocket. Now that his father was dead, his duty was very clear. He slipped into the library, where Judge Hahn was sitting.

"Here 's another letter which came this morning," he said. Judge Hahn read the Captain's letter and its inclosures with furrowed brow.

"It can't do father any harm now," Pat said, when he looked up. "And mother and I can stand it."

"I 'll see you don't lose by it," answered the judge, clasping the boy's hand. "Come

with me. We must hurry down to the courthouse.”

After a brief conference with the judge, court was called to order. The jury was brought in and Judge Hahn rose in the center of a profound silence. The room was packed and every one seemed to feel that an unexpected crisis was at hand.

Without a preliminary word, Judge Hahn read the formal statement, in which Mike McCormick described how he had set fire to the tannery, and stated his motive in so doing, ending with his signature and those of the two witnesses, and the attestation, in legal form, of the regimental judge advocate.

As he finished, Higgins clutched the arms of his chair and gasped his relief. Wagner started to rise, but was waved to his seat by the court. The jury leaned forward in an attitude of strained attention. King Anders' face went fiery red. He leaned over and whispered to Lawyer Wagner, who had grown suddenly pale. Applause broke out in the crowded room, but was instantly stilled by a rap of the sheriff's gavel.

Judge Hahn told how the paper had come into his possession. "These defendants are as innocent of this crime as any member of this jury," he went on. "It was Michael McCormick who set the tannery on fire. He was the criminal. But the same mail which brought this confession, brought with it another letter."

Slowly the lawyer opened the letter from Colonel Forsyth and read it aloud.

"Michael McCormick," he said, impressively, "has passed beyond the reach of any earthly tribunal. But if it is possible for a man to expiate a crime in this world, he has done so. If he stained his name by the commission of a private wrong, he has given his life for the public good. Living in the shadow of a crime, he died a hero. . . . Your Honor, I move that the case against these defendants be taken from the jury and that they be released, pending a further investigation."

Still there was a silence. The situation was too tense for applause. Wagner made objections to the action asked for. He was overruled and the court discharged the jury, and

released the defendants, with a promise that all the facts connected with the confession should be investigated.

Then, at last, a storm of cheers broke out. Dozens of men crowded about the defendants to congratulate them. In the midst of the tumult Judge Hahn pulled Pat McCormick forward.

“Here ’s the fellow you want to thank, Higgins,” he said.

Higgins shook his hand. “Some day I ’ll pay you for this, Pat,” he said, with an emphasis which left no doubt of his deep sincerity.

At the table near-by stood Wagner and his huge client. “Come on, Anders. Let ’s get out of this,” said the lawyer.

But the old King shook his head furiously. For a full minute he stood and glared at the son of the man who had burned his tannery and who had now spoken from the grave, as it were, to thwart his revengeful plans.

V

THE sudden end of the arson trial marked what was apparently a sudden change in the attitude of Pat McCormick toward the problems of life. When the trial began he was merely a boy; when Higgins and Kramer were discharged on that December afternoon he had become a man, feeling a keen sense of responsibility as head of the McCormick family. In reality the change was not as sudden as it appeared. Pat's association with Tom Hahn and other boys of happier birth and better breeding at the public school, the constant encouragement and inspiration of the old Captain and Aunt Bridget, had developed in him a vague, half-expressed ambition, needing only some such shock as the sensational death of his father to crystallize into a fierce determination.

“I ’m going to stay here in Liberty and

show people that a shanty mick can amount to something," he wrote to the Captain, to whom he could make such a statement without suspicion of boasting.

His plan had been to finish with the high school and then to take up the study of law. But now, as is always the case when the ideal is to be translated into the actual, circumstances arose which made the following of that plan impossible.

Within a week of the close of the trial Lawyer Wagner began ejectment proceedings to force Mrs. McCormick to give up her home in Killgrubbin. Urged by King Anders, to whom a petty revenge was better than none, he pushed the suit to a quick hearing. But before the order of ejectment was issued, Pat's new friend, John Higgins, came forward with the offer of a cottage, rent free. The offer was made to old Mrs. McCormick, who accepted it gladly, but when Pat came home from school that afternoon and heard the news, he put an instant veto on the acceptance.

"I 've got a job in the post-office," he said,

“and I ’ve found a little place out at the end of Main Street we can rent for ten dollars a month. I ’ll go over and thank Mr. Higgins.”

“But how can you do that and go to school?” asked Aunt Bridget.

“I am going to quit,” Pat announced.

“Aw—now, darling,” pleaded the old woman, “you ’ll not do that? Wid me and your mither earnin’ our tin dollars a week and nothing at all ilse to amuse ourselves wid?”

“I ’m going to work on Monday,” Pat answered. “I ’ve rented the Main Street place for a year. We ’ll move to-morrow.”

Aunt Bridget made many angry objections to evacuating her box-car and she reproached Pat bitterly for giving up school, with his “diplomay” only a few years off, but secretly she was full of pride for the boy. The evening after the moving of the scanty household goods was accomplished she rapped at the Hahns’s kitchen door, carrying a bundle under her arm. It was Mrs. Hahn, herself, who opened the door to her.

“Good-evening,” said Aunt Bridget, with a somewhat haughty air, “we jist moved into our new house on Main Street, Mrs. Hahn and I ’ve come to bring back that black basque yere sisther Lucy brought over for Norah. Misther McCormick ’ll be buying our clothes afther this.”

Smiling, Mrs. Hahn invited the old woman into her kitchen for a cup of tea and there learned the whole story of what Pat had done.

“That ’s fine,” she said, half-way between amusement and pride in the boy’s determination. “The Judge was saying this noon he had succeeded in getting Mrs. McCormick a pension of twenty dollars a month.”

“Wull, wull!” cried Aunt Bridget in delight. “Sure Mike McCormick dead is worth a lot more to his family than ivir he was alive, God rist his soul.”

Not long after Pat went to work, the Reverend Mr. Burton,—friend and companion of every boy in the village,—hunted Pat up and invited him to spend a couple of evenings each week at the Rectory.

“I ’m getting a bit rusty myself, Pat,” he

said, "and if you 'd like to keep up your algebra and read a little Latin and history, we 'll begin to-morrow evening."

Pat smiled to himself every time he thought of his first meeting with Mr. Burton. It was a moonlight winter night and Vinegar Hill and Killgrubbin were in the midst of a pitched battle at the head of Cooper's Hill. Suddenly a sturdy figure in a red dressing gown shot out of the Rectory door and sprinted across the lawn, taking the low fence in its stride. Pat and the leader of the Vinegar Hill gang, struggling fiercely on the ground, felt their collars clutched in a firm grip.

"Fighting 's bad enough," said the voice of Mr. Burton, "but this kind of fighting is a disgrace. Scratching and biting like dogs! If you boys have got to fight, come over to my barn and I 'll give you some boxing lessons."

Now Pat was glad to accept this new invitation and regularly he spent two evenings of each week at the old stone house, where the Rector lived alone with his old and crotchety mother.

In the course of their reading, Mr. Burton discovered that Pat was the possessor of a bass voice surprisingly deep and powerful in a boy of his small stature; and often, when the lessons were over, he leaned back in his easy chair and listened in half-humorous appreciation while Rienzi addressed the Romans or Spartacus roused the gladiators to revolt.

One Sunday Mr. Burton and Pat were invited to dine together at Judge Hahn's. At the table the Rector noticed that the Judge was not wearing his customary first-day black.

"I did n't see you at church to-day, Judge?" he said.

"No," answered the Judge, with a quizzical smile, "I could n't go. Sister Lucy will tell you why."

"Now, John," stammered the embarrassed lady, blushing furiously, "I told you I would buy you a new coat as soon as my interest money came in. You see," she explained, with perfect ingenuousness, "our theological student, Mr. Patterson, had his first call to preach to-day and he did n't have a decent coat of any kind to wear."

After dinner, when Judge Hahn and Mr. Burton sat down together in the library to smoke their cigars, with Pat McCormick and Tom to keep them company, the Judge quizzically asked the Rector for advice on the subject of his wife's sister.

"Lucy would give away everything in the house if we did n't keep a close watch on her," smiled the Judge, "including herself. Only this week she brought me a letter of proposal from the Rev. Mr. Elliott—you know him—the tall, discouraged-looking widower, with the projecting Adam's apple and the seven small children, they 've got over to the Second Baptist Church. They get a new minister over there about every six months and they all propose to Lucy."

"I don't blame them," said Mr. Burton, stoutly.

"She always comes to me for advice, and so far I 've been able to prevent her doing anything rash," the Judge went on. "But I had a close call with this Elliott man. He wrote a mighty eloquent letter."

Mr. Burton said nothing.

“I read it through. Then I asked: ‘Do you love him?’ ”

“What did she say to that?” asked the Rector.

“‘What has an old woman of thirty-seven to do with love?’ she answered me. ‘But he only gets six hundred a year—and that is n’t always paid, you know. My little interest money would be a great help. Then there ’s those seven little children with no one to look after them!’ ”

“The man did n’t ask her to marry him on those grounds, surely,” said Mr. Burton hotly.

“Oh, no. That ’s the way she put the case to herself. I did some mighty hard thinking for a minute. Finally I said, ‘Mr. Elliott is a very brilliant man. He will have a splendid career. Within a few years, I have no doubt, he will be called to one of the big city churches. I can see you now, dressed in a fine new silk dress, driving in your own carriage up to the great church. They will have an assistant pastor and a corps of deaconesses, so you will have nothing to do but to attend to your social

duties. Mr. Elliott's proposal will bear very serious consideration, my dear.' "

Mr. Burton was smiling broadly.

"Now I want to know, Parson," asked the Judge, "whether you think my flight of imagination was justifiable."

"What was the result of it?"

"Why, she sat right down and declined his offer, of course. The prospect I painted was too much for her. The minute one of Lucy's friends begins to have even a distant chance of becoming prosperous she loses all interest in him."

"The dear saint," laughed Mr. Burton.

"And such a bigot," Judge Hahn went on. "Right after you began coming to the house, Pat, she came in one day and warned me that I must n't let Tom associate with you. 'What 's the matter with Pat McCormick?' I asked. She lowered her voice to a whisper to make answer. 'John,' she said, solemnly, 'Pat McCormick is a Romanist.' "

The roar of hearty laughter which followed was interrupted by Mrs. Hahn.

"What are you men laughing at?" she asked from the hallway.

Before Mr. Burton could answer there sounded the voice of Miss Lucy, calling to her sister from the dining-room.

“O Alice,” she called, “I ’m going to take the rest of this ice cream over to Mrs. Wolferman.”

Mrs. Hahn joined in the renewed laughter.

“There, hear her,” said Judge Hahn. “Now Burton, do you understand why I am still a poor man?”

Walking home together up Main Street Pat noticed that Mr. Burton was unusually silent.

“Is anything the matter, Mr. Burton?” he asked finally.

“No, Pat,” answered the Rector. “I was just wondering how any man could dare to ask a saint like Lucy Wilson to marry him.”

VI

FOR MORE than a year life went smoothly in the new house. Pat did faithful work at the post-office and spent two evenings each week at the Rectory. During the same time Mr. Burton was preparing Tom Hahn for admission to Ann Arbor and the two boys studied and recited together, their old friendship growing constantly stronger.

In the Fall, after Tom had gone to matriculate and his pretty sister, Miss Jack, had entered the seminary at Bickford, Pat McCormick took the examination for a teacher's certificate, and, giving up his place in the post-office, got an appointment to teach the Slayson cross-roads school, eight miles out in the country.

It was in October of the same year that small-pox broke out in the village. It is still referred to in Liberty as the year of the great

plague. The dread disease first appeared, as might have been expected, in Killgrubbin. The physician who discovered the case hurried to the office of Dr. Jackson, the health officer, and turned it over to him with a groan of relief. Shantytown was immediately quarantined, and those within its borders were forbidden to leave on any pretext. A big yellow flag was put up on a pole near the first house on the river bank and the necessary food for the quarantined people was left in baskets each morning at the side of the bridge nearest Killgrubbin. .

The first night of the quarantine a boat load of Shantytown people escaped by rowing a couple of miles down the river. When this was discovered, an armed man was stationed on either side of the river, with instructions to shoot, if necessary, to keep the prisoners within bounds.

Dr. Jackson, a young, unmarried physician, gave up his practice and moved to Killgrubbin to devote himself to stamping out the plague. His greatest trouble was that he had no nurses. Within a week twelve cases had appeared and

the women of Shantytown were too terror-stricken to be of much service.

Pat, coming home from his school in the country one Friday night, found the whole village demoralized with fear. The richer people were leaving, and business was almost at a standstill. It was the next morning, early, that Pat's old Aunt Bridget, taking her pipe and bag of tobacco and a big roll of clean rags under her arm, left the house before either her sister or nephew were up and started straight for Killgrubbin. When the guard tried to stop her from entering the quarantined district she faced him grimly.

"Young felly," she said, "I 'm going over there on th' river bank to help me old frinds, so I am, and I 'd like to see you stop me! You run along now and tell Pat McCormick and his mither that they 've seen the last av me unlis, praise Mary, I come through this thing alive. And mind now, you 're to leave a pound of smoking tobacco in th' basket for me ivery Mondah mornin'."

Distracted Dr. Jackson, inside the plague-lines, welcomed the coming of the redoubtable

old woman. She was the first person to come inside since the quarantine was declared, and she brought with her a fearless spirit and a great store of common sense. While he doctored the sick, she organized the women of Killgrubbin and forced them to scrub the ramshackle shanties from top to bottom in the effort to conquer the plague with soap and hot water.

Three weeks went by and it began to be believed that the small-pox would be confined to Killgrubbin. Then suddenly the town was thrown into a wild panic of fear by the report that a case had been discovered at the rear of a house on Main Street, in a small hut occupied by a German woman, who kept two cows and sold the milk.

Most of the remaining population of Liberty would have left town on the next train, had that been possible, but the rest of the state had by this time enforced a quarantine against Liberty and trains did not even stop at the village, mail and express matter being thrown from the open cars as they passed through. Such being the case, scores of families left

their homes and moved to the hills about the town, living in tents and other temporary shelters. The public schools had been closed at the first outbreak of the disease and only necessary business was carried on.

The Hahns, or rather the adult part of the family which was at home, were among those who did not desert their house.

“We ’ve got to stay and watch Lucy,” the Judge said, with a smile, when asked why he did not join the exodus. “No, she has n’t got the small-pox, but she’d get it and scatter it all over town if we did n’t keep her almost chained up. She’d have been over in Kill-grubbin long ago if I had n’t absolutely forbidden her to go.”

In the cleaner and better residence part of the village the disease did not spread rapidly, but cases broke out here and there in the most unsuspected places.

One evening Judge Hahn came home with a grave look on his face. “There ’s a yellow flag on the Rectory,” he told his wife.

Mrs. Hahn was horrified by the announcement.

“Has Mr. Burton got the plague?” she asked anxiously.

“No, it ’s his mother, but, of course, he ’ll stay and care for her. They took milk from old Mrs. Wolferman.”

“What can we do?” asked Mrs. Hahn.

“I came home as soon as I heard of it to see that you and Lucy did n’t do anything foolish. We ’ve sent to Chicago to get a special nurse for the old lady. Whatever happens, neither of you must go near the Rectory. Perhaps it would be just as well to wait until the nurse comes before we tell Lucy anything about it.”

“Great Heavens!” cried Mrs. Hahn. “They have n’t even a hired girl to help them. What will the poor man do for his meals?”

But Miss Lucy, coming downstairs at the time, had heard Judge Hahn’s first startling announcement and had stopped short with a thrill of pitying horror. She stood there, half-way down, and listened eagerly to every word. Then, silently, she slipped back to her room, stuffed some things into her old straw satchel, and stole as silently down the back stairs.

She let herself out into the back yard—the Hahn's servant had fled in terror weeks before—ran through the garden, climbed the high back fence in a most hasty and undignified manner for a maiden lady of thirty-seven and ran down the alley with the guilty speed of a thief.

Just as she disappeared over the fence, she heard her sister's voice calling, "Lucy!" and the sound lent greater speed to her feet.

Dusk was beginning to fall as she reached the side street upon which the alley opened, and she hurried along without meeting a soul she knew. Nearing the Rectory she shot around to the rear, slipped through the little churchyard and opened the door of the back kitchen without stopping to knock. There she stopped for a moment to listen. She could hear some one in the front kitchen fumbling about the stove and rattling the cooking utensils. Still unannounced, she opened the door into the kitchen and caught the Reverend Richard Burton in the act of frying an egg.

He looked up as the door creaked and his face was startled and perplexed.

“Oh, you poor thing!” said Miss Lucy.

“Miss Lucy!” cried the clergyman. “What are you doing here?”

“In a minute,” she answered, with the look of a spoiled child, “I ’m going to be frying eggs.”

“I won’t let you stay,” Mr. Burton declared firmly.

“You can’t get rid of me,” snapped Miss Lucy in answer. “I ’ve been exposed to the plague, don’t you see? They won’t let me leave here now till it ’s all over.”

She was already busy about the stove. Mr. Burton stood looking at her in silent amazement.

“Mrs. Hahn?” he said questioningly.

“She has nothing to do with it. I guess I am of age.” Then, as he continued to object, she went on, “I ’d like to know how you ’d get on here without any help? Tell me that now.”

“But how did you come?”

“I came down the back alley, if you want to know, Richard Burton.”

“The Hahns don’t know, then?”

“No, they don’t. That reminds me I must find some way to tell them.”

Miss Lucy took a black wood coal from the stove, tore a big sheet of white paper from one of Mrs. Burton’s kitchen shelves and wrote on it this message:

“Judge Hahn. I am here. Lucy.”

Then she took a couple of pins from her dress, walked through the Rectory, opened one of the Main Street windows and pinned the paper to the window-ledge outside.

“There,” she said to herself, “I guess they can read that from the street.”

Then she went back to the kitchen, where Mr. Burton was having an unsuccessful encounter with an egg, took the tin turner from his hand, and went to work.

“Now,” she said, after she had boiled some coffee and spread a place on the kitchen table, “sit down and eat your supper. I ’m going to look after your mother.”

“But are n’t you going to eat anything?” asked the bewildered Mr. Burton.

“Not now. I ’m going to look after your mother first, but you eat your supper right

away. I don't want two sick people on my hands."

Miss Lucy found old Mrs. Burton propped up in bed. Her son had made her some badly burned toast and a cup of tea and she was suffering less from the disease than from lack of womanly attention.

"Why, Lucy!" the old woman cried from the bed.

"I 've come down to take care of you, Mrs. Burton," declared Miss Lucy, "and you 're not to talk or worry about anything. Let me take that burned stuff away and get you something fit to eat."

Presently Judge Hahn, driving hurriedly down Main Street in search of some clue to his sister's whereabouts, was told by a neighbor of the sign pinned to the front of the Rectory. Miss Lucy's message struck the comic note, the more by contrast with the general dread which prevailed—and the man who told of it startled gloomy Main Street with the sound of unaccustomed laughter. Judge Hahn, himself, driving on to the Rectory, smiled broadly at the means which Miss Lucy had adopted to

notify her relatives. He read the message with a chuckle and stopped long enough to catch a sight of Miss Lucy herself, peering out of an upper window. He shook his fist at her playfully, then turned and carried the news back to his wife.

“Will she come through it alive?” wailed Mrs. Hahn. “And what will people say?”

“We ’ll hope so,” answered the Judge. “And what people say does n’t make much difference at a time like this.”

Miss Lucy took hold of affairs at the Rectory with entirely competent hands. When Mr. Burton daily offered to help her about the house, she relentlessly drove him out into the churchyard for exercise.

“I ’ll not have you meddling and fussing about my work,” she declared. “I ’d as soon think of writing your sermons for you. Go out and get some fresh air. That ’s the way you can help me most.”

In the long evenings, when Mrs. Burton had gone to sleep, they sat together in the study, the clergyman reading aloud and Miss Lucy incessantly sewing. She kept the Rectory in

a condition of prim spotlessness which was half painful and altogether refreshing.

As her illness progressed, old Mrs. Burton grew querulous and demanded more and more of her two attendants. She was greatly worried because, during her illness, no flowers could be placed on the grave of her husband, a labor of love which, during the twenty years since his death, she had never forgotten for a single day. After a consultation with Dr. Jackson, who drove through the streets in a closed buggy, the few wayfarers scattering to get out of the way, Miss Lucy and Mr. Burton took on themselves the acting of a lie.

“If she is to get well,” the doctor said, “we must save her from worry of every kind.”

So Miss Lucy one morning promised her that she, herself, would go to the cemetery and take the flowers. Every morning thereafter she disappeared below stairs, leaving Mr. Burton in the sick-room, and when, within ten minutes, Mrs. Burton would call, complainingly, “Lucy! Dick, where ’s Lucy? She should n’t leave me this way,” her son would answer, “Why, mother, Miss Lucy ’s gone to

the cemetery, you know," and the old lady would lay her head down on the pillow again, quite contented.

When the crisis came, Mrs. Burton grew delirious, and, while in that condition, she talked continuously.

"Dick," she cried complainingly one afternoon to her son, "you promised me you 'd never get married while I lived. Now you 've brought home this strange woman as your wife. I see her there in the window. It 's the first time you ever disobeyed me. You 're a bad boy, Dick. I 'll tell your father."

The doctor had left a quieting draught, and after it had been administered and the old lady had fallen into a deep sleep, Miss Lucy turned to the clergyman.

"Richard Burton," she said, "so that is the reason you have never married?"

"That 's one of the reasons, Miss Lucy."

"Well, it 's no reason at all. You 've no right to spoil your life for the sake of an old woman's whim, even if she is your mother. You need somebody here at the Rectory. Look at the state I found you in!"

“But that ’s not the only reason. There ’s a difference of religious belief between me and the only woman I want to marry.”

“Nonsense! It was never intended that things of that kind should keep people apart.

“But I ’m not sure the woman I love loves me,” persisted Mr. Burton.

“Then ask her and find out,” cried Miss Lucy. “Richard Burton, I do hate a coward.”

“I will ask her,” said the clergyman, tightly gripping both arms of his chair. “Lucy, will you be my wife?”

In an agony of shame and blushes, Miss Lucy stared at him with startled eyes. “Oh, Oh, I hate you,” she sobbed.

The clergyman crossed to her chair and took one of the hands which had fallen helpless into her lap.

“I ’ve waited long enough, Lucy,” he said.

“But—your mother—” she began to object.

“That is no reason at all,” he quoted triumphantly. “I have no right to spoil my life.”

“Don’t,” she pleaded, turning away her

flaming face. "You know what I meant. You must n't shame an old woman so."

"Look at me," he commanded. Still she kept her face averted. "Oh, Lucy, dear, I do hate a coward."

Suddenly she turned to face him, smiling through her tears. "I believe you think I 'm afraid of you." And then, a moment later, "You really do need somebody to look after you, don't you?"

At the sound of voices, old Mrs. Burton roused uneasily from her sleep.

"Dick," she called feebly from the bed. Her son sprang to her side.

"Mother," he said, "Lucy Wilson has just promised to be my wife."

"I 'm very glad," the old woman answered with an effort. "I 've been worried about you, Dick." Suddenly she started up and spoke again clearly.

"Good-bye, my children," she said. "God keep you both," and was gone.

THE death of old Mrs. Burton was the last death in Liberty from the plague. The spring

came early, bringing with it almost unseasonable hot weather and day after day of cleansing sunshine. Almost as suddenly as it had appeared, the dread disease vanished, the various quarantines were lifted, the tent-dwellers moved back into town, Aunt Bridget came grimly back from Shantytown untouched by the plague and the people of Liberty, under the reaction from the long weeks of dread, plunged into a summer season of great gayety.

VII

THE effects of the great small-pox scare were little felt in the broad domains of King Anders. During the winter, while the disease raged, no member of the family visited Liberty. But that made small difference in their manner of life. At best their visits were few. And since his discomfiture in the arson trial he had stuck more closely than ever to the farm. The tannery fire had cost him twelve thousand dollars, and, with a determination to retrieve that loss, he threw himself with titanic energy into the cultivation of his square miles of land. His six great sons were fast growing up and already each of them was equal in working power to two ordinary men. Though their father was the richest farmer in the northwestern corner of the state, not one of the boys had gone to school for a day after he was thirteen. They

were huge hulks of men, with no more knowledge or intelligence than is required properly to fertilize potato ground and get the best results in the raising of livestock. Entirely without initiative, they worked in gear with the fly-wheel of their father's driving-power. Over them, and the hired men and women of the family, the King ruled with patriarchal power. He managed his business affairs without counsel or consideration of others. And there was no one to question his authority.

To this rule there was one possible exception. That was the only daughter, Antje, now a girl of sixteen. It was one of the freaks of heredity that, while she inherited no trace of physical likeness to her father, to her alone of all the family should have descended the King's masterful spirit and determined will. In her short and slender figure, her red-gold hair and deep-blue eyes, she harked back to some far-off Teutonic ancestor,—shining like a flower amid the glowering swarthiness of her great brothers—while in the temper of her mind the shrewd old father early recognized a minature reproduction of himself. For her

alone among his children King Anders was forced to feel a sincere, if half-unwilling, respect. He recognized the likeness to himself in the girl and his self-esteem was so great that nothing else was needed to produce affection. So far as tenderness was possible to him, she was its object.

One day, not long after the unexpected outcome of the arson trial, he and his daughter were working together about the cow-stable. Antje stopped to admire a beautiful black and white Friesian heifer, which the King had recently imported.

“She shall be yours, Antje,” said the old man. And Antje named the heifer Tulip and fed and groomed the pretty animal with her own hands.

One day in the following summer the King announced at dinner, “Luders has bought Tulip for two hundred dollars. It ’s a good sale.”

“But you shan’t sell her,” said his daughter.

“No?” sneered the King. “For why not?”

“Because she is not yours to sell. You gave her to me last spring.”

“Bah! That was a good joke yet! I guess, maybe so, I sell my own cattle.”

“You shall not sell Tulip,” repeated the girl stubbornly.

“Luders will be here for her to-morrow morning yet,” said the King, in a tone of finality.

Next morning Antje refused to go to school. Instead, she sat at the kitchen window, until she saw Luders drive up to the horse-barn, where her father was at work. Then she slipped quietly out to the cow-stable, taking with her a turnip and a bottle of white powder. Outside the barn she stopped long enough to hear Luders say that he had brought the money to pay for the heifer and was ready to take her away.

Then she hurried into the stable where her beautiful pet was stalled, buried a lump of powder in the turnip and fed it to her, crying as she did so. Presently she heard her father and the other farmer approaching. It was characteristic of her that she stood by her guns.

“Go into the house, Antje,” ordered the

King, anxious to avoid a scene. He might have spared himself the anxiety. The girl was dry-eyed and calm.

"I said you should not sell Tulip," she said, quietly. "I have fed her poison."

The old King sprang forward in a fury, his arm raised to strike. But Luders restrained him. "Not that little girl, Anders," he said.

"Go into the house!" roared her father. "I will teach you yet!"

The two men waited long enough to see that the little girl had told the truth. Then Anders returned the money and Luders drove away, concealing an admiring grin beneath his beard.

"That little girl of Anders' ain't afraid of him yet," he told his wife admiringly.

Anders walked grimly back to the house, stopping to cut three willow switches. He knew how to teach his women folks the danger of rebellion against his authority! But alas for the King; rebellion had already spread to an astounding quarter!

"Antje, come here!" he called, throwing open the kitchen door. Perhaps he had expected that the girl would be in hiding, but

she rose directly from her chair to face him. The sight of her fearlessness lashed his rage.

“I teach you to kill my cattle!” he roared and raised his switches to strike. But at that moment his wife clutched him firmly about the arm with both hands.

Actually it was beyond his comprehension. For thirty years his wife and servant! Not once had she dared to oppose his slightest wish; his whole conception of life tottered!

He tried to shake her off, but she only clung the tighter, crying, “Ander, you must n’t strike her!” Then his rage mastered him and he turned and, with his left hand gave his wife a savage push, almost a blow. The great strength of his arm sent her flying across the room. Her foot caught on a chair and, falling, her head struck the edge of the table. She dropped to the floor motionless, a tiny trickle of blood flowing from her temple.

With all his hardness, the thought of striking a woman—his own wife, the mother of his children—unmanned him. The sight of the prostrate body sent a chill over him. His

anger gave way to a sickening, shameful fear. He felt weak as a child.

As her mother fell, Antje rushed to her. She knelt down and loosed the dress about her throat.

“Put her on the bed,” she said to the King. He lifted the prostrate woman in his great arms and carried her into the adjoining room.

“Now open the window and get some water.”

Like a child he obeyed. When he came back his wife had recovered consciousness. She looked up at him but said nothing. There was no reproach, hardly recognition in her eyes.

“I ’ll go for the doctor,” the old King whispered, leaning over.

“Don’t waste money on such foolishness,” said the old woman, lifting her head from the pillow. “I don’t need a doctor.”

She was quoting the King’s own words and they cut him like a knife. Without answering he left the room and started toward Liberty for the physician, with his fastest horse on the gallop. He covered the twelve miles to town and back in an hour and a half.

“Must be somebody dying at King Anders’,” said the farmers along the road, when they saw him dash by. “It ’s the first time he ’s had a doctor in ten years.”

When Anders and the physician came into the house his wife was sitting in an arm-chair, with Antje beside her. “Mother fell and cut her head on the table,” said the girl, before any questions had been asked. “Father was worse scared than he needed to have been.”

The speech brought both relief and shame to the King. For the first time in his life he felt himself in the power of another—this slender girl with the fearless blue eyes—his own daughter.

Mrs. Anders’ injuries were not serious. In a few days she was about her work as usual. The events of the day were never referred to by any member of the family. In a month or two the King began to feel again absolute master of himself and of his household.

One evening he came home with an offer of marriage for his daughter. It had been arranged during the day between himself and old Piet Krager, his greatest rival in the

county as a lord of the land. Krager had six daughters and an only son; with Anders the case was reversed. One of Krager's daughters had recently married and with her had gone one hundred and sixty acres of her father's land. Anders—with marriageable sons at home—felt that so much had been lost to him. He was the readier to begin negotiations when Krager suggested it.

“Antje,” the King said to his wife, when he found her alone in the kitchen that evening, “Piet Krager wants our girl to marry his son Piet.”

“But Antje is so young,” objected she.

“How old were you when we married?” he answered.

“Is he a good boy? Would he be good by Antje? I hardly know him yet.”

“Not like our boys,” the old man admitted. “Not such a good farmer. He has been by the business college in town and such foolishness. But Piet will give six hundred and forty acres of land. Also our Ander and Klaas get two Krager girls for wives and half as much land.”

“Ask Antje,” his wife suggested.

“Young Piet Krager wants you for wife,” the King said bluntly, when the girl came into the room.

“He is a smart boy,” she answered. “I should be ashamed to marry him, I know so little. He has been to the business college.”

“Ander,” his wife broke in timidly, “Antje wants to go away to boarding-school yet first a little once.”

The King started to bluster, but the memory of that other scene in the kitchen restrained him.

“She has gone always to school,” he said.

“Yes,” answered his wife proudly, “but Antje knows already so much as the teacher. She can learn her nothing yet.”

King Anders had never paid any attention to the management of the little red school-house which stood on one corner of his own land. Any teacher was good enough to give his boys the scrap of learning they required. But now, with a shrewd plan in his mind, he held several conferences with the smaller farmers in the neighborhood, who served as

members of the school-board. One evening he came home with an announcement which he felt would put an effectual damper on the extravagant idea of sending Antje away to school.

“The school-board has hired a new man teacher,” he told his wife and daughter, “and he ’s a smart one. I guess, maybe so, he can learn Antje a few things yet. He begins Monday morning already.”

“We will see yet,” answered Mrs. Anders. Neither she nor her daughter made any further comment.

The next week the new teacher took charge of the little school-house and Antje went over to begin her studies under him. The new teacher was Pat McCormick.

VIII

THE school-house stood at one corner of the cross-roads which separated four sections of the Anders land. Behind it and across the road to the right grew thick groves of tall oak and maple trees, fringed about the edges with hazel brush and sumac. In front a fat black corn-field, punctuated with regular green dots, stretched away over a slope of the hill to the horizon. To the left was a great pasture, light green with the first tender grass, against which sleek black and white banded cattle stood out in high relief.

The school lot was inclosed by a rail fence, in the angles of which grew blue-bells and tall white cups of the trillium. A big locust tree stood on either side the revolving stile which closed the entrance, and from it a deeply worn path led to the little faded, red building, standing back from the road under the shadow of a towering elm.

When the new teacher reached the cross-roads on the first Monday morning, the children, already arrived, looked up quickly with open mouths and shy curiosity in their eyes. A few of them bowed awkwardly; others looked quickly down in confusion, digging their bare toes into the dirt. Pat unlocked the door leading to the front entry, while the pupils gathered in little groups outside, awaiting the teacher's summons.

Inside the single school-room there were twenty little battered desks, with a pine table on a raised platform at one end for the teacher. Along one side of the room ran a cracked and badly worn black-board. On the other wall hung, in solitary state, a wood-engraving representing a very large Washington crossing the Delaware in the midst of very small and fragile cakes of ice.

Presently the teacher tapped the hand-bell which stood on his table and the pupils came straggling in. They came by twos and threes, holding hands as if for mutual protection against an ambushed foe. All alike were barefooted. The girls wore blue or

brown checked gingham dresses, made in a single piece, with their light hair twisted in little braids which hung down on either side their faces. The long, baggy and patched trousers of the boys were supported by single suspenders, crossing their blue cotton shirts. The smallest took the desks in front. At the very rear sat the biggest boy of all, an overgrown lout with a heavy, sullen face. The desk across the aisle from him was occupied by a slender girl, apparently older than the others. Her pink calico dress did not conceal the budding curves of her figure. Her thick red-gold hair hung in a single braid.

As the new teacher glanced quickly about the room most of the pupils dropped their eyes shyly. Only the girl in the back row met his gaze fearlessly. On her face was an expression of curious hostility. This was the new teacher who had come between her and her dream of going away to school, and although unconscious of his guilt in that direction, Pat McCormick was quick to see that she did not look upon him with favor.

“Will each of you please give me his name,”

he said, "beginning with the little boy in the first row."

The little boy in the first row gave no sign of comprehension. To the repeated question he still remained dumb. A giggle broke out and swept round the room. Only the girl in the rear seat remained silent, though a twinkle of amusement shone in her wide blue eyes. Pat stepped down from the platform and leaned over the little boy's desk.

"What is your name?" he asked. The child glanced up in apparent terror, then tried to wiggle down under the desk, crying piteously. The giggles broke into open laughter, the children covering their mouths with their hands and twisting with delight.

Pat glanced at the girl in the rear seat.

"The little boy can't understand English." She smiled, as if she enjoyed his discomfiture. "He speaks only low Dutch."

Pat walked back to her desk. "Give me your name, please."

"Antje Anders."

It came to him like a flash that this was the daughter of his ancient enemy, who had driven

his mother from her home in Killgrubbin, whose tannery his father had burned. When he had been engaged to teach the Silver Creek school the name of the old King had never been mentioned. This was his first intimation that any of the Anders' children were to be among his pupils.

Close behind him sounded a suppressed chuckle. He turned quickly to see the fingers of the big boy on the other side retreating from a derisive gesture.

"Stand up, sir," he ordered. The boy sullenly started to rise. Perhaps the deep bass voice impressed him. Then he hesitated and sullenly sank down again into his seat.

Pat's fingers clutched the collar of his blue shirt and a jerk landed its wearer on his knees in the aisle. Another pull helped him to his feet.

"Come to the platform," ordered the new teacher, leading the way with one hand still firmly clutching the collar. The big boy, towering a head above the teacher, obeyed unresisting, apparently stupefied by the quickness of the fate which had befallen him. The

giggles were stilled now. A silent awe brooded over the school-room. Open mouths and staring eyes paid their tribute of respect. Only in the face of Antje Anders, Pat still caught a twinkle of amusement, not unmixed with a touch of appreciation. She also had a will of her own.

The big boy—his name was Hoppy Hoppens—was given the front desk and the small Hollander transferred to the rear.

“Miss Anders,” said Pat, “will you help me with this little fellow? He ’ll need an interpreter.”

The girl blushed charmingly. It was the first time she had ever been so addressed and she liked it. She went to work with her small countryman and Pat busied himself with the other children.

When recess came Pat called Antje Anders to his table. “Thank you for helping me,” he said. “Now we ’d better see about your own studies. How far have you gone in arithmetic?”

Pat noticed that Antje, like all the other pupils, was bare-footed. She called the fact

to his attention by her efforts to conceal her slender, brown ankles with her skirts. As he looked at her thick, reddish-gold hair and the smooth, even whiteness of her skin, he wondered whether he might not be mistaken in his conclusion that she was the daughter of King Anders. He dimly recalled Anders as a glowering black giant of a man. Surely this slim, dainty girl could not be his child.

"I 've gone clear through White's Intermediate," Antje answered to the teacher's question. She spoke a trifle proudly, expecting that this announcement would discomfort him. White's Intermediate had marked the furthest boundary of the former teacher's mathematical knowledge.

"Then we 'll begin algebra."

Pat caught the unwilling look of respect which came into the girl's face. It pleased him greatly and he blessed Mr. Burton for the year of study which had made him master of the mysteries of "x" plus "y."

"I expect to go to Bickford Seminary in the Fall," said the girl, shyly, voicing for the first time, except to her mother, the plan on

which she had set her heart. She wished, for some sub-conscious, unrealized reason, to have the new teacher understand that she, too, had intellectual ambitions; that she was not content with the narrow boundaries of White's Intermediate.

"Then if you 'll bring the catalog for the school we 'll prepare for the entrance examinations."

"Yes, sir," she answered, smiling a little. Pat, glancing down at his watch, was startled to see that the ten minutes allowed for recess had more than gone by.

"We 'll talk it over again," he said as he tapped the bell.

That evening, after supper, King Anders casually questioned his daughter about the new teacher.

"How goes it, Antje?" he asked. "Ain't that new teacher a smart one yet?"

"Oh, I guess so," she replied indifferently. Next morning she surprised her mother by insisting upon wearing her Sunday shoes and stockings to school.

Pat's first month as master of the Silver

Creek school went by swiftly. Outside in the elm gorgeous orioles and scarlet tanagers sang and worked at their nests. From the pasture-lands came the low of feeding cattle and the droning hum of bees busy about the clover. Through the open windows of the little school-house the soft airs of spring wandered, bringing with them the fragrance of the flowering locust. Now and then a quail slipped out from the fields and perched on the rail fence to call "Bob White," and once, even,—so quiet and remote was the place—Pat, glancing out of a window, saw a red fox creep from the hazel brush and stand with one front paw uplifted and head on side, alert for danger, before trotting across the school lot to the other woods.

Every Friday afternoon Pat walked into town to spend Sunday with his mother and Aunt Bridget and every Friday he took with him a clearer picture of his most charming pupil. Did he like her better in the pink calico and bare ankles, as he had seen her first—or in the white dress, tied with a sash, that came a few days later? It suddenly dawned on him

that he was growing sentimental and he berated himself for his folly. One Sunday he fought it all out with himself and decided very properly that he would forget Antje entirely, or, since that was impossible as long as she was one of his pupils, he would look upon her only in the impersonal light of an unusually good student.

But, on the next Monday, when he walked into the school-house, she looked up at him from her desk and smiled so divinely that poor Pat quite forgot his fine resolutions. What right had she, anyway, to do up her hair in that fetching way on the top of her head. . . . Still, he liked it better in the long braid. "The school will please come to order."

As for the girl—she saw in the new teacher a help rather than a hindrance in her cherished plan of going away to school in the Fall. If she was conscious of his restrained admiration she did not give sign of it. Only a sly glance now and then in his direction, when she thought he was not looking, betrayed the fact that he was to her more than a mere impersonal figure of Discipline and Knowledge.

IX

WHEN the young people of Liberty came home from college and seminary in June, almost every one of them brought a guest. The streets of the village took on a new tone of youthful gayety; parties, picnics and moonlight excursions on the river filled the days and nights.

To walk up elm-shaded Main Street on one of those soft June evenings was to catch fascinating glimpses of white dresses grouped on the wide front porches, far back from the street, with little spots of black scattered among them; to hear gay bursts of girlish laughter, the tinkle of guitars and banjos and, now and then, the rollicking chorus of "My Bonnie Lies Over the Ocean" or "A Spanish Cavalier," soprano and boyish bass blending sweetly together. Or, perhaps, one would meet a cavalcade of 'busses and buggies filled with

happy young people, and rattling down Main Street and on over the bridge, bound for Harshmanville, where, in the cross-roads tavern, ice cream and lemonade and a country fiddler were waiting.

And over all hung the silver lamp of the moon, which shines only for youth and beauty, spilling its magic light down through the feathery elms which arched the streets, and changing the little Illinois village into the country of immemorial romance.

The Hahns gave the first party of the season on their lawn. Tom Hahn had brought two young fellows home with him from Ann Arbor and his sister, Miss Jack, was hostess to three of her pretty classmates at Bickford Seminary. Pat McCormick was one of the guests and he was included, also, when, a week later, the Hahns' new neighbor, Andreas Schumacher, sent out invitations for a dancing party.

Originally a German peasant from the Rhine country, Schumacher's thrift and industry as a farmer, aided by his ambitious wife, had enabled him to lay up what was considered a handsome fortune. Then, after thirty years'

hard work, he had sold his land and invested his money in a business block on Main Street and in the residence, half a mile away.

Schumacher never recovered from an attitude of wondering surprise at his own success in life. The first thing he did, after he bought the down-town building, was to have fastened to its front, in gold letters two feet long, the legend "Schumacher's Block"; and his favorite amusement was to sit on the court-house steps opposite and admiringly survey this concrete monument to his importance in the community.

He took an even greater interest in his new house. First of all, he added an extra story, topped by a fancy cupola, and then had the whole creation painted in the glaring reds and greens which were at the time the last word in the fine art of house-painting. Also, when a sewer was laid down the Main Street of Liberty, old Schumacher was among the first to put in a bathroom and the marvel of turning one spigot and getting cold water and another, just like it and getting hot, was to him a perennial delight.

Now the Schumachers were to give their first evening party. Pauline Schumacher, the only child, was a classmate of Jack Hahn's, and the list of guests at the Hahns' party was taken as a nucleus for the larger number of young people who were to be invited to the Schumacher mansion. The old man insisted that the children of his old neighbors in the country should be invited. He could not overlook this opportunity of showing them the wonders of life in a great city.

With Miss Jack in the phaeton beside her, Pauline drove about the village distributing the cards of invitation, which had been written in his most flourishing style by the principal of the Liberty Business College. The two girls even drove out far into the country and left invitations for the Anders and Krager children and their neighbors.

Then there was the silver to be provided for the supper, and a dozen neighboring families contributed from their store to make up the necessary supply. The Hahn silver was marked by tying a white thread to each piece, that loaned by the Williamses with a red

thread, and so on, each family being assigned a different color by way of identification. From all over town, also, Japanese lanterns were gathered up, until more than a hundred, gorgeous in red, blue and yellow paper were ready to shed light on the coming festivities.

Old Schumacher and his hired man worked for days at building the dancing platform in the front yard, under the boughs of a huge elm tree, and Jack Thompson's Full Dress Orchestra—so called because it had been the first to introduce clawhammer coats in Liberty—was engaged, two weeks in advance, to furnish the music.

King Anders snorted with contempt when his wife told him of the invitation that had come to the boys and to Antje.

“Our young ones shall stay at home,” he said. “Schumacher gets foolish in his old age already.”

But next day Antje went to him and said, “Piet Krager wants me to go with him to Schumacher's party,” and that arrangement fitted in so well with his own plans, he curtly consented.

It was finally agreed that the children of the Anders and Krager families should go together, the head of each furnishing a long wagon for their conveyance. But Piet Krager, emphasizing his position as an only son, called for Antje in a buggy, and they started for town at seven o'clock, an hour before the time set for the opening of the party.

Piet Krager was a short, heavily built young man of twenty-one. He had prepared for the occasion by buying a new suit of ready-made clothes, light green as to background with large lumps of black scattered over the surface in bold relief. The old French barber in Liberty had cut his hair, parting it low on the left and bringing it down in front to two sharp points, with the aid of a little oil and many combings. His slight black moustache was waxed and the ends turned down in graceful curves. His chin rested on the top of a standing collar, too high for his short neck, his necktie was red, with black polka-dots, and his big hands were covered with yellow driving gloves. He wore patent-leather "pumps," above which one might catch glimpses of lurid red socks with black clocks.

Piet rather dreaded the presence of so many college boys at the party, but he had fortified himself with whiskey during the afternoon and he had a pint flask in his hip-pocket for use in a possible emergency.

Antje Anders was full of excitement at the thought of going to her first party. Her cheeks were as pink as the ribbons on her white dress when she climbed into the buggy. Piet laid the whip to his horse and it started down the lane on a gallop. With much pulling at the reins and a half-suppressed curse he steadied the beast to a fast trot. "She 's got a record of better than three minutes," he said.

"I should think you 'd be afraid she might run away," answered Antje.

"I never saw the horse yet I could n't drive," he boasted, giving the mare an extra cut with the whip. "Look here, I can drive her with one hand."

He gathered both reins into his right hand and threw his left arm about Antje's waist. The girl sat up straight, her cheeks crimson.

"Take your arm away this instant," she commanded.

“Aw, what for?” he leered, pressing her closer.

“There ’s a man in the road, right ahead of us,” said Antje, pointing out a figure a few rods away. Piet took the reins again and they drove by at a fast trot. As they passed the man raised his hat and Antje gave him a smile and “good-evening.”

“Who ’s that you ’re smiling at so sweet?” demanded young Krager.

“He ’s the teacher out at our school,” Antje answered.

“He ’s a little feller, ain’t he?” said Piet, out of the fulness of his self-satisfaction: “I ’m kind of sorry for him.”

“You need n’t be,” answered Antje hotly. “He ’s the smartest man I know. And he can teach some people a lot about good manners.”

“Aw, Antje,” said Piet, again throwing an arm about her waist, “don’t get cross by me. We are promised to each other already.”

“If you don’t behave yourself, I ’ll get out of this buggy,” the girl cried, her eyes flashing.

“Come now,” persisted the fatuous youth, “we will kiss and make it up yet.”

He pulled her close to him and touched her cheek with his lips. Instantly she struck him full in the face.

“By Gott!” he burst out, “you need n’t make no threats about getting out of my buggy. You get out right this minute!”

He pulled up at the side of the road, and the girl climbed down without a word. Piet Krager lashed his horse and drove on. Antje turned, and, with a crimson face, started back to her father’s farm. Climbing the next hill she met Pat McCormick. He stopped in astonishment.

“I quarreled with Piet Krager. I ’m not going to the party.”

“But you ’re almost in town. Come to the party with me?”

“O, I can’t. I must go home. I ’d be ashamed to go this way. . . I hope you ’ll have a good time.”

“Please come,” urged Pat. “It ’s only a little way now. I ’m going with the Hahns. They live next door to the Schumachers and we ’ve got lots of time.”

In the end she consented. It was her first party and the temptation was great.

Half a dozen young people were sitting on the Hahns' front porch when Pat and Antje walked up the lawn.

"Our wagon broke down and Piet Krager had to stay to tend to the horses," explained the artful Pat.

"Let me take you, Miss Anders?" said Tom Hahn. "Laura Keene 's ill and can't go and I 'm all alone in the world."

So presently the little party walked over across the closely-clipped grass plots, to where, on the platform under the elms, Schumacher and his family stood to receive their guests.

"Is n't she a pretty girl, Pat?" asked Miss Jack, as they followed in the wake of her brother and Antje.

"I 'm thinking she 's not the only one," the Irishman in Pat made answer.

X

OLD man Schumacher in a long black frock coat, his short gray beard freshly trimmed and a broad white waistcoat covering his rotund front, fairly exuded hospitality. He shook hands repeatedly with everybody in reach and he greeted each new comer with a hearty "Wie gehts?" His wife in a new black silk and Pauline, a slender girl in a flowered muslin, stood close beside him and reinforced his welcome with smiles and laughter.

When, after an unmelodious period of tuning-up, the music finally began and Jack Thompson bellowed "Take your pardners fer the op'nin' waltz," there were more than a hundred boys and girls gathered on the lawn, to say nothing of the mothers and other elderly relatives. These last waited to catch a glance of their own especial darling as she fluttered by, then hurried off to the kitchen to assist Mrs. Schumacher in the final arrangements for the supper.

Old Schumacher insisted on dancing the first waltz with his daughter, first removing his unaccustomed black coat and revealing himself in all the glory of stiff white shirt-sleeves.

“But I don’t waltz,” Antje Anders said regretfully, when Tom Hahn asked her.

“O, you can’t make me believe that,” Tom answered laughingly. “Come on anyway. I ’ll guide you and we won’t have a bit of trouble.”

She let herself be persuaded into trying and before she knew it, she was gliding in and out among the crowd on the platform. Tom Hahn certainly knew how to do things easily and well.

“I was sure you could do it,” he said to her when the music had stopped and they sat down together on a circular bench that ran around a giant box-elder tree. “Here, let me see your program before these chaps fill it up.”

Tom Hahn’s college mates were coming up to ask for dances, but, before he would give up the card, he insisted on putting down his name for the next four round dances.

“By right of discovery,” he whispered to Antje. “Besides, I ’m your escort, you know.”

The other boys almost filled up her card before she had fairly caught her breath. She glanced up to see Pat McCormick strolling by, with Miss Jack on his arm. He certainly was very short—even Miss Hahn was slightly taller. And there is nothing captivating about straight red hair and freckles.

“May I have the next dance?” It was Pat’s voice at her elbow.

“I ’m afraid it ’s taken,” she answered, holding out her card.

“I thought you told me you did n’t waltz?” Pat flashed out as his eye ran down the card.

“She was fooling thee,” laughed Tom Hahn. “Miss Anders waltzes like a fairy.”

The girl’s cheeks were pink and there was a new, wondering look of delight in her big blue eyes.

“I did n’t,” she stammered, “but Mr. Hahn—”

“You have n’t got a round dance left for me,” Pat broke in rudely, looking up from the card. She took it quickly from his hand.

“I ’m sorry there ’s nothing you want,” she said. Now her cheeks flew the red flag of war.

“He ’s my teacher, you know,” Pat heard Antje say as he turned away.

“Well,” Tom Hahn answered, “he may teach you everything else, so long as I teach you to waltz.”

Pat found Miss Jack and her classmates and was devoting himself savagely to their service when supper was announced. Schumacher had been in favor of ringing a huge dinner bell—relic of his days on the farm—but had finally been persuaded to make the announcement verbally. The boys and girls gathered at little tables on the porches and under the trees, where they were served by their own mothers and aunts. First came fried chicken, creamed potatoes and peas, followed by salad, sandwiches and coffee. Last of all, huge dishes of home-made ice-cream, with strawberries; and heaped platters of chocolate, cocoanut and jelly cake, in thick slices, were served.

Among the scattered tables wandered old man Schumacher, in his shirt-sleeves, stopping at each to rub his hands in boisterous hospitality as he saw the awful ravages of youthful appetite.

“Well, young folks,” was his loudly expressed wish at each table, “here ’s hoping that the vittles ’ll agree with ye!”

Supper over, the young men were invited into the Schumacher sitting-room, where, on the marble-topped table, half a dozen open boxes of cigars were resting. This was the old man’s special field of entertainment and he rose to the occasion. The opportunity to display the glories of his new bath-room was too good to be lost. When the sitting-room was filled with smokers he threw open the door leading to his pride.

“Now, gents,” he said, “would n’t you like a wash—hot and cold water?”

Meanwhile that portion of the population of Liberty which had not been invited to the Schumacher party was not missing all its grandeur. Early in the evening the crowd of the uninvited had begun to gather on the Main Street sidewalk. By the time dancing began there were almost as many outside as within the invisible boundaries. And it may fairly be questioned which had the better time, for those on the outside were not bound by the laws of hos-

pitality not to criticise the arrangements, the guests and even the host and hostess,—a piece of good fortune of which they took full advantage. So that below the shrill notes of Jack Thompson's fiddle and the gay buzz of laughter and talk, one might have heard, in the outer circle, a constant stream of comment, some of it caustic and all of it displaying an amazing knowledge of the social secrets of the village.

When supper was served the excitement among the crowd outside was redoubled. It was not easy from the sidewalk to be sure as to the exact items, and one daring youth, who, by creeping through the shadows on the lawn, had secured a near view of a table and brought back a complete list of everything served, was in great demand.

“That 's more 'n they had at the Hahns' or the Williamses',” was one comment. “I call this a real swell party.”

And that was the general verdict of the uninvited. Kind-hearted Mrs. Schumacher, finding that she had prepared much more fried chicken and ice-cream than even the youthful appetites of her guests demanded, sent out

twenty heaping platesful to the sidewalk and that made the verdict certain beyond all chance of appeal.

While the last extra was being danced, Tom Hahn hunted up Pat McCormick.

“Come and help me hitch up the surrey,” he said, “I ’m going to drive you and Miss Anders home.”

“I ’ll walk,” Pat answered sulkily.

“O, nonsense!” laughed Tom Hahn. “Walk six miles when I ’m going right out there? Come on!”

Tom helped Antje Anders up to the front seat of the surrey. Pat sat on the back seat, with pretty Miss Jack beside him. So they drove out over the moonlit country roads, Pat displaying the most astonishing high spirits, while from the front seat there came to his strained ears only occasional low ripples of laughter and the sibilant murmur of confidential voices.

Everything was dark when they reached the Anders farm-house. Tom Hahn jumped down and helped Antje to alight with much more care than seemed to Pat at all necessary. Then

Miss Jack leaned over from the surrey and bade her a cordial good-bye.

“We all want to see a lot more of you this summer,” she said.

And Pat had to be content with a casual “good-night” which Antje called over her shoulder as she turned to enter the house.

The farm where Pat happened to be boarding that month was half a mile farther out the river road.

“Well, Pat,” said Tom as the surrey turned the first corner, “your little Dutch girl was the belle of the ball all right.”

“Yes, Miss Anders did seem to be popular,” answered Pat dryly, furiously angry at the familiarity which so lightly called her “a little Dutch girl.”

“She ’s just as pretty and sweet as she can be,” Miss Jack burst out enthusiastically. “Her father owns whole townships of land about here,” she added thoughtfully.

“Tom,” his sister asked, a moment later, after Pat had been let out at the gate of his boarding place, “what in the world was the matter with Pat McCormick to-night?”

“Oh, I don’t know,” answered the careless youth, “I reckon he is n’t quite used to going to parties.”

As for Pat McCormick, he lay down to sleep in the hay-mow, rather than rouse the farmhouse, all unconscious of the storm which was about to break over his head.

XI

PAT woke early and went into the house for his breakfast. Then he walked over to the school-house and called his pupils to order. Antje Anders was not present.

All morning his mind was on what had happened the night before—chiefly he thought about Antje. Was she ill? Was her father angry with her for not having gone to the party with Piet Krager? In a way he was responsible for that. At least, but for him, she would have gone home after getting out of the buggy. He would go over to the Anders' house and take the blame on himself. It was n't her fault, after all, that Tom Hahn and his college friends had filled up her dancing program. And he had behaved like a fool—he was sure of that now. He must see her and explain and ask her to forgive him. He could hardly wait for the time to dismiss school.

Antje was still asleep when the Anders family sat down to their early breakfast.

“Where ’s the girl?” asked the old King.

“Still asleep,” answered the mother. “She did n’t get home till late yet.”

“That ’s the way with such foolishness,” said the King. “Ander”—indicating his eldest son—“and I go by town with some hogs. We won’t be back till night.”

Half an hour later old Piet Krager drove up to the Anders house.

“Where is my son, Piet?” he demanded of Mrs. Anders, who opened the door to him. “He has not come home from that party.”

“I have yet no idea,” the old woman answered, wiping her red hands on her apron. “Antje is asleep. She got back at three o’clock this morning already.”

“My girls did not see their brother at the party,” persisted Krager. “Your girl was there and was all the time dancing with those town dudes. I want to know where my boy, Piet, is yet?”

“Wait. I wake up Antje and ask her.”

The sleeping girl woke with a start when her mother shook her gently by the arm.

“Old Krager is here looking for Piet,” said Mrs. Anders. “He has not come home. Where did you leave him yet?”

“I did n’t go to the party with Piet Krager,” she said, sitting up in her bed. “He kissed me and I slapped him. Then he made me get out of his buggy. I met the school-teacher and went with him. I don’t know where Piet Krager is and I don’t care.”

“This will make plenty trouble by your father, Antje,” said the old woman, shaking her head. “I go tell Krager.”

“Antje did n’t go by the party by your son,” she told the old man waiting at the door. “He got fresh by her and she got out of his buggy. She don’t know where he is yet.”

“So,” said old Krager in an ugly tone. “Mine son is not good enough for her, huh? We see about that yet! You better look a little out for your girl. Where is Anders?”

“He is in town,” flared up the old woman, “and he make you eat what you say bad about our girl with a pitchfork yet. Antje went to the party with the school-teacher. When you

look after that boy Piet, it will keep you plenty busy.’’

Muttering to himself, Krager climbed to his wagon and drove straight to Liberty to search for his missing son.

Meanwhile King Anders had sold his hogs and then, with the money in his pocket, he went up to the office of Lawyer Wagner. As the King stalked in, Wagner looked up from his table with a grin on his face that made the old man uneasy.

‘‘Hear you ’ve got a new school-teacher out your way,’’ he said.

‘‘Yah,’’ answered the King, ‘‘and he ’s a smart one, too, yet.’’

‘‘Yes, smart enough to pull the wool over your eyes all right.’’

‘‘What you mean?’’

‘‘Why, you know who he is, don’t you? He ’s the son of Mike McCormick who burned down your tannery.’’

‘‘Huh! Aw, what you talk about?’’

‘‘The same. The red-headed boy who cleared Higgins and Kramer,’’ Wagner laughed, unpleasantly.

‘‘Well, if he is I get him out pretty quick al-

ready," roared the King, getting to his feet. "Come, Ander, we go home."

The King and his son climbed up on the high seat of the wagon, the big hog-rack behind them, and rattled out of town at a sharp trot. As they jolted along over the rough dirt road the anger in the old man grew hot and violent. He was furious at the school-trustees who had employed Pat McCormick. They had made a fool of him. Wagner and Higgins and Kramer—everybody, who knew about it, was laughing at him.

"By Gott!" he burst out, striking the horses a heavy blow, "I 'll drive that teacher out of the Anders neighborhood with a black-snake whip!"

His great son, who shared the general fear which his father inspired, said nothing. Under the smart of the blow the horses broke into a heavy gallop and it took all the boy's strength to pull them down again to a trot. By that time they had overhauled a green farm-wagon, traveling along the road ahead of them. Its driver looked back at the sound of approaching wheels. He was old Piet Krager.

“Anders,” he said, sullenly, stopping his horses. “I want to speak mit you.”

The King drew up his team. The back of Krager’s long wagon was covered with a canvas sheet. To the end gate was tied young Piet’s mare, drawing his empty buggy. Old Krager’s face was red with rage and shame.

“That ’s a nice girl you got, Anders,” he said hotly. “She ’s too good for my son, Piet, huh?”

The old King glowered down from his seat, saying nothing. He was in no mood to be bearded on the highway by a neighbor.

“She don’t go by the party with him. No! But she dance all night with them town dudes and comes home at three in the morning yet.”

“Krager, you lie to me,” thundered the King.

“Your woman told me so herself already that Antje goes by the party with the school-teacher,” answered Krager.

Young Anders on the seat beside his father could hear the old man’s heavy breathing and feel his body tighten in the grasp of the demon of rage that seized him. Pat McCormick tak-

ing his daughter to a party! Was he a thing for all men to laugh at?

“You come right away by my house, Krager,” said the King, “and we settle this pretty quick. Come!”

He tore the reins from his son’s hands and lashed his horses into a gallop. Leaning forward as if to shorten the distance, he urged them on. Close behind, old Krager followed grimly, eager to see the shame and confusion of King Anders.

Pat McCormick dismissed school a little earlier than usual. Mrs. Anders opened the kitchen door to him when he knocked.

“I ’m the school-teacher,” he began.

“You went by the party with Antje last night?” the old woman interrupted.

“Yes. She was almost in town when I met her. We went with Miss Hahn and some other young people. Antje was n’t at school to-day. I was afraid she might be ill?”

“No, she is not sick, but her father will be mad when he hears.”

“It was my fault. I will wait and see Mr. Anders. May I see Antje a minute?”

“She is working in the garden already.”

Walking down the lane over the shoulder of a hill Pat found Antje kneeling in the soft earth. She started to rise from the onion-bed she was weeding as the garden-gate clicked behind him.

“No, let me help you,” he said, dropping on one knee beside her. “I was afraid you were sick.”

“I slept late, that was all,” she said, “I ’ll be at school in the morning.”

“Antje,” Pat began unsteadily. “I was very rude to you last night.”

“Rude?” repeated the girl, a world of surprise in her voice. “Why, I did n’t know it.” She went on about her weeding.

“Yes, I was,” said Pat, “and—you were mighty unkind to me.”

The girl stopped her work and glanced over her shoulder at him. Her face was in profile and her yellow hair was lying in little wanton curls over her low forehead. The cheek turned toward him was flushed and where the collar of her blue calico dress was turned in he could see a little vein beating against the whiteness of her skin.

“What ’s the matter?” she smiled. “You ’re pulling up more onions than weeds.”

They were alone in the big garden, screened with tangled thickets of gooseberry and currant bushes. Above them a fleet of cottony white clouds was at anchor in the blue sky and the warm sun of late June beat down fervently. Locusts were shrilling in the trees and a brown and yellow striped chipmunk darted across the nearest fence-rail and perched on the post, fluttering its tail and fairly vibrating with timid curiosity.

“Antje,” Pat began, with a new note in his voice—but just then the serene silence of Arcadia and its onion bed was broken by the rattle of wagon-wheels. The girl stood up.

“It ’s my father,” she said, “and old Piet Krager is with him.”

“Never mind,” said Pat, standing beside her. “I ’ll explain to him.”

King Anders, looking straight ahead, drove on up the lane. He might have passed the garden without noticing, had not his son pulled him by the arm.

“Father,” said the boy, “there is Antje in

the garden already. And the teacher is with her.”

King Anders jerked his team to a sudden halt and sat silent for an instant, glaring at them over the garden fence.

It was all true then!

Slowly and without speaking he climbed down from the high seat, taking his black-snake whip with him. Still silent he fumbled at the leather strap which fastened the garden gate. Finally he threw it open and stepped inside.

Out in the lane old Piet Krager had stopped his horses and sat with a wicked leer on his face. On the seat which his father had just left young Ander sat motionless. Up at the house old Mrs. Anders had heard the sound of wheels and had stepped out on the porch, looking down toward the road, her hand shading her dim eyes. As she saw her husband climb down from his seat she ran swiftly toward him, crying shrilly, “Ander! Ander! Come here yet once a minute!”

“Is your name Pat McCormick?” the old King demanded, the muscles in his throat working spasmodically. His lower lip was dropped

and his teeth showed above his short gray beard.

“Yes, sir.” Pat stepped forward to face him.

“By Gott! I teach you a lesson!” he roared. The heavy whip cut through the air, but as it fell, Antje sprang before her father, as if to stop him, and caught the full force of the blow on her shoulders. Only the lash struck Pat in the face and cut a red stripe down his cheek. Antje fell to the ground with a scream of pain. Pat leaped forward and seized the whip as the King, beyond himself with rage, raised it to strike again. Close to them in the lane, now, the old mother was coming, running at the top of her speed, stumbling and shrieking execrations on her husband. On his wagon Piet Krager sat, his face distorted with a sneer of scorn and satisfaction.

As Pat grasped the whip King Anders drew back his left hand to strike him. Upraised, it strangely faltered; then dropped limp at his side. His great figure stood still for an instant. His lips moved, but only unintelligible sounds came from them. A look of awful surprise and fear shone in his eyes. He tottered, then sud-



“By Gott! I teach you a lesson.”

denly collapsed upon the ground in a senseless heap.

As he fell, the disheveled figure of young Piet Krager raised itself from under the canvas sheet which covered the back of his father's wagon.

"Hurruh!" he yelled in a drunken voice. "Everybody have a good time." Then he disappeared again. In the confusion which followed the fall of the stricken King, that interruption passed unnoticed.

Mrs. Anders, Pat, Ander and old Krager carried the great unconscious figure into the house and stretched it on a bed. While his wife loosened the woolen shirt around his neck, one of the boys started after a doctor, riding an unsaddled horse.

Pat left the house, to see Antje just going in at the back door. She was still pale and shaken from the blow she had received. He ran toward her, calling her name. Without turning to look at him she hurried in and shut the door.

XII

PAT was at supper when Luders, the president of the school-trustees, came over to see him. He called Pat out into the yard and the two sat down on the frame of an old grind-stone under an apple tree. The man was plainly the embarrassed bearer of an unpleasant message. He began with a cautious reference to what had happened during the afternoon.

“I suppose you won’t want to teach the school any more?” he finally blurted out.

“Why not?” asked Pat.

“Well, you know, Anders ’ll be mad enough at us for hiring you at all. We never had an idea that you were the fellow whose father—”

“Now, look here, Luders,” Pat interrupted —“I ’m not to blame for what my father did and I ’m going to teach this school until my term ’s out.”

“Two of the Anders boys were over at my house to-night and they said there ’d be hell to pay if you showed up at the school to-morrow.”

“I ’ll be there at nine o’clock,” said Pat, getting up from the seat. “I ’m not going to run away.”

“You don’t know that crowd, or you would n’t be so anxious to get us all into trouble,” said Luders, as he turned away.

Half an hour later Pat saw another man coming across fields to the house. It was one of the Anders hired men—an Irishman. He carried a note from Antje. Pat tore it open.

“Doctor Jackson says father has broken a blood vessel in his head,” she wrote, “and if he is to get well there must be nothing to make him mad when he comes to himself. If you keep on teaching our school it may kill him. Please go away.”

Pat looked up from the note and hesitated a moment.

“She told me they was a answer,” said the messenger.

“Tell her I ’m not going to teach the school

any more. I 'm going back to Liberty to-night."

"And a good thing it is," the man burst out. "They 're a bad lot over there"—wagging his head in the direction of the Anders farm—"all but the girl. She 's nursing the two av thim this minute, with thim big louts av boys standing around like dummies."

"The two of them?" said Pat in surprise.

"Sure the old woman keeled over tin minutes afther they got the old man in the house and the doctor found both av thim in bed whin he got there."

"Is n't there any one else to help?"

"We 're all doing what we can and they 've sint for wan of the Luders girls to do the cooking. But that Miss Antje now 's a ragaler major-gineral for you."

"Well," Pat responded slowly, "you tell her I 'm going back to Liberty to-night. That 's the most I can do to help."

He sent word to the school-directors that he had changed his mind, packed his trunk to be brought in on Saturday by the farmer and at ten o'clock started to walk the long stretch of

six miles into town. Midway he mounted the crest of a high hill and there he stood a minute and looked back. Down in the valley lay the dim buildings of the Anders farm. Between him and the girl who lived there lay a gulf which, it seemed, might never be crossed. Impulsively he tossed a good-bye kiss to her through the night. Then he faced to the west again, where the lights of the village twinkled among the trees.

NEXT morning Pat went down to see General Bristow, the postmaster, his old employer. He had decided not to look for another school. One of his old ambitions was near to realization now; what it was, only Judge Hahn and Mr. Burton knew, but by the end of the year he hoped to realize it.

There happened to be a place vacant in the post-office and he was given it. Often he called at Dr. Jackson's office to inquire as to the condition of King Anders. A rapid recovery was reported. Finally, one day after three months had gone by, Dr. Jackson told him that the old man was himself again.

“He ’s got the constitution of an ox,” the Doctor said. “Apparently he ’s as well and strong now as he ever was. It ’s mostly owing to that girl of his, too, I tell you that. She ’s not only nursed him but practically managed the farm ever since he took sick.”

“She must be quite worn out,” Pat ventured.

“Yes, she is looking pretty peaked. I told Anders he ought to send her away for a rest.”

Less than a week later, Pat got an unexpected letter. His hand trembled a little as he tore open the envelope.

“I ’ve been wanting to tell you that I don’t blame you for what happened that afternoon,” it began abruptly, “and I ’m dreadfully grateful to you for giving up the school. I don’t know what awful thing would have happened if you had n’t. I ’m going to Bickford Seminary after all. I ’ll be on the 10:40 train next Monday morning.

“Your friend,

“ANTJE ANDERS.

“P. S. Don’t come to the train if it ’s inconvenient.”

Inconvenient! When Monday came Pat was

at the station half an hour before the train was due. Presently Tom Hahn drove up in a surrey, with satchels and bundles beside him and his sister, Miss Jack, in the seat behind.

“Why, Pat McCormick,” she cried at sight of him. “Climb up here with me. Where have you been all summer? We have n’t laid eyes on you since the Schumacher party.”

“I ’ve been very busy,” he said. The arrival of other phaetons and buggies filled with young people, all come to see Miss Jack safely off, saved further explanations. They formed a circle about the seat where she held her court and filled the station platform with gay talk and laughter. Presently the train pulled in. Pat would have climbed down but the girl stopped him.

“Here, Pat,” said Miss Jack, “you shall carry my dearest treasure.” She handed him a long paste-board box. “Be careful of that,” she warned him, smilingly. “It ’s got my very bestest party dress in it.”

So in the midst of the laughing crowd of young people, Pat entered the car, his eager eyes going ahead in search of Antje. He saw

her near the rear, a little figure in a country-made brown dress, a huge canvas satchel on the seat beside her. Miss Jack caught sight of her at the same moment and ran to greet her.

“Why, Antje Anders,” she cried. “Where are you going?”

“I ’m going down to Bickford Seminary,” Antje answered.

“How lovely! Here, Tom, turn over this seat and we ’ll ride together.”

So Pat saw the girl he had come to see, taken possession of without a chance to say a word to her alone.

“Pat, put that box up here in the rack,” Miss Jack ordered, treating him as one of her attendant knights.

“I hope I ’ll see you again next week, Miss Anders,” Pat heard Tom Hahn saying. “I ’ll be stopping at the seminary on my way to Ann Arbor.”

Then the conductor called “All aboard!” The girls in the party rushed to kiss Miss Jack good-bye and a moment later Pat found himself standing on the platform outside, watch-

ing the train disappear down the track. Of the tender meeting with Antje he had fondly pictured, there was nothing left to him but a little pressure of the hand and a glance from her blue eyes—could he be sure even of that?

Poor little girl, so tired and worn, with most of the color gone from her cheeks. She looked like a little brown wren in the midst of the girls of Liberty, with their flowers and ribbons and flounces.

Pat hurried back to the office to write her a letter.

“Dear Antje,” he wrote. “I wanted very much to see you alone and have a talk with you, but you saw how it was. I wish the whole Hahn family were in Guinea. You know how glad I was to get your letter. As soon as you are settled, I want to come down to the seminary to see you. I hope you ’ll have a fine time at Bickford. May I write to you while you are away? I know what a hard summer you ’ve had and I feel that I ’m responsible for it.”

It was more than two weeks before the answer came

“I ’m feeling much better already,” she wrote. “Last week we had a pleasant visit from Tom Hahn. He stopped over to see his sister and took Jack and me out for a long ride. We ’re only allowed to see our brothers and cousins, you see, and that ’s why you can’t come down here to see me. The idea of your wishing the whole Hahn family in Guinea and of your being so unhappy because you did n’t see me alone at the station! When I looked out of the car window as the train pulled in, I thought you looked very happy sitting up on the buggy seat with Jack. I think she thinks a good deal of you. Now, don’t go and get conceited about it! Tom Hahn is going to stop here on his way home for the Christmas vacation and take us girls home with him. I ’m sorry you can’t come down to see me, but perhaps you ’ll come to the station and say ‘How do you do,’ when I go through Liberty at Christmas time. Yes, you may write to me once in a while, when you have nothing better to do.”

Here was gall and wormwood, with only a drop of honey at the end to make the taste of

it bitter-sweet. Tom Hahn ran large through it all, but—Pat might write to her once in a while! She had written him from the farm, to say that she did not blame him and telling him that he might come to the station to see her. Perhaps, after all . . . but whenever his hopes grew brighter, the grim shadow of old King Anders fell across them. For the sake of the girl herself he must crush them out.

And he had so little to offer her.

XIII

THE skill and tenderness shown by his daughter in nursing him made a deep impression on King Anders. No less was he impressed by the ability she displayed in taking over the management of the farm, to relieve him of the worry caused by the entire lack of initiative on the part of his sons. He began to feel a certain fierce pride in her.

When Dr. Jackson spoke of her growing palor and weakness and urged that she be sent away for a rest, old Mrs. Anders made bold again to suggest that Antje's wish to go away to school be gratified. To her surprise, the King consented without objection.

Antje's first three months at the quaint old seminary opened up a new world to her. The girls from Chicago and the larger towns of the state talked of books and dresses and other things that put new interests into her life. With

the quick adaptability which was hers, she soon began to make changes in her attitude of mind and in her wardrobe to meet the new conditions. King Anders was used to spending money on things which interested him—land and cattle and horses—and now that his only daughter was at school, he sent her plenty from his great store. She spent most of it in buying dresses and hats and the other dainty things which help to make a pretty girl in the freshness of her teens a vision of delight.

To Pat she wrote an occasional letter. To Tom Hahn she wrote more frequently. His letters were a great delight to her. They told of football games and of college larks and frolics and they were laced with bits of verse and scraps of Latin in a way that seemed to Antje most fascinating.

When the Christmas holidays approached, her room-mate, Jane Bartlett, asked her to spend a part of the time with her in Chicago. She longed to go, but would her father allow it? She wrote him timidly about it. Presently came a letter from her mother, written painfully in low Dutch. It inclosed a draft for

three hundred dollars. "Get yourself some pretty dresses," it said, "and have a good time. Your father says you may have more money if you want it. We want to see you very much."

She wrote to Tom Hahn at Ann Arbor that she was going to spend her vacation in Chicago and he promptly wrote back that that fell in delightfully with his own plans. He was spending a week in the city, too, and he would call on her.

The drive from the station in Chicago to the Bartlett home on the North Side was a panorama of wonders to Antje. She shrank back in the cab and watched the big buildings and the miles of houses slip by in endless procession. Before Jane Bartlett, leaning out of the cab, called "Here we are," her mind was a kaleidoscope of confused impressions.

Next morning Antje was awakened by the clatter of the milkman's horses on the pavement. The whole day was spent downtown and it was a bright-eyed and bewildered little girl who sat down to dinner at the Bartletts'. At eight o'clock Tom Hahn and his friend,

John Tyler, called. Mrs. Bartlett and her daughter were already in the drawing-room and Antje came down presently.

When Tom rose to greet her he could hardly believe his eyes. She wore a white, lacey dress, trimmed with yellow, and Mrs. Bartlett's own maid had just finished arranging her great mass of red-gold hair. As she gave him her hand, Tom Hahn lost the assurance of a senior collegian. For three months he had been writing letters to an angel and had been only half aware of it! The girl seemed perfectly at home, but Sir Thomas had hard work to cover his confusion.

“My Lord! But she 's a stunner!” cried the enthusiastic Tyler as the young men left the house. “Why did n't you give a fellow a warning?”

“O, I thought I 'd let it burst upon you all at once,” answered Tom with the nearest approach to lightness he could assume.

The next afternoon Tom and young Tyler took the girls to ride in the parks. In the evening Mrs. Bartlett gave a little dance for the young people at her house. There were other

parties, a glee club concert, followed by a bewildering round of drives and dinners, and through it all, Tom Hahn was never far from Antje's side. It seemed to the girl that she had known him for years.

On the last night of her stay in Chicago it had been arranged that the four young people, with Mrs. Bartlett as their chaperon, should attend a performance of *Romeo and Juliet*. Antje had never attended a theatrical performance; and at the prospect, naturally, she was wrought up to a high pitch of excitement.

The young men took a stage box at McVicker's. The audience was a brilliant one and when her party came into the crowded house, Antje felt that she was looking upon a scene from the land of fairies. Her wide blue eyes swept round the gorgeous dress circle and up the glittering tiers of boxes with startled delight. Despite the protests of Mrs. Bartlett she insisted on sitting at the rear of the box, where in the shadow of the heavy curtain she could see without being seen. Tom Hahn took the seat beside her, with the others in front of them.

While the orchestra was playing the overture, late comers were filing into their seats and the house was filled with gay chatter and laughter. But Antje, her eyes half-closed, leaned back in her chair and let herself drift on the great waves of melody. It was like a wonderful dream to her. Tom Hahn, sitting close beside, watched the color come into her cheeks and caught the soft sound of a little sigh of delight. Neither of them spoke and Mrs. Bartlett, glancing back, smiled happily to herself, and then fixed her eyes upon the stage.

The lights in the great theater went suddenly out, the music stopped, the stage burst into a glare of light and out tripped the gay gallants in silken hose and doublet, the gray and reverend seniors, and the tender girls of mediæval Verona, who live again in the master's love tragedy.

The little Dutch girl leaned forward, all her soul in her eyes. Tom Hahn could see her breathing quicken as she watched the action of the play. When the curtain fell for the first time, Mrs. Bartlett and Jane turned to speak

of the wonderful acting. But Antje answered hardly a word. It was all too real to her.

The farm with its dirt, its hard, grinding work, seemed very far away. Had they ever really existed? Surely this was the real world, this beautiful land, from which all sordid commonplaces were banished; where no one toiled or suffered—save for love of some fair maiden.

What she saw took full possession of her. All the young, fresh, virgin emotions of her nature were deeply stirred. She, too, was a princess of that fair country, where love is at once the only means and the sole end of living. She felt herself suddenly capable of a grand, an overmastering passion.

The orchestra played again. "Love! Love!" sang the fiddles; "Love," whispered the flutes; "Love is the only thing in the world."

The next act began and the great house, hushed and breathless, leaned forward again in attitudes of strained attention. Tom Hahn, glancing down, saw one of Antje's slim brown hands resting on the arm of her chair. He reached over, reverently, and took it in his own. To her it seemed the perfectly natural

thing for him to do. She turned her beautiful face toward him and he saw that her eyes were misty.

“Antje,” he whispered, himself under the spell, “I love you, dear.”

His voice was as passionate and compelling as that of the other lover on the stage and the girl thrilled to the mystery and wonder of it all. It was true, then! The world was merely a place for men and women to love in. Nothing else mattered. She was another Juliet and he was her Romeo, telling her his love. She felt a craving she could not resist to surrender herself to him entirely.

So she smiled up at him, with a tender light in her eyes, and he bent quickly and kissed her full on the lips.

When Antje Anders fell to sleep at last that night she was still in Shakespeare's Verona, with her eyes full of glorious color, with the sound of sweet music and the voice of her lover in her ears. To her half-sleeping fancy the walls of her little white sleeping-room at the Bartletts' were hung with gay banners and silken tapestries, and the shrill rattling of the

cable trains a block away might have been the sibilant voices of her hand-maidens whispering together in the next room of the castle.

SHE woke the next morning in Chicago. The rattle and squeak of the cable trains was very real now. The walls of her room were covered with white paper, stamped with a horrid, geometric pattern in blue and yellow. The rising-bell was ringing.

How much of what had happened last night was real and how much a part of the play? A wave of rosy color rushed into her cheeks as she remembered the pressure of Tom Hahn's lips upon her own. She conjured up his face as she had seen it the evening before—full of tenderness and love. Last night she had been a child;—now she was almost a woman. The delicious languor of sleep came over her again and, as she drifted back into unconsciousness, the flying shutter of her mind opened and closed upon a succession of other faces. There was the heavy face of her father, black and frowning; there was her mother's face, sallow and wrinkled, smiling at her with

a questioning love; last came a freckled face, crowned by a hedge of red hair. She was smiling as she slept.

Waking again in a few minutes, she found herself most unromantically hungry. She sprang up and looked at herself in the glass. This morning she was going back to the farm and Tom Hahn was going with her. How should she meet him? What should she say to him?

Tom Hahn came to take her to the station in a carriage, but she insisted that Jane Bartlett should go with them. She dreaded to be alone with her lover and yet she assured herself that she did love him.

Tom helped Jane down from the car just as the train left the station. As he came back, Antje looked up at him and smiled.

“I ’m tired, Tom,” she said, “and I have a bad headache. Would you mind if I took a nap?”

But he was not to be put off longer.

“I ’m sorry,” he said, sitting down in the chair beside her, “but before you go to sleep I want you to say that you love me.”

She sat up straight in her chair, her face very serious. "We were foolish last night, Tom," she said. "I 'm only a girl and you are n't through law school yet. We must wait."

"Well," he answered, "we can wait, but tell me that you love me. Then there 'll be something worth waiting for."

If he had not been so young the pink in her cheeks, the tender look in her eyes, would have been his sufficient answer.

"Please tell me," he insisted.

"I 'd like to, Tom,—but I can't—now," she said timidly. "You must give me time to be sure."

XIV

WHILE Antje Anders was visiting in Chicago, Pat McCormick was admitted to the bar. For two years he had been reading law under the direction of Judge Hahn, devoting his evenings and Saturdays to the work. That was the secret he had so carefully guarded from his mother and Aunt Bridget. The ceremony was a simple one. Pat, in company with Judge Hahn and General Bristow, went over to the court-house and, appearing before the Circuit Judge—who interrupted a case for the purpose—the postmaster, who was also a lawyer, moved his admission as a member of the bar. Judge Hahn added a few words and with no further formality the order was issued. Pat had already rented a little room in the same building where Judge Hahn's office was located. Now he tacked on the door a small sign reading: "Pat-

rick McCormick, Attorney & Counselor-at-Law” and took possession at once.

That evening in the *Clarion* his eye fell on a note in the personal column:

“Patrick McCormick, Esq., who has been reading law for some time with Judge Hahn, was admitted to the bar this morning, on motion of General Bristow. Mr. McCormick was born in Liberty and bids fair to become a credit to our thriving little city.”

He felt a thrill of pride as he read it. With the paper in his pocket he started home to take the great news to his mother and Aunt Bridget. It threw both the old women into great excitement.

“Pat, darlin’, I ’m that proud av you,” said old Mrs. McCormick, kissing him. But Aunt Bridget was not satisfied until she read the wonderful announcement in the *Clarion* with her own eyes. She got out her spectacles, polished them on her apron and painfully spelled out the item, word for word, her gnarled forefinger following the lines. When she had finished she threw the paper on the floor and bounced about the room, her hands

on her hips and her old feet keeping the measure of a wild Irish jig.

“Hurroo!” she shouted, while Pat and his mother laughed till the tears ran down their cheeks, “Hurroo for Granny Clancy and the little peepul! ‘Patrick McCormick, Es-s-quire! Attor-r-ney an’ Counsilor-r-at-Law.’ Now, what would they think av that in the County Roscommon?”

Next morning Pat took the two old women down to inspect the wonderful sign and the interior of the office. In the center of the room stood a little wooden table, with a plain chair before it and a couple of similar chairs on the other side. The only other furniture was a tall pine book-case in which a half dozen law books and some patent office reports made a brave showing. Mrs. McCormick and her sister went into ecstasies at the sight.

Then Aunt Bridget, who might have been a great actress if she had not been a washer-woman, insisted that Pat sit down before the table in a professional attitude, while she planted herself on the other side.

“Counsilor-r McCormick,” she began with

intense gravity, "I 'm afther asking your advice on a question av such great importance to me that I would n't be taking it to anny other lawyer in the wor-rld—such is the confidence I have in ye. But fir-rst I must know what you 'll charge me for it—you lawyers ar-r-e so tricky."

"I must know what the question is, first, Madam," answered Pat, falling in with the spirit of the game. "In any case my charge for advice would not be more than fifty dollars."

"Fifty dollars!" cried Aunt Bridget. "Do you hear that gossoon talking about fifty dollars! Sure he knows the law all right! He 'll be making a fine lawyer entirely!"

"Not so loud, Aunt Bridget," laughed Pat. "You 'll scare the natives."

"Sure it 's yoursilf 'll be scaring the natives, my bye, and that soon. And the first money you take in you must spind in buying the long black coat, do you mind?"

That same afternoon a man came heavily down the hall and thrust a curious face in at the open door. It was Luders, president of the

Silver Creek School trustees. He started with surprise at the sight of Pat McCormick.

“Well,” he said, “what you doing here?”

“I ’m practising law,” Pat answered. “Won’t you come in?”

The man sat down in one of the wooden chairs, crossed his feet and began to press the heel of one boot into the toe of the other. His clothes were worn and dust-covered and his thin beard was of the same shade.

“How are things out your way?” Pat asked.

“They ain’t very good.”

“What ’s the matter?”

“Well, ever since that row, old Anders has been after me for hiring you. And now he ’s got me.”

“Tell me about it,” said Pat, feeling a personal responsibility for the plight in which Luders found himself.

“Three years ago I had to borrow a thousand dollars,” the farmer said in a discouraged voice. “I got it at the Liberty National and they ’ve renewed it for me twice. It comes due again to-morrow and I come in to-day to fix it up.

“ ‘Sorry,’ the cashier says, ‘but we ’ve sold the mortgage to Ander Anders. You ’ll have to see him.’ And I know Anders ’ll never renew it.”

“ ‘Can ’t you get the money somewhere else?’” Pat asked.

“ ‘I ’ve been around to all the banks and they won’t any of them make Anders mad. I guess I ’ll lose the land.’”

“ ‘How much is it?’”

“ ‘Forty acres and it ’s worth every cent of fifty dollars.’”

“ ‘Come back at eleven o’clock to-morrow,’” said Pat, “ ‘and I ’ll see what I can do.’”

Up at the head of Main street, next door to the cottage which Pat had rented, old Williams, the village note-shaver, lived in a big brick house. At dinner-time Pat went in to see him.

“ ‘A client of mine wants to borrow a thousand dollars on forty acres of land in Monroe township,’” said Pat. “ ‘Would you like the loan?’”

“ ‘Well, now, I don’t know,’” drawled the old man with professional cynicism, “ ‘I guess I don’t want to let any more money out in these hard times.’”

“I ’m sorry,” said Pat. “The land ’s worth fifty dollars an acre and if I don’t get the money by noon to-morrow, King Anders ’ll get it for half what it ’s worth.”

“Aw-w-w!” gurgled old Williams in his long white beard. “It ’s one of Anders’ deals, is it? I call Anders a dangerous man, gobbling up all the land in the county and interfering with legitimate business the way he does. I ’ll go downtown and look the land up this afternoon. If you don’t hear from me, I reckon I ’ll take it, just to help you out.”

At eleven o’clock next morning, Luders came into Pat’s office.

“You did n’t find nobody to take that loan, I suppose?” he asked in a resigned tone.

“I ’m expecting old Mr. Williams here in a few minutes with the money,” Pat answered, and Luders sprang to his feet.

“If you help me out of this,” he cried, “I ’ll never forget you.”

Williams came in presently and, after whispering to Pat, was introduced to the farmer.

“Money ’s awful tight,” he began, “but I guess I can let you have this thousand. Ten per cent. ’ll be right, I guess.”

“No,” Pat spoke up, “Luders ’ll pay eight—that ’s the market rate.”

“Wall, seeing ’s it ’s going to save you from being et up by old Anders, I ’ll let you have it at that. I call him a dangerous man to the community, I do.”

“I ’ll go and bring Anders up here to release the old mortgage,” said Luders.

Presently he returned, the King climbing the stairs heavily in his wake. Anders was in a sour humor and his face plainly showed the disappointment he felt. Old Williams jumped up from his chair and greeted him with ironical cordiality.

“Well, Anders,” he said, “How are you anyhow? I ’ve just been making a little loan to our friend here. Sorry to stop you from getting another good forty for half what it ’s worth, heh?”

“I ’d lose all my land yet before I borrow money from you,” snorted the King.

“You own too much, Anders. It ’s bad for legitimate business, having all the land in a few hands. I ’m glad to keep this poor fellow out of your clutches.”

“Bah! You suck the blood out of us farmers

for thirty years already," returned the King hotly.

"I have, heh? I been helping poor people over their hard places, that 's what I been doing. I been satisfied with my miserable little eight and ten per cent., I have, while you 've been eating 'em up, body, soul and britches. You 're a dangerous man, you are, Anders. I 've always said so."

Hoping to save a further scene, Pat interrupted.

"If you 'll sign this release, Mr. Anders," he said, "I 'm ready to pay you the money."

Looking up, King Anders seemed to recognize Pat for the first time. He stood still for a moment, saying nothing. Then he crossed over to the table, took the pen which Pat offered, released the mortgage, counted the money and put it into his pocket. Then he got up and leaned forward over the table.

"So," he growled, "you get in my way again, huh? You 'll do it once too many times yet."

"Heh!" cried old Williams, as the King stalked out, "He 's a dangerous man, he is!"

XV

A DAY or two later Pat met Miss Jack on the street.

“I know now why we ’ve seen so little of you,” she said. “You were reading law all the time. Did you know that Antje was visiting Pauline Schumacher this week?”

“No,” he answered. “I must go to call on her.”

He went that evening. There was surely no reason why he should stay away. For the girl’s sake he had put out of his mind any thought of trying to win her for his wife. But that did not compel him never to see her. Old man Schumacher opened the door to him.

“So, we ’re a lawyer yet, huh?” he said with a broad smile. “Come in once.”

“I came to call on Miss Anders,” Pat ventured.

“Well,” old Schumacher quavered good-na-

turedly, "she been out sleigh-riding with Tom Hahn yet. Aber come in."

"No," answered the crestfallen Pat. "I can't stop to-night, thank you. Will you tell her that I 'll call to-morrow evening."

As he reached the gate a sleigh drove up. Out of it sprang Tom Hahn.

"Why, it 's Pat McCormick," cried Tom.

"Good-evening, Pat," called a voice from the sleigh. He walked to the curb and she held out her hand to him. The touch of it thrilled him.

"Antje," he began, then stopped to look at her. She wore a fur coat that nestled close under the curve of her dainty chin and her beautiful hair was topped by a fur-trimmed hat, with a long gray feather in it. Her cheeks were red with the roses of the winter air.

"I hope you 're well," he stammered awkwardly.

"Do I look ill?" she smiled. "When am I going to see you?"

"May I call to-morrow night?" he asked, and wondered if she noticed how his voice trembled.

“Yes, and be sure you come,” she warned him, playfully, as Tom Hahn helped her to alight.

Pat trod the air as he walked home that night. At her smile and the touch of her hand the fortress of his resolution had crumbled. He would win her yet, let the grim old King do his worst. For her own sake—as well as his own—he would make the fight.

But when he called at the Schumachers' the next evening, Antje took instant command of the situation. She was cordial and most friendly and there were no other callers, but not once was he alone with her for a moment. Pauline Schumacher or her father was always in the room and poor Pat felt that she had planned it so.

Only when he rose to go, Antje walked with him into the dimly-lighted hall.

“Pat,” she said as he was putting on his overcoat, “seriously, I want to congratulate you on your admission to the bar. I want you to become a great lawyer. I ’m going home to-morrow and back to school Monday, so I shan’t see you again, but I ’ll always want to know how you are and what you are doing.”

Pat turned and took her hand. Perhaps it was the vigor with which he pressed it that sent the rosy tide to her cheeks. A tender confession was trembling on his lips, when old Mrs. Schumacher came bustling out into the hall from the kitchen.

“Well, Mr. McCormick,” she burst out, “You must think I ’m mighty inhospitable not coming in to see you all evening, but the truth is I ’ve been in jell all day and I just could n’t sleep to-night till I did up the last of these cranberries. They ’re just lovely, too. I ’ve brought out a glass of it that I want you to take home to your maw.”

Pat went out into the night with both his mind and the glass of jelly upside down. Antje’s speech in the hall, her actions all the evening, seemed to indicate that she had a friendly interest in his welfare and nothing more, and that she was anxious to have him understand it so. Perhaps—probably—she was already engaged to Tom Hahn. He knew that to avow his own love would be certain to bring upon her the fierce rage of her old father. Was it not the part of a man to spare her this terrible ordeal—to give her up, without effort,

into the keeping of one towards whom King Anders could harbor no such bitter hate?

Troubled in mind, with the instinct of self-abnegation and the demands of a yearning love struggling for the command of his will, Pat went the next evening to visit his old friend and confidant, the Captain. That ancient mariner had been invalided home from the war with his left leg shattered below the knee. Before a writ of ejection was served on him, he had taken up his abode on a little island in the channel of the river, where he set up a duplicate of his old cabin, with all his old treasures in place.

“And now,” he announced, when the new abode was completed, “I feel more to home than ever, being used, as the geography says, to being entirely surrounded by water.”

“Come in, Fust Mate,” he said, when Pat, walking across on the ice, had climbed the bridge and knocked on the door. “There ’s a good fire going in the chart-room.”

The Captain puffed his corn-cob pipe and looked shrewdly at his visitor. “There seems to be something on your mind, Fust Mate,” he

said. Already he knew in a general way how the ground lay. He had been told of the scene in King Anders' garden and of what had immediately followed it. Besides, he loved the boy, and it took but a few awkward sentences to put the situation clearly before him. He puffed hard at his pipe and cleared his throat.

“You remember that letter I sent you from the front?” he said.

Pat nodded, wondering why the old man should choose this time to go back into ancient history. What bearing could that have on this present problem?

“I said that some time I 'd tell you why I took such an interest in clearing John Higgins, a man I never talked to in my life, even at the cost of getting you into trouble. I 'm going to tell you now.

“My father was a whaler before me. He was master of the Polly L. of Bedford, and when he married he took his wife with him on his next vyage. I 've told you I was born at Bedford, but that was n't true, plainly speaking, for we was ten months out and cruising the South Pacific when I signed

the ship's articles. Having salt water in my veins, instead of blood, I took to the sea on my own hook when I was old enough to handle a rope. I was a middling smart sailorman, too. At twenty-four I was second mate of a whaling-ship and at twenty-eight the fust mate. It was then that I fust set eyes on Annie."

The old man stopped a moment, relighted his pipe, and stared into the fire, where drift-wood was burning briskly.

"Her pa was one of the big ship-owners of Bedford. A fleet of forty sailed under the ensign of Bilson & Sturges and the firm name was knowed in a hundred ports, from Siberia to the Injun Ocean. Annie lived in a big stone house on Mansion Street and drove about in her carriage. I was the fust mate of one of her father's ships. But I fell in love with her, and Annie B.—she took something of a liking to me. When old man Bilson found out how things were going he blew a gale from the nor'-northwest. He give out orders that there was no berth for me on any of the B. & S. whalers and he packed the girl off to visit her uncle in Boston.

“But that did n’t feaze me none. I was a young feller and a determined one, and as soon as I got another berth as fust mate on one of Ferguson’s whalers, I hunted up Annie and her and me run off to Nantucket, where a sky-pilot spliced us, good and trim and proper.”

“I thought you were going to tell me about John Higgins, Captain?” said Pat.

“That ’s what I ’m a-doing, Fust Mate,” answered the Captain, with a smile. “You jist set and listen.

“When old man Bilson heard the news, he raised a hurricane; sent word that Annie was dead to him and that he never wanted to see either of us again. We was both sorry for that, but still mighty glad that we ’d got married. A good many whalers took their wives with them on their vyages, but I thought Annie had been raised too tender to stand life on a ship for a couple of years—let alone the danger. I bought her a little cottage in Bedford and left her there.

“My first vyage was a short one—little more ’n a year. When we come sailing into

the Ferguson docks, with our hold full of sperm oil, there was Annie waiting for me, waying her handkerchief and throwing kisses as we warped in. And beside her was her father, old Benjamin Bilson, head of the firm of Bilson & Sturges, tall silk hat, brass-buttoned coat, high white collar and all. He was holding something up in his arms for me to see. Pretty soon I makes out it was a little kiddie in a long white dress,—my baby, my little son, Fust Mate.”

The Captain knocked the ashes out of his pipe with much unnecessary vehemence. Then he reloaded it and picked up a blazing splinter from the fire to serve as a lighter. Carelessly, he held the flame so closely to his face that it made his eyes water.

“Dum the thing ennyhow!” he said fiercely, throwing pipe and all into the fire.

“Wall, as I was saying, I made a jump from the rail when we got within ten feet of the dock and the next minute I was holding Annie B. in my arms.

“ ‘Here ’s your son, sir,’ ” said old man Bilson, handing over the kiddie. ‘It ’s grand-

mother is waiting to welcome you up to the house.'

"That night we had a family reunion up to the big stone house on Mansion Street. For a month I went around walking on air, feeling plum sorry for everybody else on earth, they not having no Annie B. nor kiddie to make things worth while."

The Captain blew his nose loudly, then got up and stumped across the chart-room on his wooden peg. He put one gnarled old hand on Pat's shoulder.

"If you love a girl, Fust Mate," he said, "the thing for you to do is to up-anchor, clap on every rag you can carry, steer through the breakers and past the rocks, damn the torpedoes, like Farragut done, and let nothing on earth stop yer, till you git into the harbor of your soul's desire—as the poet says. You hear me!"

"Yes, Captain," said Pat quickly, anxious not to further arouse the old man's deeply-stirred emotions, "but what has this got to do with John Higgins?"

"From this time on it 's got all to do with

him," said the Captain, going back to his chair. "Old Mr. Bilson offered me a good place on shore, but I was too proud and stubborn to accept any favors from him. I got a berth as master of Ferguson's new whaler and he let me christen her the Annie B. Three months later I took her out. My wife is plum distracted to go along, but 'No,' I says, holding the kid in my arms, 'I ain't going to risk carrying this bundle of sweetness around the Horn. I 'll be back in less than two years, anyhow, and then we 'll all settle down and stay land lubbers as long as the ship hangs together.'

"So, off we sails, with Annie B. standing on Ferguson's dock and waving a handkerchief at her namesake as long as we 're in sight.

"Wall, Fust Mate, less than six months afterwards we strikes one of them Chinese twisters out in the Pacific and it blows the riggin' plum out of us. The Annie B. springs a leak and I and the crew takes to the boats. We lands on an island, jest like you read about in the story books, and there we stays for four years and three months, till a tea ship happens

to send in a boat for water and takes those of us who are left back to New York.

“First thing I found out was that the firm of Bilson & Sturges was no longer in existence. Old man Bilson had died three and a half years before—a bankrupt, not leaving enough money to pay his debts. That made me powerful anxious about Annie B. and I lit out for Bedford. Them five years away had changed me to an old man and nobody knew me. The big stone house on Mansion Street was turned into a hospital and strangers was living in the cottage I ’d bought for Annie B. When I found that out I never let on who I was, but I stayed around Bedford for a month, picking up what news I could.

“Seems like the wreckage of the Annie B. had been found drifting around the South Seas and word came back to Bedford that we was all lost. That was jest after Annie B.’s father died. Then she had nobody left to care for but the kiddie. The next year he took sick and died of the dypthery.

“Poor girl! I ain’t blaming her a bit when pretty soon an old lover of hers come along

and she up and married him. Then right away they left Bedford and goes nobody knows where. The hull Bilson family had jest vanished off the face of the earth.

“Right then and there I histed a new flag—my old name was Silas Bright—and I been sailing under it ever since. I went on three more whaling vyages under the name of John Edwards and got together six thousand dollars. Then it just seemed to me I must go and hunt up Annie B. and see if she was well and happy—if that husband of hers was treating her right.

“It tuck a long time, Fust Mate, but I found her at last. I found her right here in Liberty and her name is Mrs. John Higgins!”

Pat had been staring at the Captain with wide eyes of incredulity. Now he sprang to his feet and started to speak, but the old man waved a restraining hand.

“Set right down, Fust Mate,” he said, “That ’s all there is to it and you and I are the only humans that knows it. Annie B. ’s happy with her husband and children and I ’m dead,”—he smiled grimly—“My tombstone ’s been

a-standing for thirty years in the Baptist graveyard at Bedford.”

There was a moment's complete silence. It was broken by the Captain. He stumped over to Pat's chair and took him by the hand.

“It 's time you were going home, Fust Mate,” he said. “No,” he broke in as Pat started to speak, “I don't want to hear another word about it. But remember this. Don't you let anything stand between you and the girl.”

XVI

PAT McCORMICK leaned back in his office chair, his feet on the table, reading the *Liberty Clarion*. Presently his casual eye focused on the following item, which seemed to burn against the white paper in wavering letters of fire:

“It is reported that the engagement will soon be announced of the son of one of our most prominent attorneys and the only daughter of perhaps the largest land-owner in the county.”

The paper slipped unnoticed to the floor. It was true then! A pang, physical in the intensity of its pain, shot through him. But perhaps the paper was wrong. If it had been based on anything more than mere gossip the names would surely have been printed. Uncertainty was maddening. Moreover, the parting injunction of the old Captain was fresh in his mind.

As Pat walked up the wide avenue of great oaks which leads to the main building of the old Bickford Seminary that evening, he suddenly became conscious that from fifty windows girlish faces were peeping down at him. He straightened his five feet six to its full height, painfully aware that towering stature and the broad shoulders of a gladiator were needed to be properly impressive. The big Swedish maid who opened the door, glanced down at his freckled, boyish face, and, without troubling to ask for a card, said, "Step in." Inside the hall Pat heard the sound of half suppressed giggles and, looking up, caught a momentary glimpse of sparkling eyes peering over the banister railing.

The maid, never stopping to ask his errand, had gone straight to the office of Miss Sophronia Hunks, the chatelaine of that rosebud garden of girls.

"Miss Sophronia," said the maid, "there 's a boy waiting in the reception-room."

Up rose Miss Sophronia, on her guard at once, as she always was when anything masculine invaded her sacred portals, and with

slow and stately steps descended to the reception-room. Very tall, very thin and very short-sighted was Miss Sophronia, and as she swept into the room Pat could almost feel the icy current of air which accompanied her. She adjusted her glasses.

“Well, my boy,” she said, “what can I do for you?”

This, then, was the climax! To bring the burning soul of a tragic hero into the icy presence of a venerable maiden lady who treats one as a child!

Up from his chair rose Pat, as dignified as Miss Sophronia herself.

“Madam,” he said in that deep bass voice which always startled those unaccustomed to it, “I am Patrick McCormick. Allow me to present my card.”

Miss Sophronia gingerly took the bit of paste-board in her long, white fingers. Looking over her glasses she read upon it, “Patrick McCormick, Attorney and Counselor-at-law. Notary Public.”

Miss Sophronia’s dignified complacency, which had supported her in so many difficult

situations, deserted her entirely. She had made a most mortifying and embarrassing mistake.

“I beg your pardon, sir,” she stammered uncertainly, but Pat interrupted her with a bow.

“I have called to see Miss Antje Anders on a matter of importance,” he said. “May I trouble you to ask her to come down?”

The combination of the startling card and of the tremendous voice, most of all her own blushing embarrassment, were too much for Miss Sophronia Hunks. For the first time in her life she found herself at a loss for a word.

“Certainly, sir,” she stammered, as Pat bowed her grandly out of the room.

“Why, Pat,” said Antje, a few moments later, with her hand outstretched to him, “what ’s the matter? And what in the world did you do to Miss Hunks?”

“Nothing,” he answered, rising to meet her and holding her hand in his own.

“She opened the door of my room just now and said: ‘Miss Anders there ’s an attorney waiting to see you in the reception-room. Here ’s his card.’ Then she threw the card on

my bed and almost ran away. I was frightened half to death till I read your name."

"Don't you know why I 've come down to see you?" Pat asked. He looked straight at her as she leaned back against the cushions of a great easy-chair and she must have seen the reason in his eyes. They were honest eyes and they adored her, from the tip of her slipper to the dimple in her tilted chin.

"It took courage anyhow," she countered. "Miss Hunks usually freezes young men who come here to call. Sha'n't I ask Jack Hahn to come down?"

"I came to see you," he said. "I can't wait any longer to tell you that I love you."

The girl looked at him with pained, appealing eyes. "O, Pat, you must n't," she began.

"If there is some one else—"

"No," she interrupted, "there is no one else—not yet," she stammered. "I can't explain. I don't know. But—"

"I have n't much to offer. And your father—I tried hard. I decided I would never tell you. But I can't help it. I love you so."

"I hoped you would n't. I did n't want you to. When I think of father—"

“Ever since I saw you in the school-house I have loved you. Won’t you say—”

“Don’t, Pat,” she broke in hurriedly. “I can’t listen to you. It ’s all wrong—”

The clock on the marble mantel-piece chimed ten o’clock in a very cold, metallic voice. At the same instant they were left sitting in total darkness.

“What ’s the matter?” asked the startled Pat, springing to his feet.

The girl was laughing in a relieved, half hysterical way.

“It ’s nothing,” she said. “The lights go out all over the house at ten o’clock and I forgot to warn you. I ’ll lead you to the front door.”

They groped their way down the long, dark hall. From the stairway above them came the sound of suppressed giggles. At the door Pat stopped, bent over and kissed the girl’s hand.

“Please write me,” he whispered.

“No,” she answered. “Not until I—good-night.”

Next day Sally Wagner, writing her semi-weekly letter to her mother in Liberty, mentioned, quite incidentally, as among the happen-

ings of the week at the seminary that they had had prunes three times for dinner and that Pat McCormick had been down to call on Antje Anders. Mrs. Wagner, quite as incidentally, told her husband the same bit of gossip at the breakfast-table.

So when King Anders came in to see his lawyer a few days later, that amiable person had a fine bit of news for him.

XVII

THE spring campaign was well under way in Liberty County. For the first time since the war the Democrats had thought it worth while to nominate a full county ticket. Their candidate for prosecuting attorney was a young lawyer named Hiram Hector, not long resident in the village.

A month before election day Hector was called back by telegraph to his old home in central New York. His father was critically ill. Before his son arrived, the old man died, leaving his estate badly involved. Hector promptly wrote John Higgins, the chairman of the county committee, that he would be detained in the east for months; possibly he might never return to Liberty. At any rate, he withdrew from the ticket and asked the committee to name in his place a candidate who could make an active canvass.

The committee met to take action. Members had consulted with several prominent lawyers, none of whom would allow the use of his name. Chairman Higgins said nothing till all the others had expressed themselves. In his pocket he had a note, which had been written by the Captain, but which was signed "Vox Populi."

"Why don't you put young Pat McCormick in the place of Hector?" it said. "You fellows need the Irish vote and he can get it. Then there are lots of young Republicans who will vote for him and he 'd make you a red-hot campaign."

Higgins read the note aloud. "What do you think about that?" he asked.

Old man Williams, who served as treasurer of the campaign committee, cleared his throat.

"I don't know about putting Mike McCormick's son on our ticket," he objected.

"Don't you remember the letter Mike's Colonel wrote when he was killed?" Higgins asked. "And Anders is n't the most popular man in Liberty County, anyhow. Nobody but a fool would raise that issue against Pat."

Other names were mentioned and discussed and further objections were made to the selection of Pat McCormick, but, in the absence of any active candidates for the place, it was finally decided to appoint Higgins and Williams a committee to confer with Pat and offer him the nomination.

They found him at his office, in conference with a roughly-dressed young man, whose right arm was suspended in a sling, and who, at the sight of the distinguished callers, got up to leave.

“No, keep your seat, Joe,” Pat said, bowing to Higgins and Williams. “Take chairs, gentlemen. I ’ll see you in a minute.”

“He ’s a born politician,” Higgins whispered to his companion. “He ’s made a friend of that fellow for life. You can’t beat the Irish.”

But Williams, who did not enjoy waiting for a railroad brakeman, only growled.

“Pat,” said Higgins presently as the client went out, “how would you like to be prosecuting attorney of Liberty County?”

“Very much,” he answered promptly, with

a smile. Then as he glanced at the face of old Williams: "What 's the joke?"

"Hector 's withdrawn and we thought you might catch the Irish vote and a lot of the young fellows for us."

"You 're in earnest, then?"

"So far as the Democratic nomination goes, we are."

The splendor of the unexpected offer gave his ambition wings. Through all his body he felt the nerves tingle. Here was a chance. And a chance was what he wanted.

"I 'm young," he said. "There 's lots of better lawyers."

"Yes, that 's so," frankly assented Williams, "but they won't none of 'em take it."

Higgins and Pat both broke out into a laugh.

"It ain't that bad, Pat," said Higgins. "The older men can't afford to take the office and we think you 'll run the best of the young fellows. A Democratic nomination don't usually amount to much in Liberty County, but this is an off-year and we 've got a chance."

"I 'd like nothing better than to make a fight for it," declared Pat.

“Of course,” broke in old Williams, “we ’ll expect you to make a contribution to the campaign fund. Hector put in \$500.”

Pat’s eyebrows fell, the corners of his mouth drooped. “I ’m afraid that lets me out,” he said. “I have n’t got the money.”

Higgins glared angrily at the treasurer. “Oh, that can be arranged all right. I ’ll attend to that for you.”

“Why, yes,” spoke up Williams, not to be outdone in generosity. “I ’ll let you have the money myself. At seven per cent., too.”

“I could n’t run on borrowed money,” said Pat, grinning to conceal his disappointment. “You ’ll have to get another candidate.”

“We ’ll not take no for an answer now,” said Higgins, anxious to get old Williams out of the room before he complicated matters further. “Think it over and we ’ll come back to-morrow.”

Hardly had they left before the Captain came stumping into the office, in the most casual way possible.

“Thought I ’d come in and see the new shop,” he said. “How are things going? Met

old man Williams going down the stairs just now. Is he one of your clients?"

"He and John Higgins have just been here to offer me the Democratic nomination for prosecuting attorney," said Pat.

"Well, I want to know!" ejaculated the Captain, with an air of great surprise. "I surely want to know! And you tuck it, I guess!"

"I could n't," answered Pat soberly. "I have n't got five hundred dollars to put into the campaign funds."

The Captain's eyes narrowed shrewdly, as he glanced quickly at Pat's melancholy face, then stared out of the window.

"That 's surely too bad," he said and waited.

"Higgins offered to put up the money for me, but, of course, I could n't run on borrowed money."

"No, of course not. Then you declined?"

"They would n't let me say no. They 're coming back to-morrow to hear me say it."

If Pat had been alert he might have seen the spasm of relief which ran up the Captain's

wrinkled face from chin to eyebrows, but he was looking down at the table under the burden of his disappointment.

“They ain’t no way that a feller that ain’t got a cent can help you, I guess,” said the Captain, drawing a long breath.

“No, Captain,” Pat answered, getting up from his seat. “Maybe I ’ll get another chance some time. I thank you just as much.”

When the old man went out he closed the door behind him, then quickly dodged down the hall and into Judge Hahn’s office. This door he also closed and locked behind him.

“Well, Edwards?” said the Judge, looking up, with a smile. “You must have some very private business on hand?”

“Judge, you got two thousand dollars of mine, ain’t you?”

The money had been in Judge Hahn’s hands for investment for fifteen years, but the Captain always spoke as if he had doubts about it.

“I ’ve got to git five hundred of it right away.”

“I can get it for you at the bank. But what do you want that much money for?”

The Captain put a gnarled forefinger alongside his nose.

“You know us sailors, Jedge. I ’m a-going on a big bat. Kin I sit down in your back room and write a letter while you git the money? I want it all in one bill. And lock the door behind you.”

When the Judge returned, the Captain held a much blotted sheet of foolscap.

“Now, I got to git this copied,” he said.

“I ’ll do it for you,” the Judge answered, taking the sheet from his hands and sitting down to his table.

“Disgeese your hand, Jedge,” urged the Captain, looking over his shoulder, “and spill on a few blots.”

“You damned old cuss!” said Judge Hahn, as he finished, throwing one arm around the old sailor’s shoulders.

“Pretty good one, eh, Jedge?” snickered the Captain, as he slipped the bill into the envelope. “Do you know anybody in Chicago you could trust to mail this vallybill dockimint?”

Both of them grinning like schoolboys, the Judge wrote a note to a friend in Chicago, asking him to promptly remail the inclosed letter

and the two went over to the Post Office together and dropped it into the box.

When Pat told his mother and Aunt Bridget of the offer which had come to him and explained how he would be obliged to refuse it for lack of five hundred dollars, his old aunt was ready for desperate deeds.

“Sure there ’d be gold lace up and down the tail av that long black coat now, but fer the lack av five hundurd dirty dollars,” she complained. “Can’t you git hold av the money somehow, Pat darlin’? I ’ll go down meself to-night and rob the bank.”

“Old man Williams offered to loan it to me,” smiled Pat, “and he ’d only charged me seven per cent. interest at that.”

“You go and till old Williams, the dirty spalpeen that he is, that your Aunt Bridget ’ll do his washin’ and ironin’ for th’ rist av his life—and may the divvle carry him off to-morry—if he ’ll put the money in your hands.”

Pat went down the next morning, ready, if not reconciled, to repeat his declination. In the post-office at noon there was a letter for him. It was post-marked Chicago and addressed in a strange and illiterate hand.

“Dear Sir,” it said. “Inclosed please find five hundred dollars, which I owed your father. Him and me was side pardners in the same company during the war. Jest before he was killed we went in halves on a two dollar lottery ticket. When the drawing came off, we wins a thousand dollars. Mike was dead then and I keeps the money. After the war I come to Chicago and I ’ve did well here. I ’ve always knowed I ’d ought to have split up my winnings with you, but I ain’t never come to the point till now. Anyway, here it is. Good-bye.

Mike McCormick’s comrade.”

Enclosed in the envelope was a five hundred dollar bill. There was absolutely nothing about the letter to suggest the identity of the sender. Pat’s first feeling was one of astonishment and buoyant delight. Then a suspicion crept into his mind. Higgins had taken this method of sending him the needed money. He went straight to the office in which the Democratic campaign was being managed and handed the letter to the Chairman.

“It ’s mighty good of you, Mr. Higgins,” he said, “but I can’t take your money that way.”

“I never was smart enough to get up a scheme like that,” said Higgins with a roar of laughter that made it impossible to doubt the sincerity of his denial. “Your unknown debtor did n’t forget to put in the money, did he?”

Pat took the bill from his pocket and laid it on the desk.

“Well, a fellow who ’s as lucky as you are can’t be beat in politics,” laughed Higgins.

Williams came into the room, attracted by the unusual hilarity. He stopped and stared at the green-backed bill on the desk.

“Mr. McCormick has just brought over his contribution to the campaign fund, Mr. Williams,” said Higgins, watching, with a twinkle in his eye, the effect of his announcement on the mercenary old treasurer.

“Well, by Goll!” said Williams, clutching his long white beard as if for support. “Pat, you did n’t git that money for less ’n seven per cent., did you?”

XVIII

KING ANDERS came in from the stable, looking black and glowering. The hired men and the six big sons, coatless and freshly washed, were waiting to sit down at the long table in the kitchen. He hung his coat on the nail behind the door, and sat heavily down in the chair at the head without uttering a word. Old Mrs. Anders, busy about the stove, saw at a glance that her lord was in a savage mood. The King lifted a piece of rock candy from its saucer by the string to which it was attached and twirled it around in his cup of coffee till the drink was sweetened to his taste. Then he passed it to the next man. Still he did not speak.

“Did the hogs sell well, father?” asked one of the boys.

“No,” growled the King, without looking up. But Mrs. Anders was sure that something more important than that was oppressing him.

In fifteen minutes the meal was over. The men and boys had gorged to the full and lumbered out of the room. Mrs. Anders sat down next to the King.

“What is the matter yet, Ander?” she said.

Anders raised his sullen eyes from the table. “Antje must come home from that damn school right away quick,” he said.

The old woman flinched as from a blow in the face.

“What did she do?”

“Do, huh!” he burst out. “That McCormick feller was down there to Bickford to see her two weeks ago yet! That ’s what she do!”

“Maybe so that is a lie, Ander!”

“It is no lie yet. Lawyer Wagner told me so his girl wrote a letter about it. He is laughing at me because that upstart school-teacher makes me a fool out. I will not stand it yet.”

“She will stay till the school term gets over?” pleaded Mrs. Anders.

“She will come home this week already,” roared the King, striking the table with his fist. “All the time I know it is damn foolishness. I spend me my money to send her by

school and how she pay me back? When she milk ten cows every morning maybe so she learn a little sense yet!"

"Ander," began his wife, "that McCormick feller—"

"He is getting in my way too much already," broke in the King. "Last year he beat me out of that Luders forty acres. Now Lawyer Wagner makes shame of me and says I have him for a son-in-law when I don't look out. I drive him out of Liberty County first!"

"She will promise never to—"

"Make a letter to Antje," ordered the King, "and tell her she must come home on Saturday."

That night old Mrs. Anders sat down and laboriously wrote a long letter to her daughter. To Antje it came like a sentence of death. Far better that she had never left the farm. Then she had known nothing but the hard, grinding, coarse life to which she had been born; now a brighter, happier, more inspiring world had just been opened to her and the taste of it was very sweet. She had seen the light; now she was to be dragged back into utter

darkness. And Pat McCormick was responsible for the calamity which had come upon her.

She took the letter to her room, locked the door, threw herself on the bed and wept.

She would *not* go back to the farm and settle down there to the life she had left! . . . But where else could she go? What door of escape was open to her?

Tom Hahn had asked her to marry him. If she but said the word he would come and take her away from it all. That was her way out. She went to her desk and took out paper. Yet she hesitated . . . If only Pat McCormick had not come down to Bickford. From the beginning, almost, he had brought nothing but sorrow into her life.

Again she threw herself on the bed and wept. A muffled knock sounded on the door.

"Who is it," asked Antje, stifling her sobs. She shrank from the inquisitive presence of one of the teachers.

"It is I—Jack. Please let me in."

"Go away," cried Antje.

"I won't. Let me in, please. If you don't look out, Miss Hunks will hear you."

Terrified at the idea of being subjected to one of Miss Sophronia's cross-examinations, Antje crept from her bed to the door and unlocked it. Then, without waiting for the girl to enter, she rushed back to the bed and flung herself upon it. Jack slipped noiselessly in, locked the door, turned down the light and then hesitated for a moment by the bedside.

"Why, Antje, dear, what 's the matter?" she whispered. The little Dutch girl raised her pathetic face, that was like a wind-swept, rain-streaked, country rose. Before her stood Miss Jack, tall and white and graceful,—a high-bred lily. Into Antje's head flashed a sudden hatred of all that she stood for. Why should Jack Hahn be born to easy enjoyment of what she, herself, had only tasted and was now to lose?

"I hate you!" sobbed Antje.

"O, Antje," cried Miss Jack, throwing her arms about the poor little figure on the bed, "Antje, dear. Do tell me what 's the matter? Perhaps I can help you."

Antje made no answer, trying hard to stifle her sobs. Very gently, Jack raised her from

the bed and rested the disheveled golden head on her own shoulder.

“There, dear, there,” she said soothingly. “Cry it all out.”

With her soft hands she stroked Antje’s yellow hair. For a moment there was nothing said. Then suddenly Antje sat straight up. She looked Jack in the eyes, trying hard to control herself. But the effort was useless.

“I ’ve got to go home for good on Saturday, Jack,” sobbed Antje, presently, when their mingled weeping had subsided. “I ’ve got to go home and give it all up. And I can’t go, Jack. I just can’t go!”

“What ’s happened, dear?” asked the other. “There, lie down and let me undress you? What has happened?”

Instant loyalty to her family, inborn, inherited from long generations of proud Dutch ancestors, came to the girl’s aid and guided her tongue.

“O, nothing has happened,” she answered, her tears stopping as suddenly as they had begun. “Mother needs me at home, that ’s all, and I ’ve got to leave school on Saturday.”

“Perhaps it will be only for a little while,” said Jack, hopefully.

“I ’m afraid not. I ’m afraid this is the end.”

“O, well, dear, you ’ll only be a little way from Liberty. You ’ll come in and visit me often and I ’ll drive out to the farm every day or two.”

But that was too much! That brought home to her too vividly what life on the farm would mean, with all its petty meannesses, its sordid, unnecessary economies, its total lack of books, pictures, music, all that had filled the last few months with light and sweetness.

“I can’t give it all up, Jack,” she cried, her tears coming afresh. “I can’t go back!”

But the flow of tears was suddenly interrupted by a double knock on the door and by the monitory voice of Miss Sophronia Hunks.

“Miss Anders!” called Miss Hunks. Jack Hahn hastened to open the door.

“Young ladies, what does this mean?” asked Miss Hunks icily.

“We have had bad news,” answered Jack. Antje had pulled the bed clothes up about her

disheveled head at the entrance of the dragon and from beneath them came the sound of half-suppressed sobs.

“It must be bad news, indeed, to justify such an outbreak of unrestrained emotion,” said Miss Hunks. “Nothing could be worse for the nervous system. May I ask what is the nature of the disquieting intelligence you have received?”

Miss Hunks crossed her arms and waited grimly for a reply. It came from an unexpected source. Anje suddenly sat up, her eyes tearless.

“Miss Hunks,” she said, in tones as icy as that lady’s own, “the news I have had concerns only myself!”

“Miss Anders,” cried the indignant principal. “Do not add an exhibition of bad temper to—”

“O, you need n’t mind,” interrupted Antje, breaking down into a half sob. “I ’m going to leave your old school anyhow. And I ’m g-g-glad of it, too!”

“Miss Hahn,” said Miss Hunks sternly, fearful lest this rebellious spirit should prove infectious, “go to your room at once.”

Jack started to obey. Then she stopped at the bedside, bent over and kissed Antje.

“I ’m awfully sorry, dear, she said. “But don’t cry. It ’ll all come out right somehow.”

At the door she stopped again and ran quickly back to the bed.

“Antje, dear,” she whispered, so low that not even the keen ears of Miss Hunks could hear, “why don’t you write to Tom?”

Then, without stopping an instant for a response to her suggestion, she left the room.

XIX

THE nomination of Pat McCormick for the office of prosecuting attorney was variously received. As the Captain had predicted, it was pleasing to the young voters of the county and, particularly to those of the village, most of whom had known Pat since his bare-footed boyhood. A score of young men volunteered to help him in the campaign, and among the first was Tom Hahn, now permanently established in his father's law-office.

“We 'll take the horse and phaeton, Pat,” he said, “and visit every farm-house in Liberty County.”

But it must be confessed that the nomination did not throw the Republican managers into a panic. They had named Tom Martin, Henry Wagner's law-partner, for prosecuting attorney, and when Wagner heard of the action of the Democratic committee, he expressed his contempt for that body.

“That gives you a cinch, Tom,” he said to his partner. “I ’ll take a few cracks at young McCormick in the *Clarion* that ’ll make Higgins wish he had n’t.”

King Anders came his nearest to a smile when Wagner told him the news.

“I bet you he don’t get twenty votes in Monroe township yet,” he said with contemptuous amusement. “What for the Democrats do such a trick, anyhow?”

“It was Higgins’ doing. He was paying off his old debt.”

“Well, if Higgins thinks he can jam that young feller down my throat, I ’ll fool him once. He ’s getting too uppish already. He ’d better stayed over in Shantytown where he belongs—the Upstart!”

That evening Wagner walked down to his office to write some editorials for the *Clarion*, to which he lent the scintillations of his vituperative pen during every political campaign. He stopped finally with a few lines.

“I ’ll begin with an easy one,” he said to himself as he walked over to the *Clarion* office.

Next evening Chairman Higgins of the

Democratic Committee found this paragraph in the paper:

“It may be good public policy to nominate for the position of chief administrator of the criminal laws a man who numbers among his immediate relatives a self-confessed criminal, but we doubt if the law-abiding and decent citizens of Liberty County will look at it in that light.”

“There,” laughed Higgins, as he dropped the paper on his library table, “we ’ve got an issue now. I was afraid they ’d have too much sense.”

“What ’s the matter, John?” asked his wife.

“Nothing, Annie, only young Pat McCormick is going to be elected prosecuting attorney, that ’s all.”

Next day Higgins waited in the sitting-room after dinner until he saw Williams walking down the street. Then he went out to join him, casually.

In addition to his other responsibilities old Williams held the office of Chairman of the Board of County Commissioners. Three months before, the Board had appropriated

ten thousand dollars for the erection of a monument in the court-house square, in honor of the volunteer soldiers and sailors of the country who lost their lives in the rebellion. The date for the laying of the corner-stone was only a week off and the program for the exercises of dedication, which were intended to make the patriotic lesson impressive, was not yet completed.

It had been easy to decide that Father Callahan of the Catholic Church should make the opening prayer and that the Reverend Doctor Matlack of the First Presbyterian should pronounce the benediction. It was inevitable that General Bristow, most conspicuous of local veterans and commander of the Grand Army Post, should deliver the principal oration. But there the Board stopped.

At its first meeting to consider the program, it had been agreed that the son of one of the dead heroes of the county should be asked to speak, as the representative of the younger generation. Three candidates for the honor had immediately appeared and the Board could come to no decision. The contest had

developed great bitterness. Half a dozen meetings to decide the question had been called and each ballot showed a hard and fast deadlock, with no hope of a break. The adherents of the several candidates would not yield an inch.

“Going down to settle the monument row?” asked Higgins.

“Yes, we ’ve got to settle it to-day,” Williams answered. “The corner-stone is laid next Saturday.”

“Why don’t you try a compromise?”

“We ’ll have to, I guess. The trouble is there is n’t anybody we can compromise on. I ’ve suggested a dozen names and each time there is a kick.”

“Get up one with no names mentioned at all, then,” suggested Higgins.

“How can we do that?”

“How would it do to have the speech made by the son of the first Liberty volunteer who was killed in the war?”

“Hum-m,” hesitated old man Williams. “I wonder who that would be?”

“The official records would settle that for

you," answered Higgins. "There 'd be no chance for an argument. That 's the beauty of the scheme."

"I guess that 's a pretty good plan. I was thinking of something like that myself."

When the Board met Williams laid his compromise before them.

"But who was the first volunteer killed?" asked half a dozen commissioners in chorus.

"I don't know," Williams answered. "I don't believe anybody could tell off-hand. That 's what makes it a good compromise. The idea only occurred to me on the way down town and I 've had no chance to investigate, if I had wanted to."

The board members were tired of the controversy and time was pressing. The suggestion of President Williams was put in the form of a resolution and carried unanimously.

Within twenty-four hours everybody in Liberty knew that Pat McCormick had been chosen to speak at the laying of the cornerstone. The peculiar way in which the decision had been reached was the subject of general comment. Some partisans took the ground

that old Williams, as Treasurer of the Democratic County Committee, had played a sharp trick on his colleagues in thus securing the selection of one of the candidates of his party. Lawyer Wagner gave bitter expression to this view in the columns of the *Clarion*.

“Things have come to a pretty pass,” he wrote, “when, by a disreputable trick, party politics are injected into what was intended to be an impressive ceremony dedicated to the memory of our dead heroes. The trick was perpetrated by the treasurer of one of the campaign committees and the intended beneficiary is a candidate on his party ticket. If this candidate were other than he is, he might be expected to decline the questionable honor, but in a man of his antecedents a delicate sense of decency can hardly be expected. It will remain for the voters of Liberty County to properly rebuke this shameless attempt to prostitute a patriotic occasion.”

“That ’ll stir up the animals,” John Higgins chuckled as he read it. He was right. Old man Williams, his long white beard wagging with wrath, strode into the *Clarion* office

to denounce the man who wrote it as a liar. If he had known the choice would fall on Pat McCormick he would not have made the suggestion, "But now, by Goll! I 'll see that Pat 's the speaker, no matter what happens!"

General Bristow called at the *Clarion* office later in the day. He was a leading Republican and held the federal patronage in his hands. The editor of the *Clarion* listened to him with respect. He had prepared a communication which he would like published. The editor would be delighted. General Bristow handed the copy to him and he looked it over.

"I don't see how I can consistently print this," the editor said, as he looked up from the letter with a troubled face.

"Don't then and I 'll take the stump for Pat McCormick," roared the angry old soldier.

So this is what John Higgins read in the *Clarion* the next day with many chuckles of joy:

"In accordance with its policy of absolute fairness, even in matters of party politics, the *Clarion*

takes pleasure in printing the following communication from General Bristow :

“I read in the *Clarion* last evening an attack on the action of the County Board in selecting Patrick McCormick as one of the speakers at the laying of the corner-stone of the Soldiers' Monument.

“The public is familiar with the original controversy which followed the attempt of the Board to name a representative of the Sons of Veterans. In my opinion the Board acted with wisdom in deciding to bestow the honor on the son of the first of Liberty's volunteers who lost his life in the rebellion. When it so decided, I am informed that not one member knew on whom the honor would fall. That it did fall to Pat McCormick is no fault of his and, though I do not agree with him in politics, I consider the honor worthily bestowed. The fact that he also happens to be a candidate for office has nothing whatever to do with the case.

“I venture to say that the veterans of the late war will be inclined to resent any further attacks, veiled or otherwise, on a man who, whatever his private faults, was one of the bravest soldiers in the brigade which I had the honor to command. Certainly an attempt to cast insinuations on the son, because of the sins of the father, is cowardly and uncalled for. If politics have been injected into the

proceedings of Saturday, I am sorry to say that the *Clarion*, rather than the County Board, is responsible for it.

“CHARLES BRISTOW.”

“Wagner ’s winning our fight for us,” said Chairman Higgins when he read General Bristow’s letter.

The evening after he received formal notification of his selection, Pat went over to the island to tell the news to the Captain.

“Wall, son,” said the old man, “now you got a chance to show ’em what a shanty Irishman can do.”

They sat for an hour on the bridge, looking down the river, while the Captain smoked and fought over some of the battles in which he had taken part.

“In my company, Fust Mate,” the old man said, “there were twenty Irishmen, as many Germans, half a dozen Swedes, a little bunch of Hollanders, and a couple of English, to say nothing of us Yankees. In camp and on the march we was always fighting among ourselves. Each of us stuck up for his country as the best

in the world to be born in. Give us two weeks without a battle and half the boys would be nursing black eyes. But, when the bugle sounded, and the captain yelled, "Charge! Double quick!" there was only one nationality in the whole company—all sons of the one flag. We fought then to see which could git to the enemy's line fust. There was plenty of countries the best to be born in, Fust Mate, but only one among 'em all worth dying for!"

Pat's Celtic imagination was quick to catch fire at the suggestion, which he made the text for his speech. He worked on it almost constantly, day and night, and had little time to think of Antje or anything but the work on hand. On Friday night he rehearsed the speech at the rectory, with Mr. Burton and his wife as an enthusiastic, but critical, audience.

Saturday came, clear and beautiful, with the breath of the budding summer in the air. The trees were burgeoning in fresh and tender green. Early in the morning the farmers began to come in from all the surrounding country. Most of them had either served in the Union armies or had sent their sons to fill a

place in the ranks. This was their monument. Their big wagons fringed the streets for blocks and their families gathered in thousands on the grass of the court-house square and overflowed on the sidewalks and up the stairways in every direction. In the crowds were hundreds in blue uniforms and scores who limped on crutches or carried an empty sleeve.

When Father Callahan rose to offer the opening prayer the square and all the streets about it were one black, swaying mass of people. The Liberty Cornet band followed, playing "The Star Spangled Banner" and men broke into the wild yells and cheers they had learned on triumphant battle-fields. The fierce fervor of the fight still sounded in their hoarse, high-pitched voices. General Bristow spoke briefly and was heard by few, his voice trembling with the intensity of his emotions. Then Pat heard his own name called by Williams, who was presiding over the exercises. All his courage oozed away and his knees shook as he walked to the speaker's stand and bowed to the great crowd, which was still cheering the last speaker, less for what he had said than for what he was.

The people looked up at the short, youthful figure, and were silent for a moment. There was something about the white face, with its broad mouth and hedge of red hair above, which commanded their sympathy. He looked so absurdly unequal to the situation.

“Men and women of Liberty County!”

It was the voice which held them, his voice—the one great gift which nature had bestowed upon him—deep, ringing, powerful, penetrating without the slightest effort to the farthest limit of the crowd.

Farmers living far from town, who had started to leave when General Bristow sat down, stopped for a moment to listen. A half-surprised, half-pleased, smile swept over the upturned faces. Mouths opened and eyes rounded and the smile changed to a look of awed intensity as Pat went on. The first sound which broke in upon his words was a deep German roar of “Hoch! Hoch!” as he told how the sons of the fatherland had proved their courage. Then followed the shrill yells of his old friends of Shantytown as the tale of Irish valor was rehearsed.

Presently Pat made out two figures in the

crowd. One of them was that of his Aunt Bridget, mounted on top of a dry-goods box at the corner and waving a big flag frantically. Close by, he saw the Captain, his mouth wide open and hand behind ear. To these two, Pat talked for the remainder of his ten minutes.

“For the honor of that flag,” he concluded, “the brave men of a dozen nations gave their lives. Born under imperial banners, they died for the flag that set them free. They swore that it should stand forever for equal rights and equal opportunities for all men. It remains for us—their sons—to see that their blood-sealed oath is kept inviolate.”

When he sat down there was at first a moment's tense silence. Then burst a great roar of voices, and a wild confusion of people, struggling about the speaker's stand, throwing hats into the air and cheering. In it all, Pat saw first only his old aunt, jumping up and down on her box like a rubber-doll and uttering screams that pierced the deeper roar like arrows. Then his eye caught the figure of the Captain, fighting his way to the front like a man driven by devils.



“Men and women of Liberty County!”

General Bristow came over and shook his hand.

“I congratulate you, sir,” said the old soldier. “I am proud of you.”

The Captain, his coat half-torn from his body, came next, wringing Pat’s hand and crying, “You showed ’em, Fust Mate! You showed ’em!”

Far off on the outskirts of the crowd, John Higgins, turning to drive away, said to his wife, “Annie, that was the best political speech I ever heard in my life. And there was n’t a word of politics in it.”

XX

ANTJE came back from the seminary determined to face the conditions of life on the farm without flinching. Least of all should her father ever see in her any indication that she felt herself ill-treated. And at the worst she knew that the old dead monotony of existence could never return. She had new resources—a few books, a few friends, and a new outlook into the possibilities of life. As a blind man who has once looked out on the good green world, flooded with golden light, may be happier for the memory of that celestial vision, so she treasured the recollection of her days at the seminary and gave thanks for them. Not even her mother ever heard a word of complaint. Into the every-day work of the farm she threw herself with an energy and an intelligence which first surprised King Anders and then aroused unpleasant reflections. Perhaps he had been hard and unjust to the girl.

Instinctively he understood her better than any one else, and in the depths of his stubborn nature there lay a great pride in, and an overwhelming love for, the one member of his family who had inherited his own strong traits of character.

When Jack Hahn drove out to the farm once or twice during the spring vacation, he welcomed her, in secret, as cordially as Antjé herself, and at the coming of big Tom Hahn, the old King smiled grimly as he recognized a suitor for the hand of his daughter.

“That Hahn girl gets pretty thick by Antje already,” he said to his wife. “I think maybe so they like to get her for their boy, huh?”

“He was down two or three times by the seminary to see her yet,” answered the old woman. “And in Chicago he took her by the theater. He is a good boy, not so?”

The King was not present at the laying of the corner-stone, but a few days later he called at the office of Lawyer Wagner to talk it over.

“That McCormick feller ’s getting to be a pretty smart one, huh?” he said. “They say he made a fine speech by the monument.”

“That was just what we needed,” answered Wagner. “It stirred our boys all up and now they ’ll go to work in earnest.”

“I hear he comes out by the Silver Creek School pretty soon to make a speech,” the King went on. “I should n’t wonder when he does if there was a lively time yet.”

“What ’s going to happen?” asked Wagner, with an anticipatory smile.

“Oh, maybe so noddings,” said Anders with a grin, “but some of those boys out our way are pretty wild ones, huh?”

“Oh, I see,” smiled Wagner. “I ’d like to be on hand myself.”

Pat’s speech at the Silver Creek school-house came late in the campaign. He and Tom Hahn had traveled together for several weeks, driving out into the country in the morning, calling at the various farms in the afternoon and speaking at the district school-houses in the evening. Always the best of friends, there had yet grown up between them a feeling of aloofness, almost of tension. One subject they both instinctively avoided. Now, as they drove out over the bridge and along the old,

familiar river road, they were both strangely silent.

"I wonder if there 'll be a big crowd to-night," Tom asked finally.

"I hope so. The committee promised a full house."

"You 've got a whole lot of old friends out here, have n't you?" Tom asked.

"And some that are n't so friendly," Pat answered smiling. "I don't reckon the King and his boys 'll turn out to welcome me."

"Perhaps Antje 'll come."

Pat looked at his comrade sharply. "She 'll hardly come up from the seminary to hear me speak," he said.

"She 's been at home for three weeks. Did n't you know?" asked Tom in surprise.

"No," said Pat. "I did n't know it."

The old white horse trotted noiselessly along the dust-laden road, and both young men lapsed into silence again.

Three weeks ago! That was just after he had seen her at the seminary, Pat remembered. Was he responsible for her recall? He knew what it must mean to her to give it up. Surely

she must hate him now. That was why he had not heard from her. He had never touched her life, except to bring sorrow and trouble into it.

“I can’t bear to think of her back there on the farm,” burst out Tom. “It ’s a dog’s life and she was never made for it.”

“Then why don’t you go and take her away from it?” That was what Pat should have said. That would have been generous and just to both Antje and his friend there in the buggy with him. But he could n’t say it. Instead, he turned his eyes away, and a feeling of fierce, bitter, jealous rage burned within him.

The horse jogged around the corner and the little old school-house, standing back under its great elm, came into sight.

“Here we are, Pat,” said Tom. “It looks like a big crowd, too.”

Over at the Anders farm the announcement that Tom Hahn and Pat were to hold a meeting, caused some little suppressed excitement. The King did not speak of it, but Antje gathered from bits of talk she overheard that the boys were planning mischief.

On the evening, appointed for the meeting, King Anders, coming in to supper, noticed the girl's absence, and asked, "Where is Antje, yet?"

"She went to spend the night with the Luders girls," answered her mother.

"Hah!" said the King. "She have to go see that Hahn boy yet."

Farmers' wagons were tied to the fence and scattered through the grove about the school-house, as Tom and Pat McCormick drove up. Groups of people were standing about the door and a score of men were perched like crows upon the top rail of the fence, whittling, smoking and talking about the crops. As the two young men climbed down from their buggy, the talk ceased and all eyes were fixed upon them—shrewd, critical eyes.

"Pretty young-looking cuss," said one old farmer. "Yes," answered another, "but he 's a smart one, all right. You ought to 'ave heard the speech he made at the corner-stone laying."

The chairman of the township committee came out to receive them and the crowd fol-

lowed back into the school-house. The women and children filled the seats, the men standing thick along the walls, sitting in the open windows and massing themselves about the open doors at the back. The two little kerosene lamps, hanging by wires from the ceiling, filled the shadowy recesses of the school-house with a dim yellow glow. But there was plenty of light for both Pat and Tom Hahn to make out, sitting near the center of the room with the Luders girls, the slender figure of Antje. There was nothing about her to distinguish her from the others—nothing but her unconscious grace, the lure of her yellow hair and the tender, fearless, uncertain spirit which looked out through her dark blue eyes.

As Pat looked down at her, his heart beat wildly. For him there was no one else present and the idea of making a political speech to Antje seemed impossible. Other words were closer to his lips, and the old school-house was full of tender memories. Why was she there to make them real?

The girl herself could not have answered. She had come because she must. Some impulse had driven her.

She looked up at the platform. There sat Tom, tall and handsome. He was smiling at her and a look of tenderness shone back from her eyes. She glanced at Pat sitting at the back of the platform, with his chair tilted back, as he used to sit when she went to school to him. His lack of dignity made her angry and her cheeks went red. Not once did he glance in her direction.

The chairman of the township committee broke in upon the tumult of her mind. With one hand fumbling at his watch-chain and the other tightly clenched behind his back, he stepped to the front of the platform and cleared his throat nervously.

“Fellow citizens,” he began. “The presence of so many here to-night—in spite of its being the busy season—is proof that the voters of Monroe township are fully alive to the great importance of the issues of this campaign, which we shall hear discussed this evening by one of our most eloquent speakers. I have the honor of introducing to you the Democratic candidate for prosecuting attorney of Liberty County, the Honorable Patrick McCormick.”

Pat stepped forward to the front of the platform and faced the applause. His face was red and he was furiously angry with himself that the sight of the girl should have so upset him. His sentinel eyes glanced instantly at her face. It was white and sober.

The moment he began to speak, untoward things happened. A length fell from the long stove-pipe which stretched across the room, and discharged a cloud of soot into the up-turned faces of the people. Left unsupported, the rest of the pipe fell also, each length, as it tipped, pouring its burden of dirt over the room.

The place was thrown into instant and utter confusion. Women screamed, children climbed on top of the desks, people in the front seats, half-choked with soot, tried to force their way to the windows, gasping for air. Some of the men at the rear had rushed out of the house. Others were laughing at the panic.

Instantly the thought of treachery came into Pat's mind.

"Wait!" he called from the platform. "Don't let a lot of mischief-makers break up our meeting. There 's no danger!"

At the fall of the pipe, Antje Anders had sprung to her feet. She glanced from side to side through the open windows.

Then, as Pat spoke, there came fresh trouble. Through each of the windows a big, gray hornets' nest, filled with furiously buzzing insects, was hurled into the confused crowd. Instantly the confusion became wild panic. There were screams of pain from the women and children and execrations from the men, as the people climbed through the windows and fought for exit at the door.

Glancing to the right as the hornets' nest was thrown in, Antje recognized in the dim light the face of her brother, Klaas. The sight filled her with a sudden fury. She looked up at the platform, where Pat, pale and calm, still stood, vainly trying to stop the riot, and her heart went out to him.

And then in an instant she knew. It was Pat McCormick she loved. She would stand with him against even her own people. It came to her with the certainty of fate that she had always loved him. Doubts, questionings, were over. The instant need was to help him thwart the plot of her own brothers. In the

newness of the realization of her love for him, it was a blessed opportunity. So she waited for him in the shadows, just outside the school-house door.

Pat, Tom Hahn and the Chairman were the last to leave the school-house. As he hurried through the door, Pat heard a girl's voice calling to him softly.

"Pat," whispered Antje, "don't let them beat you that way. Hold a meeting out here—in the open!"

It came to him like an inspiration. He flashed one grateful, adoring look upon her, then turned and sprang to the top of the school-house steps.

"Friends!" he cried in his great voice. "We will hold our meeting in the open air. Wait a moment and we will have a fire built. It takes more than the sting of a yellow-jacket to break up a Democratic rally."

Tom Hahn and some of the younger men gathered a big pile of dry wood and presently, by the red light of the blazing fire, Pat went on to deliver what Tom declared was his best speech of the whole campaign. Small wonder!

For from a pair of dark blue eyes, not ten feet away—eyes that sparkled with enthusiasm and excitement—there flashed to him constantly renewed and increased inspiration.

When the speech was over, while the hearty country cheers were still sounding, Pat and Tom Hahn stepped up at the same moment to speak to Antje. And then happened what to Pat was a thing not to be understood. It was for Tom Hahn that she had the first smile of welcome and a lingering hand-clasp. Tom leaned over and whispered to her. She shook her head, smiling no longer, while Pat stood by, raging inwardly.

Was this the girl whose excited whisper had inspired the meeting in the open air? Why had her warmth so suddenly cooled? Or had he been dreaming?

“I ’m so sorry, Pat—about to-night,” she said.

“Antje,” he asked huskily, “why on earth have n’t you written a fellow?”

“I ’ve been so busy since I came home,” she began, “and you ’ve had a campaign on your hands. I did n’t want to—”

“Oh, you girls!” the voice of old man Luders broke in. “Hurry up yet. You want me to stay up all night?”

Pat and Tom Hahn got into the buggy and drove away in mutual silence.

“Mr. Luders,” said Antje, as he turned his team, “I wish you ’d let me out at home. There ’s something I must attend to to-night.”

XXI

WHEN Antje opened the kitchen door, her father looked up at her in surprise. He was sitting in his big rocking-chair by the stove. Klaas was perched on the top of the kitchen table, his long legs almost touching the floor; while the rest of the boys formed an appreciative audience to the story Klaas was telling. Antje had heard the sound of boisterous laughter as she came up the lane and she had interrupted Klaas in the midst of his story as she opened the door.

She swept an angry glance over the seven men—giants, every one, huge and black, with malicious smiles still hovering on their faces. Her cheeks were red and little points of flame glittered in her blue eyes.

The men looked at her, waiting for her to speak as she faced them, with her back against the kitchen door.

“Klaas!” she cried, pointing at her eldest

brother with a trembling forefinger. "You are a big coward! I saw you throw that hornets' nest into the school-house—right in among the women and children!"

The big fellow looked up at her and laughed, a heavy, insolent, contemptuous laugh.

"Tom Hahn got stung, huh?" he said.

"You 're a sneak," she went on, pricked by his contempt. "Creeping around in the dark like a thief! You ought to go to jail for what you did to-night!"

"Aw! What I care what you say!" growled Klaas, getting to his feet. The other boys laughed uneasily.

"I 'm ashamed of you all," she ended, breaking down in true womanly fashion, once her defiance had been uttered.

Up to this point the old King had said nothing. He had even taken a certain fierce pleasure in seeing his daughter display the dauntless spirit which she, among all his children, had inherited. He had smiled as he listened to her hot denunciation of her huge brother. But now Antje was crying; and her mother, roused from sleep, was standing in the door of her bedroom, calling to her daughter:

“Go by bed,” he ordered. “Go by bed, you all. We see about this yet in the morning.”

Half an hour later, while Antje lay sobbing in her bed, her old mother crept softly into the room and sat down beside her. Her gnarled hand lay upon the girl’s braided hair. Stroking it tenderly, she whispered: “Antje, tell me what is the matter, eh?”

Brokenly the girl told the story of the night’s happenings.

“I ’m sure father knew all about it, too,” she added. “It was such a cowardly thing to do. That ’s why everybody hates father and hates us all.”

“Antje,” said the old woman, with something like awe in her voice, “your father owns near four thousand acres of land. He is a very rich man, yet.”

“That makes it all the worse, mother. Why should he want to fight a poor boy like Pat McCormick—and fight him in the dark, too, like a sneak?”

“Antje, his father burned the tannery and Ander lost twelve thousand dollars.”

“That was n’t Pat’s fault. He is n’t to

blame for what his father did. It is n't fair to fight him for that reason!"

"Antje, liebchen," said the old woman, throwing a protecting arm about the girl's shoulders, "don't cry. Why do you care so much?"

"O, mother, don't you know? Can't you see? It 's because I love him."

"O, Antje!" cried the old woman, horror-stricken. "Antje! Love him! That will kill your father yet! Wait, Antje! Wait for God's sake!"

"I can't help it mother. I tried hard, but I can't help it!"

"I don't know what becomes of us yet," wailed the old woman under her breath. "When your father knows that, I believe he kills you dead."

NEXT morning the King sent the boys early to work in the fields. Then, after breakfast, he said to his daughter, speaking very kindly: "Come with me by the garden a little, Antje."

The old man walked ahead into the garden.

He was in his shirt-sleeves and was smoking a long pipe, with a painted china bowl. As Antje, following, heard the gate click behind her, she was reminded of another scene in that same prim Dutch garden and she braced herself to face another violent outbreak of anger. But her father's manner was calm and half jocular. He sat down on an oak stump near the gate, took a long pull at his pipe and searched her flushed face with his keen gray eyes.

"Antje," he said, finally—his voice was almost tender—"your mother cried about you all night. She waked me up crying."

"I 'm sorry, father."

"She would not tell me what was the matter by her. But I 'm not a fool yet. I guess I understand it already, huh?"

The girl saw a smile on her father's face and looked down in confusion, saying nothing.

"You was mad by those boys' tricks last night, not so?" There was amused admiration in his voice. "You must not take it so serious. But, yes, I know why you do not like it when they laugh at him, huh?"

He said it with a kindly chuckle and the girl, astounded, kept her eyes on the ground.

“Antje,” the old man went on, “you think some about getting married, not so? I guess, maybe so, we fix that all right, huh? What you say?”

The girl could not speak. Evidently the old mother had given him some hint of the midnight confession. But why this marvelous change in her father? Instead of fierce threats and terrible refusal, he was sitting there, smiling his approval.

“You say noddings, huh? But you don’t need to. When a girl gets red like that and looks down and can’t talk yet, she don’t need to say noddings. Antje, I guess you like that feller pretty much, already, huh?”

“Yes, father,” she answered, looking up at him, prepared now to believe in any miracle.

“You been a good girl by me, Antje,” the old man went on, his eyes fondly caressing her. “When I was sick that time you took care of me fine. I guess maybe so when you get married I give you five hundred acres of land. You sure you got the right feller this time, huh?”

“Yes, father, I ’m sure.” They were smiling at each other now. King Anders was almost playful. He took three or four short pulls at his pipe and chuckled hoarsely.

“I guess any of those town fellers been glad when they get Anders’ girl for his woman, not so? Maybe so you better look around some more!”

The girl smiled back at him and shook her head. This was a father she had never known before.

“I don’t care about the land, father, if only you won’t be angry with me,” she said.

“You better take him. Five hundred acres is a good deal some land. If you ’re sure about the feller, huh?”

“I ’m sure, father,” she said, with a look on her face that was like a vision of the promised land.

“I guess he ’s a pretty good feller—for a lawyer. I go in town to-morrow and fix him up, huh?”

“O, no, please don’t do that,” pleaded the girl, all her maiden modesty behind the prayer. “I would n’t have you say anything to him for the world.”

“I won’t say noddings to him yet,” answered the old King, with a slow, cunning smile. “I go me to see his father.”

“His father?” cried Antje, as the gulf opened beneath her feet. “His father?”

“Sure,” answered the old man, still with that shrewd smile on his face. “I go me to see Judge Hahn to-morrow morning when I go in with the hogs yet.”

Antje fell on her knees before her father, her hands stretched out to him in hopeless appeal. So suddenly, so cruelly, the blow had struck that she had hardly breath to speak.

“But it is n’t Tom Hahn, father,” she cried in a piteous voice, twisting her hands together in impotent agony. “It is n’t Tom Hahn! I don’t love Tom Hahn!”

King Anders’ lower lip dropped and his face went white. Then the blood swept back in a flood and made it crimson.

“Huh? Huh?” he stammered, groping unwillingly for the truth, his eyes staring. “What you say?”

As he spoke, he rose from the stump and stood, towering above her.

“What you say?” he repeated, rasping out his words, as though it were hard to force them through his lips. For an instant Antje hesitated. Then, with a courage greater than his own, she looked the old man squarely in the eyes.

“Father,” she said, “I can’t help it. I love Pat McCormick.”

All the muscles in King Anders’ body tightened convulsively. He raised his clenched right fist above his head. Unnoticed, the china bowl of his pipe was squeezed into fragments, which cut the flesh of his hand so that the blood dripped down on his daughter’s yellow hair.

“You tell me that so to my face!” he hissed. “By Gott! When you ever speak to that man in your life, I kill him dead!”

Then, without further word, he turned and tottered to the gate and up the lane towards the house.

XXII

FOR ten minutes after they had started on the drive back to Liberty, Pat and Tom Hahn discussed the attempt of the Anders gang to break up their meeting. Then they suddenly fell into an embarrassed silence. They were both struggling with the same problem. Over them both fell the shadow of their love for the same girl. Each felt himself a traitor to his friendship for the other. Each was bitterly jealous of the other; and shame that this feeling should exist kept both of them silent. It was a relief when the old horse stopped at the McCormick's cottage and Pat, getting out, bade Tom Hahn a constrained good-night.

Next morning, early, King Anders stalked into the office of Lawyer Wagner.

"How goes the election yet?" he asked.

"O, young McCormick 'll be beat all right," Wagner answered. "He may run ahead of his

ticket, though. There 's no denying he 's made a hot campaign."

"Ahead of his ticket!" growled the old King. "Damn him! I want him wiped clean off the slate! I bet you I got Monroe township fixed already."

"Yes, but it 'd take a lot of money to fix the whole county the same way," said Wagner.

"How much it cost, huh?"

"Well," answered Wagner with assumed indifference, "I calculate that about five thousand dollars would put Pat McCormick where the lilies won't bloom again."

"I get him," said the King sullenly. He got up and went over to the bank. He came back presently and laid the money on the table before Wagner, who took it greedily.

"You 're sure this beats him, huh?" asked the old man suspiciously.

"Dead certain. Tom Martin 's as good as elected this minute. Wait till I write you a receipt for this."

Her father spoke never a word to Antje after he left her in the garden. Orders for work to keep her busy each day were delivered through

her mother. Otherwise the King ignored her completely. Her great brothers followed their father's example, except that they added a touch of cruelty to the treatment by occasional indirect and indelicate taunts. Often she had to clench her hands, until the nails bit into the tender flesh, to keep from answering them hotly. But it was the attitude of her old mother which hurt the most. Always the old woman had been her confidant and champion, who understood her intuitively and whose love was a sure refuge in time of trouble. But now the time had come when she could go no further in opposition to the will of her husband. Open defiance to the old King and absolute mutiny against his authority were as far beyond her sympathy as her imagination. She seemed hardly to look upon her daughter as any longer a member of the family.

When Antje first crept back from the garden and climbed the narrow, crooked stairs which led to her little bedroom, she found the closet, where all her pretty new clothes had been hanging, open and empty. Her trunk, which held the rest of her treasures, was also gone.

“Mother,” she cried, running down to the kitchen, “what has become of all my things?”

“Your father has taken them,” the old woman answered, with averted face, and went on about her work without a word of sympathy.

Cut off thus from her own family, Antje perceived that she was under a kind of surveillance. Her father had made it impossible for her to leave the farm, even if she had wished to do so. She was a virtual prisoner. And in the midst of all her troubles, she was tormented by one terrible thought that made her present situation seem pleasant by contrast.

Suppose Pat McCormick should attempt to see her? With her own fresh consciousness of complete love for him filling her nature, it seemed to her, somehow, certain that he would come—that he must come—that across the six miles which separated them, her yearning love would cry out and that it would be heard. But with the awful threat which her father had made in the garden hanging like a menacing sword between them, she felt, even more strongly, that for her to permit the possibility would be to make herself an accomplice to

murder. For she did not doubt that King Anders would be quite equal to making good his oath. Above all, it would endanger the life of the man she loved, which was to be rather guarded from all harm as the dearest of treasures.

So she sat down in her little room under the roof that night with a great task before her. In her slender brown hands lay the destinies of three strong men.

First of all she must, in decent fairness, write to Tom Hahn and tell him that she did not love him. How strange it was! Yesterday, altogether uncertain; to-day, so sure! She could not understand or explain herself or her decision. She but knew, with a blessed certainty that left no place for questioning.

It was a hard letter to write. She had known Tom Hahn so intimately; she owed him so much; she still felt so tenderly towards him. Worst of all, she might not give him her reason; for no slightest suspicion of the truth must reach Pat McCormick. When it was finished, she was crying. It was hard to deliberately cut one's self off from the only way of hope which lay open. But it had to be done.

There remained the letter to Pat McCormick. As she drew the paper towards her, she blushed divinely, as if at the very thought of all the love which filled her. For the moment she forgot the facts. On her face came a smile in which pride and tenderness were mingled with something wistful and altogether appealing. Then suddenly she realized again, as if for the first time, that she had come into her love only to renounce it. The smile went; the face grew white, with wide, staring eyes; the corners of the mouth drooped and the lower lip trembled, so that any man seeing it must have felt his heart torn from him by the pitiful picture of her uncomforted distress.

She must tell Pat McCormick that he must not come to take what she would have gloried to give him. She must tell him bluntly, with cold dissimulation, leaving him to think himself uncared for and cast off, for should he catch the faintest, dimmest hint of the truth between the lines, she knew that he would come to her against all urging to the contrary.

DEAR MR. MCCORMICK :

It is n't an easy thing to write, but I can't put it off any longer. I have made up my mind and you

must not, under any circumstances, try to see me again. It would only bring fresh trouble and sorrow upon me. You know, I suppose, what followed your visit to the seminary. If you have the least regard for me, you will respect my wish and not make bad matters any worse. Please take this as final.

Your friend,

ANTJE ANDERS.

Don't try to see me unless you want to make me miserable for life.

She had no stamps and no chance to mail her letters, but she carried them to one of the hired men—the same who had taken her note to Pat, after her father's seizure in the garden—and asked him, in confusion, to attend to it for her.

“I will that,” answered the man with a smile. “To-morry 's eliction, annyhow, and I 'm goin' to town.”

Then she turned and went slowly back into the old farm-house, having signed with her own hand the warrant which committed her to what she was sure would be worse than solitary confinement.

XXIII

EARLY on the morning of Election Day King Anders and his six sons hitched up the horses and drove away. Even the hired men were given a day off. The farm was deserted, save for the two women.

In Liberty the polls opened at six o'clock in the morning. Higgins, Tom Hahn, Pat, the Captain, and others directly interested, were up and about even before that hour. They met at headquarters in the room over the engine-house.

"I 'll stay here all day," said Chairman Higgins, "and if anything turns up you 'll know where to find me. The rest of you get out and hustle."

Presently it developed that Lawyer Wagner had spent a part of King Anders' contribution to the campaign fund in hiring all the available hacks and carriages, for use in bringing Republican voters to the polls. When Tom

Hahn saw the swarm of vehicles displaying the red and blue banners of the Republican ticket, he hurried up to the house and hitched up his own white mare. On the way he met Fred Williams, son of the campaign treasurer, and he promised to bring down the family carriage and pair. Pauline Schumacher called to Tom from the next yard and offered her own pony and phaeton for the good of the cause.

“I ’ll drive it myself,” she said. “No, I ’ll take the double-seated wagon and get Jack to go with me!”

All the way up Main Street Tom got recruits and in an hour more than a dozen private carriages were dashing about the streets, each bearing the legend “Vote for Pat McCormick and the Democratic Ticket.”

The first load which Pauline Schumacher and Jack Hahn brought to the polls consisted of old Slayson, who for ten years had taken care of the Hahns’ lawn, Herr Professor Hermann, the huge, heavily-bearded old German who had been the earliest apostle of music in Liberty, and little Jimmy Strait, who had secretly worshiped Jack Hahn ever since they

had both graduated from the high school and whom she bore away in triumph from the door of his father's butcher-shop.

Tom Hahn met them, laughing, at the curb in front of the little hotel where the votes were cast.

"Well, Professor," he said, "what do you think about the new woman in politics now? I 'll take the rig off your hands now, girls."

"Indeed you won't," answered his sister. "We 're having a fine time. And we can get a lot more votes than you can, can't we Pauline?"

The polls closed at six o'clock. Out at the Anders farm the day dragged. Antje and her mother kept steadily at their work, both lonely and under a strain. The old woman yearned to speak to her daughter tenderly and to try to comfort her. The girl, her hands mechanically busy with the homely tasks of the kitchen, sent her spirit abroad to cheer her lover in his battle at the polls. Almost despairingly, she prayed for his success.

After an early supper she went to her little bedroom and lay there for hours, sleepless

with anxiety. It was nearly midnight when she heard her father come in. He seemed to walk straight through the kitchen to his bedroom. Then came the muffled sound of three or four questions on the part of her mother and as many short, gruff replies. After that there was silence.

An hour later Antje was roused from a troubled sleep by the sound of boisterous talking just outside the house. Presently her brothers, Klaas and Piet, tramped into the kitchen, talking and laughing noisily.

“Hush the noise and go to bed yet,” called the old King angrily from his bedroom.

Then Klaas replied in a thick, unsteady voice, speaking first to his brother in what was intended to be a whisper.

“The old man is sore yet, huh, Piet?” he said and then in a louder tone: “Say, father, the boys in town give you the laugh. They say you put up five thousand dollars to beat Pat McCormick. Lawyer Wagner puts most of it in his pocket, already, and Pat McCormick gets elected by the biggest majority on the ticket. Heh! I don’t blame you when you feel sore!”

Antje heard the old man's incoherent retort and the confused sound of several angry voices talking at once. Then a deep silence spread over the household and the girl buried a hot cheek in her pillow and cried softly—for joy at the success of the man she loved. She knew that defeat would make her father more savage and vindictive, and that on her would be visited his displeasure. But that was nothing beside the glorious fact that Pat had won!

Pat McCormick and the other Democratic candidates, with their managers and friends, received the news of their election in the headquarters at the engine-house. By nine o'clock it was known that the town of Liberty had given the ticket a large majority. Presently the first report came in from the country towns. It was brought by a man on horse-back, who announced that in Monroe township, usually strongly Democratic, King Anders had cut down the majority to a few votes. That, for a time, caused some alarm, but before midnight, it was certainly known that the Republicans were overwhelmingly defeated and Pat went home to take the news.

The little cottage was all aglow, a kerosene

lamp shining in each one of the front windows, and from the porch hung a big flag. But when he stepped inside the door the sitting-room was empty.

“Mother!” he called jubilantly. “We ’ve won!”

At his call the door leading to the kitchen burst suddenly open and out sprang Aunt Bridget, with a whoop of joy. Clutched in her two hands, her arms held out stiff before her, she carried a black, broad-cloth, frock coat.

“Here it is, yer Honor!” she cried. “Here it is! Hurrah for the litthle peepul!”

Behind her, awkwardly and half shyly, came Mrs. McCormick. She bore, as if it had been an imperial crown, a shining silk hat.

“From yere mother and yere aunt,” said Aunt Bridget, with a profound curtsy. “And a proud day it is for the County Roscommon!”

There were tears in Pat’s eyes as he laughed. Then nothing would do but the new regalia must be put on and Aunt Bridget walked around the room to admire the spectacle from every angle.

“’T is the grandest sight a human bein’ ivir gazed upon,” she announced finally.



“Here it is, yer Honor!”

Old Mrs. McCormick, leaning against the wall, with admiration and boundless love shining in her rugged old face, suddenly covered her eyes with her hands.

“Why, mother, what ’s the matter?” cried Pat in alarm.

“Oh, sure,” she wailed, shaking her head from side to side, despairingly, “I ’m wishin’ my Mike—God save his soul—were here to see!”

In the morning Pat started downtown in the highest spirits. On the way fully a score of people stopped to congratulate him and give him their best wishes. He stuck his head into the room over the engine-house which had been used for headquarters. Higgins and Tom Hahn were already there and a crowd of men were sitting about, discussing the result. They raised a cheer at the sight of him.

“You lead the ticket, Pat,” said Higgins, gripping his hand. “It ’s a landslide. Half the counties in the state have gone Democratic. Look here what the *Clarion* has to say about you.”

“The great surprise of the whole unexpected result,” Pat read, “is the astonishing majority

of Patrick McCormick, candidate for prosecuting attorney. He received nearly four hundred more votes than the next highest man on either ticket. The river ward—as might have been expected—voted solidly for him and the silk stockings of upper Main Street were not far behind in support. In addition he seems to have got practically the entire Grand Army vote throughout the entire county.

“The *Clarion* strongly opposed Mr. McCormick’s election, but it cannot fail to recognize that he has shown himself to be extremely popular with the voters of Liberty County. Now that the fight is over, it is only fair to admit that during the campaign he displayed most extraordinary power as a public speaker. Beginning with a really eloquent oration at the laying of the corner-stone of the soldiers’ monument, he spoke forcibly, more than once, to large audiences in every township in the county. He owes the impressive majority by which he leads all competitors almost entirely to his own exertions. We venture to express the hope that his friends may not be disappointed in his future career.”

Pat looked up from the paper, flattered and proud, yet embarrassed in his pride.

“I ’m going over to the post-office,” he said, by way of covering his confusion. “I ’ll be back shortly.”

“Be sure,” Higgins whispered to him as he went out. “There is something important I want to see you about.”

Pat walked down the two blocks of Main Street with his head in the clouds, finding it hard to conceal the happiness he could not help but feel. At the post-office there was a single letter waiting for him.

It was the letter which Antje Anders had written the day before election and had given to the hired man to mail. He read it and the light faded out of the sky. In his triumph the proudest thought had been that now he had something worth while to offer her. If he had failed the blow would have been easier. But coming most cruelly in the moment of his victory, it took all the sparkle out of his ambition; all the zest and spirit from life itself.

“I have made up my mind,” she wrote, and “please take this as final.”

XXIV

CHAIRMAN HIGGINS sat late in his library going over the returns. Not only Liberty, but Washington and Madison Counties, the three making up the Twentieth congressional district, had gone Democratic for the first time since the war. Higgins set down on a sheet of paper the majorities received by all the winning candidates in each of the three counties. He studied and compared the figures carefully.

“By George!” he said to himself. “I believe we can do it.”

For years the district had been represented in Congress by John Mason of Washington County, a Republican. Mason was not a man of any especial ability or unusual brilliancy. He had made many enemies in the district.

Next morning Higgins ran over to Allenton, the county-seat of Washington County and had an interview with his friend, Charley Johnson,

chairman of the Democratic county committee. The following day Pat McCormick got a letter from Johnson, signed in his official capacity, inviting him to make the principal speech at a Democratic ratification-meeting in Allenton.

Unhappy and disheartened by the letter from Antje, the Johnson invitation, though so flattering in terms and so inspiring in the opportunity it offered, came without a thrill. Pat's first and strong impulse was to decline it. It did not seem worth while to make the effort. But that, he reflected, would be the part of a child. He needed something to keep him from brooding uselessly on what he had lost. He sat down at once and forced himself to write an acceptance. Next day he told Higgins what he had done. The Chairman, speaking as if it were all news to him, was warm in his congratulations.

"It 's a fine chance, Pat," he said, "and more may depend on it than you imagine. You must give them a ripper. My reputation 's at stake, as well as your own."

As Pat plunged into the work of preparing

his speech he found his enthusiasm growing. Resolutely, with clenched teeth, he drove the thought of his great disappointment out of his mind. The love of a woman was not the only thing worth while in the world. He fiercely concentrated all his energies upon the writing of his speech and the joy of the born orator filled him, as he worked it out to a splendid climax. As he finished one period, tears were in his eyes; at the conclusion of another he sprang to his feet and, standing before the mirror, rehearsed its stately sentences in a voice that roused Aunt Bridget from her midnight slumber. When the last word was written he threw himself on the bed and slept soundly until morning.

Down at Allenton, Higgins, who was a member of the State Central Committee, as well as head of the county organization, had been at work through his friend Johnson. The Democrats, so long silent and uncomforted in defeat, were brought into the city from all over the district on special trains. Marching clubs from each of the three county-seats were present, each headed by a brass band. At the cor-

ners of the court-house square huge bonfires were built and there, standing on a wooden platform, Pat was introduced to the huge, cheering crowd.

“The Twentieth congressional district has redeemed herself,” said Chairman Johnson. “In each of her three counties every Democratic candidate has been elected. To-night I have the honor of introducing to you the man who won the most sweeping victory among them all—the Irish Bantam of Liberty County—Honorable Patrick McCormick.”

The bands burst into wild discordant welcome; down in front, Higgins, Tom Hahn and the delegation from Liberty led the cheers; from five thousand throats rose the shrill triumphant voice of “the unterrified and unconquerable Democracy.” Then Pat spoke.

Next morning the *Chicago Tribune*, whose correspondent had been present at the suggestion of Higgins, said:

“Not in ten years has there been such a scene of enthusiasm and tumult at a political meeting in Illinois as that which followed the conclusion of his speech. From this time on Mr. McCormick must be

reckoned with among the political factors of the state.”

Next day Higgins, Tom Hahn, old Williams and the other members of the county central committee tramped into Pat’s law office. He looked up in surprise from his desk and saw the smiling faces of his friends.

“Pat,” said Higgins, “we want you to run for Congress. Wait a minute,” he went on smilingly, as the young man started to speak. “The election is four months off. The convention to nominate a Democratic candidate will be held in August. There’s no time to lose. We don’t want an answer now. Think it over and let us know to-morrow.”

Pat thanked the committee. In his heart he knew already that he should accept the offer if it were possible. Politics was his mistress now and, the warmer he made his wooing of her, the less he should be tormented with despairing thoughts of Antje Anders. Besides, his youthful blood was stirred with new consciousness of power. The dazzling prospect of congressional honors did not frighten him. And in a far corner of his mind lurked the unexpressed

thought that he might show the girl that what she rejected had a higher value than she had dreamed of.

Higgins remained after the rest of the committee had gone out. "It 's like this, Pat," he said. "The Democratic nominee this year will have pretty nearly a cinch. The fight 'll be for the nomination. Washington County has had the Congressman so long that it won't have a candidate. That leaves it between us and Madison. On the basis of the last vote, Madison County will have eighteen delegates to the convention, Liberty County twenty-one and Washington County twenty. The man who carries Liberty County and who can get half of Washington's vote 'll win. I 've got it fixed already with Johnson that, if he can control it, we shall have ten of Washington's delegates. And you can get Liberty's solid delegation without half trying. See?"

Before Pat McCormick formally announced his candidacy, Higgins succeeded in arranging that the nominating convention should meet in the Grand Opera House at Liberty on the first Thursday in August. Delegates from each of

the three counties in the district were to be chosen at a primary election to be held two days before that date.

The statement of Pat McCormick's new ambition was given space in all the papers of the district. Even the Republican *Clarion* printed a long article on its front page, declaring that the newly-elected prosecuting attorney was presumptuous and absurd in aspiring to succeed the veteran, John Mason, at Washington.

"We advise our friends, the enemy," said the *Clarion*, "not to bank too much on the result of an off-year landslide. When national issues are to be voted on, the stalwart Republicans of the old Twentieth district can be depended on to stick to their guns. Certainly they are not likely to send to Washington, in the place of our present time-tried and tested representative, a young man who, whatever his ability, is utterly without legislative experience."

From Madison County came the prompt announcement that Fred Steffens, a prominent German lawyer, had been chosen to carry its banner in the fight for the nomination.

The campaign went with a rush, as Higgins

had planned it. It was not a succession of speeches and big meetings, like that which had preceded the recent election. Instead, Higgins and his aides sat at headquarters and prepared lists of delegates to be voted for at the coming primaries. Each man on the list was called in and personally pledged to vote for Pat McCormick, as Liberty County's candidate, until released by the chairman.

Steffens was somewhat active in Washington County, but Higgins made small effort there, being content to trust to his secret understanding with Johnson, head of the county organization.

"I can promise to deliver ten of our delegates to you, no matter what happens," Johnson assured him, a week before the primaries were held.

XXV

FOR weeks after Pat McCormick's election as prosecuting attorney, King Anders did not leave the farm. He stayed close to the house, though he drove his sons and the hired men to their work with even more than his usual savage energy. Day after day he shut himself up in his bedroom adjoining the kitchen, muttering and talking to himself. To Antje, busy with mechanical, never-ending household duties, there came to be something uncanny in the intermittent rumbling of that harsh, old voice. As the days went by in their dead, hopeless monotony, the sounds which came from her father's bedroom grew to be a menace of coming catastrophe. Sooner or later she felt certain that the old King would rouse himself to seek revenge on Pat McCormick and the others who had helped to make him ridiculous, and every day which passed without action on his part made more acute the dread

that filled her. She became a bundle of tingling nerves, strained to catch some hint of what deep plot her father was laying, so that she might warn her lover in time to save him. She felt that she would have stooped to any subterfuge, to any trick of eavesdropping, to protect Pat McCormick from what seemed, in her morbid mood, the conspiracy that threatened him.

When the *Weekly Clarion*, telling of Pat's triumph at the Allenton ratification-meeting, reached the farm, she took it to her bedroom and, behind a locked door, laughed and cried there, for joy at what he had done. But when she saw how the King's sullen and morose wrath was rekindled when he read it, her dread came back stronger than before. Then came the paper of the next week, which announced that Pat McCormick was a candidate for the Democratic nomination for Congress. She was not at the house when the paper arrived and, before she returned, her father had hitched up and driven to town for the first time in months. She did not notice his absence for some hours and the paper which explained it did not fall into her hands until

late in the afternoon. Then it seemed to her that her heart stood still. The announcement, she felt, might drive her father to any desperate act and she had been too late to send word to Pat of his danger. In an agony of nervous fear she kept about her work until she heard the sound of wheels coming up the lane. Then she went out into the yard as her father drove by to the barn.

“Here, Antje,” the King called to her. “I ’ve got you a letter yet.”

He threw her the letter as he passed. She recognized Tom Hahn’s writing. It was the first time her father had spoken to her for months. She knew that something had happened to relax his stubborn mood, but it was impossible even to imagine what it might be. She took the letter and went up to her bedroom.

When King Anders read that Pat McCormick was a candidate for Congress, he had wasted not a minute. One hour later he walked into Lawyer Wagner’s office. Wagner, looking up from his table, took the opening.

“Well, Anders,” he said, quickly, “you ’re

a stranger. The Demmys skinned us good and plenty, did n't they?"

"Yes," growled the King. "What became of that money of mine, already?"

"I did the best I could with it. Why, young McCormick carried your own town against you. I don't see how you could expect me to do any better."

"What you do with the money, huh?"

"Here are the vouchers," said Wagner, taking a lot of receipted bills from a pigeon-hole. "Every cent 's accounted for."

"Uh-h," said Anders, with a contemptuous glance at the papers, "you got that fixed all right."

"But now," the lawyer went on impressively, ignoring the innuendo, "he 's going to run for Congress and now we 've got a chance."

Wagner lowered his voice and, as the King listened to the unfolding of the plan, a malicious twinkle came into his small, black eyes.

"I go me right back and start—" he began, but Wagner interrupted.

“Now wait a minute,” he said. “If they get even a suspicion of what you ’re going to do, they can beat us to death. You must let on that you don’t take a bit of interest in the primaries.’

He talked in low tones for fifteen minutes, impressing upon King Anders the details of the plot and the necessity for absolute secrecy.

“By Gott! Wagner,” Anders burst out finally, “I believe we get him this time sure. We teach him yet, huh?”

“It all depends on how carefully you do it,” answered the lawyer. “And you don’t want to be seen about my office again until the thing ’s all over.”

King Anders went home like a boy with a new pet. The look of shrewd and cunning self-satisfaction had come back again to his face. Antje, picking up the letter which he had thrown her, had noticed the change and tried vainly to guess its cause. That wonder was still first in her mind as she tore the envelope to read what Tom Hahn had to say.

“This is the third time I have written you,” he said, “since your letter came. I can’t understand why you do not answer. I think I have

a right to know why you will not marry me. You don't say; you give no reason. At least let me see you, before you finally make up your mind. My great love for you is surely sufficient reason for this insistence."

He had written her twice before? Where had the letters gone? Her father had kept them, of course. Perhaps, also, he had kept from her a letter from Pat McCormick. For that she hated him. Now she must answer Tom Hahn.

"Dear Tom," she wrote. "I have just had your letter of Thursday. The other two you wrote have never reached me. You say you have a right to know why I will not marry you. I agree with you and I will tell you, since you ask, though, as you say you love me, you must keep my secret in the strictest confidence. I cannot marry you because I love another man. I can give you no better proof of my feeling for you than to tell you this, for you and I are the only ones who know it—and no one else must know. I cannot even mention his name. If it is hard for you, please do not think it is easy for me."

When she went down to see about the mail-

ing of her letter, her father was bustling about the house and exchanging jests with her mother, in a mood so different from that which had held him for months that she was frightened. More than ever now she felt that she must be on her guard. She knew that something was on foot which involved the happiness and fortune of Pat McCormick. How she yearned for a word from him, just to say that he was well and that he loved her, for, in spite of the letter she had written him, she felt that he should somehow have guessed the truth.

The next morning her father was up early and went out to visit one of the old, vacant houses which still stood on the various farms he had swallowed up. A few days later a new family, with three or four grown boys among its members, moved into the house.

“I think I try me how some tenants work, yet,” the King announced at the table. “I get some more out here next week.”

Almost every day now, another one of the vacant houses on the Anders' land was occupied by a family and every family seemed to be made up largely of men. Never before had

the King ever rented an acre of his land. He had always insisted on working it all under his own supervision. Why this sudden change in a life-long policy? What possible effect could it have on Pat McCormick and on his ambition to go to Congress? The girl was puzzled, entirely at sea. She thought of writing to Tom Hahn and asking his advice. But, under the circumstances, that seemed impossible.

Finally the vacant houses were all filled up. The new tenants seemed to be strangely unsociable. They kept closely to themselves, having nothing to do with any of the neighboring farmers. And Antje noticed that so far as working the land went they seemed to be strangely indifferent. What was stranger still, this laxity on their part seemed not to rouse the ire of the King. It was a puzzle the girl could not solve.

Finally one afternoon—it was the day before the primaries for the election of delegates to the Congressional convention were to be held—she was lying up in the haymow in the horse barn, where she went occasionally to be alone with her thoughts and with her love.

Her brothers, Klaas and Piet, drove into the stable below from the fields. She heard them as they unharnessed and put up their horses. Then Klaas, standing just below the opening to the loft, spoke with a guttural laugh.

“The old man ’s got that McCormick feller fixed this time, ain’t he?”

“By Golly!” answered Piet, “When he sees you and me and the old man walk into the Opera House on Thursday, I guess he ’ll think Anders ain’t such a fool, yet, huh?”

It came to her like a flash that this was the secret she had been seeking. Just what it meant she did not understand, but it was plain that the plan was to defeat Pat at the nominating convention. That was only three days off. If he was to be warned it must be at once. She waited until her brothers had gone into the house, then hurried after them and went up to her room. The thought that she was doing wrong in thus taking advantage of what she had overheard did not even occur to her. Her one object was to help Pat McCormick at any cost and in any way.

“Dear Pat,” she wrote, her fingers flying,

“Father and the boys are planning to beat you at the convention. I don’t know how, but I heard Klaas say this afternoon that you would be surprised when he and Piet and father walk into the Opera House on Thursday afternoon. For three months father has been filling up all the vacant houses on his farm with tenant families. I suppose that has something to do with it. I ’m sorry I did n’t have sense enough to see it before, for I ’m afraid the news comes to you too late. I don’t know how I ’m going to get this note to you, but I ’ll try to find a way. I hope you ’ll win—I ’m sure you will.

“Antje.”

She wrote without stopping to think how the receipt of this note must affect the man who had received her cold and formal letter of rejection. Putting it hurriedly into an envelop she slipped away across the fields to the Luders farm-house. Mrs. Luders was in the kitchen.

“Can you get this letter mailed for me to-night?” asked Antje breathlessly.

“Yes, sure,” Mrs. Luders answered. “He ’s going in to-night and I ’ll put it up here on the

clock to give to him." By "he" Mrs. Luders meant her husband, of course. She always so referred to him.

Early the next morning King Anders, his sons and his hired men left the house. One of them went straight to each of the tenant farms and there marshaled the voters they had installed. Late in the afternoon they appeared at the little red school-house, where the primary election was held. The judges found that all the necessary formalities had been attended to. There was nothing to do but to permit them to cast their votes. Each of them cast a ballot for a delegate ticket on which appeared the names of King Anders and his two eldest sons. When the votes were counted it was found that they had twelve majority over the regular ticket prepared by Higgins and headed by Luders.

Coming home late that night to supper King Anders made no attempt to conceal his glee.

"Huh!" he began. "I guess, maybe so, that McCormick feller finds out now that he monkeys mit a buzz-saw. We three beat him to death in the convention Thursday."

Had her letter miscarried? Had she been too late after all? Antje listened to the taunt with cheeks that burned and hot tears of anger in her eyes. Her father looked at her and chuckled grimly.

“I guess maybe so that young upstart has to move back to Shantytown where he belongs and go to work yet, huh, Antje?”

The girl did not answer. She clenched her hands and strove to keep back the hot tears.

“What you got to say to that, Antje, huh?” he persisted, brutally.

“I wrote him yesterday what you were doing,” she flashed back at him. “He ’ll beat you yet.”

Then she turned and ran sobbing up the stairs to her room. From below the sound of boisterous laughter came up to her.

XXVI

HAVING furnished King Anders with a plan for defeating the congressional ambitions of Pat McCormick, Lawyer Wagner set about gratifying a private and personal spite of his own. His own feeling towards "the Irish Bantam of Liberty County" had come to be only less bitter than that of the King himself. He chuckled with malicious self-satisfaction as he finished writing a brief editorial for the *Clarion*.

"I guess he and Higgins 'll fall right into this figure-four trap," he said to himself as he read it over for the tenth time.

"Political ambition is commendable," he had written. "And a man who is suddenly raised from the street to a place of considerable political power may almost be excused if he loses his head. But, however dazzled, he should try to remember that a high position carries with it certain responsibilities. A man is not elected

prosecuting attorney, for instance, in order that he may live on the salary of that office while he is trying to obtain a nomination for Congress. Common decency, if nothing else, should lead him to resign one office, while fighting for the other, or else give up his ideas of further preferment and settle down to try to earn the salary he is drawing."

Pat read the paragraph in the *Clarion* and took it over to headquarters.

"I think Wagner 's right about that," he said to Higgins, when the chairman had read it. "I 'll have to resign, anyhow, right after the convention—that is if I 'm nominated."

"Well, there 's no doubt about that," said Higgins. "But I don't like the idea of doing what Wagner says. He is n't making the suggestion for our benefit, you know."

"If I stick, it 'll give the Republicans something to talk about when the campaign opens. And I don't see that Wagner has shown himself to be especially brilliant so far, do you?"

"All right," said Higgins. "Send 'er in. If there 's a nigger in the wood-pile this time I don't see him."

So Pat sent in his resignation to the Governor and, when its acceptance was made public, Lawyer Wagner smiled grimly.

“I guess that young man ’ll be out of a job altogether pretty soon,” he said.

Up to the day of the primary election, Higgins held a weekly conference with the chairmen of the various township committees. Once he asked Luders, head of the organization in Monroe township, whether King Anders was showing any signs of activity.

“No, I guess the old man got his belly full at the last election,” Luders answered. “He ’s farming now. I hear he ’s renting some of his land out to tenants. The King has n’t been up to working it all himself since he had that stroke.”

The evening before the primaries the last conference was held. Luders came in late and was in a great hurry.

“Everything ’s all right,” he reported. “I was out buying some sheep this afternoon and I did n’t stop at the house on my way to town, so I must hurry back. The old woman ’ll think something ’s happened to me if I don’t get home soon.”

So far as Higgins had been able to discover there was no opposition to his delegate ticket in any part of Liberty County. The next evening he, with the remainder of the committee and its candidate, waited at headquarters to receive such returns as might come in. Luders was one of the first to arrive. He threw himself, breathless and white-faced, from his horse and rushed up the stairs. A glance at his face showed the shame and chagrin which he felt.

“What ’s the matter, Luders?” demanded Higgins, half rising from his chair.

“King Anders,” he stammered.

“He has n’t—”

“He filled up all his tenant houses with voters and he beat us by twelve majority.”

“Good Lord!” Higgins sank back into his chair. “He what?”

“He got himself and his two boys elected delegates by twelve majority.”

Pat McCormick saw the golden dome of the Capitol at Washington grow dim and fade out before his eyes. A feeling of rage filled him.

“What did you let a lot of strangers vote for?” he demanded.

“They ’d all been living there long enough

to vote," insisted Luders, "and the King had affidavits ready to swear in everybody that we objected to."

"We 'll beat 'em on a contest," said Higgins.

"The Steffens crowd 'll have a majority without these three votes," broke in Pat. What difference did it make after all? The bitter thought flashed on him that Antje must have known something about her father's plan. If she had cared she would have warned him.

"That 's so," said Higgins, slowly. "Well, Luders," he went on, "you might as well go home. I don't see anything you can do now."

"Maybe we can—" the man began, but Higgins interrupted him. "I want to think it over now," he said. "You come in to-morrow morning and we 'll see what can be done."

Luders reluctantly left the room and Higgins turned to his colleagues.

"Pat," he said, "I knew Wagner was up to something when he said that you should resign."

"He apparently was."

“I ’m not going to give up yet. Have any of you anything to suggest?”

Several half-hearted and desperate plans were proposed, but none of them appealed to the practical sense of the chairman. Pat McCormick seemed to sum up the general feeling when he said: “Without our home county solidly with us, I don’t see that we have much show.”

Higgins stayed at headquarters after the others had gone home. “It ’s mostly my fault, anyway,” he said. “I did n’t give Wagner and old Anders credit for as much sense as they ’ve got and I should n’t have trusted anything to Luders. He means all right, but— I ’m going to stay awhile, anyhow, and see what I can figure out.”

Before he went home Higgins sent a telegram to his friend Charley Johnson, chairman of the Washington County delegation.

“Meet me at Hanson Junction as early as possible to-morrow, Wednesday morning,” the message said.

XXVII

KING ANDERS drove into Liberty early the next morning. In his coat pocket he carried the certificates of the election that accredited him and his two sons as delegates to the Congressional convention. But he did not stop to see Lawyer Wagner and gloat with him over the victory they had won. Instead, he tied his team in front of the court-house and tramped heavily up the stairway across Main Street, which led to the office of Pat McCormick.

Pat happened to be alone in the room, having come down to look over his mail.

“Good morning, Mr. Anders,” he said, controlling himself with an effort, as the old man closed the door behind him. “What can I do for you?”

“Huh!” said the old King, with a chuckle. “I came up to do somedings by you this morning already.”

“Sit down, sir.”

“So,” said the old man, seating himself, a grin on his face. “I hear you want to go by Congress yet, huh?”

“Yes, I am working hard to that end,” answered Pat with a smile, falling in with the Anders mood.

“Well, we see about that yet, huh?” said the King, with a sudden scowl on his face. “Maybe so, when me and my two boys votes against you that Steffens feller goes?”

“What do you want to see me about, Mr. Anders?” Pat asked sharply. He could not imagine what the old man had in mind, but he had no desire to get into a quarrel with him.

“I come up here to tell you that, maybe so, I had three votes for you yet,” said the King, his big, red face wrinkled into a cunning smile.

“You—what?” stammered Pat in astonishment.

“Sure,” the King went on in what was intended to be a conciliatory and soothing tone. “I got these three votes for you. But you must also do someding a little for me.”

“Well—what is it?”

King Anders got up, walked across to the table, rested his two huge hands on its surface and leaned over, speaking in a husky and confidential whisper.

“There is mein girl, Antje,” he said. “She is no good. Naw-w!” He shook his head, convincingly. “When she makes married I not give her an acre of land.” The little gray eyes searched Pat’s face shrewdly. They saw there a strange tumult of emotions—astonishment, anger, a flicker of hope. Why this speech to him, who carried in his breast pocket the girl’s letter of rejection?

“I vote for you when you promise to let mein girl alone yet, huh?” The King thrust his face further forward, waiting his answer. It still wore a cunning, conciliatory smile.

Pat McCormick squared his slim shoulders; he rested his forefinger on the old man’s shoulder. In the face of the insult he smiled like a man to whom has come a vision of un hoped and impossible happiness.

“Mr. Anders,” he said slowly, “if your daughter will have me, I ’ll marry her in spite of you and all hell!”

“Marry you!” bellowed the King. “Marry you! I make her dead first! Und you, too!”

Tom Hahn opened the door and stepped in, just as King Anders uttered his threat. The King showed a savage face over his shoulder, and recognized the intruder, then dropped his arms and, without another word, backed scowling out of the office.

For a moment the two young men stood silent, looking straight into each other's eyes. It was hard to tell which face was the whiter. Pat was the first to speak.

“Sit down, Tom,” he said, “and I 'll tell you about it.”

Tom Hahn dropped into a chair, his eyes still fixed on Pat.

“He came up to offer me his three votes”—Tom Hahn sat up straight, surprise in his face—“provided I 'd promise not to marry his daughter.”

A sudden look of anger blazed in Tom's eyes at the insult to his friend. “As if that would help me,” Pat went on bitterly, “when she 's turned me down cold.”

Tom Hahn rose to his feet, his face troubled.

Pat stepped forward and held out his hand. "Forgive me, old man," he said. "It 's been hard to give her up. But I ought to have congratulated you before this."

Tom took the offered hand, but shook his head at the same time. "Not me, Pat," he said, slowly. "It is n't me."

Each looked at the other, embarrassed and perplexed. Then both smiled, doubtfully.

"I 'm ashamed of the way I 've felt towards you, Tom."

"There are some things a fellow can't help."

"Well, whatever happens, we 'll stick together now."

"Nothing shall come between us."

Then, as if ashamed of the emotion he had shown, Tom Hahn dropped the hand of his friend and hastily opened the office door. "Good-by, old man," he said. "I 'll see you this afternoon."

Pat stood still a moment, his head in a whirl. What did it all mean? He formed an instant decision to find out. Five minutes later he secured a mount at the livery-stable opposite the court-house and rode down Main Street

at a gallop. As he passed the Opera House block he caught sight of the broad back of King Anders, filling the stairway which led up to the office of Lawyer Wagner.

Crossing the Main Street bridge he turned north into the river road. He had no definite plan of action in his mind. He only knew that somehow he must find out the truth. Could it be that after all she loved him? Then what mattered anything else? What mattered his failure to win the nomination? The loss of his position as prosecuting attorney? The fierce anger and savage threats of the old King? If she but loved him!

He leaned over and patted the horse's outstretched neck. "Good boy! Good boy!" he whispered. "Can you carry us both?" And laughed aloud at the thought. They clattered swiftly through King Anders' miles of summer woodlands and past his yellowing wheat fields. It was harvest time—harvest time for the fields of wheat and for the hopes of lovers. Surely she loved him and somewhere he would find her!

The pony seemed to catch its rider's fever

of haste. Its long stride lengthened and it swept round the corner, where stood the school-house under its elm, at a speed to please the temper of the fieriest Lochinvar.

For dear memory's sake, Pat gave the old building a swift, tender glance of reminiscent affection—then suddenly pulled his horse back on its haunches.

There on the low door-step sat a slender girl in a blue dress, so wrapped in thought that she had glanced with unseeing eyes at the approaching horseman. Her hands lay listless in her lap, her shoulders had the curve of despondency. For an instant Pat looked at her, breathless. She was there because she loved him!

“Antje!” he cried, throwing himself from his horse.

The girl started up, terror in her eyes. Her red lips were parted and her bosom rose and fell with her quick, frightened breathing. Her slender figure leaned back against the door for support.

“What has happened?” she cried. “You have n't killed him?”

He came hurrying to her, arms outstretched, laughing out of sheer joy. "Nothing has happened," he said. "Nothing—except that you love me!"

Up to the very edges of her sunny hair swept the traitorous pink and her shining eyes grew dim with tenderness, but she only pressed the closer to the protecting wall.

"No," she stammered, not daring to look him in the eyes, "I do not love you."

"Antje, dearest!" He seized her brown hand and covered it with kisses. Then, suddenly, he took her tightly into his arms. For an instant she yielded herself to him utterly. He felt her fluttered breathing against his heart and, in a moment's ecstasy, he kissed away the tears which filled her eyes. Her round brown arms went up to twine about his neck, her rosy face was upturned and her lips lifted to his—then suddenly there swam before her brimming eyes a scene of bloody conflict—a prophetic vision, it seemed to her, of the hour when her lover and her father should settle once for all the feud that was of the old King's making, and which she knew he would carry on to the bitter end.

“No! No!” she struggled and pulled herself away from his embrace, leaning back trembling against the door. A blind terror of what might happen, should she yield, mastered her. “I do not love you,” she said, fiercely. “If you loved me you would not come here.”

“Dear heart!” he pleaded and took her hand again—from each to other thrilled the truth—“I know you love me. I could not stay away.”

“You must go,” she faltered, “now—at once!”

“Not without you!”

To her strained ears came the distant sound of wagon wheels. It might well be her father coming home. Her eyes were big with terror. At any cost of cruelty Pat must be sent away—and quickly. Her face was that of a tortured saint, but the boy was too full of his love to read it rightly.

“Pat,” she said slowly, clenching her brown hands, “I do not love you. You have brought nothing but sorrow into my life. I told you not to come here. You only make me miserable. I am fond of you, Pat—but—I do not love you,” she lashed herself to repeat.



“Then suddenly he took her tightly into his arms.”

Pat dropped back a step as if he had been stabbed. The pain of it was unbelievable. The girl spared herself the sight of his face. She was afraid to look.

“Now, will you go?” she urged. It was plain to her that he had never had her warning letter, else he would not so quickly believe the words her anguished face belied. Without waiting for his answer, she turned and slipped noiselessly away through the trees. He looked up again at the sound of her voice.

“Go!” she cried back to him. “Hurry, and —don’t take the river road!”

ON her homeward flight Antje stopped at the Luders farm. She burst into the kitchen unannounced, and fat old Mrs. Luders turned around at her entrance with something like haste in her ponderous movements. The girl’s cheeks were flaming and an angry light was in her eyes.

“What ’s the matter, Antje?” she asked.

“You did n’t mail my letter!” said the girl, accusingly.

“No,” the old woman began, but Antje in-

errupted. "I knew you had n't," she broke out.

"He went into town without coming home the other night," the old woman went on, "but he took it in with him this morning all right,"

"Oh! Oh! Oh!" cried Antje. "I 'd give my life if it had been mailed that night—or not mailed at all!"

Her lower lip was quivering and her whole figure trembled under the stress of repressed emotion. Farmer Luders' huge old wife was a true woman and wise in the reading of hearts.

"Come here by me, once, little mädchen," she said in her broken English, throwing one massive arm about the girl's shaking shoulders.

So kneeling on the rag carpet, with her head in old Mrs. Luders' capacious lap, Antje cried and sobbed at her enforced cruelty to the man she loved, while a big red hand stroked her yellow braids and a soft old voice said, soothingly, "So-so, liebchen. You been have an awful hard time, yes? But mebbe things come out right yet."

XXVIII

PAT McCORMICK'S gray pony limped back into town, its rider dazed by the succession of cruel blows which had fallen on his unlucky head. All his political ambitions had come to worse than nothing. To-morrow Steffens would certainly be nominated for Congress. Three days later, his resignation as prosecuting attorney—already accepted—would go into effect. That would leave him penniless—a counselor without clients—to begin the practice of law all over again. And the humiliation of political defeat would be an additional handicap.

But that situation might have been faced. Given sufficient incentive and he could have gone into that fight hoping for eventual victory. Fighting for her, no hope would be too desperate, no odds too great. Patience and courage, backed by a woman's love, must conquer. But he had just been told, by her own lips, that

she did not love him—had been told that he made her only miserable. What was the use then? What mattered anything?

The reaction came swiftly. Clenched teeth and lowered brows succeeded an hour of utter despondency. Whatever happened he owed a debt to himself and to his friends. Without a thought of dinner he went to his office and sat grimly down at the desk to make necessary plans.

At 4 o'clock in the afternoon Higgins and Tom Hahn walked in. Pat looked up and the expression on his face somehow moved Higgins to a smile.

“Cheer up!” the chairman burst out. “Perhaps it ain't as bad as you think!”

The candidate forced an answering smile and the two men pulled chairs close to the desk and bent over it in confidential whispers.

“After you went home last night,” Higgins began, “I wired Charley Johnson to meet me at Hanson Junction early this morning. I caught a way-freight at six o'clock and found him there waiting.”

“Then you have n't been to bed yet?” Pat asked.

“No, and I ’m not sleepy, either. I just got back fifteen minutes ago.”

“A man ’s lucky that has you to fight for him.”

“Don’t flatter yourself,” Higgins answered lightly. “My reputation as a political manager is at stake. I can’t stand letting Wagner and King Anders make a fool of me.”

“Well, what happened?”

“I told Johnson what the Anders gang had done for us and he was tickled.”

“And sorry he could n’t do anything more for us?” Pat put in bitterly.

“Not directly, he can’t, but he ’s willing to be more than decent, at that. We fixed up a scheme between us. Both you and Steffens are to be called on to speak to the convention. You ’re to speak last and your speech is supposed to be so blamed eloquent that three of Steffens’ delegates from Washington County are swept off their feet by it and vote for you, in spite of everything that Johnson can do to stop them.”

Pat was smiling broadly.—Here was the way for which he had been vainly groping. “Can he deliver the goods?”

“He could turn over the whole twenty if he wanted to,” Higgins answered, “but this way he can’t be blamed and you ’ll be nominated just the same.”

“Higgins,” said Pat, holding out his hand, “some day I hope I ’ll be able to pay you for this.”

“You don’t owe me anything, my boy,” the chairman answered. “I ’m just playing the game—and it is n’t won yet, either!”

All that evening Higgins, Tom Hahn, Pat and the rest were busy completing arrangements for the convention which was to be held the next afternoon. And long into the night they sat, planning their tactics for the coming day. Johnson came up from Allenton on a late freight train to report that his arrangements were perfected. He gave Higgins the names of three of his delegates.

“They ’re the chaps I ’m not going to be able to hold in line, after Mr. McCormick, here, makes his spiel,” he said with a smile.

“The Steffens people don’t suspect?” asked Higgins.

“No,” answered Johnson, with smiling con-

tempt. "Nobody knows I 'm up here to-night. I 'm going back on the freight at four o'clock to be ready to march in with the brass band and the rest of the boys at ten."

Tom Hahn and Pat escorted Johnson to the station. When they came back to headquarters Higgins looked at his watch.

"By George!" he said. "It 's nearly five o'clock."

"Not much use of going to bed at all," said Tom Hahn.

"Oh, yes!" Higgins insisted. "Pat must get some rest, somehow. He 's got to have all his eloquence on tap to-morrow, you know."

The three men walked up Main Street together. Higgins turned off at the corner above the First Presbyterian church. Tom and Pat McCormick went on, arm-in-arm.

"Tom," said Pat, "I 'm going to owe you fellows a mighty big bill."

"We 'll be around to collect, all right," Tom laughed. "Six or eight of us 'll want the Liberty post-office to begin with."

"If I 'm elected, all you and Higgins need do is ask for what you want," Pat answered.

“Elected! I wish I had half as good a chance of getting to Heaven. A five-minute speech to-morrow afternoon and you ’re It! Good-night, old man.”

Pat walked alone up the long walk to the house. Victory was in his grasp and he saw before him a successful career in Congress—a higher honor than he had dreamed of a year before. The painful memory of the girl he had so nearly won, and lost, only put a fiercer determination into his ambition. Washington! the great white dome of the Capitol! An opportunity to bring honor to a tarnished name! No wonder he felt equal to any possible demand in the way of a speech that afternoon.

The house was in darkness. He let himself in and slipped quietly into his own room on the ground floor. He would undress without striking a light, for fear of waking his mother and old Aunt Bridget. But no! He could not sleep; he would close the doors and read a while before going to bed. He lighted the lamp and there on the little table beside it lay a letter.

He picked it up. It was addressed in the

handwriting of Antje. On the instant there rose before him the trembling figure of the girl as she bade him go. He could feel the pressure of her lips upon his. All his love for her surged up within him. He tore the envelope and read the letter which Antje had given to Mrs. Luders to mail the evening before the primary election.

“I hope you ’ll win. I ’m sure you will!” she had written. He dropped the note on the table and clenched his hands upon it.

“She *must* care a little!” sang his heart. “And I ’ll *make* her care more!”

For a moment he hesitated. Then he buttoned her letter into his coat pocket, put on his hat and went out into the night. In the east the first blushes of the sunrise were beginning to brighten over the Anders farm.

XXIX

THE day of the Congressional convention will long be memorable in Liberty and in all the northern end of the state. Never before had a political meeting of such importance been held in the county, and the fact that there was a local candidate in the field made the convention of tremendous interest to all Pat's townspeople. It had been arranged that special trains should run from Washington and Madison Counties and preparations were made to receive the greatest crowd in the history of Liberty.

The court-house square was the center of excitement. Across from one corner of it stood the Grand Opera House, on the front of which was stretched a huge white cotton banner, bearing, in red letters, the legend: "DEMOCRATIC CONGRESSIONAL CONVENTION." Over the upper story of the engine-house hung another big sheet, with the inscrip-

tion: "PATRICK McCORMICK—HEAD-QUARTERS." The managers of the Stefens campaign had fitted up a similar room nearby. The women of the three different church societies had opened temporary lunch-rooms for the visitors in as many vacant store-buildings and their banners, also, flaunted over the streets. "A GOOD SQUARE MEAL FOR A QUARTER," read one of them. And another: "PATRONIZE THE METHODIST LADIES." The whole town was dressed as for some great festival.

It was a still, scorching August day. By 7 o'clock the farmers of the county, many of whom had started early to escape the heat, were beginning to arrive, their progress heralded by clouds of dust, kicked up by the shambling feet of the heavy horses. It was the first chance that most of them had ever had to participate, even as spectators, in anything like national politics, and they came, almost to a man, within a radius of twenty miles. They early filled the livery-stables with their teams. Later comers hitched their horses in unbroken rows along the racks which fringed

the court-house square and the streets adjoining.

The men and boys, in shirt-sleeves, gathered in groups on the court-house steps and sat in rows along the curb. Presently they filled the grass-plot, in the center of which stood the soldiers' monument, and overflowed on to the sidewalks. The delegates from the various townships were the center of attraction for each group. Most of them had not yet heard of the trick which King Anders had played on the Liberty County candidate.

As that news slowly passed from lip to lip it roused heavy anger and resentment. In almost every group there was one present who had been the victim of the greed and cunning of the King and he was ready to start the discussion with a curse.

"If he beats old Liberty out of a Congressman, he ought to be tarred and feathered!" was the sentiment, more profanely put, that was expressed in fifty places.

Higgins, Tom Hahn and the rest of the campaign managers had met at Pat's headquarters shortly after seven o'clock.

“Where ’s Pat?” Higgins asked.

“Oh, he did n’t turn in until after five, you know,” Tom answered.

“That ’s so. We ’d better let him sleep awhile. He can’t do much, anyhow, this morning.”

About seven o’clock, too, King Anders rode into town, his six sons in the wagon behind him. He hitched his gray stallions before the Grand Opera House and stalked up the stairs, without a word, to the office of Lawyer Wagner. The crowds on the street saw him and many a fist was shaken after his broad back.

An ugly feeling was developing all along the line. After breakfast the men of Liberty came downtown and joined the impromptu debating clubs along the street. They added a new note of bitterness, for Pat McCormick was the idol of many of them, and they hated King Anders, almost to a man. His attempt to send Higgins and Kramer to the penitentiary had never been forgiven. And his treachery to Liberty’s Congressional candidate acted like a strong wind on a smoldering fire.

At eight o’clock the Silver Cornet Band

swung into the court-house square and struck up "Marching through Georgia." And the crowds stopped, thickened along the curb.

Presently the band turned into Main Street and headed for the railroad station. Steffens and his delegates from Madison County were coming in on a special train. Higgins, looking out of the window at headquarters, heard the music and saw the gathering crowds.

"Tom," he said, "the ball 's open. You 'd better go and wake up Pat."

"All right," Tom answered. "I 've got the phaeton waiting down on the street."

In twenty minutes Tom Hahn was back. He rushed up the stairs to headquarters without stopping to tie his horse.

"By God! Higgins, he ain't there!" he cried, breathlessly. "The old lady says he did n't come home all night."

"Hush-h!" whispered the chairman, raising a warning hand. "Don't talk so loud. Where did you leave him this morning?"

"Right at his own gate. He was almost at the door when I looked back." Tom Hahn leaned over the chairman's desk and spoke in a whisper.

“King Anders was up in Pat’s office yesterday morning,” he said. “I heard Anders threaten to kill him. Do you think—?”

“No,” Higgins answered, slowly, after a moment’s hesitation. “No,” he repeated, more firmly, as the situation grew clearer to his mind. “You see the King expects to beat us in the convention, so there ’s no reason why he should want Pat out of the way. But keep it quiet, for the Lord’s sake! The crowd ’s sore enough at Anders now. If this gets out there ’ll be trouble.”

But word that Pat McCormick had disappeared spread quickly through the crowd, in spite of Higgins’ precautions. His mother and Aunt Bridget alarmed the neighborhood with their inquiries, within a few minutes after Tom Hahn had called. In widening circles the alarm spread and, within half an hour, the crowds gathered about the court-house were beginning to talk of it in excited voices. Wild rumors flew from mouth to mouth. Yesterday, it was told, King Anders had called on the candidate in his office and had threatened him with death if he did not withdraw. Now Pat was missing. Anders had kept his word.

“I ’d like to help string up the old Dutchman!” cried one gaunt farmer in the growing crowd about the Opera House building, shaking his fist at the window where the huge figure of King Anders could be seen standing.

“You ’ll get a chance if Pat don’t show up soon,” was the grim retort.

Up Main Street from the railroad station came a long procession, the band at its head, and, behind it, Steffens, Madison County’s candidate, and his eighteen delegates, each of them wearing a big red and gold badge. They were followed by two hundred of Steffens’ friends, who at regular intervals rent the air with staccato cheers.

Presently, with a somewhat milder blare of trumpets, Johnson and his twenty delegates arrived from Washington County. Johnson called first at Steffens’ headquarters. There he heard the startling news of Pat’s disappearance and hurried over to the engine-house to see Higgins.

“What the devil is this I hear, Higgins?” he asked in a whisper.

“Well, Pat ’s gone, that ’s all we know about it.”

“The boys say old Anders has made away with him?”

“That don’t sound reasonable to me. Why, the old man expects to beat us this afternoon. Why should he want to get Pat out of the way?”

“What are you going to do?”

“Get the convention postponed until four o’clock, for one thing. If we don’t look out we ’ll have something worse than a convention to handle.”

“Yes, they ’re talking mighty ugly on the street already. They ’ll be after Anders with a rope if the boy don’t turn up.”

It was getting close to noon and with the passage of each half hour the temper of the crowd grew more dangerous. Hundreds of excited men were now massed about the Grand Opera House. In the center of the crowd was a big dry-goods box and from it as from a pulpit, man after man was stirring up the mob to violence against the King. The concentrated hate of long years flamed up into fury.

Word had early been brought to Lawyer Wagner of the bitter feeling which had developed against his client. As the excitement

grew more and more intense and an outbreak of violence seemed imminent, the attorney lost courage. He urged Anders to slip down the back stairs and into hiding until the clamor was quieted. But the old King laughed at him.

“They can’t scare me yet!” he declared. “By Gott! when they come up here by me they been sorry already!”

In a circle about him, like a royal body-guard, sat his six great sons. Whatever their faults, they were not afraid in this emergency. And, truly, the men who attacked them would have need of all their strength and courage.

The King even refused to leave the window. He stood there in full sight of the mob below and glared down, as if to defy them.

It was one of Anders’ own farm-hands—an Irishman—who was the first actively to incite riot. He came staggering down the street, half a dozen wild comrades with him. Excitement and whiskey had mastered them all. He was half lifted up to the top of a dry-goods box.

“There you are, you ould divvle!” he cried,

pointing a drunken, wavering finger at the window above him. "You, that I 've seen beat your own daughter wid a blacksnake whip! Sure you 'd think no more av cutting a man's throat, whin you 're mad, than I would av crossing the sthreet. You know where Pat McCormick is this minute, ye sour-faced old scut! Come on, byes!" he screamed, waving both arms out over the crowd, "We 'll choke it out av his dirty black throat!"

Tom Hahn, who had been standing in the crowd turned and ran swiftly to the engine-house.

"Higgins," he cried. "Hurry up! They 'll be stringing Anders up in a minute!"

Higgins sprang from his seat and the two rushed back down the stairs.

"We 've got to protect him somehow," gasped Tom Hahn as he ran. But before they reached the crowd in front of the Opera House, affairs had come to a climax.

As the Irishman sprang down from his perch on the box an old farmer forced his way to the center, brandishing a long rope and crying "Come on, boys!" Instantly the mob be-

came a wild beast, clamoring with a hundred savage voices for its prey. Men rushed and fought each other for entrance to the stairway. Suddenly in the doorway loomed up the spare and determined form of the Captain.

“Hold on, you fools!” he shrilled. In his right hand he brandished his wooden leg.

The mob paused in wonder. “Ye know me—” he yelled, “and ye know me fur a friend of Pat McCormick. I know where Pat is this blame minute an’ when the right time comes he ’ll pop up in Convention and turn the tables on that Dutchman upstairs. Now go-wan, you fellers, and don’t spoil his game for him!”

For an instant the mob hesitated and wavered. The moment of madness was over. The excited men gazed at one another with foolish grins.

“Right you are, Cap!” bawled a voice. This ain’t no lynchin’ bee. This here ’s a political convention!”

When the Captain declared he knew Pat’s whereabouts there was, at first, a murmur of incredulity, but there was no doubting his ear-

nestness. Higgins and Tom Hahn took their cue from him.

“Yes,” they assured one man after another, as they circulated through the crowd, “we know where he is, all right, but we can’t tell now. It would spoil all his plans. Just you wait and see.” Gradually the crowd melted away and an ugly tragedy had been averted.

They found the Captain sitting down on the curb to adjust his wooden leg and took him over to headquarters with them. They, too, had been half deceived by the old man’s vehement speech.

“God forgive me for a liar,” he said, in answer to their questioning. “I don’t know where Pat is any more than you do. But we ’ve got to get Anders out of town before that convention meets. I do know that.”

XXX

WHEN the mob began to grow threatening, Lawyer Wagner had fled from his office, followed by the sneers of the old King, who never, for a moment, relaxed his bold front. Wagner did not return and when Higgins and Tom Hahn climbed the back-stairs to the Opera House block and rapped at the door of his office, it was the voice of King Anders that roared permission for them to enter. As the King and his sons saw the managers of their rival come into the room, they rose as one man from their chairs and stood at bay.

“Mr. Anders,” he said, “we want to talk with you.”

“Well!” growled the old man, still standing, surrounded by his giant guard.

“You saw what happened out there just now,” Higgins went on. “We had all we could do to keep the mob from coming up here after you with a rope.”

“Let dem come!” said the King, and his boys moved a little closer about him. “What you think we ’d be doing, huh?”

“We stopped ’em by saying that we knew where Pat McCormick is. But we don’t know. We promised ’em Pat would show up at the convention. But we don’t know whether he ’s alive or dead, I tell you. We ’ve come up here to ask you to get out of town, while you can. If the convention meets and Pat McCormick does n’t appear, we can’t answer for your life!”

“Go to the devil, yet!” said the King, scornfully. “You and your gang can’t scare me! I know your dirty tricks, already. You drive me out of town and then you nominate that young feller for Congress, huh? What for you take me? Me and my boys, we take care of ourselves, by Gott!”

“Anders,” said John Higgins, earnestly, “I don’t know whether you had anything to do with Pat McCormick’s disappearance or not. But if he is n’t here when the convention meets this afternoon there ’ll be bloodshed sure, if the mob can lay hands on you. If you ’ll go

and take your boys with you, I 'll promise that his name shall not be presented to the convention."

"Aw, go talk to some fool, yet!" sneered the King. "I stay right here, by damn, and this afternoon I go by that convention. When you chase me home you have to get something more but a clothes-line rope and a lot of drunk Irishmans. You go find that coward, Wagner, and scare him some more yet!"

"Well," said Higgins, as he and Tom Hahn slipped down the back-stairs, their errand an utter failure, "there 's nothing to do but to postpone the convention as late as possible and hope for the best."

A conference was held with Johnson of Washington County and with the manager of the Steffens forces and presently a placard was posted on the front of the Opera House, announcing that the convention would not be called to order until four o'clock. The delegates already were impatient of idle waiting. Some of them had been drinking and all were excitedly discussing the events of the morning. The shrewder saw in the announcement a part

of the plot for the undoing of King Anders. Others suspected that they had been deceived and that the managers were merely fighting for time. They waited, sullenly, for developments.

Four o'clock came without a word from Pat. For more than an hour a huge crowd had been gathering about the Opera House.

"There 's nothing to do but call the convention to order," said Higgins. "If we delay any longer Hell will break loose. We must string out the preliminaries as long as possible. Perhaps some of the boys 'll get tired and go home."

Promptly at four o'clock the doors of the Opera House were thrown open and up the wide stairways swept a torrent of excited men. Most of them were in their shirt-sleeves. They were smoking pipes and cigars and carrying their coats over their arms. They packed the gallery until it seemed that the pillars which supported it must give way. Men and boys sat as close as they could crowd into the window casements and stood in deep ranks about the rear of both the balcony and the first floor, the

front half of which was roped off for the delegates. The hum which filled the great room was like the buzzing of a vast swarm of angry bees.

Presently King Anders came, forcing his way through the crowd and closely followed by his six sons in single file. The old man and his sons towered high above the men who made way for them. It was like the entrance of a file of giant grenadiers.

“Yes,” answered Higgins, when the doorkeeper appealed to him, “I know only two of the boys are delegates, but let ’em all in. The old man ’s likely to have more than a political fight on his hands this afternoon. We ’ll give him a fair show.”

Looking straight ahead, the seven big men tramped across the house and sat down in the front row of seats, farthest from the door. Higgins felt an irresistible thrill of admiration at the sight.

“By George!” he said to Tom Hahn. “They ’re a nervy lot!”

For a moment, the undaunted entrance of the old man and his sons, forced a respectful silence in the packed body of the house. Then



“Presently King Anders came, closely followed by his six sons.”

W. M. G. 1871

the angry buzz broke out again, louder than before, but it was promptly quieted by whispers of "Wait and see old Anders get the razzle-dazzle!"

Higgins, Johnson and the Steffens managers held an animated conference on the stage. They realized that they were holding a convention of a dangerously explosive character.

"For God's sake keep things moving as slowly as you can!" pleaded Higgins as Johnson rose to call the house to order. So Johnson went on to give a complete history of the Democratic party from the time of Thomas Jefferson down. He reviewed all the follies and mistakes of the Republicans, and spoke at length on the administration of every president since Washington and then started in to "view with alarm" the present condition of the country. Finally the impatient galleries revolted. Men began to yell "Time!" to shout angry interruptions and to beat the floor with their heavy boots.

"I 'll have to quit," said Johnson in an aside to Higgins. "They 'll be throwing chairs in a minute."

So, as slowly as possible, the managers pro-

ceeded with the organization of the convention. Johnson was chosen permanent chairman, two secretaries were selected and a committee was appointed to pass on the credentials of the delegates. Then a recess was proposed from the floor.

“No,” said Higgins, below his voice, “we dare n’t do it. If we don’t keep them busy, they ’ll start a row in a minute. Call somebody up to speak.”

“There ’s Calkins,” Johnson whispered back. “He can set his mouth to going and go way and leave it. I ’ll call on him.”

Calkins had been talking fully ten minutes, though it seemed to Higgins not more than one, when the credentials committee came back to report. The convention waited, in silence, as the names of the accredited delegates were read, until Monroe township was reached.

“Ander Anders,” sounded the shrill sing-song of the reading clerk. Hisses began to break out all over the house. The crowd had hoped that the old King might not be seated. “Klaas Anders.” The hisses redoubled, shot through by derisive cat-calls. “Piet Anders.”

“Hurry up!” Higgins whispered to the

chairman. "Get things started before things break loose."

"Nominations for Congress are now in order," cried Johnson, stepping to the front of the stage. There was an instant's silence; if anything was going to happen, it must happen soon.

A delegate from the Steffens County of Madison jumped up on his chair. "Stage! Stage!" shouted the galleries. The delegates in front boosted the Madison County spokesman over the footlights. He stood at the front center of the platform and spoke with the confidence of assured victory, naming Fred Steffens for the nomination. When he had finished and was climbing down, the Madison County delegation sprang to their feet, cheering and throwing hats into the air. But the rest of the house was strangely silent.

"Any further nominations?" asked the chairman. The hush of the room was accented by the heavy breathing of a thousand excited men, waiting under pressure for an expected sensation. Higgins, his face white and strained, leaned over and whispered to Tom Hahn.

“Get up, Tom,” he said, “and talk!”

Never had an orator a more breathlessly attentive audience and never had an orator less to say than he.

“After him the deluge!” groaned Higgins.

“Gentlemen of the convention,” Tom began. “My first duty—and I could have none more pleasant—is to welcome you to the county and city of Liberty. I welcome you on behalf of all our people, but more especially on behalf of the loyal Democrats of the county, who, fighting under the same standard which you so recently have followed to victory, have just elected their entire ticket, from Prosecuting Attorney to County Superintendent of Schools. More especially still and with the greatest possible pleasure, I welcome you on behalf of Liberty County’s candidate for Congress, whose name I shall have the honor of presenting to this convention.

“We of his home town know him too well and love him too dearly to need a word of introduction. We have known him since the years when as a barefooted Irish boy he lived with his parents in a shanty on the mud-flats of Killgrubbin. His life has been an open

book to us during all the years since then. We have seen how, when his father was killed in battle, the boy gave up his scholarly ambitions and assumed the responsibility of head and chief support of the family. We have been moved by admiration for his industry and his perseverance as he studied law at night and in the intervals of regular employment, preparing himself for admission to the profession, which already he honors. We have seen how, with compelling eloquence, he lead the Democratic hosts of Liberty County to a sweeping victory last spring, himself coming in at the head of the poll, with a majority unmatched in Illinois. More lately, we have listened with pride and admiration as his silver voice stirred the Democratic heart at Allenton and made his name familiar to all the people of our state. We point to him as the rising star of the young Democracy. To-day we bring his name before you, that you may honor the old Twentieth district by honoring him with your nomination for Congress.”

The packed gallery broke into uproarious cheers.

“Gentlemen,” Tom Hahn went on, “I thank

you on behalf of Pat McCormick for your applause and I venture also, in his name, to urge you to remember that he would be the last to thank you for any act of discourtesy to those, who, well within their legal rights, oppose his political ambition.

“There have been those among you who have attempted to stir up the mad spirit of mob violence; who have urged you to lawlessly take the law into your own hands and, without even the shadow of proof, revenge a suspected crime upon the gray head of one who sits here to-day as a delegate, with as good a title to that place as any one among us all. In the name of Pat McCormick, I cry shame upon such false friends of his. Were he in this hall he would be the first to rise in his seat and refuse a nomination for Congress, won at such a cost of disgrace and dishonor to his party, to the county of Liberty and the state of Illinois!”

“Where is Pat McCormick?” cried an angry voice from the gallery. An instant tumult started. Tom Hahn waved his hands for a moment’s silence.

“You have been promised,” he said, impressively, “that before this convention adjourns you shall hear from him.”

“What in the name of Heaven is that boy going to say next?” gasped Johnson.

“He had to do it,” answered Higgins. “It was the only thing that would keep them quiet.”

From the door at the side of the stage stepped a small boy, wearing a blue cap. He held up a yellow envelope.

“Here ’s a telegram for Mr. Hahn,” he said. Tom Hahn took the message, tore the envelope and read it, then turned again to face the breathless house, the open telegram in his hands. Higgins and Johnson had started to their feet. All over the house men were getting up. The silence was tense with apprehension.

“I promised you that you should hear from Pat McCormick,” the speaker said, in a low, shaken voice. “I shall keep my word. His message to us all has just come.”

It seemed to Higgins that Tom must be about to read a message announcing Pat’s

death, so solemn was his manner and his voice. From the gallery men leaned over, their hands to their ears: others stopped still, half-way between sitting and standing. The strain was audible.

“Chicago, Illinois,” Tom read. “August 7th. Thomas Hahn, Grand Opera House, Liberty, Illinois. Antje Anders and I have just been married. If I have lost the Crown I have won the Princess. Our thanks to all my friends. Patrick McCormick.”

Up from a front seat in the gallery rose a wild yell of triumph. It was the voice of the captain. The delegates from Liberty County leaped to their chairs, as if an explosion had thrown them into the air. They were cheering, laughing and slapping each other on the back. Old King Anders sat dazed in his seat. His sons leaned over and whispered to him. He rose to his feet and shouted at Tom Hahn, waving his hands wildly. What he was saying was lost in the mingled din of cheers and derisive yells.

“What ’s the matter, King Anders?” bawled a voice from above. “Did n’t you get a bid to the wedding?”

Some one in the gallery started singing. A hundred voices took it up, beating time with their feet against the floor and railing.

I saw the steamer go 'round the bend—
Good-bye, my lover, good-bye—
All loaded down with Anders' men—
Good-bye, my lover, good-bye!

The King, his six sons in his wake, fought his way to the stage and Tom Hahn leaned over the footlights to hear him.

“It 's a damn lie!” he roared. “Gimme that message yet!” Eagerly he spelled out the writing on the slip of paper, his sons leaning over his shoulders to read. Then he convulsively tore it into bits and stamped them on the floor.

“That 's right! Dance at the wedding!” cried the shrill voice from the gallery.

The King turned to face the howling, laughing, cheering mob, clenching both fists above his head in furious defiance and pouring out a torrent of unheard and unheeded curses.

“Come! We see about this!” he bellowed, rushing for the door, his sons surging after.

Behind them broke a fresh and triumphant pandemonium.

In the hall outside Lawyer Wagner was standing, afraid to go in, yet anxious to know the result. As Anders and his boys dashed by, regardless, he learned from one of the stragglers in their train what had taken place inside the Opera House. He hurried after them and caught the King by the sleeve at the head of the stairs. "Don't go, Anders," he cried. "They 'll nominate Pat McCormick sure!"

The King shook him off with a contemptuous curse and thundered on down the wide stairs, unheeding. The tiny, alert young woman who sat at her table in the telegraph office across the street, pecking at the key like a bird, looked up in terror at the entrance of the band of raging giants.

"Have you a telegraph from Pat McCormick got?" demanded the old man.

Without a word, the frightened girl handed across the counter a rumpled bit of tissue paper.

Painfully King Anders spelled it over. Then he crushed the copy in his hand and threw it on the floor.

“It is a trick yet!” he roared. “It is a damn lie! Come!” he ordered the boys. “We go by home and see vunce.”

Higgins, looking out of a window, saw the descent on the telegraph office. He watched anxiously, until the King, followed by his sons, charged out again into the street and across to where their team was standing. Then, as the high-strung Normans leaped forward into their collars, under the old man’s furious lash, Higgins turned and hurried back to the stage.

“Anders and his boys have gone home,” he whispered to Chairman Johnson, under cover of the disorder, which still filled the house. “Get the roll-call started as soon as you can.”

Johnson beat on the table-top with a heavy cane. “Are there any further nominations for Congress?” he cried, through the din.

A sudden silence, almost terrifying in its contrast to the previous uproar, fell over the convention. Men sat still, again, in strained, tense attitudes, waiting for the climax.

“If there are no more nominations,” Johnson went on, “the clerk will please call the roll.”

“Liber-r-ty Coun-n-ty?”

“Liberty County casts twenty-one votes for Patrick McCormick!” answered Tom Hahn, from his place on the floor.

The Chairman of the Madison County delegation leaped to his feet.

“I rise to a point of order,” he cried. “Three of the twenty-one delegates from Liberty County have left the hall. I demand that the delegation be polled.”

“I remind the gentleman,” Tom Hahn answered, “that, under the call for this convention, when any part of a delegation is absent, the remainder is given the right to fill the vacant places. This power we have already exercised. Liberty County fills twenty-one seats on the floor of this convention and it casts its solid vote for Patrick McCormick!”

“The chair rules the point well taken,” said Johnson from the stage. “The vote will be so recorded. The roll-call will proceed.”

“Madison County?”

“Eighteen votes for Frederick Steffens!”

“Washington County?”

“Ten votes for Patrick McCormick and—”

The announcement was drowned in a thousand voiced yell of triumph. Thirty-one votes were a majority of the convention. Steffens, standing on his chair, appealed for recognition. The crowd recognized him and hushed into listening silence.

“I move that the nomination of Patrick McCormick be made unanimous,” he said.

HALF an hour later Higgins and Tom Hahn jointly wrote a telegram and saw it off on the wires to Pat McCormick.

“The crown is also yours. The convention sends its unanimous nomination as a wedding-present to Pat and the Princess.”

XXXI

THE unexpected news of his nomination for Congress brought Pat McCormick and his bride quickly back to Liberty. A hard campaign was before him and the time was short. Now, more than ever, he was determined to win. They drove directly to the little cottage at the head of Main street. There, also, came King Anders, the afternoon of their arrival. He tied his big gray stallions before the gate and, tramping heavily up the walk, beat upon the door with the butt of his black-snake whip. Aunt Bridget opened to him.

“Good evenin’, sorr,” the old woman said, eyeing him with her most martial aspect.

“Where is my girl, yet?” the king demanded.

“ ’T is th’ wife av Congrissman McCormick yere wantin’ to see, I dunno?” Aunt Bridget questioned aggressively, her hands on her hips.

“Where is Antje Anders?”

“There ain’t nobody be that name stoppin’ here, sorr,” replied Bridget, her nose high in air. “Ye ’ve come to th’ wrong house, I ’m thinkin’. ’T is th’ McCormick fam’ly lives here, I ’d have ye know.”

“I go me in and see yet!” roared the King.

Then, just as an Homeric battle seemed certain, Antje herself came to the door. She had recognized the deep tones of her father’s voice, as it was raised in anger and hurried down, her husband with her.

“Here I am, father,” she cried.

“Th’ gintlemin called to offer ye his congratulations, Mississ McCormick,” said Aunt Bridget, with a mock curtsy to the old King.

Then she stepped aside, still holding herself in reserve, ready for any sudden emergency. The three stood silent for a moment. Shrewdly and long the little gray eyes of King Anders searched his daughter’s face. The pleading look he saw there, did not conceal the happiness which filled her. She smiled up at him wistfully and in her face was a stray beam of summer sunshine.

The old man turned his gaze suddenly upon Pat McCormick and the look on his face instantly hardened. His heavy eye-brows dropped far down and the muscles about his mouth grew tense. In the background Aunt Bridget cleared her decks for action.

Then, as his rage rose to master him, King Anders felt the timid pressure of his daughter's hand upon his arm and turned to face her. She did not speak. Her eyes were filled with tears and on her lips was still a tremulous, appealing smile.

Slowly, as he looked, his great figure straightened itself. One could almost feel the effort of his tremendous will as it faced the inevitable and choked to death the vain passion which struggled to rise within him.

"Antje," he said at last, "come here once yet."

The girl, her face all aglow with triumphant tenderness, crept closer to the old man and he threw his great left arm tightly about her. With his right he reached out and clutched Pat McCormick's hand.

"You be good by her!" he roared, the thun-

der of his voice only half hiding the new feeling which shook him.

At the sight, old Aunt Bridget, all her fighting colors furled, and sniffing vigorously to cover her own emotion, slipped her anchor and came also into port.

“Misther Anders, sorr,” she said, this time with a curtesy of real respect, “I ’m afther beggin’ Yere Honor’s pardon, that I am. Wōn’t ye be steppin’ in to have a cup av tay? Sure, what have I been thinkin’ av to lave ye standin’ out here on the por-r-ch all this time?”

With a chorus of relieved laughter they all followed Aunt Bridget into the little front room. There at the deal table, Antje sat by her father’s knees, her husband close beside her, while the old woman bustled about with the tea things.

“Pretty soon already you ’ll be going by Congress, not so?” said the King presently to his new son.

“I don’t know. The Republicans ’ll put up a hot fight. They ’d go a long way to beat me.”

“By damn!” roared the King, striking the table a great whack with his fist, “when they try that, we teach ’em a few things yet, huh?”

THE END

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