That Fortune

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Table of Contents

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On a summer day, long gone among the summer days that come but to go, a lad of twelve years was idly and recklessly swinging in the top of a tall hickory, the advance picket of a mountain forest. The tree was on the edge of a steep declivity of rocky pasture−land that fell rapidly down to the stately chestnuts, to the orchard, to the cornfields in the narrow valley, and the maples on the bank of the amber river, whose loud, unceasing murmur came to the lad on his aerial perch like the voice of some tradition of nature that he could not understand.

He had climbed to the topmost branch of the lithe and tough tree in order to take the full swing of this free creature in its sport with the western wind. There was something exhilarating in this elemental battle of the forces that urge and the forces that resist, and the harder the wind blew, and the wider circles he took in the free air, the more stirred the boy was in the spring of his life. Nature was taking him by the hand, and it might be that in that moment ambition was born to achieve for himself, to conquer.

If you had asked him why he was there, he would very likely have said, "To see the world." It was a world worth seeing. The prospect might be limited to a dull eye, but not to this lad, who loved to climb this height, in order to be with himself and indulge the dreams of youth. Any pretense would suffice for taking this hour of freedom: to hunt for the spicy checker−berries and the pungent sassafras; to aggravate the woodchucks, who made their homes in mysterious passages in this gravelly hillside; to get a nosegay of columbine for the girl who spelled against him in school and was his gentle comrade morning and evening along the river road where grew the sweet−flag and the snap−dragon and the barberry bush; to make friends with the elegant gray squirrel and the lively red squirrel and the comical chipmunk, who were not much afraid of this unarmed naturalist. They may have recognized their kinship to him, for he could climb like any squirrel, and not one of them could have clung more securely to this bough where he was swinging, rejoicing in the strength of his lithe, compact little body. When he shouted in pure enjoyment of life, they chattered in reply, and eyed him with a primeval curiosity that had no fear in it. This lad in short trousers, torn shirt, and a frayed straw hat above his mobile and cheerful face, might be only another sort of animal, a lover like themselves of the beech−nut and the hickory−nut.

It was a gay world up here among the tossing branches. Across the river, on the first terrace of the hill, were weather−beaten farmhouses, amid apple orchards and cornfields. Above these rose the wooded dome of Mount Peak, a thousand feet above the river, and beyond that to the left the road wound up, through the scriptural land of Bozrah, to high and lonesome towns on a plateau stretching to unknown regions in the south. There was no bar to the imagination in that direction. What a gracious valley, what graceful slopes, what a mass of color bathing this lovely summer landscape! Down from the west, through hills that crowded on either side to divert it from its course, ran the sparkling Deerfield, from among the springs and trout streams of the Hoosac, merrily going on to the great Connecticut. Along the stream was the ancient highway, or lowway, where in days before the railway came the stage−coach and the big transport−wagons used to sway and rattle along on their adventurous voyage from the gate of the Sea at Boston to the gate of the West at Albany.

Below, where the river spread wide among the rocks in shallows, or eddies in deep, dark pools, was the ancient, long, covered, wooden bridge, striding diagonally from rock to rock on stone columns, a dusky tunnel through the air, a passage of gloom flecked with glints of sunlight, that struggled in crosscurrents through the interstices of the boards, and set dancing the motes and the dust in a golden haze, a stuffy passage with odors a century old−−who does not know the pungent smell of an old bridge?−−a structure that groaned in all its big timbers when a wagon invaded it. And then below the bridge the lad could see the historic meadow, which was a cornfield in the eighteenth century, where Captain Moses Rice and Phineas Arms came suddenly one summer day to the end of their planting and hoeing. The house at the foot of the hill where the boy was cultivating his imagination had been built by Captain Rice, and in the family burying−ground in the orchard above it lay the body of this mighty

militia−man, and beside him that of Phineas Arms, and on the headstone of each the legend familiar at that period of our national life, "Killed by the Indians." Happy Phineas Arms, at the age of seventeen to exchange in a moment the tedium of the cornfield for immortality.

There was a tradition that years after, when the Indians had disappeared through a gradual process of intoxication and pauperism, a red man had been seen skulking along the brow of this very hill and peering down through the bushes where the boy was now perched on a tree, shaking his fist at the hated civilization, and vengefully, some said pathetically, looking down into this valley where his race had been so happy in the natural pursuits of fishing, hunting, and war. On the opposite side of the river was still to be traced an Indian trail, running to the western mountains, which the boy intended some time to follow; for this highway of warlike forays, of messengers of defiance, along which white maidens had been led captive to Canada, appealed greatly to his imagination.

The boy lived in these traditions quite as much as in those of the Revolutionary War into which they invariably glided in his perspective of history, the redskins and the redcoats being both enemies of his ancestors. There was the grave of the envied Phineas Arms−−that ancient boy not much older than he−−and there were hanging in the kitchen the musket and powder−horn that his great−grandfather had carried at Bunker Hill, and did he not know by heart the story of his great−grandmother, who used to tell his father that she heard when she was a slip of a girl in Plymouth the cannonading on that awful day when Gage met his victorious defeat?

In fact, according to his history−book there had been little but wars in this peaceful nation: the War of 1812, the Mexican War, the incessant frontier wars with the Indians, the Kansas War, the Mormon War, the War for the Union. The echoes of the latter had not yet died away. What a career he might have had if he had not been born so late in the world! Swinging in this tree−top, with a vivid consciousness of life, of his own capacity for action, it seemed a pity that he could not follow the drum and the flag into such contests as he read about so eagerly.

And yet this was only a corner of the boy's imagination. He had many worlds and he lived in each by turn. There was the world of the Old Testament, of David and Samson, and of those dim figures in the dawn of history, called the Patriarchs. There was the world of Julius Caesar and the Latin grammar, though this was scarcely as real to him as the Old Testament, which was brought to his notice every Sunday as a necessity of his life, while Caesar and AEneas and the fourth declension were made to be a task, for some mysterious reason, a part of his education. He had not been told that they were really a part of the other world which occupied his mind so much of the time, the world of the Arabian Nights and Robinson Crusoe, and Coleridge and Shelley and Longfellow, and Washington Irving and Scott and Thackeray, and Pope's Iliad and Plutarch's Lives. That this was a living world to the boy was scarcely his fault, for it must be confessed that those were very antiquated book− shelves in the old farmhouse to which he had access, and the news had not been apprehended in this remote valley that the classics of literature were all as good as dead and buried, and that the human mind had not really created anything worth modern notice before about the middle of the nineteenth century. It was not exactly an ignorant valley, for the daily newspapers were there, and the monthly magazine, and the fashion− plate of Paris, and the illuminating sunshine of new science, and enough of the uneasy throb of modern life. Yet somehow the books that were still books had not been sent to the garret, to make room for the illustrated papers and the profound physiological studies of sin and suffering that were produced by touching a scientific button. No, the boy was conscious in a way of the mighty pulsation of American life, and he had also a dim notion that his dreams in his various worlds would come to a brilliant fulfillment when he was big enough to go out and win a name and fame. But somehow the old books, and the family life, and the sedate ways of the community he knew, had given him a fundamental and not unarmed faith in the things that were and had been.

Every Sunday the preacher denounced the glitter and frivolity and corruption of what he called Society, until the boy longed to see this splendid panorama of cities and hasting populations, the seekers of pleasure and money and fame, this gay world which was as fascinating as it was wicked. The preacher said the world was wicked and vain. It did not seem so to the boy this summer day, not at least the world he knew. Of course the boy had no experience. He had never heard of Juvenal nor of Max Nordau. He had no philosophy of life. He did not even

know that when he became very old the world would seem to him good or bad according to the degree in which he had become a good or a bad man.

In fact, he was not thinking much about being good or being bad, but of trying his powers in a world which seemed to offer to him infinite opportunities. His name−−Philip Burnett−−with which the world, at least the American world, is now tolerably familiar, and which he liked to write with ornamental flourishes on the fly−leaves of his schoolbooks, did not mean much to him, for he had never seen it in print, nor been confronted with it as something apart from himself. But the Philip that he was he felt sure would do something in the world. What that something should be varied from day to day according to the book, the poem, the history or biography that he was last reading. It would not be difficult to write a poem like "Thanatopsis" if he took time enough, building up a line a day. And yet it would be better to be a soldier, a man who could use the sword as well as the pen, a poet in uniform. This was a pleasing imagination. Surely his aunt and his cousins in the farmhouse would have more respect for him if he wore a uniform, and treat him with more consideration, and perhaps they would be very anxious about him when he was away in battles, and very proud of him when he came home between battles, and went quite modestly with the family into the village church, and felt rather than saw the slight flutter in the pews as he walked down the aisle, and knew that the young ladies, the girl comrades of the district school, were watching him from the organ gallery, curious to see Phil, who had gone into the army. Perhaps the preacher would have a sermon against war, and the preacher should see how soldierlike he would take this attack on him. Alas! is such vanity at the bottom of even a reasonable ambition? Perhaps his town would be proud of him if he were a lawyer, a Representative in Congress, come back to deliver the annual oration at the Agricultural Fair. He could see the audience of familiar faces, and hear the applause at his witty satires and his praise of the nobility of the farmer's life, and it would be sweet indeed to have the country people grasp him by the hand and call him Phil, just as they used to before he was famous. What he would say, he was not thinking of, but the position he would occupy before the audience. There were no misgivings in any of these dreams of youth.

II

The musings of this dreamer in a tree−top were interrupted by the peremptory notes of a tin horn from the farmhouse below. The boy recognized this not only as a signal of declining day and the withdrawal of the sun behind the mountains, but as a personal and urgent notification to him that a certain amount of disenchanting drudgery called chores lay between him and supper and the lamp−illumined pages of The Last of the Mohicans. It was difficult, even in his own estimation, to continue to be a hero at the summons of a tin horn−−a silver clarion and castle walls would have been so different−−and Phil slid swiftly down from his perch, envying the squirrels who were under no such bondage of duty.

Recalled to the world that now is, the lad hastily gathered a bouquet of columbine and a bunch of the tender leaves and the red berries of the wintergreen, called to "Turk," who had been all these hours watching a woodchuck hole, and ran down the hill by leaps and circuits as fast as his little legs could carry him, and, with every appearance of a lad who puts duty before pleasure, arrived breathless at the kitchen door, where Alice stood waiting for him. Alice, the somewhat feeble performer on the horn, who had been watching for the boy with her hand shading her eyes, called out upon his approach:

"Why, Phil, what in the world−−"

"Oh, Alice!" cried the boy, eagerly, having in a moment changed in his mind the destination of the flowers; "I've found a place where the checker−berries are thick as spatter." And Phil put the flowers and the berries in his cousin's hand. Alice looked very much pleased with this simple tribute, but, as she admired it, unfortunately asked−−women always ask such questions:

"And you picked them for me?"

This was a cruel dilemma. Phil was more devoted to his sweet cousin than to any one else in the world, and he didn't want to hurt her feelings, and he hated to tell a lie. So he only looked a lie, out of his affectionate, truthful eyes, and said:

"I love to bring you flowers. Has uncle come home yet?"

"Yes, long ago. He called and looked all around for you to unharness the horse, and he wanted you to go an errand over the river to Gibson's. I guess he was put out."

"Did he say anything?"

"He asked if you had weeded the beets. And he said that you were the master boy to dream and moon around he ever saw." And she added, with a confidential and mischievous smile: "I think you'd better brought a switch along; it would save time."

Phil had a great respect for his uncle Maitland, but he feared him almost more than he feared the remote God of Abraham and Isaac. Mr. Maitland was not only the most prosperous man in all that region, but the man of the finest appearance, and a bearing that was equity itself. He was the first selectman of the town, and a deacon in the church, and however much he prized mercy in the next world he did not intend to have that quality interfere with justice in this world. Phil knew indeed that he was a man of God, that fact was impressed upon him at least twice a day, but he sometimes used to think it must be a severe God to have that sort of man. And he didn't like the curt way he pronounced the holy name−−he might as well have called Job "job."

Alice was as unlike her father, except in certain race qualities of integrity and common−sense, as if she were of different blood. She was the youngest of five maiden sisters, and had arrived at the mature age of eighteen. Slender in figure, with a grace that was half shyness, soft brown hair, gray eyes that changed color and could as easily be sad as merry, a face marked with a moving dimple that every one said was lovely, retiring in manner and yet not lacking spirit nor a sly wit of her own. Now and then, yes, very often, out of some paradise, no doubt, strays into New England conditions of reticence and self−denial such a sweet spirit, to diffuse a breath of heaven in its atmosphere, and to wither like a rose ungathered. These are the New England nuns, not taking any vows, not self−consciously virtuous, apparently untouched by the vanities of the world. Marriage? It is not in any girl's nature not to think of that, not to be in a flutter of pleasure or apprehension at the attentions of the other sex. Who has been able truly to read the thoughts of a shrinking maiden in the passing days of her youth and beauty? In this harmonious and unselfish household, each with decided individual character, no one ever intruded upon the inner life of the other. No confidences were given in the deep matters of the heart, no sign except a blush over a sly allusion to some one who had been "attentive." If you had stolen a look into the workbasket or the secret bureau−drawer, you might have found a treasured note, a bit of ribbon, a rosebud, some token of tenderness or of friendship that was growing old with the priestess who cherished it. Did they not love flowers, and pets, and had they not a passion for children? Were there not moonlight evenings when they sat silent and musing on the stone steps, watching the shadows and the dancing gleams on the swift river, when the air was fragrant with the pink and the lilac? Not melancholy this, nor poignantly sad, but having in it nevertheless something of the pathos of life unfulfilled. And was there not sometimes, not yet habitually, coming upon these faces, faces plain and faces attractive, the shade of renunciation?

Phil loved Alice devotedly. She was his confidante, his defender, but he feared more the disapproval of her sweet eyes when he had done wrong than the threatened punishment of his uncle.

"I only meant to be gone just a little while," Phil went on to say.

"And you were away the whole afternoon. It is a pity the days are so short. And you don't know what you lost."

"No great, I guess."

"Celia and her mother were here. They stayed all the afternoon."

"Celia Howard? Did she wonder where I was?"

"I don't know. She didn't say anything about it. What a dear little thing she is!"

"And she can say pretty cutting things."

"Oh, can she? Perhaps you'd better run down to the village before dark and take her these flowers."

"I'm not going. I'd rather you should have the flowers." And Phil spoke the truth this time.

Celia, who was altogether too young to occupy seriously the mind of a lad of twelve, had nevertheless gained an ascendancy over him because of her willful, perverse, and sometimes scornful ways, and because she was different from the other girls of the school. She had read many more books than Phil, for she had access to a library, and she could tell him much of a world that he only heard of through books and newspapers, which latter he had no habit of reading. He liked, therefore, to be with Celia, not withstanding her little airs of superiority, and if she patronized him, as she certainly did, probably the simple−minded young gentleman, who was unconsciously bred in the belief that he and his own kin had no superiors anywhere, never noticed it. To be sure they quarreled a good deal, but truth to say Phil was never more fascinated with the little witch, whom he felt himself strong enough to protect, than when she showed a pretty temper. He rather liked to be ordered about by the little tyrant. And sometimes he wished that Murad Ault, the big boy of the school, would be rude to the small damsel, so that he could show her how a knight would act under such circumstances. Murad Ault stood to Phil for the satanic element in his peaceful world. He was not only big and strong of limb and broad of chest, but he was very swarthy, and had closely curled black hair. He feared nothing, not even the teacher, and was always doing some dare−devil thing to frighten the children. And because he was dark, morose, and made no friends, and wished none, but went solitary his own dark way, Phil fancied that he must have Spanish blood in his veins, and would no doubt grow up to be a pirate. No other boy in the winter could skate like Murad Ault, with such strength and grace and recklessness−−thin ice and thick ice were all one to him, but he skated along, dashing in and out, and sweeping away up and down the river in a whirl of vigor and daring, like a black marauder. Yet he was best and most awesome in the swimming pond in summer−−though it was believed that he dared go in in the bitter winter, either by breaking the ice or through an air−hole, and there was a story that he had ventured under the ice as fearless as a cold fish. No one could dive from such a height as he, or stay so long under water; he liked to stay under long enough to scare the spectators, and then appear at a distance, thrashing about in the water as if he were rescuing himself from drowning, sputtering out at the same time the most diabolical noises−− curses, no doubt, for he had been heard to swear. But as he skated alone he swam alone, appearing and disappearing at the swimming−place silently, with never a salutation to any one. And he was as skillful a fisher as he was a swimmer. No one knew much about him. He lived with his mother in a little cabin up among the hills, that had about it scant patches of potatoes and corn and beans, a garden fenced in by stumproots, as ill− cared for as the shanty. Where they came from no one knew. How they lived was a matter of conjecture, though the mother gathered herbs and berries and bartered them at the village store, and Murad occasionally took a hand in some neighbor's hay−field, or got a job of chopping wood in the winter. The mother was old and small and withered, and they said evil−eyed. Probably she was no more evil−eyed than any old woman who had such a hard struggle for existence as she had. An old widow with an only son who looked like a Spaniard and acted like an imp! Here was another sort of exotic in the New England life.

Celia had been brought to Rivervale by her mother about a year before this time, and the two occupied a neat little cottage in the village, distinguished only by its neatness and a plot of syringas, and pinks, and marigolds, and roses, and bachelor's−buttons, and boxes of the tough little exotics, called "hen−and−chickens," in the door−yard,

and a vigorous fragrant honeysuckle over the front porch. She only dimly remembered her father, who had been a merchant in a small way in the city, and dying left to his widow and only child a very moderate fortune. The girl showed early an active and ingenious mind, and an equal love for books and for having her own way; but she was delicate, and Mrs. Howard wisely judged that a few years in a country village would improve her health and broaden her view of life beyond that of cockney provincialism. For, though Mrs. Howard had more refinement than strength of mind, and passed generally for a sweet and inoffensive little woman, she did not lack a certain true perception of values, due doubtless to the fact that she had been a New England girl, and, before her marriage and emigration to the great city, had passed her life among unexciting realities, and among people who had leisure to think out things in a slow way. But the girl's energy and self−confidence had no doubt been acquired from her father, who was cut off in mid−career of his struggle for place in the metropolis, or from some remote ancestor. Before she was eleven years old her mother had listened with some wonder and more apprehension to the eager forecast of what this child intended to do when she became a woman, and already shrank from a vision of Celia on a public platform, or the leader of some metempsychosis club. Through her affections only was the child manageable, but in opposition to her spirit her mother was practically powerless. Indeed, this little sprout of the New Age always spoke of her to Philip and to the Maitlands as "little mother."

The epithet seemed peculiarly tender to Philip, who had lost his father before he was six years old, and he was more attracted to the timid and gentle little widow than to his equable but more robust Aunt Eusebia, Mrs. Maitland, his father's elder sister, whom Philip fancied not a bit like his father except in sincerity, a quality common to the Maitlands and Burnetts. Yet there was a family likeness between his aunt and a portrait of his father, painted by a Boston artist of some celebrity, which his mother, who survived her husband only three years, had saved for her boy. His father was a farmer, but a man of considerable cultivation, though not college−bred−−his last request on his death−bed was that Phil should be sent to college−−a man who made experiments in improving agriculture and the breed of cattle and horses, read papers now and then on topics of social and political reform, and was the only farmer in all the hill towns who had what might be called a library.

It was all scattered at the time of the winding up of the farm estate, and the only jetsam that Philip inherited out of it was an annotated copy of Adam Smith's Wealth of Nations, Young's Travels in France, a copy of The Newcomes, and the first American edition of Childe Harold. Probably these odd volumes had not been considered worth any considerable bid at the auction. From his mother, who was fond of books, and had on more than one occasion, of the failure of teachers, taught in the village school in her native town before her marriage, Philip inherited his love of poetry, and he well remembered how she used to try to inspire him with patriotism by reading the orations of Daniel Webster (she was very fond of orations), and telling him war stories about Grant and Sherman and Sheridan and Farragut and Lincoln. He distinctly remembered also standing at her knees and trying, at intervals, to commit to memory the Rime of the Ancient Mariner. He had learned it all since, because he thought it would please his mother, and because there was something in it that appealed to his coming sense of the mystery of life. When he repeated it to Celia, who had never heard of it, and remarked that it was all made up, and that she never tried to learn a long thing like that that wasn't so, Philip could see that her respect for him increased a little. He did not know that the child got it out of the library the next day and never rested till she knew it by heart. Philip could repeat also the books of the Bible in order, just as glibly as the multiplication−table, and the little minx, who could not brook that a country boy should be superior to her in anything, had surprised her mother by rattling them all off to her one Sunday evening, just as if she had been born in New England instead of in New York. As to the other fine things his mother read him, out of Ruskin and the like; Philip chiefly remembered what a pretty glow there was in his mother's face when she read them, and that recollection was a valuable part of the boy's education.

Another valuable part of his education was the gracious influence in his aunt's household, the spirit of candor, of affection, and the sane common−sense with which life was regarded, the simplicity of its faith and the patience with which trials were borne. The lessons he learned in it had more practical influence in his life than all the books he read. Nor were his opportunities for the study of character so meagre as the limit of one family would imply. As often happens in New England households, individualities were very marked, and from his stern uncle

and his placid aunt down to the sweet and nimble−witted Alice, the family had developed traits and even eccentricities enough to make it a sort of microcosm of life. There, for instance, was Patience, the maiden aunt, his father's sister, the news−monger of the fireside, whose powers of ratiocination first gave Philip the Greek idea and method of reasoning to a point and arriving at truth by the process of exclusion. It did not excite his wonder at the time, but afterwards it appeared to him as one of the New England eccentricities of which the novelists make so much. Patience was a home−keeping body and rarely left the premises except to go to church on Sunday, although her cheerfulness and social helpfulness were tinged by nothing morbid. The story was−−Philip learned it long afterwards−−that in her very young and frisky days Patience had one evening remained out at some merry−making very late, and in fact had been escorted home in the moonlight by a young gentleman when the tall, awful− faced clock, whose face her mother was watching, was on the dreadful stroke of eleven. For this delinquency her mother had reproved her, the girl thought unreasonably, and she had quickly replied, "Mother, I will never go out again." And she never did. It was in fact a renunciation of the world, made apparently without rage, and adhered to with cheerful obstinacy.

But although for many years Patience rarely left her home, until the habit of seclusion had become as fixed as that of a nun who had taken the vows, no one knew so well as she the news and gossip of the neighborhood, and her power of learning or divining it seemed to increase with her years. She had a habit of sitting, when her household duties permitted, at a front window, which commanded a long view of the river road, and gathering the news by a process peculiar to herself. From this peep−hole she studied the character and destination of all the passers−by that came within range of her vision, and made her comments and deductions, partly to herself, but for the benefit of those who might be listening.

"Why, there goes Thomas Henry," she would say (she always called people by their first and middle names). "Now, wherever can he be going this morning in the very midst of getting in his hay? He can't be going to the Browns' for vegetables, for they set great store by their own raising this year; and they don't get their provisions up this way either, because Mary Ellen quarreled with Simmons's people last year. No! "she would exclaim, rising to a climax of certainty on this point, "I'll be bound he is not going after anything in the eating line!"

Meantime Thomas Henry's wagon would be disappearing slowly up the sandy road, giving Patience a chance to get all she could out of it, by eliminating all the errands Thomas Henry could not possibly be going to do in order to arrive at the one he must certainly be bound on.

"They do say he's courting Eliza Merritt," she continued, "but Eliza never was a girl to make any man leave his haying. No, he's never going to see Eliza, and if it isn't provisions or love it's nothing short of sickness. Now, whoever is sick down there? It can't be Mary Ellen, because she takes after her father's family and they are all hearty. It must be Mary Ellen's little girls, and the measles are going the rounds. It must be they've all got the measles."

If the listeners suggested that possibly one of the little girls might have escaped, the suggestion was decisively put aside.

"No; if one of them had been well, Mary Ellen would have sent her for the doctor."

Presently Thomas Henry's cart was heard rumbling back, and sure enough he was returning with the doctor, and Patience hailed him from the gate and demanded news of Mary Ellen.

"Why, all her little girls have the measles," replied Thomas Henry, "and I had to leave my haying to fetch the doctor."

"I want to know," said Patience.

Being the eldest born, Patience had appropriated to herself two rooms in the rambling old farmhouse before her brother's marriage, from which later comers had never dislodged her, and with that innate respect for the rights and peculiarities of others which was common in the household, she was left to express her secluded life in her own way. As the habit of retirement grew upon her she created a world of her own, almost as curious and more individually striking than the museum of Cluny. There was not a square foot in her tiny apartment that did not exhibit her handiwork. She was very fond of reading, and had a passion for the little prints and engravings of "foreign views," which she wove into her realm of natural history. There was no flower or leaf or fruit that she had seen that she could not imitate exactly in wax or paper. All over the walls hung the little prints and engravings, framed in wreaths of moss and artificial flowers, or in elaborate square frames made of pasteboard. The pasteboard was cut out to fit the picture, and the margins, daubed with paste, were then strewn with seeds of corn and acorns and hazelnuts, and then the whole was gilded so that the effect was almost as rich as it was novel. All about the rooms, in nooks and on tables, stood baskets and dishes of fruit−apples and plums and peaches and grapes−set in proper foliage of most natural appearance, like enough to deceive a bird or the Sunday−school scholars, when on rare occasions they were admitted into this holy of holies. Out of boxes, apparently filled with earth in the corners of the rooms, grew what seemed to be vines trained to run all about the cornices and to festoon the pictures, but which were really strings, colored in imitation of the real vine, and spreading out into paper foliage. To complete the naturalistic character of these everlasting vines, which no scale−bugs could assail, there were bunches of wonderful grapes depending here and there to excite the cupidity of both bird and child. There was no cruelty in the nature of Patience, and she made prisoners of neither birds nor squirrels, but cunning cages here and there held most lifelike counterfeits of their willing captives. There was nothing in the room that was alive, except the dainty owner, but it seemed to be a museum of natural history. The rugs on the floor were of her own devising and sewing together, and rivaled in color and ingenuity those of Bokhara.

But Patience was a student of the heavens as well as of the earth, and it was upon the ceiling that her imagination expanded. There one could see in their order the constellations of the heavens, represented by paper− gilt stars, of all magnitudes, most wonderful to behold. This part of her decorations was the most difficult of all. The constellations were not made from any geography of the heavens, but from actual nightly observation of the positions of the heavenly bodies. Patience confessed that the getting exactly right of the Great Dipper had caused her most trouble. On the night that was constructed she sat up till three o'clock in the morning, going out and studying it and coming in and putting up one star at a time. How could she reach the high ceiling? Oh, she took a bean−pole, stuck the gilt star on the end of it, having paste on the reverse side, and fixed it in its place. That was easy, only it was difficult to remember when she came into the house the correct positions of the stars in the heavens. What the astronomer and the botanist and the naturalist would have said of this little kingdom is unknown, but Patience herself lived among the glories of the heavens and the beauties of the earth which she had created. Probably she may have had a humorous conception of this, for she was not lacking in a sense of humor. The stone step that led to her private door she had skillfully painted with faint brown spots, so that when visitors made their exit from this part of the house they would say, "Why, it rains!" but Patience would laugh and say, "I guess it is over by now."

III

I'm not going to follow you about any more I through the brush and brambles, Phil Burnett," and Celia, emerging from the thicket into a clearing, flung herself down on a knoll under a beech−tree.

Celia was cross. They were out for a Saturday holiday on the hillside, where Phil said there were oceans of raspberries and blueberries, beginning to get ripe, and where you could hear the partridges drumming in the woods, and see the squirrels.

"Why, I'm not a bit tired," said Phil; "a boy wouldn't be." And he threw himself down on the green moss, with his heels in the air, much more intent on the chatter of a gray squirrel in the tree above him than on the complaints of his comrade.

"Why don't you go with a boy, then?" asked Celia, in a tone intended to be severe and dignified.

"A boy isn't so nice," said Philip, with the air of stating a general proposition, but not looking at her.

"Oh," said Celia, only half appeased, "I quite agree with you." And she pulled down some beech leaves from a low, hanging limb and began to plait a wreath.

"Who are you making that for?" asked Philip, who began to be aware that a cloud had come over his holiday sky.

"Nobody in particular; it's just a wreath." And then there was silence, till Philip made another attempt.

"Celia, I don't mind staying here if you are tired. Tell me something about New York City. I wish we were there."

"Much you know about it," said Celia, but with some relaxation of her severity, for as she looked at the boy in his country clothes and glanced at her own old frock and abraded shoes, she thought what a funny appearance the pair would make on a fashionable city street.

"Would you rather be there?" asked Philip. "I thought you liked living here."

"Would I rather? What a question! Everybody would. The country is a good place to go to when you are tired, as mamma is. But the city! The big fine houses, and the people all going about in a hurry; the streets all lighted up at night, so that you can see miles and miles of lights; and the horses and carriages, and the lovely dresses, and the churches full of nice people, and such beautiful music! And once mamma took me to the theatre. Oh, Phil, you ought to see a play, and the actors, all be− a−u−ti−fully dressed, and talking just like a party in a house, and dancing, and being funny, and some of it so sad as to make you cry, and some of it so droll that you had to laugh−−just such a world as you read of in books and in poetry. I was so excited that I saw the stage all night and could hardly sleep." The girl paused and looked away to the river as if she saw it all again, and then added in a burst of confidence: "Do you know, I mean to be an actress some day, when mamma will let me."

"Play−actors are wicked," said Phil, in a tone of decision; "our minister says so, and my uncle says so."

"Fudge!" returned Celia. "Much they know about it. Did Alice say so?"

"I never asked her, but she said once that she supposed it was wrong, but she would like to see a play."

"There, everybody would. Mamma says the people from the country go to the theatre always, a good deal more than the people in the city go. I should like to see your aunt Patience in a theatre and hear what she said about it. She's an actress if ever there was one."

Philip opened his eyes in protest.

"Mamma says it is as good as a play to hear her go on about people, and what they are like, and what they are going to do, and then her little rooms are just like a scene on a stage. If they were in New York everybody would go to see them and to hear her talk."

This was such a new view of his home life to Philip that he could neither combat it nor assent to it, further than to say, that his aunt was just like everybody else, though she did have some peculiar ways.

"Well, she acts," Celia insisted, "and most people act. Our minister acts all the time, mamma says." Celia had plenty of opinions of her own, but when she ventured a startling statement she had the habit of going under the shelter of "little mother," whose casual and unconsidered remarks the girl turned to her own uses. Perhaps she

would not have understood that her mother merely meant that the minister's sacerdotal character was not exactly his own character. Just as Philip noticed without being able to explain it that his uncle was one sort of a man in his religious exercises and observances and another sort of man in his dealings with him. Children often have recondite thoughts that do not get expression until their minds are more mature; they even accept contradictory facts in their experience. There was one of the deacons who was as kind as possible, and Philip believed was a good and pious man, who had the reputation of being sharp and even tricky in a horse− trade. And Philip used to think how lucky it was for him that he had been converted and was saved!

"Are you going to stay here always?" asked Philip, pursuing his own train of thought about the city.

"Here? I should think not. If I were a boy I wouldn't stay here, I can tell you. What are you going to do, Phil, what are you going to be?"

"Oh, I don't know," said Philip, turning over on his back and looking up into the blue world through the leaves; "go to college, I suppose." Children are even more reticent than adults about revealing their inner lives, and Philip would not, even to Celia, have confessed the splendid dreams about his career that came to him that day in the hickory−tree, and that occupied him a great deal.

"Of course," said this wise child, "but that's nothing. I mean, what are you going to do? My cousin Jim has been all through college, and he doesn't do a thing except wear nice clothes and hang around and talk. He says I'm a little chatter−box. I hate the sight of him."

"If he doesn't like you, then I don't like him," said Philip, as if he were making a general and not a personal assertion. "Oh, I should like to travel."

"So should I, and see things and find things. Jim says he's going to be an explorer. He never will. He wouldn't find anything. He twits me, and wants to know what is the good of my reading about Africa and such things. Phil, don't you love to read about Africa, and the desert, and the lions and the snakes, and bananas growing, and palm−trees, and the queerest black men and women, real dwarfs some of them? I just love it."

"So do I," said Philip, "as far as I have read. Alice says it's awful dangerous−−fevers and wild beasts and savages and all that. But I shouldn't mind."

"Of course you wouldn't. But it costs like everything to go to Africa, or anywhere."

"I'd make a book about it, and give lectures, and make lots of money."

"I guess," said Celia, reflecting upon this proposition, "I'd be an engineer or a railroad man, or something like that, and make a heap of money, and then I could go anywhere I liked. I just hate to be poor. There!"

"Is Jim poor?"

"No; he can do what he pleases. I asked him, then, why he didn't go to Africa, and he wanted to know what was the good of finding Livingstone, anyway. I'll bet Murad Ault would go to Africa."

"I wish he would," said Philip; and then, having moved so that he could see Celia's face, "Do you like Murad Ault?"

"No," replied Celia, promptly; "he's horrid, but he isn't afraid of anything."

"Well, I don't care," said Philip, who was nettled by this implication. And Celia, who had shown her power of irritating, took another tack.

"You don't think I'd be seen going around with him? Aren't we having a good time up here?"

"Bully!" replied Philip. And not seeing the way to expand this topic any further, he suddenly said:

"Celia, the next time I go on our hill I'll get you lots of sassafras."

"Oh, I love sassafras, and sweet−flag!"

"We can get that on the way home. I know a place." And then there was a pause. "Celia, you didn't tell me what you are going to do when you grow up."

"Go to college."

"You? Why, girls do, don't they? I never thought of that."

"Of course they do. I don't know whether I'll write or be a doctor. I know one thing−−I won't teach school. It's the hatefulest thing there is! It's nice to be a doctor and have your own horse, and go round like a man. If it wasn't for seeing so many sick people! I guess I'll write stories and things."

"So would I," Philip confessed, "if I knew any."

"Why, you make 'em up. Mamma says they are all made up. I can make 'em in my head any time when I'm alone."

"I don't know," Philip said, reflectively, "but I could make up a story about Murad Ault, and how he got to be a pirate and got in jail and was hanged."

"Oh, that wouldn't be a real story. You have got to have different people in it, and have 'em talk, just as they do in books; and somebody is in love and somebody dies, and the like of that."

"Well, there are such stories in The Pirate's Own Book, and it's awful interesting."

"I'd be ashamed, Philip Burnett, to read such a cruel thing, all about robbers and murders."

"I didn't read it through; Alice said she was going to burn it up. I shouldn't wonder if she did."

"Boys make me tired!" exclaimed this little piece of presumption; and this attitude of superiority exasperated Philip more than anything else his mentor had said or done, and he asserted his years of seniority by jumping up and saying, decidedly, "It's time to go home. Shall I carry your wreath?"

"No, I thank you!" replied Celia, with frigid politeness.

"Down in the meadow," said Philip, making one more effort at conciliation, "we can get some tigerlilies, and weave them in and make a beautiful wreath for your mother."

"She doesn't like things fussed up," was the gracious reply. And then the children trudged along homeward, each with a distinct sense of injury.

IV

Traits that make a child disagreeable are apt to be perpetuated in the adult. The bumptious, impudent, selfish, "hateful" boy may become a man of force, of learning, of decided capacity, even of polish and good manners, and score success, so that those who know him say how remarkable it is that such a "knurly" lad should have turned out so well. But some exigency in his career, it may be extraordinary prosperity or bitter defeat, may at any moment reveal the radical traits of the boy, the original ignoble nature. The world says that it is a "throwing back"; it is probably only a persistence of the original meanness under all the overlaid cultivation and restraint.

Without bothering itself about the recondite problems of heredity or the influence of environment, the world wisely makes great account of "stock." The peasant nature, which may be a very different thing from the peasant condition, persists, and shows itself in business affairs, in literature, even in the artist. No marriage is wisely contracted without consideration of "stock." The admirable qualities which make a union one of mutual respect and enduring affection−−the generosities, the magnanimities, the courage of soul, the crystalline truthfulness, the endurance of ill fortune and of prosperity−−are commonly the persistence of the character of the stock.

We can get on with surface weaknesses and eccentricities, and even disagreeable peculiarities, if the substratum of character is sound. There is no woman or man so difficult−−to get on with, whatever his or her graces or accomplishments, as the one "you don't know where to find," as the phrase is. Indeed, it has come to pass that the highest and final eulogy ever given to a man, either in public or private life, is that he is one "you can tie to." And when you find a woman of that sort you do not need to explain to the cynical the wisdom of the Creator in making the most attractive and fascinating sex.

The traits, good and bad, persist; they may be veneered or restrained, they are seldom eradicated. All the traits that made the great Napoleon worshiped, hated, and feared existed in the little Bonaparte, as perfectly as the pea−pod in the flower. The whole of the First Empire was smirched with Corsican vulgarity. The world always reckons with these radical influences that go to make up a family. One of the first questions asked by an old politician, who knew his world thoroughly, about any man becoming prominent, when there was a discussion of his probable action, was, "Whom did he marry?"

There are exceptions to this general rule, and they are always noticeable when they occur−−this deviation from the traits of the earliest years−− and offer material fox some of the subtlest and most interesting studies of the novelist.

It was impossible for those who met Philip Burnett after he had left college, and taken his degree in the law−school, and spent a year, more or less studiously, in Europe, to really know him if they had not known the dreaming boy in his early home, with all the limitations as well as the vitalizing influences of his start in life. And on the contrary, the error of the neighbors of a lad in forecasting his career comes from the fact that they do not know him. The verdict about Philip would probably have been that he was a very nice sort of a boy, but that he would never "set the North River on fire." There was a headstrong, selfish, pushing sort of boy, one of Philip's older schoolmates, who had become one of the foremost merchants and operators in New York, and was already talked of for mayor. This success was the sort that fulfilled the rural idea of getting on in the world, whereas Philip's accomplishments, seen through the veneer of conceit which they had occasioned him to take on, did not commend themselves as anything worth while. Accomplishments rarely do unless they are translated into visible position or into the currency of the realm. How else can they be judged? Does not the great public involuntarily respect the author rather for the sale of his books than for the books themselves?

The period of Philip's novitiate−−those most important years from his acquaintance with Celia Howard to the attainment of his professional degree−−was most interesting to him, but the story of it would not detain the reader of exciting fiction. He had elected to use his little patrimony in making himself instead of in making money−−if merely following his inclination could be called an election. If he had reasoned about it he would have known that

the few thousands of dollars left to him from his father's estate, if judiciously invested in business, would have grown to a good sum when he came of age, and he would by that time have come into business habits, so that all he would need to do would be to go on and make more money. If he had reasoned more deeply he would have seen that by this process he would become a man of comparatively few resources for the enjoyment of life, and a person of very little interest to himself or to anybody else. So perhaps it was just as well that he followed his instincts and postponed the making of money until he had made himself, though he was to have a good many bitter days when the possession of money seemed to him about the one thing desirable.

It was Celia, who had been his constant counselor and tormentor, about the time when she was beginning to feel a little shy and long−legged, in her short skirts, who had, in a romantic sympathy with his tastes, opposed his going into a "store" as a clerk, which seemed to the boy at one time an ideal situation for a young man.

"A store, indeed!" cried the young lady; "pomatum on your hair, and a grin on your face; snip, snip, snip, calico, ribbons, yard−stick; 'It's very becoming, miss, that color; this is only a sample, only a remnant, but I shall have a new stock in by Friday; anything else, ma'am, today?' Sho! Philip, for a man!"

Fortunately for Philip there lived in the village an old waif, a scholarly oddity, uncommunicative, whose coming to dwell there had excited much gossip before the inhabitants got used to his odd ways.

Usually reticent and rough of speech−−the children thought he was an old bear−−he was nevertheless discovered to be kindly and even charitable in neighborhood emergencies, and the minister said he was about the most learned man he ever knew. His history does not concern us, but he was doubtless one of the men whose talents have failed to connect with success in anything, who had had his bout with the world, and retired into peaceful seclusion in an indulgence of a mild pessimism about the world generally.

He lived alone, except for the rather neutral presence of Aunt Hepsy, who had formerly been a village tailoress, and whose cottage he had bought with the proviso that the old woman should continue in it as "help." With Aunt Hepsy he was no more communicative than with anybody else. "He was always readin', when he wasn't goin' fishin' or off in the woods with his gun, and never made no trouble, and was about the easiest man to get along with she ever see. You mind your business and he'll mind his'n." That was the sum of Aunt Hepsy's delivery about the recluse, though no doubt her old age was enriched by constant "study" over his probable history and character. But Aunt Hepsy, since she had given up tailoring, was something of a recluse herself.

The house was full of books, mostly queer books, "in languages nobody knows what," as Aunt Hepsy said, which made Philip open his eyes when he went there one day to take to the old man a memorandum−book which he had found on Mill Brook. The recluse took a fancy to the ingenuous lad when he saw he was interested in books, and perhaps had a mind not much more practical than his own; the result was an acquaintance, and finally an intimacy−−at which the village wondered until it transpired that Philip was studying with the old fellow, who was no doubt a poor shack of a school−teacher in disguise.

It was from this gruff friend that Philip learned Greek and Latin enough to enable him to enter college, not enough drill and exact training in either to give him a high stand, but an appreciation of the literatures about which the old scholar was always enthusiastic. Philip regretted all his life that he had not been severely drilled in the classics and mathematics, for he never could become a specialist in anything. But perhaps, even in this, fate was dealing with him according to his capacities. And, indeed, he had a greater respect for the scholarship of his wayside tutor than for the pedantic acquirements of many men he came to know afterwards. It was from him that Philip learned about books and how to look for what he wanted to know, and it was he who directed Philip's taste to the best. When he went off to college the lad had not a good preparation, but he knew a great deal that would not count in the entrance examinations.

"You will need all the tools you can get the use of, my boy, in the struggle," was the advice of his mentor, "and the things you will need most may be those you have thought least of. I never go fishing without both fly and bait."

Philip was always grateful that before he entered college he had a fine reading knowledge of French, and that he knew enough German to read and enjoy Heine's poems and prose, and that he had read, or read in, pretty much all the English classics.

He used to recall the remark of a lad about his own age, who was on a vacation visit to Rivervale, and had just been prepared for college at one of the famous schools. The boys liked each other and were much together in the summer, and talked about what interested them during their rambles, carrying the rod or the fowling−piece. Philip naturally had most to say about the world he knew, which was the world of books−− that is to say, the stored information that had accumulated in the world. This more and more impressed the trained student, who one day exclaimed:

"By George! I might have known something if I hadn't been kept at school all my life."

Philip's career in college could not have been called notable. He was not one of the dozen stars in the class−room, but he had a reputation of another sort. His classmates had a habit of resorting to him if they wanted to "know anything" outside the text−books, for the range of his information seemed to them encyclopaedic. On the other hand, he escaped the reputation of what is called "a good fellow." He was not so much unpopular as he was unknown in the college generally, but those who did know him were tolerant of the fact that he cared more for reading than for college sports or college politics. It must be confessed that he added little to the reputation of the university, since his name was never once mentioned in the public prints−−search has been made since the public came to know him as a writer−−as a hero in any crew or team on any game field. Perhaps it was a little selfish that his muscle developed in the gymnasium was not put into advertising use for the university. The excuse was that he had not time to become an athlete, any more than he had time to spend three years in the discipline of the regular army, which was in itself an excellent thing.

Celia, in one of her letters−−it was during her first year at a woman's college, when the development of muscle in gymnastics, running, and the vigorous game of ball was largely engaging the attention of this enthusiastic young lady−−took him to task for his inactivity. "This is the age of muscle," she wrote; "the brain is useless in a flabby body, and probably the brain itself is nothing but concentrated intelligent muscle. I don't know how men are coming out, but women will never get the position they have the right to occupy until they are physically the equals of men."

Philip had replied, banteringly, that if that were so he had no desire to enter in a physical competition with women, and that men had better look out for another field.

But later on, when Celia had got into the swing of the classics, and was training for a part in the play of "Antigone," she wrote in a different strain, though she would have denied that the change had any relation to the fact that she had strained her back in a rowing−match. She did not apologize for her former advice, but she was all aglow about the Greek drama, and made reference to Aspasia as an intellectual type of what women might become. "I didn't ever tell you how envious I used to be when you were studying Greek with that old codger in Rivervale, and could talk about Athens and all that. Next time we meet, I can tell you, it will be Greek meets Greek. I do hope you have not dropped the classics and gone in for the modern notion of being real and practical. If I ever hear of your writing 'real' poetry−−it is supposed to be real if it is in dialect or misspelled! never will write you again, much less speak to you."

Whatever this decided young woman was doing at the time she was sure was the best for everybody to do, and especially for Master Phil.

Now that the days of preparation were over, and Philip found himself in New York, face to face with the fact that he had nowhere to look for money to meet the expense of rent, board, and clothes except to his own daily labor, and that there was another economy besides that which he had practiced as to luxuries, there were doubtless hours when his faith wavered a little in the wisdom of the decision that had invested all his patrimony in himself. He had been fortunate, to be sure, in securing a clerk's desk in the great law−office of Hunt, Sharp &Tweedle, and he had the kindly encouragement of the firm that, with close application to business, he would make his way. But even in this he had his misgivings, for a great part of his acquirements, and those he most valued, did not seem to be of any use in his office−work. He had a lofty conception of his chosen profession, as the right arm in the administration of justice between man and man. In practice, however, it seemed to him that the object was to win a case rather than to do justice in a case. Unfortunately, also, he had cultivated his imagination to the extent that he could see both sides of a case. To see both sides is indeed the requisite of a great lawyer, but to see the opposite side only in order to win, as in looking over an opponent's hand in a game of cards. It seemed to Philip that this clear perception would paralyze his efforts for one side if he knew it was the wrong side. The argument was that every cause a man's claim or his defense−−ought to be presented in its fullness and urged with all the advocate's ingenuity, and that the decision was in the bosom of an immaculate justice on the bench and the unbiased intelligence in the jury−box. This might be so. But Philip wondered what would be the effect on his own character and on his intellect if he indulged much in the habit of making the worse appear the better cause, and taking up indifferently any side that paid. For himself, he was inclined always to advise clients to "settle," and he fancied that if the occupation of the lawyer was to explain the case to people ignorant of it, and to champion only the right side, as it appeared to an unprejudiced, legally trained mind, and to compose instead of encouraging differences, the law would indeed be a noble profession, and the natural misunderstandings, ignorance, and different points of view would make business enough.

"Stuff!" said Mr. Sharp. "If you begin by declining causes you disapprove of, the public will end by letting you alone in your self− conceited squeamishness. It's human nature you've got to deal with, not theories about law and justice. I tell you that men like litigation. They want to have it out with somebody. And it is better than fisticuffs."

From Mr. Hunt, who moved in the serener upper currents of the law, Philip got more satisfaction.

"Of course, Mr. Burnett, there are miserable squabbles in the law practice, and contemptible pettifoggers and knaves, and men who will sell themselves for any dirty work, as there are in most professions and occupations, but the profession could not exist for a day if it was not on the whole on the side of law and order and justice.

No doubt it needs from time to time criticism and reformation. So does the church. You look at the characters of the really great lawyers! And there is another thing. In dealing with the cases of our complex life, there is no accomplishment, no learning in science, art, or literature, that the successful practitioner will not find it very advantageous to possess. And a lawyer will never be eminent who has not imagination."

Philip thought he had a very good chance of exercising his imagination in the sky chamber where he slept−−a capital situation from which to observe the world. There could not have been an uglier view created−−a shapeless mass of brick and stone and painted wood, a collected, towering monstrosity of rectangular and inharmonious lines, a realized dream of hideousness−−but for the splendid sky, always changing and doing all that was possible in the gleams and shadows and the glowing colors of morning and evening to soften the ambitious work of man; but for the wide horizon, with patches of green shores and verdant flats washed by the kindly tide; but for the Highlands and Staten Island, the gateway to the ocean; but for the great river and the mighty bay shimmering and twinkling and often iridescent, and the animated life of sails and steamers, the leviathans of commerce and the playthings of pleasure, and the beetle−like, monstrous ferry−boats that pushed their noses through all the confusion, like intelligent, business−like saurians that knew how to keep an appointed line by a clumsy courtesy of apparent yielding. Yes, there was life enough in all this, and inspiration, if one only knew what to be inspired about.

When Philip came home from the office at sunset, through the bustling streets, and climbed up to his perch, he insensibly brought with him something of the restless energy and strife of the city, and in this mood the prospect before him took on a certain significance of great things accomplished, of the highest form of human energy and achievement; he was a part of this exuberant, abundant life, to succeed in the struggle seemed easy, and for the moment he possessed what he saw.

The little room had space enough for a cot bed, a toilet−stand, a couple of easy−chairs−−an easy−chair is the one article of furniture absolutely necessary to a reflecting student−−some well−filled book−shelves, a small writing−desk, and a tiny closet quite large enough for a wardrobe which seemed to have no disposition to grow. Except for the books and the writing−desk, with its heterogeneous manuscripts, unfinished or rejected, there was not much in the room to indicate the taste of its occupant, unless you knew that his taste was exhibited rather by what he excluded from the room than by what it contained. It must be confessed that, when Philip was alone with his books and his manuscripts, his imagination did not expand in the directions that would have seemed profitable to the head of his firm. That life of the town which was roaring in his ears, that panorama of prosperity spread before him, related themselves in his mind not so much as incitements to engage in the quarrels of his profession as something demanding study and interpretation, something much more human than processes and briefs and arguments. And it was a dark omen for his success that the world interested him much more for itself than for what he could make out of it. Make something to be sure he must−−so long as he was only a law clerk on a meagre salary−−and it was this necessity that had much to do with the production of the manuscripts. It was a joke on Philip in his club−−by−the−way, the half−yearly dues were not far off−−that he was doing splendidly in the law; he already had an extensive practice in chambers!

The law is said to be a jealous mistress, but literature is a young lady who likes to be loved for herself alone, and thinks permission to adore is sufficient reward for her votary. Common−sense told Philip that the jealous mistress would flout him and land him in failure if he gave her a half−hearted service; but the other young lady, the Helen of the professions, was always beckoning him and alluring him by the most subtle arts, occupying all his hours with meditations on her grace and beauty, till it seemed the world were well lost for her smile. And the fascinating jade never hinted that devotion to her brought more drudgery and harassment and pain than any other service in the world. It would not have mattered if she had been frank, and told him that her promise of eternal life was illusory and her rewards commonly but a flattering of vanity. There was no resisting her enchantments, and he would rather follow her through a world of sin and suffering, pursuing her radiant form over bog and moor, in penury and heartache, for one sunrise smile and one glimpse of her sunset heaven, than to walk at ease with a commonplace maiden on any illumined and well−trod highway.

V

It is the desire of every ambitious soul to, enter Literature by the front door, and the few who have patience and money enough to live without the aid of the beckoning Helen may enter there. But a side entrance is the destiny of most aspirants, even those with the golden key of genius, and they are a long time in working their way to be seen coming out, of the front entrance. It is true that a man can attract considerable and immediate attention by trying to effect an entrance through the sewer, but he seldom gains the respect of the public whom he interests, any more than an exhibitor of fireworks gains the reputation of an artist that is accorded to the painter of a good picture.

Philip was waiting at the front door, with his essays and his prose symphonies and his satirical novel−−the satire of a young man is apt to be very bitter−−but it was as tightly shut against him as if a publisher and not the muse of literature kept the door.

There was a fellow−boarder with Philip, whose acquaintance he had made at the common table in the basement, who appeared to be free of the world of letters and art. He was an alert, compact, neatly dressed little fellow, who had apparently improved every one of his twenty−eight years in the study of life, in gaining assurance and confidence in himself, and also presented himself as one who knew the nether world completely but was not of it.

He would have said of himself that he knew it profoundly, that he frequented it for "material," but that his home was in another sphere. The impression was that he belonged among those brilliant guerrillas of both sexes, in the border−land of art and society, who lived daintily and talked about life with unconventional freedom. Slight in figure, with very black hair, and eyes of cloudy gray, an olive complexion, and features trained to an immobility proof against emotion or surprise, the whole poised as we would say in the act of being gentlemanly, it is needless to say that he took himself seriously. His readiness, self− confidence, cocksureness, Philip thought all expressed in his name−−Olin Brad.

Mr. Brad was not a Bohemian−−that is, not at all a Bohemian of the recognized type. His fashionable dress, closely trimmed hair, and dainty boots took him out of that class. He belonged to the new order, which seems to have come in with modern journalism−−that is, Bohemian in principle, but of the manners and apparel of the favored of fortune. Mr. Brad was undoubtedly clever, and was down as a bright young man in the list of those who employed talent which was not dulled by conscientious scruples. He had stood well in college, during three years in Europe he had picked up two or three languages, dissipated his remaining small fortune, acquired expensive tastes, and knowledge, both esoteric and exoteric, that was valuable to him in his present occupation. Returning home fully equipped for a modern literary career, and finding after some bitter experience that his accomplishments were not taken or paid for at their real value by the caterers for intellectual New York, he had dropped into congenial society on the staff of the Daily Spectrum, a mighty engine of public opinion, which scattered about the city and adjacent territory a million of copies, as prodigally as if they had been auctioneers' announcements. Fastidious people who did not read it gave it a bad name, not recognizing the classic and heroic attitude of those engaged in pitchforking up and turning over the muck of the Augean stables under the pretense of cleaning them.

Mr. Brad had a Socratic contempt for this sort of fault−finding. It was answer enough to say, "It pays. The people like it or they wouldn't buy it. It commands the best talent in the market and can afford to pay for it; even clergymen like to appear in its columns−−they say it's a providential chance to reach the masses. And look at the Morning GooGoo" (this was his nickname for one of the older dailies), "it couldn't pay its paper bills if it hadn't such a small circulation."

Mr. Brad, however, was not one of the editors, though the acceptance of an occasional short editorial, sufficiently piquant and impudent and vivid in language−−to suit, had given him hopes. He was salaried, but under orders for special service, and was always in the hope that the execution of each new assignment would bring him into popular notice, which would mean an advance of position and pay.

Philip was impressed with the ready talent, the adaptable talent, and the facility of this accomplished journalist, and as their acquaintance improved he was let into many of the secrets of success in the profession.

"It isn't an easy thing," said Mr. Brad, "to cater to a public that gets tired of anything in about three days. But it is just as well satisfied with a contradiction as with the original statement. It calls both news. You have to watch out and see what the people want, and give it to 'em. It is something like the purveying of the manufacturers and the dry−goods jobber for the changing trade in fashions; only the newspaper has the advantage that it can turn a somersault every day and not have any useless stock left on hand.

The public hasn't any memory, or, if it has, this whirligig process destroys it. What it will not submit to is the lack of a daily surprise. Keep that in your mind and you can make a popular newspaper. Only," continued Mr. Brad, reflectively, "you've got to hit a lot of different tastes.

"You'd laugh," this artist in emotions went on, after a little pause, "at some of my assignments. There was a run awhile ago on elopements, and my assignment was to have one every Monday morning. The girl must always be lovely and refined and moving in the best society; elopement with the coachman preferred, varied with a teacher in a Sunday−school. Invented? Not always. It was surprising how many you could find ready made, if you were

on the watch. I got into the habit of locating them in the interior of Pennsylvania as the safest place, though Jersey seemed equally probable to the public. Did I never get caught? That made it all the more lively and interesting. Denials, affidavits, elaborate explanations, two sides to any question; if it was too hot, I could change the name and shift the scene to a still more obscure town. Or it could be laid to the zeal of a local reporter, who could give the most ingenious reasons for his story. Once I worked one of those imaginary reporters up into such prominence for his clever astuteness that my boss was taken in, and asked me to send for him and give him a show on the paper.

"Oh, yes, we have to keep up the domestic side. A paper will not go unless the women like it. One of the assignments I liked was 'Sayings of Our Little Ones.' This was for every Tuesday morning. Not more than half a column. These always got copied by the country press solid. It is really surprising how many bright things you can make children of five and six years say if you give your mind to it. The boss said that I overdid it sometimes and made them too bright instead of 'just cunning.'

"'Psychological Study of Children' had a great run. This is the age of science. Same with animals, astronomy−−anything. If the public wants science, the papers will give it science.

"After all, the best hold for a lasting sensation is an attack upon some charity or public institution; show up the abuses, and get all the sentimentalists on your side. The paper gets sympathy for its fearlessness in serving the public interests. It is always easy to find plenty of testimony from ill−used convicts and grumbling pensioners."

Undoubtedly Olin Brad was a clever fellow, uncommonly well read in the surface literatures of foreign origin, and had a keen interest in what he called the metaphysics of his own time. He had many good qualities, among them friendliness towards men and women struggling like himself to get up the ladder, and he laid aside all jealousy when he advised Philip to try his hand at some practical work on the Spectrum. What puzzled Philip was that this fabricator of "stories " for the newspaper should call himself a "realist." The "story," it need hardly be explained, is newspaper slang for any incident, true or invented, that is worked up for dramatic effect. To state the plain facts as they occurred, or might have occurred, and as they could actually be seen by a competent observer, would not make a story. The writer must put in color, and idealize the scene and the people engaged in it, he must invent dramatic circumstances and positions and language, so as to produce a "picture." And this picture, embroidered on a commonplace incident, has got the name of "news." The thread of fact in this glittering web the reader must pick out by his own wits, assisted by his memory of what things usually are. And the public likes these stories much better than the unadorned report of facts. It is accustomed to this view of life, so much so that it fancies it never knew what war was, or what a battle was, until the novelists began to report them.

Mr. Brad was in the story stage of his evolution as a writer. His light facility in it had its attraction for Philip, but down deep in his nature he felt and the impression was deepened by watching the career of several bright young men and women on the press−−that indulgence in it would result in such intellectual dishonesty as to destroy the power of producing fiction that should be true to life. He was so impressed by the ability and manifold accomplishments of Mr. Brad that he thought it a pity for him to travel that road, and one day he asked him why he did not go in for literature.

"Literature!" exclaimed Mr. Brad, with some irritation; "I starved on literature for a year. Who does live on it, till he gets beyond the necessity of depending on it? There is a lot of humbug talked about it. You can't do anything till you get your name up. Some day I will make a hit, and everybody will ask, 'Who is this daring, clever Olin Brad?' Then I can get readers for anything I choose to write. Look at Champ Lawson. He can't write correct English, he never will, he uses picturesque words in a connection that makes you doubt if he knows what they mean. But he did a dare−devil thing picturesquely, and now the publishers are at his feet. When I met him the other day he affected to be bored with so much attention, and wished he had stuck to the livery− stable. He began at seventeen by reporting a runaway from the point of view of the hostler."

"Well," said Philip, "isn't it quite in the line of the new movement that we should have an introspective hostler, who perhaps obeys Sir Philip Sidney's advice, 'Look into your heart and write'? I chanced the other night in a company of the unconventional and illuminated, the 'poster' set in literature and art, wild−eyed and anaemic young women and intensely languid, 'nil admirari' young men, the most advanced products of the studios and of journalism. It was a very interesting conclave. Its declared motto was, 'We don't read, we write.' And the members were on a constant strain to say something brilliant, epigrammatic, original. The person who produced the most outre sentiment was called 'strong.' The women especially liked no writing that was not 'strong.' The strongest man in the company, and adored by the women, was the poet− artist Courci Cleves, who always seems to have walked straight out of a fashion−plate, much deferred to in this set, which affects to defer to nothing, and a thing of beauty in the theatre lobbies. Mr. Cleves gained much applause for his well−considered wish that all that has been written in the world, all books and libraries, could be destroyed, so as to give a chance to the new men and the fresh ideas of the new era."

"My dear sir," said Brad, who did not like this caricature of his friends, "you don't make any allowance for the eccentricities of genius."

"You would hit it nearer if you said I didn't make allowance for the eccentricities without genius," retorted Philip.

"Well," replied Mr. Brad, taking his leave, "you don't understand your world. You go your own way and see where you will come out."

And when Philip reflected on it, he wondered if it were not rash to offend those who had the public ear, and did up the personals and minor criticisms for the current prints. He was evidently out of view. No magazine paper of his had gained the slightest notice from these sublimated beings, who discovered a new genius every month.

A few nights after this conversation Mr. Brad was in uncommon spirits at dinner.

"Anything special turned up?" asked Philip.

"Oh, nothing much. I've thrown away the chance of the biggest kind of a novel of American life. Only it wouldn't keep. You look in the Spectrum tomorrow morning. You'll see something interesting."

"Is it a−−" and Philip's incredulous expression supplied the word.

"No, not a bit. And the public is going to be deceived this time, sure, expecting a fake. You know Mavick?"

"I've heard of him−−the operator, a millionaire."

"A good many times. Used to be minister or consul or something at Rome. A great swell. It's about his daughter, Evelyn, a stunning girl about sixteen or seventeen−−not out yet."

"I hope it's no scandal."

"No, no; she's all right. It's the way she's brought up−−shows what we've come to. They say she's the biggest heiress in America and a raving beauty, the only child. She has been brought up like the Kohinoor, never out of somebody's sight. She has never been alone one minute since she was born. Had three nurses, and it was the business of one of them, in turn, to keep an eye on her. Just think of that. Never was out of the sight of somebody in her life. Has two maids now−−always one in the room, night and day."

"What for?"

"Why, the parents are afraid she'll be kidnapped, and held for a big ransom. No, I never saw her, but I've got the thing down to a dot. Wouldn't I like to interview her, though, get her story, how the world looks to her. Under surveillance for sixteen years! The 'Prisoner of Chillon' is nothing to it for romance."

"Just the facts are enough, I should say."

"Yes, facts make a good basis, sometimes. I've got 'em all in, but of course I've worked the thing up for all it is worth. You'll see. I kept it one day to try and get a photograph. We've got the house and Mavick, but the girl's can't be found, and it isn't safe to wait. We are going to blow it out tomorrow morning."

VI

The Mavick mansion was on Fifth Avenue in the neighborhood of Central Park. It was one of the buildings in the city that strangers were always taken to see. In fact, this was a palace not one kind of a palace, but all kinds of a palace. The clever and ambitious architect of the house had grouped all the styles of architecture he had ever seen, or of which he had seen pictures. Here was not an architectural conception, like a sonnet or a well−constructed novel, but if all the work could have been spread out in line, in all its variety, there would have been produced a panorama. The sight of the mansion always caused wonder and generally ignorant admiration. Its vastness and splendor were felt to be somehow typical of the New World and of the cosmopolitan city.

The cost, in the eyes of the spectators, was a great part of its merits. No doubt this was a fabulous sum. "You can form a little idea of it," said a gentleman to his country friend, "when I tell you that that little bit there, that little corner of carving and decoration, cost two hundred thousand dollars! I had this from the architect himself."

"My!"

The interior was as fully representative of wealth and of the ambition to put under one roof all the notable effects of all the palaces in the world. But it had, what most palaces have not, all the requisites for luxurious living. The variety of styles in the rooms was bewildering. Artists of distinction, both foreign and native, had vied with each other in the decoration of the rooms given over to the display of their genius. All paganism and all Christianity, history, myth, and the beauties of nature were spread upon the walls and ceilings. Rare woods, rare marbles, splendid textures, the product of ancient handiwork and modern looms, added a certain dignity to the more airy creations of the artists. Many of the rooms were named from the nations whose styles of decoration and furnishing were imitated in them, but others had the simple designation of the gold room, the silver room, the lapis−lazuli room, and so on. It was not only the show−rooms, the halls, passages, stairways, and galleries (both of pictures and of curios) that were thus enriched, but the boudoirs, retiring−rooms, and more private apartments as well. It was not simply a house of luxury, but of all the comfort that modern invention can furnish. It was said that the money lavished upon one or two of the noble apartments would have built a State−house (though not at Albany), and that the fireplace in the great hall cost as much as an imitation mediaeval church. These were the things talked about, and yet the portions of this noble edifice, rich as they were, habitually occupied by the family had another character−−the attractions and conveniences of what we call a home. Mrs. Mavick used to say that in her apartments she found refuge in a sublimated domesticity. Mavick's own quarters−−not the study off the library where he received visitors whom it was necessary to impress−−had an executive appearance, and were, in the necessary appliances, more like the interior bureau of a board of trade. In fact, the witty brokers who were admitted to its mysteries called it the bucket−shop.

Mr. Brad's article on "A Prisoned Millionaire" more than equaled Philip's expectations. No such "story" had appeared in the city press in a long time. It was what was called, in the language of the period, a work of art−−that is, a sensation, heightened by all the words of color in the language, applied not only to material things, but to states and qualities of mind, such as "purple emotions" and "scarlet intrepidity." It was also exceedingly complimentary. Mavick himself was one of the powers and pillars of American society, and the girl was an

exquisite exhibition of woodland bloom in the first flush of spring−time. As he read it over, Philip thought what a fine advertisement it is to every impecunious noble in Europe

That morning, before going to his office, Philip strolled up Fifth Avenue to look at that now doubly, famous mansion. Many others, it appeared, were moved by the same curiosity. There was already a crowd assembled. A couple of policemen, on special duty, patrolled the sidewalk in front in order to keep a passage open, and perhaps to prevent a too impudent inspection. Opposite the house, on the sidewalk and on door−steps, was a motley throng, largely made up of toughs and roughs from the East Side, good−natured spectators who merely wanted to see this splendid prison, and a moving line of gentlemen and ladies who simply happened to be passing that way at this time. The curbstone was lined with a score of reporters of the city journals, each with his note−book. Every window and entrance was eagerly watched. It was hoped that one of the family might be seen, or that some servant might appear who could be interviewed. Upon the windows supposed by the reporters to be those from which the heiress looked, a strict watch was kept. The number, form, and location of these windows were accurately noted, the stuff of the curtains described in the phrase of the upholsterer, and much good language was devoted to the view from these windows. The shrewdest of the reporters had already sought information as to the interior from the flower dealers, from upholsterers, from artists who had been employed in the decorations, and had even assailed, in the name of the rights of the public whom they represented, the architects of the building; but their chief reliance was upon the waiters furnished by the leading caterers on occasions of special receptions and great dinners, and milliners and dress−makers, who had penetrated the more domestic apartments. By reason of this extraordinary article in the newspaper, the public had acquired the right to know all about the private life of the Mavick family.

This right was not acknowledged by Mr. Mavick and his family. Of course the object of the excitement was wholly ignorant of the cause of it, as no daily newspaper was ever seen by her that had not been carefully inspected by the trusted and intelligent governess. The crowd in front of the mansion was accounted for by the statement that a picture of it had appeared in one of the low journals, and there was naturally a curiosity to see it. And Evelyn was told that this was one of the penalties a man paid for being popular.

Mrs. Mavick, who seldom lost her head, was thoroughly frightened and upset, and it was a rare occasion that could upset the equanimity of the late widow, Mrs. Carmen Henderson. She gave way to her passion and demanded that the offending editor should be pursued with the utmost rigor of the law. Mr. Mavick was not less annoyed and angry, but he smiled when his wife talked of pursuing the press with the utmost rigor of the law, and said that he would give the matter prompt attention. That day he had an interview with the editor of the Daily Spectrum; which was satisfactory to both parties. The editor would have said that Mavick behaved like a gentleman. The result of the interview appeared in the newspaper of the following morning.

Mr. Mavick had requested that the offending reporter should be cautioned; he was too wise to have further attention called to the matter by demanding his dismissal. Accordingly the reporter was severely reprimanded, and then promoted.

The editorial, which was written by Mr. Olin Brad, and was in his best Macaulay style, began somewhat humorously by alluding to the curious interest of the public in ancient history, citing Mr. Froude and Mr. Carlyle, and the legend of Casper Hauser. It was true, gradually approaching the case in point, that uncommon precautions had been taken in the early years of the American heiress, and it was the romance of the situation that had been laid before the readers of the Spectrum. But there had been really no danger in our chivalrous, free American society, and all these precautions were long a thing of the past (which was not true). In short, with elaboration and great skill, and some humor, the exaggerations of the former article were minimized, and put in an airy and unsubstantial light. And then this friend of the people, this exposer of abuses and champion of virtue, turned and justly scored the sensational press for prying into the present life of one of the first families in the country.

Incidentally, it was mentioned that the ladies of the family had before this incident bespoken their passage for their annual visit to Europe, and that this affair had not disturbed their arrangements (which also was not true). This casual announcement was intended to draw away attention from the Fifth Avenue house, and to notify the roughs that it would be useless to lay any plans.

The country press, which had far and wide printed the interesting story, softened it in accordance with the later development. Possibly no intelligent person was deceived, but in the estimation of the mass of the people the Spectrum increased its reputation for enterprise and smartness and gave also an impression of its fairness. The manager, told Mr. Brad that the increased sales of the two days permitted the establishment to give him a vacation of two weeks on full pay, and during these weeks the manager himself set up a neat and modest brougham.

All of which events, only partially understood, Mr. Philip Burnett revolved in his mind, and wondered if what was called success was worth the price paid for it.

VII

The name of Thomas Mavick has lost the prominence and significance it had at the time the events recorded in this history were taking place. It seems incredible that the public should so soon have lost interest in him. His position in the country was most conspicuous. No name was more frequently in the newspapers. No other person not in official life was so often interviewed. The reporters instinctively turned to him for information in matters financial, concerning deals, and commercial, which were so commonly connected with political, enterprises. No loan was negotiated without consulting him, no operation was considered safe without knowing how he was affected towards it, and to ascertain what Mavick was doing or thinking was a constant anxiety in the Street. Of course the opinion of a man so powerful was very important in politics, and any church or sect would be glad to have his support. The fact that he and his family worshiped regularly at St. Agnes's was a guarantee of the stability of that church, and incidentally marked the success of the Christian religion in the metropolis.

But the condition of the presence in the public mind of the name of a great operator and accumulator of money who is merely that is either that he go on accumulating, so that the magnitude of his wealth has few if any rivals, or that his name become synonymous with some gigantic cleverness, if not rascality, so that it is used as an adjective after he and his wealth have disappeared from the public view. It is different with the reputation of an equally great financier who has used his ability for the service of his country. There is no Valhalla for the mere accumulators of money. They are fortunate if their names are forgotten, and not remembered as illustrations of colossal selfishness.

Mavick may have been the ideal of many a self−made man, but he did not make his fortune−−he married it. And it was suspected that the circumstances attending that marriage put him in complete control of it. He came into possession, however, with cultivated shrewdness and tact and large knowledge of the world, the world of diplomacy as well as of business. And under his manipulation the vast fortune so acquired was reported to have been doubled. It was at any rate almost fabulous in the public estimation.

When the charming widow of the late Rodney Henderson, then sojourning in Rome, placed her attractive self and her still more attractive fortune in the hands of Mr. Thomas Mavick, United States Minister to the Court of Italy, she attained a position in the social world which was in accord with her ambition, and Mavick acquired the means of making the mission, in point of comparison with the missions of the other powers at the Italian capital, a credit to the Great Republic. The match was therefore a brilliant one, and had a sort of national importance.

Those who knew Mrs. Mavick in the remote past, when she was the fascinating and not definitely placed Carmen Eschelle, and who also knew Mr. Mavick when he was the confidential agent of Rodney Henderson, knew that their union was a convenient and material alliance, in which the desire of each party to enjoy in freedom all the pleasures of the world could be gratified while retaining the social consideration of the world. Both had always

been circumspect. And it may be added, for the information of strangers, that they thoroughly knew each other, and were participants in a knowledge that put each at disadvantage, so that their wedded life was a permanent truce. This bond of union was not ideal, and not the best for the creation of individual character, but it avoided an exhibition of those public antagonisms which so grieve and disturb the even flow of the current of society, and give occasion to so much witty comment on the institution of marriage itself.

When, some two years after Mr. Mavick relinquished the mission to Italy to another statesman who had done some service to the opposite party, an heiress was born to the house of Mavick, her appearance in the world occasioned some disappointment to those who had caused it. Mavick naturally wished a son to inherit his name and enlarge the gold foundation upon which its perpetuity must rest; and Mrs. Mavick as naturally shrank from a responsibility that promised to curtail freedom of action in the life she loved. Carmen−−it was an old saying of the danglers in the time of Henderson−−was a domestic woman except in her own home.

However, it is one of the privileges of wealth to lighten the cares and duties of maternity, and the enlarged household was arranged upon a basis that did not interfere with the life of fashion and the charitable engagements of the mother. Indeed, this adaptable woman soon found that she had become an object of more than usual interest, by her latest exploit, in the circles in which she moved, and her softened manner and edifying conversation showed that she appreciated her position. Even the McTavishes, who were inclined to be skeptical, said that Carmen was delightful in her new role. This showed that the information Mrs. Mavick got from the women who took care of her baby was of a kind to touch the hearts of mothers and spinsters.

Moreover, the child was very pretty, and early had winning ways. The nurse, before the baby was a year old, discovered in her the cleverness of the father and the grace and fascination of the mother. And it must be said that, if she did not excite passionate affection at first, she enlisted paternal and maternal pride in her career. It dawned upon both parents that a daughter might give less cause for anxiety than a son, and that in an heiress there were possibilities of an alliance that would give great social distinction. Considering, therefore, all that she represented, and the settled conviction of Mrs. Mavick that she would be the sole inheritor of the fortune, her safety and education became objects of the greatest anxiety and precaution.

It happened that about the time Evelyn was christened there was a sort of epidemic of stealing children, and of attempts to rob tombs of occupants who had died rich or distinguished, in the expectation of a ransom. The newspapers often chronicled mysterious disappearances; parents whose names were conspicuous suffered great anxiety, and extraordinary precautions were taken in regard to the tombs of public men. And this was the reason that the heiress of the house of Mavick became the object of a watchful vigilance that was probably never before exercised in a republic, and that could only be paralleled in the case of a sole heir− apparent of royalty.

These circumstances resulted in an interference with the laws of nature which it must be confessed destroyed one of the most interesting studies in heredity that was ever offered to an historian of social life. What sort of a child had we a right to expect from Thomas Mavick, diplomatist and operator, successor to the rights and wrongs of Rodney Henderson, and Carmen Mavick, with the past of Carmen Eschelle and Mrs. Henderson? Those who adhered to the strictest application of heredity, in considering the natural development of Evelyn Mavick, sought refuge in the physiological problem of the influence of Rodney Henderson, and declared that something of his New England sturdiness and fundamental veracity had been imparted to the inheritor of his great fortune.

But the visible interference took the form of Ann McDonald, a Scotch spinster, to whom was intrusted the care of Evelyn as soon as she was christened. It was merely a piece of good fortune that brought a person of the qualifications of Ann McDonald into the family, for it is not to be supposed that Mrs. Mavick had given any thought to the truth that the important education of a child begins in its cradle, or that in selecting a care−taker and companion who should later on be a governess she was consulting her own desire of freedom from the duties of a mother. It was enough for her that the applicant for the position had the highest recommendations, that she was prepossessing in appearance, and it was soon perceived that the guardian was truthful, faithful, vigilant, and of an

affectionate disposition and an innate refinement.

Ann McDonald was the only daughter of a clergyman of the Scotch Church, and brought up in the literary atmosphere common in the most cultivated Edinburgh homes. She had been accurately educated, and always with the knowledge that her education might be her capital in life. After the death of her mother, when she was nineteen, she had been her father's housekeeper, and when in her twenty−fourth year her father relinquished his life and his salary, she decided, under the advice of influential friends, to try her fortune in America. And she never doubted that it was a providential guidance that brought her into intimate relations with the infant heiress. It seemed probable that a woman so attractive and so solidly accomplished would not very long remain a governess, but in fact her career was chosen from the moment she became interested in the development of the mind and character of the child intrusted to her care. It is difficult to see how our modern life would go on as well as it does if there were not in our homes a good many such faithful souls. It sometimes seems, in this shifting world, that about the best any of us can do is to prepare some one else for doing something well.

Miss McDonald had a pretty comprehensive knowledge of English literature and history, and, better perhaps than mere knowledge, a discriminating and cultivated taste. If her religious education had twisted her view of the fine arts, she had nevertheless a natural sympathy for the beautiful, and she would not have been a Scotchwoman if she had not had a love for the romances of her native land and at heart a "ballad" sentiment for the cavaliers. If Evelyn had been educated by her in Edinburgh, she might have been in sentiment a young Jacobite. She had through translations a sufficient knowledge of the classics to give her the necessary literary background, and her study of Latin had led her into the more useful acquisition of French.

If she had been free to indulge her own taste, she would have gone far in natural history, as was evident from her mastery of botany and her interest in birds.

She inspired so much confidence by her good sense, clear−headedness, and discretion, that almost from the first Evelyn was confided to her sole care, with only the direction that the baby was never for an instant, night or day, to be left out of the sight of a trusty attendant. The nurse was absolutely under her orders, she selected the two maids, and no person except the parents and the governess could admit visitors to the nursery. This perfect organization was maintained for many years, and though it came to be relaxed in details, it was literally true that the heiress was never alone, and never out of the sight of some trusted person responsible for her safety. But whatever the changes or relaxation, in holidays, amusements, travel, or education, the person who formed her mind was the one who had taught her to obey, to put words together into language, and to speak the truth, from infancy.

It is not necessary to consider Ann McDonald as a paragon. She was simply an intelligent, disciplined woman, with a strong sense of duty. If she had married and gone about the ordinary duties of life at the age of twenty−four, she would probably have been in no marked way distinguished among women. Her own development was largely due to the responsibility that was put upon her in the training of another person. In this sense it was true that she had learned as much as she had imparted. And in nothing was this more evident than in the range of her literary taste and judgment. Whatever risks, whatever latitude she might have been disposed to take with regard to her own mind, she would not take as to the mind of another, and as a consequence her own standards rose to meet the situation. That is to say, in a conscientious selection of only the best for Evelyn, she became more fastidious as to the food for her own mind. Or, to put it in still another way, in regard to character and culture generally, the growth of Miss McDonald could be measured by that of Evelyn.

When, from the time Evelyn was seven years old, it became necessary in her education to call in special tutors in the languages and in mathematics, and in certain arts that are generally called accomplishments, Miss McDonald was always present when the lessons were given, so that she maintained her ascendency and her influence in the girl's mind. It was this inseparable companionship, at least in all affairs of the mind, that gave to this educational experiment an exceptional interest to students of psychology. Nothing could be more interesting than to come into

contact with a mind that from infancy onward had dwelt only upon what is noblest in literature, and from which had been excluded all that is enervating and degrading. A remarkable illustration of this is the familiar case of Helen Keller, whose acquisitions, by reason of her blindness and deafness, were limited to what was selected for her, and that mainly by one person, and she was therefore for a long time shielded from a knowledge of the evil side of life. Yet all vital literature is so close to life, and so full of its passion and peril, that it supplies all the necessary aliment for the growth of a sound, discriminating mind; and that knowledge of the world, as knowledge of evil is euphemistically called, can be safely left out of a good education. This may be admitted without going into the discussion whether good principles and standards in literature and morals are a sufficient equipment for the perils of life.

This experiment, of course, was limited in Evelyn's case. She came in contact with a great deal of life. Her little world was fairly representative, for it contained her father, her mother, her governess, the maids and the servants, and occasional visitors, whom she saw freely as she grew older. The interesting fact was that she was obliged to judge this world according to the standards of literature, morals, and manners that had been implanted in her mainly by the influence of one person. The important part of this experiment of partial exclusion, in which she was never alone' an experiment undertaken solely for her safety and not for her training−was seen in her when she became conscious of its abnormal character, and perceived that she was always under surveillance. It might have made her exceedingly morbid, aside from its effect of paralyzing her self−confidence and power of initiation, had it not been for the exceptionally strong and cheerful nature of her companion. A position more hateful, even to a person not specially socially inclined, cannot be imagined than that of always being watched, and never having any assured privacy. And under such a tutelage and dependence, how in any event could she be able to take care of herself? What weapons had this heiress of a great fortune with which to defend herself? What sort of a girl had this treatment during seventeen years produced?

VIII

To the private apartment of Mr. Mavick, in the evening of the second eventful day, where, over his after−dinner cigar, he was amusing himself with a French novel, enters, after a little warning tap, the mistress of the house, for, what was a rare occurrence, a little family chat.

"So you didn't horsewhip and you didn't prosecute. You preferred to wriggle out!"

"Yes," said Mavick, too much pleased with the result to be belligerent, "I let the newspaper do the wriggling."

"Oh, my dear, I can trust you for that. Have you any idea how it got hold of the details?"

"No; you don't think McDonald−−"

"McDonald! I'd as soon suspect myself. So would you."

"Well, everybody knew it already, for that matter. I only wonder that some newspaper didn't get on to it before. What did Evelyn say?"

"Nothing more than what you heard at dinner. She thought it amusing that there should be such a crowd to gaze at the house, simply because a picture of it had appeared in a newspaper. She thought her father must be a very important personage. I didn't undeceive her. At times, you know, dear, I think so myself."

"Yes, I've noticed that," said Mavick, with a good−natured laugh, in which Carmen joined, "and those times usually coincide with the times that you want something specially."

"You ought to be ashamed to take me up that way. I just wanted to talk about the coming−out reception. You know I had come over to your opinion that seventeen was perhaps better than eighteen, considering Evelyn's maturity. When I was seventeen I was just as good as I am now."

"I don't doubt it," said Mavick, with another laugh.

"But don't you see this affair upsets all our arrangements? It's very vexatious."

"I don't see it exactly. By−the−way, what do you think of the escape suggested by the Spectrum, in the assertion that you and Evelyn had arranged to go to Europe? The steamer sails tomorrow."

"Think!" exclaimed Carmen. "Do you think I am going to be run, as you call it, by the newspapers? They run everything else. I'm not politics, I'm not an institution, I'm not even a revolution. No, I thank you. It answers my purpose for them to say we have gone."

"I suppose you can keep indoors a few days. As to the reception, I had arranged my business for it. I may be in Mexico or Honolulu the following winter."

"Well, we can't have it now. You see that."

"Carmen, I don't care a rap what the public thinks or says. The child's got to face the world some time, and look out for herself. I fancy she will not like it as much as you did."

"Very likely. Perhaps I liked it because I had to fight it. Evelyn never will do that."

"She hasn't the least idea what the world is like."

"Don't you be too sure of that, my dear; you don't understand yet what a woman feels and knows. You think she only sees and thinks what she is told. The conceit of men is most amusing about this. Evelyn is deeper than you think. The discrimination of that child sometimes positively frightens me−−how she sees into things. It wouldn't surprise me a bit if she actually knew her father and mother!"

"Then she beats me," said Mavick, with another laugh, "and I've been at it a long time. Carmen, just for fun, tell me a little about your early life."

"Well"−−there was a Madonna−like smile on her lips, and she put out the toe of her slender foot and appeared to study it for a moment−−" I was intended to be a nun."

"Spanish or French?"

"Just a plain nun. But mamma would not hear of it. Mamma was just a bit worldly."

"I never should have suspected it," said Mavick, with equal gravity. "But how did you live in those early days, way back there?"

"Oh!" and Carmen looked up with the most innocent, open−eyed expression, "we lived on our income."

"Naturally. We all try to do that." The tone in Mavick's voice showed that he gave it up.

"But, of course," and Carmen was lively again, "it's much nicer to have a big income that's certain than a small one that is uncertain."

"It would seem so."

"Ah, deary me, it's such a world! Don't you think, dear, that we have had enough domestic notoriety for one year?"

"Quite. It would do for several."

"And we will put it off a year?"

"Arrange as you like." And Mavick stretched up his arms, half yawned, and took up another cigar.

"It will be such a relief to McDonald. She insisted it was too soon." And Carmen whirled out of her chair, went behind her husband, lifted with her delicate fingers a lock of grayish hair on his forehead, deposited the lightest kiss there−−"Nobody in the world knows how good you are except me," and was gone.

And the rich man, who had gained everything he wanted in life except happiness, lighted his cigar and sought refuge in a tale of modern life, that was, however, too much like his own history to be consoling.

It must not be supposed from what she said that Mrs. Mavick stood in fear of her daughter, but it was only natural that for a woman of the world the daily contact of a pure mind should be at times inconvenient. This pure mind was an awful touchstone of conduct, and there was a fear that Evelyn's ignorance of life would prevent her from making the proper allowances. In her affectionate and trusting nature, which suspected little evil anywhere, there was no doubt that her father and mother had her entire confidence and love. But the likelihood was that she would not be pliant. Under Miss McDonald's influence she had somewhat abstract notions of what is right and wrong, and she saw no reason why these should not be applied in all cases. What her mother would have called policy and reasonable concessions she would have given different names. For getting on in the world, this state of mind has its disadvantages, and in the opinion of practical men, like Mavick, it was necessary to know good and evil. But it was the girl's power of discernment that bothered her mother, who used often to wonder where the child came from.

On the other hand, it must not be supposed that the singular training of Evelyn had absolutely destroyed her inherited tendencies, or made her as she was growing into womanhood anything but a very real woman, with the reserves, the weaknesses, the coquetries, the defenses which are the charm of her sex. Nor was she so ignorant of life as such a guarded personality might be thought. Her very wide range of reading had liberalized her mind, and given her a much wider outlook upon the struggles and passions and failures and misery of life than many another girl of her age had gained by her limited personal experience. Those who hold the theory that experience is the only guide are right as a matter of fact, since every soul seems determined to try for itself and not to accept the accumulated wisdom of literature or of experienced advisers; but those who come safely out of their experiences are generally sound by principle which has been instilled in youth. But it is useless to moralize. Only the event could show whether such an abnormal training as Evelyn had received was wise.

When Mrs. Mavick went to her daughter's apartments she found Evelyn reading aloud and Miss McDonald at work on an elaborate piece of Bulgarian embroidery.

"How industrious! What a rebuke to me!"

"I don't see, mamma, how we could be doing less; I've only an audience of one, and she is wasting her time."

"Well, carissima, it is settled. It's off for a year."

"The reception? Why so?"

"Your father cannot arrange it. He has too much on hand this season, and may be away."

"There, McDonald, we've got a reprieve," and Evelyn gave a sigh of relief.

The Scotch woman smiled, and only said, "Then I shall have time to finish this."

Evelyn jumped up, threw herself into her mother's lap, and began to smooth her hair and pet her. "I'm awfully glad. I'd ever so much rather stay in than come out. Yes, dear little mother."

"Little?"

"Yes." And the girl pulled her mother from her chair, and made her stand up to measure. "See, McDonald, almost an inch taller than mamma, and when I do my hair on top!"

"And see, mamma"−−the girl was pirouetting on the floor−−" I can do those steps you do. Isn't it Spanish?"

"Rather Spanish−American, I guess. This is the way."

Evelyn clapped her hands. "Isn't that lovely!"

"You are only a little brownie, after all." Her mother was holding her at arm's−−length and studying her critically, wondering if she would ever be handsome.

The girl was slender, but not tall. Her figure had her mother's grace, but not its suggestion of yielding suppleness. She was an undoubted brunette−−complexion olive, hair very dark, almost black except in the sunlight, and low on her forehead−chin a little strong, and nose piquant to say the least of it. Certainly features not regular nor classic. The mouth, larger than her mother's, had full lips, the upper one short, and admirable curves, strong in repose, but fascinating when she smiled. A face not handsome, but interesting. And the eyes made you hesitate to say she was not handsome, for they were large, of a dark hazel and changeable, eyes that flashed with merriment, or fell into sadness under the long eyelashes; and it would not be safe to say that they could not blaze with indignation. Not a face to go wild about, but when you felt her character through it, a face very winning in its dark virgin purity.

"I do wonder where she came from? "Mrs. Mavick was saying to herself, as she threw herself upon a couch in her own room and took up the latest Spanish novel.

IX

Celia Howard had been, in a way, Philip's inspiration ever since the days when they quarreled and made up on the banks of the Deer field. And a fortunate thing for him it was that in his callow years there was a woman in whom he could confide. Her sympathy was everything, even if her advice was not always followed. In the years of student life and preparation they had not often met, but they were constant and painstaking correspondents. It was to her that he gave the running chronicle of his life, and poured out his heart and aspirations. Unconsciously he was going to school to a woman, perhaps the most important part of his education. For, though in this way he might never hope to understand woman, he was getting most valuable knowledge of himself.

As a guide, Philip was not long in discovering that Celia was somewhat uncertain. She kept before him a very high ideal; she expected him to be distinguished and successful, but, her means varied from time to time. Now she would have him take one path and now another. And Philip learned to read in this varying advice the changes in her own experience. There was a time when she hoped he would be a great scholar: there was no position so noble as that of a university professor or president. Then she turned short round and extolled the business life: get

money, get a position, and then you can study, write books, do anything you like and be independent. Then came a time−−this was her last year in college−− when science seemed the only thing. That was really a benefit to mankind: create something, push discovery, dispel ignorance.

"Why, Phil, if you could get people to understand about ventilation, the necessity of pure air, you would deserve a monument. And, besides−−this is an appeal to your lower nature−−science is now the thing that pays." Theology she never considered; that was just now too uncertain in its direction. Law she had finally approved; it was still respectable; it was a very good waiting−ground for many opportunities, and it did not absolutely bar him from literature, for which she perceived he had a sneaking fondness.

Philip wondered if Celia was not thinking of the law for herself. She had tried teaching, she had devoted herself for a time to work in a College Settlement, she had learned stenography, she had talked of learning telegraphy, she had been interested in women's clubs, in a civic club, in the political education of women, and was now a professor of economics in a girl's college.

It finally dawned upon Philip, who was plodding along, man fashion, in one of the old ruts, feeling his way, like a true American, into the career that best suited him, that Celia might be a type of the awakened American woman, who does not know exactly what she wants. To be sure, she wants everything. She has recently come into an open place, and she is distracted by the many opportunities. She has no sooner taken up one than she sees another that seems better, or more important in the development of her sex, and she flies to that. But nothing, long, seems the best thing. Perhaps men are in the way, monopolizing all the best things. Celia had never made a suggestion of this kind, but Philip thought she was typical of the women who push individualism so far as never to take a dual view of life.

"I have just been," Celia wrote in one of her letters, when she was an active club woman, "out West to a convention of the Federation of Women's Clubs. Such a striking collection of noble, independent women! Handsome, lots of them, and dressed−−oh, my friend, dress is still a part of it! So different from a man's convention! Cranks? Yes, a few left over. It was a fine, inspiring meeting. But, honestly, I could not exactly make out what they were federating about, and what they were going to do when they got federated. It sort of came over me, I am such a weak sister, that there is such a lot of work done in this world with no object except the doing of it."

A more recent letter:−−"Do you remember Aunt Hepsy, who used to keep the little thread−and−needle and candy shop in Rivervale? Such a dear, sweet, contented old soul! Always a smile and a good word for every customer. I can see her now, picking out the biggest piece of candy in the dish that she could afford to give for a little fellow's cent. It never came over me until lately how much good that old woman did in the world. I remember what a comfort it was to go and talk with her. Well, I am getting into a frame of mind to want to be an Aunt Hepsy. There is so much sawdust in everything−−No, I'm not low−spirited. I'm just philosophical−−I've a mind to write a life of Aunt Hepsy, and let the world see what a real useful life is."

And here is a passage from the latest:−−"What an interesting story your friend−−I hope he isn't you friend, for I don't half like him−−has made out of that Mavick girl! If I were the girl's mother I should want to roast him over the coals. Is there any truth in it?

Of course I read it, as everybody did and read the crawl out, and looked for more. So it is partly our fault, but what a shame it is, the invasion of family life! Do tell me, if you happen to see her−−the girl− −driving in the Park or anywhere −of course you never will−−what she looks like. I should like to see an unsophisticated millionaire−ess! But it is an awfully interesting problem, invented or not I'm pretty deep in psychology these days, and I'd give anything to come in contact with that girl. You would just see a woman, and you wouldn't know. I'd see a soul. Dear me, if I'd only had the chance of that Scotch woman! Don't you see, if we could only get to really know one mind and soul, we should know it all. I mean scientifically. I know what you are thinking,

that all women have that chance. What you think is impertinent−−to the subject."

Indeed, the story of Evelyn interested everybody. It was taken up seriously in the country regions. It absorbed New York gossip for two days, and then another topic took possession of the mercurial city; but it was the sort of event to take possession of the country mind. New York millionaires get more than their share of attention in the country press at all times, but this romance became the subject of household talk and church and sewing−circle gossip, and all the women were eager for more details, and speculated endlessly about the possible character and career of the girl.

Alice wrote Philip from Rivervale that her aunt Patience was very much excited by it. '"The poor thing,' she said, 'always to have somebody poking round, seeing every blessed thing you do or don't do; it would drive me crazy. There is that comfort in not having anything much−−you have yourself. You tell Philip that I hope he doesn't go there often. I've no objection to his being kind to the poor thing when they meet, and doing neighborly things, but I do hope he won't get mixed up with that set.' It is very amusing," Alice continued, "to hear Patience soliloquize about it and construct the whole drama.

But you cannot say, Philip, that you are not warned (!) and you know that Patience is almost a prophet in the way she has of putting things together. Celia was here recently looking after the little house that has been rented ever since the death of her mother. I never saw her look so well and handsome, and yet there was a sort of air about her as if she had been in public a good deal and was quite capable of taking care of herself. But she was that way when she was little.

I think she is a good friend of yours. Well, Phil, if you do ever happen to see that Evelyn in the opera, or anywhere, tell me how she looks and what she has on−−if you can."

The story had not specially interested Philip, except as it was connected with Brad's newspaper prospects, but letters, like those referred to, received from time to time, began to arouse a personal interest. Of course merely a psychological interest, though the talk here and there at dinner−tables stimulated his desire, at least, to see the subject of them. But in this respect he was to be gratified, in the usual way things desired happen in life−−that is, by taking pains to bring them about.

When Mr. Brad came back from his vacation his manner had somewhat changed. He had the air of a person who stands on firm ground. He felt that he was a personage. He betrayed this in a certain deliberation of speech, as if any remark from him now might be important. In a way he felt himself related to public affairs.

In short, he had exchanged the curiosity of the reporter for the omniscience of the editor. And for a time Philip was restrained from intruding the subject of the Mavick sensation. However, one day after dinner he ventured:

"I see, Mr. Brad, that your hit still attracts attention." Mr. Brad looked inquiringly blank.

I mean about the millionaire heiress. It has excited a wide interest."

"Ah, that! Yes, it gave me a chance," replied Brad, who was thinking only of himself.

"I've had several letters about it from the country."

"Yes? Well, I suppose," said Brad, modestly, "that a little country notoriety doesn't hurt a person."

Philip did not tell his interlocutor that, so far as he knew, nobody in the country had ever heard the name of Olin Brad, or knew there was such a person in existence. But he went on:

"Certainly. And, besides, there is a great curiosity to know about the girl. Did you ever see her?"

"Only in public. I don't know Mavick personally, and for reasons," and Mr. Brad laughed in a superior manner. "It's easy enough to see her."

"How?"

"Watch out for a Wagner night, and go to the opera. You'll see where Mavick's box is in the bill. She is pretty sure to be there, and her mother. There is nothing special about her; but her mother is still a very fascinating woman, I can tell you. You'll find her sure on a 'Carmen' night, but not so sure of the girl."

On this suggestion Philip promptly acted. The extra expense of an orchestra seat he put down to his duty to keep his family informed of anything that interested them in the city. It was a "Siegfried" night, and a full house. To describe it all would be very interesting to Alice. The Mavick box was empty until the overture was half through. Then appeared a gentleman who looked as if he were performing a public duty, a lady who looked as if she were receiving a public welcome, and seated between them a dark, slender girl, who looked as if she did not see the public at all, but only the orchestra.

Behind them, in the shadow, a middle−aged woman in plainer attire. It must be the Scotch governess. Mrs. Mavick had her eyes everywhere about the house, and was graciously bowing to her friends. Mr. Mavick coolly and unsympathetically regarded the house, quite conscious of it, but as if he were a little bored. You could not see him without being aware that he was thinking of other things, probably of far−reaching schemes. People always used to say of Mavick, when he was young and a clerk in a Washington bureau, that he looked omniscient. At least the imagination of spectators invested him with a golden hue, and regarded him through the roseate atmosphere that surrounds a many− millioned man. The girl had her eyes always on the orchestra, and was waiting for the opening of the world that lay behind the drop−curtain. Philip noticed that all the evening Mrs. Mavick paid very little attention to the stage, except when the rest of the house was so dark that she could distinguish little in it.

Fortunately for Philip, in his character of country reporter, the Mavick box was near the stage, and he could very well see what was going on in it, without wholly distracting his attention from Wagner's sometimes very dimly illuminated creation.

There are faces and figures that compel universal attention and admiration. Commonly there is one woman in a theatre at whom all glances are leveled. It is a mystery why one face makes only an individual appeal, and an appeal much stronger than that of one universally admired. The house certainly concerned itself very little about the shy and dark heiress in the Mavick box, having with regard to her only a moment's curiosity. But the face instantly took hold of Philip. He found it more interesting to read the play in her face than on the stage. He seemed instantly to have established a chain of personal sympathy with her. So intense was his regard that it seemed as if she must, if there is anything in the telepathic theory of the interchange of feeling, have been conscious of it. That she was, however, unconscious of any influence reaching her except from the stage was perfectly evident. She was absorbed in the drama, even when the drama was almost lost in darkness, and only an occasional grunting ejaculation gave evidence that there was at least animal life responsive to the continual pleading, suggesting, inspiring strains of the orchestra. In the semi−gloom and groping of the under−world, it would seem that the girl felt that mystery of life which the instruments were trying to interpret.

At any rate, Philip could see that she was rapt away into that other world of the past, to a practical unconsciousness of her immediate surroundings. Was it the music or the poetic idea that held her? Perhaps only the latter, for it is Wagner's gift to reach by his creations those who have little technical knowledge of music. At any rate, she was absorbed, and so perfectly was the progress of the drama repeated in her face that Philip, always with the help of the orchestra, could trace it there.

But presently something more was evident to this sympathetic student of her face. She was not merely discovering the poet's world, she was finding out herself. As the drama unfolded, Philip was more interested in this phase than in the observation of her enjoyment and appreciation. To see her eyes sparkle and her cheeks glow with enthusiasm during the sword−song was one thing, but it was quite another when Siegfried began his idyl, that nature and bird song of the awakening of the whole being to the passion of love. Then it was that Evelyn's face had a look of surprise, of pain, of profound disturbance; it was suffused with blushes, coming and going in passionate emotion; the eyes no longer blazed, but were softened in a melting tenderness of sympathy, and her whole person seemed to be carried into the stream of the great life passion. When it ceased she sank back in her seat, and blushed still more, as if in fear that some one had discovered her secret.

Afterwards, when Philip had an opportunity of knowing Evelyn Mavick, and knowing her very well, and to some extent having her confidence, he used to say to himself that he had little to learn−−the soul of the woman was perfectly revealed to him that night of "Siegfried."

As the curtain went down, Mrs. Mavick, whose attention had not been specially given to the artists before, was clapping her hands in a great state of excitement.

"Why don't you applaud, child?"

"Oh, mother," was all the girl could say, with heaving breast and downcast eyes.

X

All winter long that face seemed to get between Philip and his work. It was an inspiration to his pen when it ran in the way of literature, but a distinct damage to progress in his profession. He had seen Evelyn again, more than once, at the opera, and twice been excited by a passing glimpse of her on a crisp, sunny afternoon in the Mavick carriage in the Park− always the same bright, eager face. So vividly personal was the influence upon him that it seemed impossible that she should not be aware of it−−impossible that she could not know there was such a person in the world as Philip Burnett.

Fortunately youth can create its own world. Between the secluded daughter of millions and the law clerk was a great gulf, but this did not prevent Evelyn's face, and, in moments of vanity, Evelyn herself, from belonging to Philip's world. He would have denied−−we have a habit of lying to ourselves quite as much as to others−−that he ever dreamed of possessing her, but nevertheless she entered into his thoughts and his future in a very curious way. If he saw himself a successful lawyer, her image appeared beside him. If his story should gain the public attention, and his occasional essays come to be talked of, it was Evelyn's interest and approval that he caught himself thinking about. And he had a conviction that she was one to be much more interested in him as a man of letters than as a lawyer. This might be true. In Philip's story, which was very slowly maturing, the heroine fell in love with a young man simply for himself, and regardless of the fact that he was poor and had his career to make. But he knew that if his novel ever got published the critics would call it a romance, and not a transcript of real life. Had not women ceased to be romantic and ceased to indulge in vagaries of affection?

Was it that Philip was too irresolute to cut either law or literature, and go in, single−minded, for a fortune of some kind, and a place? Or was it merely that he had confidence in the winning character of his own qualities and was biding his time? If it was a question of making himself acceptable to a woman−−say a woman like Evelyn−−was it not belittling to his own nature to plan to win her by what he could make rather than by what he was?

Probably the vision he had of Evelyn counted for very little in his halting decision. "Why don't you put her into a novel?" asked Mr. Brad one evening. The suggestion was a shock. Philip conveyed the idea pretty plainly that he hadn't got so low as that yet. "Ah, you fellows think you must make your own material. You are higher−toned than old Dante." The fact was that Philip was not really halting. Every day he was less and less in love with the

law as it was practiced, and, courting reputation, he would much rather be a great author than a great lawyer. But he kept such thoughts to himself. He had inherited a very good stock of common−sense. Apparently he devoted himself to his office work, and about the occupation of his leisure hours no one was in his confidence except Celia, and now and then, when he got something into print, Alice. Professedly Celia was his critic, but really she was the necessary appreciator, for probably most writers would come to a standstill if there was no sympathetic soul to whom they could communicate, while they were fresh, the teeming fancies of their brains.

The winter wore along without any incident worth recording, but still fruitful for the future, as Philip fondly hoped. And one day chance threw in his way another sensation. Late in the afternoon of a spring day he was sent from the office to Mavick's house with a bundle of papers to be examined and signed.

"You will be pretty sure to find him," said Mr. Sharp, "at home about six. Wait till you do see him. The papers must be signed and go to Washington by the night mail."

Mr. Mavick was in his study, and received Philip very civilly, as the messenger of his lawyers, and was soon busy in examining the documents, flinging now and then a short question to Philip, who sat at the table near him.

Suddenly there was a tap at the door, and, not waiting for a summons, a young girl entered, and stopped after a couple of steps.

"Oh, I didn't know−−"

"What is it, dear?" said Mr. Mavick, looking up a moment, and then down at the papers.

"Why, about the coachman's baby. I thought perhaps−−" She had a paper in her hand, and advanced towards the table, and then stopped, seeing that her father was not alone.

Philip rose involuntarily. Mr. Mavick looked up quickly. "Yes, presently. I've just now got a little business with Mr. Burnett."

It was not an introduction. But for an instant the eyes of the young people met. It seemed to Philip that it was a recognition. Certainly the full, sweet eyes were bent on him for the second she stood there, before turning away and leaving the room. And she looked just as true and sweet as Philip dreamed she would look at home. He sat in a kind of maze for the quarter of an hour while Mavick was affixing his signature and giving some directions. He heard all the directions, and carried away the papers, but he also carried away something else unknown to the broker. After all, he found himself reflecting, as he walked down the avenue, the practice of the law has its good moments!

What was there in this trivial incident that so magnified it in Philip's mind, day after day? Was it that he began to feel that he had established a personal relation with Evelyn because she had seen him? Nothing had really happened. Perhaps she had not heard his name, perhaps she did not carry the faintest image of him out of the room with her. Philip had read in romances of love at first sight, and he had personal experience of it. Commonly, in romances, the woman gives no sign of it, does not admit it to herself, denies it in her words and in her conduct, and never owns it until the final surrender. "When was the first moment you began to love me, dear?" "Why, the first moment, that day; didn't you know it then?" This we are led to believe is common experience with the shy and secretive sex. It is enough, in a thousand reported cases, that he passed her window on horseback, and happened to look her way. But with such a look! The mischief was done. But this foundation was too slight for Philip to build such a hope on.

Looking back, we like to trace great results to insignificant, momentary incidents−−a glance, a word, that turned the current of a life. There was a definite moment when the thought came to Alexander that he would conquer the

world! Probably there was no such moment. The great Alexander was restless, and at no initial instant did he conceive his scheme of conquest. Nor was it one event that set him in motion. We confound events with causes. It happened on such a day. Yes, but it might have happened on another. But if Philip had not been sent on that errand to Mavick probably Evelyn would never have met him. What nonsense this is, and what an unheroic character it makes Philip! Is it supposable that, with such a romance as he had developed about the girl, he would not some time have come near her, even if she had been locked up with all the bars and bolts of a safety deposit?

The incident of this momentary meeting was, however, of great consequence. There is no such feeder of love as the imagination. And fortunate it was for Philip that his romance was left to grow in the wonder−working process of his own mind. At first there had been merely a curiosity in regard to a person whose history and education had been peculiar. Then the sight of her had raised a strange tumult in his breast, and his fancy began to play about her image, seen only at a distance and not many times, until his imagination built up a being of surpassing loveliness, and endowed with all the attractions that the poets in all ages have given to the sex that inspires them. But this sort of creation in the mind becomes vague, and related to literature only, unless it is sustained by some reality. Even Petrarch must occasionally see Laura at the church door, and dwell upon the veiled dreamer that passed and perhaps paused a moment to regard him with sad eyes. Philip, no doubt, nursed a genuine passion, which grew into an exquisite ideal in the brooding of a poetic mind, but it might in time have evaporated into thin air, remaining only as an emotional and educational experience. But this moment in Mr. Mavick's library had given a solid body to his imaginations, and a more definite turn to his thought of her.

If, in some ordinary social chance, Philip had encountered the heiress, without this previous wonderworking of his imagination in regard to her, the probability is that he would have seen nothing especially to distinguish her from the other girls of her age and newness in social experience. Certainly the thought that she was the possessor of uncounted millions would have been, on his side, an insuperable barrier to any advance. But the imagination works wonders truly, and Philip saw the woman and not the heiress. She had become now a distinct personality; to be desired above all things on earth, and that he should see her again he had no doubt.

This thought filled his mind, and even when he was not conscious of it gave a sort of color to life, refined his perceptions, and gave him almost sensuous delight in the masterpieces of poetry which had formerly appealed only to his intellectual appreciation of beauty.

He had not yet come to a desire to share his secret with any confidant, but preferred to be much alone and muse on it, creating a world which was without evil, without doubt, undisturbed by criticism. In this so real dream it was the daily office work that seemed unreal, and the company and gossip of his club a kind of vain show. He began to frequent the picture−galleries, where there was at least an attempt to express sentiment, and to take long walks to the confines of the city−confines fringed with all the tender suggestions of the opening spring. Even the monotonous streets which he walked were illumined in his eyes, glorified by the fullness of life and achievement. "Yes," he said again and again, as he stood on the Heights, in view of the river, the green wall of Jersey and the great metropolis spread away to the ocean gate, "it is a beautiful city! And the critics say it is commonplace and vulgar." Dear dreamer, it is a beautiful city, and for one reason and another a million of people who have homes there think so. But take out of it one person, and it would have for you no more interest than any other huge assembly of ugly houses. How, in a lover's eyes, the woman can transfigure a city, a landscape, a country!

Celia had come up to town for the spring exhibitions, and was lodging at the Woman's Club. Naturally Philip saw much of her, indeed gave her all his time that the office did not demand. Her company was always for him a keen delight, an excitement, and in its way a rest. For though she always criticised, she did not nag, and just because she made no demands, nor laid any claims on him, nor ever reproached him for want of devotion, her society was delightful and never dull. They dined together at the Woman's Club, they experimented on the theatres, they visited the galleries and the picture−shops, they took little excursions into the suburbs and came back impressed with the general cheapness and shabbiness, and they talked−−talked about all they saw, all they had read, and something of what they thought. What was wanting to make this charming camaraderie perfect? Only one thing.

It may have occurred to Philip that Celia had not sufficient respect for his opinions; she regarded them simply as opinions, not as his.

One afternoon, in the Metropolitan Picture−Gallery, Philip had been expressing enthusiasm for some paintings that Celia thought more sentimental than artistic, and this reminded her that he was getting into a general way of admiring everything.

"You didn't use, Philip, to care so much for pictures."

"Oh, I've been seeing more."

"But you don't say you like that? Look at the drawing."

"Well, it tells the story."

"A story is nothing; it's the way it's told. This is not well told."

"It pleases me. Look at that girl."

"Yes, she is domestic. I admit that. But I'm not sure I do not prefer an impressionistic girl, whom you can't half see, to such a thorough bread−and−butter miss as this."

"Which would you rather live with?"

"I'm not obliged to live with either. In fact, I'd rather live with myself. If it's art, I want art; if it's cooking and sewing, I want cooking and sewing. If the artist knew enough, he'd paint a woman instead of a cook."

"Then you don't care for real life?"

"Real life! There is no such thing. You are demonstrating that. You transform this uninteresting piece of domesticity into an ideal woman, ennobling her surroundings. She doesn't do it. She is level with them."

"It would be a dreary world if we didn't idealize things."

"So it would. And that is what I complain of in such 'art' as this. I don't know what has got into you, Phil. I never saw you so exuberant. You are pleased with everything. Have you had a rise in the office? Have you finished your novel?"

"Neither. No rise. No novel. But Tweedle is getting friendly. Threw an extra job in my way the other day. Do you think I'd better offer my novel, when it is done, to Tweedle?"

"Tweedle, indeed!"

"Well, one of our clients is one of the great publishing firms, and Tweedle often dines with the publisher."

"For shame, Phil!"

Philip laughed. "At any rate, that is no meaner than a suggestion of Brad's. He says if I will just weave into it a lot of line scenery, and set my people traveling on the great trunk, stopping off now and then at an attractive branch, the interested railroads would gladly print it and scatter it all over the country."

"No doubt," said Celia, sinking down upon a convenient seat. "I begin to feel as if there were no protection for anything. And, Phil, that great monster of a Mavick, who is eating up the country, isn't he a client also?"

"Occasionally only. A man like Mavick has his own lawyers and judges."

"Did you ever see him?"

"Just glimpses."

"And that daughter of his, about whom such a fuss was made, I suppose you never met her?"

"Oh, as I wrote you, at the opera; saw her in her box."

"And−−?"

"Oh, she's rather a little thing; rather dark, I told you that; seems devoted to music."

"And you didn't tell what she wore."

"Why, what they all wear. Something light and rather fluffy."

"Just like a man. Is she pretty?"

"Ye−e−s; has that effect. You'd notice her eyes." If Philip had been frank he would have answered,

"I don't know. She's simply adorable," and Celia would have understood all about it.

"And probably doesn't know anything. Yes, highly educated? I heard that. But I'm getting tired of 'highly educated'; I see so many of them. I've been making them now for years. Perhaps I'm one of them. And where am I? Don't interrupt. I tell you it is a relief to come across a sweet, womanly ignoramus. What church does she go to?"

"Who?"

"That Mavick girl."

"St. Thomas', I believe."

"That's good−−that's devotional. I suppose you go there too, being brought up a Congregationalist?"

"At vespers, sometimes. But, Celia, what is the matter with you? I thought you didn't care−−didn't care to belong to anything?"

"I? I belong to everything. Didn't I write you reams about my studies in psychology? I've come to one conclusion. There are only two persons in the world who stand on a solid foundation, the Roman Catholic and the Agnostic. The Roman Catholic knows everything, the Agnostic doesn't know anything."

Philip was never certain when the girl was bantering him; nor, when she was in earnest, how long she would remain in that mind and mood. So he ventured, humorously:

"The truth is, Celia, that you know too much to be either. You are what they call emancipated."

"Emancipated!" And Celia sat up energetically, as if she were now really interested in the conversation. "Become the slave of myself instead of the slave of somebody else! That's the most hateful thing to be, emancipated. I never knew a woman who said she was emancipated who wasn't in some ridiculous folly or another. Now, Phil, I'm going to tell you something. I can tell you. You know I've been striving to have a career, to get out of myself somehow, and have a career for myself. Well, today−−mind, I don't say tomorrow"−−(and there was a queer little smile on her lips)−−"I think I will just try to be good to people and things in general, in a human way."

"And give up education?"

"No, no. I get my living by education, just as you do, or hope to do, by law or by letters; it's all the same. But wait. I haven't finished what I was going to say. The more I go into psychology, trying to find out about my mind and mind generally, the more mysterious everything is. Do you know, Phil, that I'm getting into the supernatural? You can't help running into it. For me, I am not side−tracked by any of the nonsense about magnetism and telepathy and mind−reading and other psychic imponderabilities. Isn't it queer that the further we go into science the deeper we go into mystery?

Now, don't be shocked, I mean it reverently, just as an illustration. Do you think any one knows really anything more about the operation in the world of electricity than he does about the operation of the Holy Ghost? And yet people talk about science as if it were something they had made themselves."

"But, Celia−−"

"No, I've talked enough. We are in this world and not in some other, and I have to make my living. Let's go into the other room and see the old masters. They, at least, knew how to paint−−to paint passion and character; some of them could paint soul. And then, Phil, I shall be hungry. Talking about the mind always makes me hungry."

XI

Philip was always welcome at his uncle's house in Rivervale. It was, of course, his home during his college life, and since then he was always expected for his yearly holiday. The women of the house made much of him, waited on him, deferred to him, petted him, with a flattering mingling of tenderness to a little boy and the respect due to a man who had gone into the world. Even Mr. Maitland condescended to a sort of equality in engaging Philip in conversation about the state of the country and the prospects of business in New York.

It was July. When Philip went to sleep at night−−he was in the front chamber reserved for guests−−the loud murmur of the Deerfield was in his ears, like a current bearing him away into sweet sleep and dreams in a land of pleasant adventures. Only in youth come such dreams. Later on the sophisticated mind, left to its own guidance in the night, wanders amid the complexities of life, calling up in confusion scenes long forgotten or repented of, images only registered by a sub−conscious process, dreams to perplex, irritate, and excite.

In the morning the same continuous murmur seemed to awake him into a peaceful world. Through the open window came in the scents of summer, the freshness of a new day. How sweet and light was the air! It was indeed the height of summer. The corn, not yet tasseled, stood in green flexible ranks, moved by the early breeze. In the river−meadows haying had just begun. Fields of timothy and clover, yellowing to ripeness, took on a fresh bloom from the dew, and there was an odor of new−mown grass from the sections where the scythes had been. He heard the call of the crow from the hill, the melody of the bobolink along the meadow− brook; indeed, the birds of all sorts were astir, skimming along the ground or rising to the sky, keeping watch especially over the garden and the fruit−trees, carrying food to their nests, or teaching their young broods to fly and to chirp the songs of summer. And from the woodshed the shrill note of the scythe under the action of the grindstone. No such vivid realization of summer as that.

Philip stole out the unused front door without disturbing the family. Whither? Where would a boy be likely to go the first thing? To the barn, the great cavernous barn, its huge doors now wide open, the stalls vacant, the mows empty, the sunlight sifting in through the high shadowy spaces. How much his life had been in that barn! How he had stifled and scrambled mowing hay in those lofts! On the floor he had hulled heaps of corn, thrashed oats with a flail−−a noble occupation−−and many a rainy day had played there with girls and boys who could not now exactly describe the games or well recall what exciting fun they were. There were the racks where he put the fodder for cattle and horses, and there was the cutting−machine for the hay and straw and for slicing the frozen turnips on cold winter mornings.

In the barn−yard were the hens, just as usual, walking with measured step, scratching and picking in the muck, darting suddenly to one side with an elevated wing, clucking, chattering, jabbering endlessly about nothing. They did not seem to mind him as he stood in the open door. But the rooster, in his oriental iridescent plumage, jumped upon a fence− post and crowed defiantly, in warning that this was his preserve. They seemed like the same hens, yet Philip knew they were all strangers; all the hens and flaunting roosters he knew had long ago gone to Thanksgiving. The hen is, or should be, an annual. It is never made a pet. It forms no attachments. Man is no better acquainted with the hen, as a being, than he was when the first chicken was hatched. Its business is to live a brief chicken life, lay, and be eaten. And this reminded Philip that his real occupation was hunting hens' eggs. And this he did, in the mows, in the stalls, under the floor−planks, in every hidden nook. The hen's instinct is to be orderly, and have a secluded nest of her own, and bring up a family. But in such a communistic body it is a wise hen who knows her own chicken. Nobody denies to the hen maternal instincts or domestic proclivities, but what an ill example is a hen community!

And then Philip climbed up the hill, through the old grass−plot and the orchard, to the rocks and the forest edge, and the great view. It had more meaning to him than when he was a boy, and it was more beautiful. In a certain peaceful charm, he had seen nothing anywhere in the world like it. Partly this was because his boyish impressions, the first fresh impressions of the visible world, came back to him; but surely it was very beautiful. More experienced travelers than Philip felt its unique charm.

When he descended, Alice was waiting to breakfast with him. Mrs. Maitland declared, with an approving smile on her placid, aging face, that he was the same good−for−nothing boy. But Alice said, as she sat down to the little table with Philip, "It is different, mother, with us city folks." They were in the middle room, and the windows opened to the west upon the river−meadows and the wooded hills beyond, and through one a tall rose−bush was trying to thrust its fragrant bloom.

What a dainty breakfast! Alice flushed with pleasure. It was so good of him to come to them. Had he slept well? Did it seem like home at all? Philip's face showed that it was home without the need of saying so. Such coffee−yes, a real aroma of the berry! Just a little more, would he have? And as Alice raised the silver pitcher, there was a deep dimple in her sweet cheek. How happy she was! And then the butter, so fresh and cool, and the delicious eggs−−by the way, he had left a hatful in the kitchen as he came in. Alice explained that she did not make the eggs. And then there was the journey, the heat in the city, the grateful sight of the Deerfield, the splendid morning, the old barn, the watering− trough, the view from the hill everything just as it used to be.

"Dear Phil, it is so nice to have you here," and there were tears in Alice's eyes, she was so happy.

After breakfast Philip strolled down the country road through the village. How familiar was every step of the way!−−the old houses jutting out at the turns in the road; the glimpse of the river beyond the little meadow where Captain Rice was killed; the spring under the ledge over which the snap−dragon grew; the dilapidated ranks of fence smothered in vines and fireweeds; the cottages, with flower−pots in front; the stores, with low verandas ornamented with boxes and barrels; the academy in its green on the hill; the old bridge over which the circus elephant dared not walk; the new and the old churches, with rival steeples; and, not familiar, the new inn.

And he knew everybody, young and old, at doorways, in the fields or gardens, and had for every one a hail and a greeting. How he enjoyed it all, and his self−consciousness added to his pleasure, as he swung along in his well−fitting city clothes, broad−shouldered and erect−−it is astonishing how much a tailor can do for a man who responds to his efforts. It is a pleasure to come across such a hero as this in real life, and not have to invent him, as the saying is, out of the whole cloth. Philip enjoyed the world, and he enjoyed himself, because it was not quite his old self, the farmer's boy going on an errand. There must be knowledge all along the street that he was in the great law office of Hunt, Sharp &Tweedle. And, besides, Philip's name must be known to all the readers of magazines in the town as a writer, a name in more than one list of "contributors." That was fame. Translated, however, into country comprehension it was something like this, if he could have heard the comments after he had passed by:

"Yes, that's Phil Burnett, sure enough; but I'd hardly know him; spruced up mightily. I wonder what he's at?"

"I heard he was down in New York trying to law it. I heard he's been writin' some for newspapers. Accordin' to his looks, must pay a durn sight better'n farmin'."

"Well, I always said that boy wa'n't no skeezics."

Almost the first question Philip asked Alice on his return was about the new inn, the Peacock Inn.

"There seemed a good deal of stir about it as I passed."

"Why, I forgot to tell you about it. It's the great excitement. Rivervale is getting known. The Mavicks are there. I hear they've taken pretty much the whole of it."

"The Mavicks?

"Yes, the New York Mavicks, that you wrote us about, that were in the paper."

"How long have they been there?"

"A week. There is Mrs. Mavick and her daughter, and the governess, and two maids, and a young fellow in uniform−−yes, livery−−and a coachman in the same, and a stableful of horses and carriages. It upset the village like a circus. And they say there's a French chef in white cap and apron, who comes to the side−door and jabbers to the small boys like fireworks."

"How did it come about?"

"Naturally, I guess; a city family wanting a quiet place for summer in the country. But you will laugh. Patience first discovered it. One day, sitting at the window, she saw a two−horse buggy driven by the landlord of the Peacock, and a gentleman by his side. 'Well, I wonder who that is−city man certainly. And wherever is he going? May be a railroad man. But there is nothing the matter with the railroad. Shouldn't wonder if he is going to see the tunnel. If it was just that, the landlord wouldn't drive him; he'd send a man. And they keep stopping and pointing and looking round. No, it isn't the railroad, it's scenery. And what can a man like that want with scenery?

He does look like a railroad man. It may be tunnel, but it isn't all tunnel.' When the team came back in the afternoon, Patience was again at the window; she had heard meantime from Jabez that a city man was stopping at the Peacock. 'There he goes, and looking round more than ever. They've stopped by the bridge and the landlord is pointing out. It's not tunnel, it's scenery. I tell you, he is a city boarder. Not that he cares about scenery; it's for his family. City families are always trying to find a grand new place, and he has heard of Rivervale and the Peacock Inn. Maybe the tunnel had something to do with it.'"

"Why, it's like second sight."

"No, Patience says it's just judgment. And she generally hits it. At any rate, the family is here."

The explanation of their being there−−it seemed to Philip providential−− was very simple. Mr. Mavick had plans about the Hoosac Tunnel that required him to look at it. Mrs. Mavick took advantage of this to commission him to look at a little inn in a retired village of which she had heard, and to report on scenery and climate. Warm days and cool nights and simplicity was her idea. Mavick reported that the place seemed made for the family.

Evelyn was not yet out, but she was very nearly out, and after the late notoriety Mrs. Mavick dreaded the regular Newport season. And, in the mood of the moment, she was tired of the Newport palace. She always said that she liked simplicity−−a common failing among people who are not compelled to observe it. Perhaps she thought she was really fond of rural life and country ways. As she herself said,

"If you have a summer cottage at Newport or Lenox, it is necessary to go off somewhere and rest." And then it would be good for Evelyn to live out−of−doors and see the real country, and, as for herself, as she looked in the mirror, "I shall drink milk and go to bed early. Henderson used to say that a month in New Hampshire made another woman of me."

Oh, to find a spot where we could be undisturbed, alone and unknown. That was the program. But Carmen simply could not be anywhere content if she were unnoticed. It was not so easy to give up daily luxury, and habits of ease at the expense of attendants, or the ostentation which had become a second nature. Therefore the "establishment" went along with her to Rivervale, and the shy, modest little woman, who had dropped down into the country simplicity that she so dearly loved, greatly enjoyed the sensation that her coming produced. It needed no effort on her part to produce the sensation. The carriage, and coachman and footman in livery, would have been sufficient; and then the idea of one family being rich enough to take the whole hotel!

The liveries, the foreign cook in his queer cap and apron, and all the goings−on at the Peacock were the inexhaustible topic of talk in every farmhouse for ten miles around. Rivervale was a self−respecting town, and principled against luxury and self−indulgence, and judged with a just and severe judgment the world of fashion and of the grasping, wicked millionaires. And now this world with all its vain show had plumped down in the midst of them. Those who had traveled and seen the ostentation of cities smiled a superior smile at the curiosity and wonder exhibited, but even those who had never seen the like were cautious about letting their surprise appear. Especially in the presence of fashion and wealth would the independent American citizen straighten his backbone, reassuring himself that he was as good as anybody. To be sure, people flew to windows when the elegant equipage dashed by, and everybody found frequent occasion to drive or walk past the Peacock Inn. It was only the novelty of it, in a place that rather lacked novelties.

And yet there prevailed in the community a vague sense that millions were there, and a curious expectation of some individual benefit from them. All the young berry−pickers were unusually active, and poured berries into the kitchen door of the inn. There was not a housewife who was not a little more anxious about the product of her churning; not a farmer who did not think that perhaps cord−wood would rise, that there would be a better demand for garden "sass," and more market for chickens, and who did not regard with more interest his promising colt. When he drove to the village his rig was less shabby and slovenly in appearance. The young fellows who prided themselves upon a neat buggy and a fast horse made their turnouts shine, and dashed past the inn with a self−conscious air. Even the stores began to "slick up" and arrange their miscellaneous notions more attractively, and one of them boldly put in a window a placard, "Latest New York Style." When the family went to the Congregational church on Sunday not the slightest notice was taken of them−−though every woman could have told to the last detail what the ladies wore−−but some of the worshipers were for the first time a little nervous about the performance of the choir, and the deacons heard the sermon chiefly with reference to what a city visitor would think of it.

Mrs. Mavick was quite equal to the situation. In the church she was devout, in the village she was affable and friendly. She made acquaintances right and left, and took a simple interest in everybody and everything. She was on easy terms with the landlord, who declared, "There is a woman with no nonsense in her." She chatted with the farmers who stopped at the inn door, she bought things at the stores that she did not want, and she speedily discovered Aunt Hepsy, and loved to sit with her in the little shop and pick up the traditions and the gossip of the neighborhood. And she did not confine her angelic visits to the village. On one pretense and another she made her way into every farmhouse that took her fancy, penetrated the kitchens and dairies, and got, as she told McDonald, into the inner life of the people.

She must see the grave of Captain Moses Rice. And on this legitimate errand she one day carried her fluttering attractiveness and patchouly into the Maitland house. Mrs. Maitland was civil, but no more. Alice was civil but reserved−−a great many people, she said, came to see the graves in the old orchard. But Mrs. Mavick was not a bit abashed. She expressed herself delighted with everything. It was such a rest, such a perfectly lovely country, and everybody was so hospitable! And Aunt Hepsy had so interested her in the history of the region! But it was difficult to get her talk responded to.

However, when Miss Patience came in she made better headway. She had heard so much of Miss Maitland's apartments. She herself was interested in decorations. She had tried to do something in her New York home. But there were so many ideas and theories, and it was so hard to be natural and artificial at the same time. She had no doubt she could get some new ideas from Miss Maitland. Would it be asking too much to see her apartments? She really felt like a stranger nowhere in Rivervale. Patience was only too delighted, and took her into her museum of natural history, art, religion, and vegetation.

"She might have gone to the grave−yard without coming into the house," Alice remarked.

"Oh, well," said her mother, "I think she is very amusing. You shouldn't be so exclusive, Alice."

"Mother, I do believe she paints."

With Patience, Mrs. Mavick felt on surer ground.

"How curious, how very curious and delightful it is! Such knowledge of nature, such art in arrangement."

"Oh, I just put them up," said Patience, "as I thought they ought by rights to be put up."

"That's it. And you have combined everything here. You have given me an idea. In our house we have a Japan room, and an Indian room, and a Chinese room, and an Otaheite, and I don't know what−−Egyptian, Greek, and not one American, not a really American. That is, according to American ideas, for you have everything in these two rooms. I shall write to Mr. Mavick." (Mr. Mavick never received the letter.)

When she came away it was with a profusion of thanks, and repeated invitations to drop in at the inn. Alice accompanied her to the first stone that marked the threshold of the side door, and was bowing her away, when Mr. Philip swung over the fence by the wood−shed, with a shot− gun on his shoulder, and swinging in his left hand a gray squirrel by its bushy tail, and was immediately in front of the group.

"Ah!" involuntarily from Mrs. Mavick. An introduction was inevitable.

"My cousin, Mr. Burnett, Mrs. Mavick." Philip raised his cap and bowed.

"A hunter, I see."

"Hardly, madam. In vacations I like to walk in the woods with a gun."

"Then you are not−−"

"No," said Philip, smiling, "unfortunately I cannot do this all the time."

"You are of the city, then?"

"With the firm of Hunt, Sharp &Tweedle."

"Ah, my husband knows them, I believe."

"I have seen Mr. Mavick," and Philip bowed again.

"How lucky!"

Mrs. Mavick had an eye for a fine young fellow−−she never denied that −−and Philip's manly figure and easy air were not lost on her. Presently she said:

"We are here for a good part of the summer. Mr. Mavick's business keeps him in the city and we have to poke about a good deal alone. Now, Miss Alice, I am so glad I have met your cousin. Perhaps he will show us some of the interesting places and the beauties of the country he knows so well." And she looked sideways at Philip.

"Yes, he knows the country," said Alice, without committing herself.

"I am sure I shall be delighted to do what I can for you whenever you need my services," said Philip, who had reasons for wishing to know the Mavicks which Alice did not share.

"That's so good of you! Excursions, picnics oh, we will arrange. You must come and help me arrange. And I hope," with a smile to Alice, "you can persuade your cousin to join us sometimes."

Alice bowed, they all bowed, and Mrs. Mavick said au revoir, and went swinging her parasol down the driveway. Then she turned and called back, "This is the first long walk I have taken." And then she said to herself, "Rather stiff, except the young man and the queer old maid. But what a pretty girl the younger must have been ten years ago! These country flowers!"

XII

Mrs. Mavick thought herself fortunate in finding, in the social wilderness of Rivervale, such a presentable young gentleman as Philip. She had persuaded herself that she greatly enjoyed her simple intercourse with the inhabitants, and she would have said that she was in deep sympathy with their lives. No doubt in New York she would relate her summer adventures as something very amusing, but for the moment this adaptable woman seemed to herself in a very ingenuous, receptive, and sympathetic state of mind. Still, there was a limit to the entertaining power of Aunt Hepsy, which was perceived when she began to repeat her annals of the neighborhood, and to bring forward again and again the little nuggets of wisdom which she had evolved in the small circle of her experience. And similarly Mrs. Mavick became aware that there was a monotony in the ideas brought forward by the farmers and the farmers' wives, whether in the kitchen or the best room, which she lighted up by her gracious presence, that it was possible to be tired of the most interesting "peculiarities" when once their novelty was exhausted, and that so−called "characters" in the country fail to satisfy the requirements of intimate or long companionship. Their world is too narrowly circumscribed.

The fact that Philip was a native of the place, and so belonged to a world that was remote from her own, made her free to seek his aid in making the summer pass agreeably without incurring any risk of social obligations. Besides, when she had seen more of him, she experienced a good deal of pleasure in his company. His foreign travel, his reading, his life in the city, offered many points of mutual interest, and it was a relief to her to get out of the narrow range of topics in the provincial thought, and to have her allusions understood. Philip, on his part, was not slow to see this, or to perceive that in the higher intellectual ranges, the serious topics which occupied the attention of the few cultivated people in the neighborhood, Mrs. Mavick had little interest or understanding, though there was nothing she did not profess an interest in when occasion required. Philip was not of a suspicious nature, and it may not have occurred to him that Mrs. Mavick was simply amusing herself, as she would do with any agreeable man, young or old, who fell in her way, and would continue to do so if she reached the age of ninety.

On the contrary, it never seemed to occur to Mrs. Mavick, who was generally suspicious, that Philip was making himself agreeable to the mother of Evelyn. In her thought Evelyn was still a child, in leading− strings, and would be till she was formally launched, and the social gulf between the great heiress and the law clerk and poor writer was simply impassable. All of which goes to show that the most astute women are not always the wisest.

To one person in Rivervale the coming of Mrs. Mavick and her train of worldliness was unwelcome. It disturbed the peaceful simplicity of the village, and it was likely to cloud her pleasure in Philip's visit. She felt that Mrs. Mavick was taking him away from the sweet serenity of their life, and that in everything she said or did there was an element of unrest and excitement. She was careful, however, not to show any of this apprehension to Philip; she showed it only by an increased affectionate interest in him and his concerns, and in trying to make the old home more dear to him. Mrs. Mavick was loud in her praise of Alice to her cousin, and sought to win her confidence, but she was, after all, a little shy of her, and probably would have characterized her to a city friend as a sort of virgin in the Bible.

It so happened that day after day went by without giving Philip anything more than passing glimpses of Evelyn, when she was driving with her mother or her governess. Yet Rivervale never seemed so ravishingly beautiful to all his senses. Surely it was possessed by a spirit of romance and poetry, which he had never perceived before, and he wasted a good deal of time in gazing on the river, on the gracious meadows, on the graceful contours of the hills. When he was a lad, in the tree−top, there had been something stimulating and almost heroic in the scene, which awakened his ambition. Now it was the idyllic beauty that took possession of him, transformed as it was by the presence of a woman, that supreme interpreter of nature to a youth. And yet scarcely a woman−−rather a vision of a girl, impressible still to all the influences of such a scene and to the most delicate suggestions of unfolding life. Probably he did not analyze this feeling, but it was Evelyn he was thinking of when he admired the landscape, breathed with exhilaration the fresh air, and watched the white clouds sail along the blue vault; and he knew that if she were suddenly to leave the valley all the light would go out of it and the scene would be flat to his eyes and torturing to his memory.

Mrs. Mavick he encountered continually in the village. He had taken many little strolls with her to this or that pretty point of view, they had exchanged reminiscences of foreign travel, and had dipped a little into current popular books, so that they had come to be on easy, friendly terms. Philip's courtesy and deference, and a certain wit and humor of suggestion applied to ordinary things, put him more and more on a good footing with her, so much so that she declared to McDonald that really young Burnett was a genuine "find" in the country.

It seems a pity that the important events in our lives are so commonplace. Philip's meeting with Evelyn, so long thought of and dramatized in his mind, was not in the least as he had imagined it. When one morning he went to the Peacock Inn at the summons of Mrs. Mavick, in order to lay out a plan of campaign, he found Evelyn and her governess seated on the veranda, with their books. It was Evelyn who rose first and came forward, without, so far as Philip could see, the least embarrassment of recognition.

"Mr. Burnett? Mamma will be here in a moment. This is our friend, Miss McDonald."

The girl's morning costume was very simple, and in her short walking− skirt she seemed younger even than in the city. She spoke and moved−− Philip noticed that−−without the least self−consciousness, and she had a way of looking her interlocutor frankly in the eyes, or, as Philip expressed it, "flashing" upon him.

Philip bowed to the governess, and, still standing and waving his hand towards the river, hoped they liked Rivervale, and then added:

"I see you can read in the country."

"We pretend to," said Evelyn, who had resumed her seat and indicated a chair for Philip, "but the singing of that river, and the bobolinks in the meadow, and the light on the hills are almost too much for us. Don't you think, McDonald, it is like Scotland?"

"It would be," the governess replied, "if it rained when it didn't mist, and there were moors and heather, and−−"

"Oh, I didn't mean all that, but a feeling like that, sweet and retired and sort of lonesome?"

"Perhaps Miss McDonald means," said Philip, "that there isn't much to feel here except what you see."

Miss McDonald looked sharply around at Philip and remarked: "Yes, that's just it. It is very lovely, like almost any outdoors, if you will give yourself up to it. You remember, Evelyn, how fascinating the Arizona desert was? But there was a romantic addition to the colored desolation because the Spaniards and the Jesuits had been there. Now this place lacks traditions, legends, romance. You have to bring your romance with you."

"And that is the reason you read here?"

"One reason. Especially romances. This charming scenery and the summer sounds of running water and birds make a nice accompaniment to the romance."

"But mamma says," Evelyn interrupted, "there is plenty of legend here, and tradition and flavor, Indians and early settlers, and even Aunt Hepsy."

"Well, I confess they don't appeal to me. And as for Indians, Parkman's descriptions of those savages made me squirm. And I don't believe there was much more romance about the early settlers than about their descendants. Isn't it true, Mr. Burnett, that you must have a human element to make any country interesting?"

Philip glanced at Evelyn, whose bright face was kindled with interest in the discussion, and thought, "Good heavens! if there is not human interest here, I don't know where to look for it," but he only said:

"Doubtless."

"And why don't you writers do something about it? It is literature that does it, either in Scotland or Judea."

"Well," said Philip, stoutly, "they are doing something. I could name half a dozen localities, even sections of country, that travelers visit with curiosity just because authors have thrown that glamour over them. But it is hard to create something out of nothing. It needs time."

"And genius," Miss McDonald interjected.

"Of course, but it took time to transform a Highland sheep−stealer into a romantic personage."

Miss McDonald laughed. "That is true. Take a modern instance. Suppose Evangeline had lived in this valley! Or some simple Gretchen about whose simple story all the world is in sympathy!"

"Or," thought Philip, "some Evelyn." But he replied, looking at Evelyn, "I believe that any American community usually resents being made the scene of a romance, especially if it is localized by any approach to reality."

"Isn't that the fault mostly of the writer, who vulgarizes his material?"

"The realists say no. They say that people dislike to see themselves as they are."

"Very likely," said Miss McDonald; "no one sees himself as others see him, and probably the poet who expressed the desire to do so was simply attitudinizing. −−[Robert Burns: "Oh! wha gift the Giftie gie us; to see o'rselves as others see us. D.W.]−− By the way, Mr. Burnett, you know there is one place of sentiment, religious to be sure, not far from here. I hope we can go some day to see the home of the 'Mountain Miller.'"

"Yes, I know the place. It is beyond the river, up that steep road running into the sky, in the next adjoining hill town. I doubt if you find any one there who lays it much to heart. But you can see the mill."

"What is the Mountain Miller?" asked Evelyn.

"A tract that, when I was a girl," answered Miss McDonald, "used to be bound up with 'The Dairyman's Daughter' and 'The Shepherd of Salisbury Plain.' It was the first thing that interested me in New England."

"Well," said Philip, "it isn't much. Just a tract. But it was written by Parson Halleck, a great minister and a sort of Pope in this region for fifty years. It is, so far as I know, the only thing of his that remains."

This tractarian movement was interrupted by the arrival of Mrs. Mavick.

"Good−morning, Mr. Burnett. I've been down to see Jenkins about his picnic wagon. Carries six, besides the driver and my man, and the hampers. So, you see, Miss Alice will have to go. We couldn't go rattling along half empty. I'll go up and see her this afternoon. So, that's settled. Now about the time and place. You are the director. Let's sit down and plan it out. It looks like good weather for a week."

"Miss McDonald says she wants to see the Mountain Miller," said Philip, with a smile.

"What's that? A monument like your Pulpit Rock?"

"No, a tract about a miller."

"Ah, something religious. I never heard of it. Well, perhaps we had better begin with something secular, and work round to that."

So an excursion was arranged for the next day. And as Philip walked home, thinking how brilliant Evelyn had been in their little talk, he began to dramatize the excursion.

All excursions are much alike, exhilarating in the outset, rarely up to expectation in the object, wearisome in the return; but, nevertheless, delightful in the memory, especially if attended with some hardship or slight disaster. To be free, in the open air, and for a day unconventional and irresponsible, is the sufficient justification of a country picnic; but its common attraction is in the opportunity for bringing young persons of the opposite sex into natural

and unrestrained relations. To Philip it was the first time in his life that a picnic had ever seemed a defensible means of getting rid of a day.

The two persons to whom this excursion was most novel and exciting were Evelyn and the elder maiden, Alice, who sat together and speedily developed a sympathy with each other in the enjoyment of the country, and in a similar poetic temperament, very shy on the part of Alice and very frank on the part of Evelyn. The whole wild scene along the river was quite as novel to Alice as to the city girl, because, although she was familiar with every mile of it and had driven through it a hundred times, she had never in all her life before, of purpose, gone to see it. No doubt she had felt its wildness and beauty, but now for the first time she looked at it as scenery, as she might have looked at a picture in a gallery. And in the contagion of Evelyn's outspoken enthusiasm she was no longer afraid to give timid expression to the latent poetry in her own soul. And daring to express this, she seemed to herself for the first time to realize vividly the nobility and grace of the landscape. And yet there was a difference in the appreciation of the two. More widely read and traveled, Evelyn's imagination took a wider range of comparison and of admiration, she was appealed to by the large features and the grandiose effects; while Alice noted more the tenderer aspects, the wayside flowers and bushes, the exotic−looking plants, which she longed to domesticate in what might be called the Sunday garden on the terraces in front of her house. For it is in these little cultivated places by the door−step, places of dreaming in the summer hours after meeting and at sunset, that the New England maiden experiences something of that tender religious sentiment which was not much fed in the barrenness of the Congregational meeting−house.

The Pulpit Rock, in the rough pasture land of Zoar, was reached by a somewhat tedious climb from the lonely farmhouse, in a sheltered nook, through straggling woods and gray pastures. It was a vast exposed surface rising at a slight angle out of the grass and undergrowth. Along the upper side was a thin line of bushes, and, pushing these aside, the observer was always startled at the unexpected scene−−as it were the raising of a curtain upon another world. He stood upon the edge of a sheer precipice of a thousand feet, and looked down upon a green amphitheatre through the bottom of which the brawling river, an amber thread in the summer foliage, seemed trying to get an outlet from this wilderness cul de sac. From the edge of this precipice the first impulse was to start back in surprise and dread, but presently the observer became reassured of its stability, and became fascinated by the lonesome wildness of the scene.

"Why is it called Pulpit Rock?" asked Mrs. Mavick; "I see no pulpit."

"I suppose," said Philip, "the name was naturally suggested to a religious community, whose poetic images are mainly Biblical, and who thought it an advantageous place for a preacher to stand, looking down upon a vast congregation in the amphitheatre."

"So it is," exclaimed Evelyn. "I can see John the Baptist standing here now, and hear his voice crying in the wilderness."

"Very likely," said Mrs. Mavick, persisting in her doubt, "of course in Zoar. Anywhere else in the world it would be called the Lover's Leap."

"That is odd," said Alice; "there was a party of college girls came here two years ago and made up a story about it which was printed, how an Indian maiden pursued by a white man ran up this hill as if she had been a deer, disappeared from his sight through these bushes, and took the fatal leap. They called it the Indian Maiden's Rock. But it didn't take. It will always be Pulpit Rock."

"So you see, Miss McDonald," said Philip, "that writers cannot graft legends on the old stock."

"That depends upon the writer," returned the Scotch woman, shortly. "I didn't see the schoolgirl's essay."

When the luncheon was disposed of, with the usual adaptation to nomadic conditions, and the usual merriment and freedom of personal comment, and the wit that seems so brilliant in the open air and so flat in print, Mrs. Mavick declared that she was tired by the long climb and the unusual excitement.

"Perhaps it is the Pulpit," she said, "but I am sleepy; and if you young people will amuse yourselves, I will take a nap under that tree."

Presently, also, Alice and the governess withdrew to the edge of the precipice, and Evelyn and Philip were left to the burden of entertaining each other. It might have been an embarrassing situation but for the fact that all the rest of the party were in sight, that the girl had not the least self−consciousness, having had no experience to teach her that there was anything to be timid about in one situation more than in another, and that Philip was so absolutely content to be near Evelyn and hear her voice that there was room for nothing else in his thought. But rather to his surprise, Evelyn made no talk about the situation or the day, but began at once with something in her mind, a directness of mental operation that he found was characteristic of her.

"It seems to me, Mr. Burnett, that there is something of what Miss McDonald regards as the lack of legend and romance in this region in our life generally."

"I fancy everybody feels that who travels much elsewhere. You mean life seems a little thin, as the critics say?"

"Yes, lacks color and background. But, you see, I have no experience. Perhaps it's owing to Miss McDonald. I cannot get the plaids and tartans and Jacobins and castles and what−not out of my head. Our landscapes are just landscapes."

"But don't you think we are putting history and association into them pretty fast?"

"Yes, I know, but that takes a long time. I mean now. Take this lovely valley and region, how easily it could be made romantic."

"Not so very easy, I fancy."

"Well, I was thinking about it last night." And then, as if she saw a clear connection between this and what she was going to say, "Miss McDonald says, Mr. Burnett, that you are a writer."

"I? Why, I'm, I'm−−a lawyer."

"Of course, that's business. That reminds me of what papa said once: 'It's lucky there is so much law, or half the world, including the lawyers, wouldn't have anything to do, trying to get around it and evade it.' And you won't mind my repeating it−−I was a mite of a girl−−I said, 'Isn't that rather sophistical, papa?' And mamma put me down'−−It seems to me, child, you are using pretty big words.'"

They both laughed. But suddenly Evelyn added:

"Why don't you do it?"

"Do what?"

"Write a story about it−−what Miss McDonald calls 'invest the region with romance.'"

The appeal was very direct, and it was enforced by those wonderful eyes that seemed to Philip to discern his powers, as he felt them, and his ambitions, and to express absolute confidence in him. His vanity was touched in

its most susceptible spot. Here seemed to be a woman, nay, a soul, who understood him, understood him even better than Celia, the lifelong confidante. It is a fatal moment for men and women, that in which they feel the subtle flattery of being understood by one of the opposite sex. Philip's estimation of himself rose 'pari passu' with his recognition of the discernment and intellectual quality of the frank and fascinating girl who seemed to believe in him. But he restrained himself and only asked, after a moment of apparent reflection upon the general proposition:

"Well, Miss Mavick, you have been here some time. Have you discovered any material for such use?"

"Why, perhaps not, and I might not know what to do with it if I had. But perhaps you don't mean what I mean. I mean something fitting the setting. Not the domestic novel. Miss McDonald says we are vulgarized in all our ideals by so much domesticity. She says that Jennie Deans would have been just an ordinary, commonplace girl but for Walter Scott."

"Then you want a romance?"

"No. I don't know exactly what I do want. But I know it when I see it." And Evelyn looked down and appeared to be studying her delicate little hands, interlacing her taper, ivory fingers−−but Philip knew she did not see them−−and then looked up in his face again and said:

"I'll tell you. This morning as we came up I was talking all the way with your cousin. It took some time to break the ice, but gradually she began to say things, half stories, half poetic, not out of books; things that, if said with assurance, in the city would be called wit. And then I began to see her emotional side, her pure imagination, such a refinement of appreciation and justice−−I think there is an immovable basis of justice in her nature−−and charity, and I think she'd be heroic, with all her gentleness, if occasion offered."

"I see," said Philip, rather lightly, "that you improved your time in finding out what a rare creature Alice is. But," and this more gravely, "it would surprise her that you have found it out."

"I believe you. I fancy she has not the least idea what her qualities are, or her capacities of doing or of suffering, and the world will never know−−that is the point−unless some genius comes along and reveals them."

"How?"

"Why, through a tragedy, a drama, a story, in which she acts out her whole self. Some act it out in society. She never will. Such sweetness and strength and passion−−yes, I have no doubt, passion under all the reserve! I feel it but I cannot describe it; I haven't imagination to make you see what I feel."

"You come very near it," said Philip, with a smile. And after a moment the girl broke out again:

"Materials! You writers go searching all round for materials, just as painters do, fit for your genius."

"But don't you know that the hardest thing to do is the obvious, the thing close to you?"

"I dare say. But you won't mind? It is just an illustration. I went the other day with mother to Alice's house. She was so sort of distant and reserved that I couldn't know her in the least as I know her now. And there was the rigid Puritan, her father, representing the Old Testament; and her placid mother, with all the spirit of the New Testament; and then that dear old maiden aunt, representing I don't know what, maybe a blind attempt through nature and art to escape out of Puritanism; and the typical old frame farmhouse−−why, here is material for the sweetest, most pathetic idyl. Yes, the Story of Alice. In another generation people would come long distances to see the valley where Alice lived, and her spirit would pervade it."

There could be but one end to such a burst of enthusiasm, and both laughed and felt a relief in a merriment that was, after all, sympathetic. But Evelyn was a persistent creature, and presently she turned to Philip, again with those appealing eyes.

"Now, why don't you do it?"

Philip hesitated a moment and betrayed some embarrassment under the questioning of the truthful eyes.

"I've a good mind to tell you. I have−−I am writing something."

"Yes?"

"Not that exactly. I couldn't, don't you see, betray and use my own relatives in that way."

"Yes, I see that."

"It isn't much. I cannot tell how it will come out. I tell you−−I don't mean that I have any right to ask you to keep it as a secret of mine, but it is this way: If a writer gives away his imagination, his idea, before it is fixed in form on paper, he seems to let the air of all the world upon it and it disappears, and isn't quite his as it was before to grow in his own mind."

"I can understand that," Evelyn replied.

"Well−−" and Philip found himself launched. It is so easy to talk about one's self to a sympathetic listener. He told Evelyn a little about his life, and how the valley used to seem to him as a boy, and how it seemed now that he had had experience of other places and people, and how his studies and reading had enabled him to see things in their proper relations, and how, finally, gradually the idea for a story in this setting had developed in his mind. And then he sketched in outline the story as he had developed it, and left the misty outlines of its possibilities to the imagination.

The girl listened with absorbing interest, and looked the approval which she did not put in words. Perhaps she knew that a bud will never come to flower if you pull it in pieces. When Philip had finished he had a momentary regret for this burst of confidence, which he had never given to any one else. But in the light of Evelyn's quick approval and understanding, it was only momentary. Perhaps neither of them thought what a dangerous game this is, for two young souls to thus unbosom themselves to each other.

A call from Mrs. Mavick brought them to their feet. It was time to go. Evelyn simply said:

"I think the valley, Mr. Burnett, looks a little different already."

As they drove home along the murmuring river through the golden sunset, the party were mostly silent. Only Mrs. Mavick and Philip, who sat together, kept up a lively chatter, lively because Philip was elated with the event of the day, and because the nap under the beech−tree in the open air had brightened the wits of one of the cleverest women Philip had ever met.

If the valley did seem different to Evelyn, probably she did not think so far as to own to herself whether this was owing to the outline of the story, which ran in her mind, or to the presence of the young author.

Alice and Philip were set down at the farmhouse, and the company parted with mutual enthusiasm over the success of the excursion.

"She is a much more interesting girl than I thought," Alice admitted. "Not a bit fashionable."

"And she likes you."

"Me?"

"Yes, your ears would have burned."

"Well, I am glad, for I think she is sincere."

"And I can tell you another thing. I had a long talk while you were taking your siesta. She takes an abstract view of things, judging the right and wrong of them, without reference to conventionalities or the practical obstacles to carrying out her ideas, as if she had been educated by reading and not by society. It is very interesting."

"Philip," and Alice laid her hand on his shoulder, "don't let it be too interesting."

XIII

When Philip said that Evelyn was educated in the world of literature and not in the conflicts of life he had hit the key−note of her condition at the moment she was coming into the world and would have to act for herself. The more he saw of her the more was he impressed with the fact that her discrimination, it might almost be called divination, and her judgment were based upon the best and most vital products of the human mind. A selection had evidently been made for her, until she had acquired the taste, or the habit rather, of choosing only the best for herself. Very little of the trash of literature, or the ignoble−−that is to say, the ignoble view of life−− had come into her mind. Consequently she judged the world as she came to know it by high standards. And her mind was singularly pure and free from vulgar images.

It might be supposed that this sort of education would have its disadvantages. The word is firmly fixed in the idea that both for its pleasure and profit it is necessary to know good and evil. Ignorance of the evil in the world is, however, not to be predicated of those who are familiar only with the great masterpieces of literature, for if they are masterpieces, little or great, they exhibit human nature in all its aspects. And, further than this, it ought to be demonstrable, a priori, that a mind fed on the best and not confused by the weak and diluted, or corrupted by images of the essentially vulgar and vile, would be morally healthy and best fitted to cope with the social problems of life. The Testaments reveal about everything that is known about human nature, but such is their clear, high spirit, and their quality, that no one ever traced mental degeneration or low taste in literature, or want of virility in judgment, to familiarity with them. On the contrary, the most vigorous intellects have acknowledged their supreme indebtedness to them.

It is not likely that Philip made any such elaborate analysis of the girl with whom he was in love, or attempted, except by a general reference to the method of her training, to account for the purity of her mind and her vigorous discernment. He was in love with her more subtle and hidden personality, with the girl just becoming a woman, with the mysterious sex that is the inspiration of most of the poetry and a good part of the heroism in the world. And he would have been in love with her, let her education have been what it might. He was in love before he heard her speak. And whatever she would say was bound to have a quality of interest and attraction that could be exercised by no other lips. It might be argued−−a priori again, for the world is bound to go on in its own way−−that there would be fewer marriages if the illusion of the sex did not suffice for the time to hide intellectual poverty, and, what is worse, ignobleness of disposition.

It was doubtless fortunate for this particular lovemaking, though it did not seem so to Philip, that it was very much obstructed by lack of opportunities, and that it was not impaired in its lustre by too much familiarity. In truth, Philip would have said that he saw very little of Evelyn, because he never saw her absolutely alone. To be

sure he was much in her presence, a welcome member of the group that liked to idle on the veranda of the inn, and in the frequent excursions, in which Philip seemed to be the companion of Mrs. Mavick rather than of her daughter. But she was never absent from his thought, his imagination was wholly captive to her image, and the passion grew in these hours of absence until she became an indispensable associate in all that he was or could ever hope to be. Alice, who discerned very clearly Mrs. Mavick and her ambition, was troubled by Philip's absorption and the cruel disappointment in store for him. To her he was still the little boy, and all her tenderness for him was stirred to shield him from the suffering she feared.

But what could she do? Philip liked to talk about Evelyn, to dwell upon her peculiarities and qualities, to hear her praised; to this extent he was confidential with his cousin, but never in regard to his own feeling. That was a secret concerning which he was at once too humble and too confident to share with any other. None knew better than he the absurd presumption of aspiring to the hand of such a great heiress, and yet he nursed the vanity that no other man could ever appreciate and love her as he did.

Alice was still more distracted and in sympathy with Philip's evident aspirations by her own love for Evelyn and her growing admiration for the girl's character. It so happened that mutual sympathy−−who can say how it was related to Philip?−−had drawn them much together, and chance had given them many opportunities for knowing each other. Alice had so far come out of her shell, and broken the reserve of her life, as to make frequent visits at the inn, and Mrs. Mavick and Evelyn found it the most natural and agreeable stroll by the river−side to the farmhouse, where naturally, while the mother amused herself with the original eccentricities of Patience, her daughter grew into an intimacy with Alice.

As for the feelings of Evelyn in these days−−her first experience of something like freedom in the world−−the historian has only universal experience to guide him. In her heart was working the consciousness that she had been singled out as worthy to share the confidence of a man in his most secret ambitions and aspirations, in the dreams of youth which seemed to her so noble. For these aspirations and dreams concerned the world in which she had lived most and felt most.

If Philip had talked to her as he had to Celia about his plans for success in life she would have been less interested. But there was nothing to warn her personally in these unworldly confessions. Nor did Philip ever seem to ask anything of her except sympathy in his ideas. And then there was the friendship of Alice, which could not but influence the girl. In the shelter of that the intercourse of the summer took on natural relations. For some natures there is no nurture of love like the security of family protection, under cover of which there is so little to excite the alarm of a timid maiden.

It was fortunate for Philip that Miss McDonald took a liking to him. They were thrown much together. They were both good walkers, and liked to climb the hills and explore the wild mountain streams. Philip would have confessed that he was fond of nature, and fancied there was a sort of superiority in his attitude towards it to that of his companion, who was merely interested in plants−just a botanist. This attitude, which she perceived, amused Miss McDonald.

"If you American students," she said one day when they were seated on a fallen tree in the forest, and she was expatiating on a rare plant she had found, "paid no more attention to the classics than to the world you live in, few of you would get a degree."

"Oh, some fellows go in for that sort of thing," Philip replied. "But I have noticed that all English women have some sort of fad−−plants, shells, birds, something special."

"Fad!" exclaimed the Scotchwoman. "Yes, I suppose it is, if reading is a fad. It is one way of finding out about things. You admire what the Americans call scenery; we, since you provoke me to say it, love nature−− I mean its individual, almost personal manifestations. Every plant has a distinct character of its own. I saw the other day an

American landscape picture with a wild, uncultivated foreground. There was not a botanical thing in it. The man who painted it didn't know a sweetbrier from a thistle.

Just a confused mass of rubbish. It was as if an animal painter should compose a group and you could not tell whether it was made up of sheep or rabbits or dogs or foxes or griffins."

"So you want things picked out like a photograph?"

"I beg your pardon, I want nature. You cannot give character to a bit of ground in a landscape unless you know the characters of its details. A man is no more fit to paint a landscape than a cage of monkeys, unless he knows the language of the nature he is dealing with down to the alphabet. The Japanese know it so well that they are not bothered with minutia, but give you character."

"And you think that science is an aid to art?"

"Yes, if there is genius to transform it into art. You must know the intimate habits of anything you paint or write about. You cannot even caricature without that. They talk now about Dickens being just a caricaturist. He couldn't have been that if he hadn't known the things he caricatured. That is the reason there is so little good caricature."

"Isn't your idea of painting rather anatomical?" Philip ventured to ask.

"Do you think that if Raphael had known nothing of anatomy the world would have accepted his Sistine Madonna for the woman she is?" was the retort.

"I see it is interesting," said Philip, shifting his ground again, "but what is the real good of all these botanical names and classifications?"

Miss McDonald gave a weary sigh. "Well, you must put things in order. You studied philology in Germany? The chief end of that is to trace the development, migration, civilization of the human race. To trace the distribution of plants is another way to find out about the race. But let that go. Don't you think that I get more pleasure in looking at all the growing things we see, as we sit here, than you do in seeing them and knowing as little about them as you pretend to?"

Philip said that he could not analyze the degree of pleasure in such things, but he seemed to take his ignorance very lightly. What interested him in all this talk was that, in discovering the mind of the governess, he was getting nearer to the mind of her pupil. And finally he asked (and Miss McDonald smiled, for she knew what this conversation, like all others with him, must ultimately come to):

"Does the Mavick family also take to botany?"

"Oh yes. Mrs. Mavick is intimate with all the florists in New York. And Miss Evelyn, when I take home these specimens, will analyze them and tell all about them. She is very sharp about such things. You must have noticed that she likes to be accurate?"

"But she is fond of poetry."

"Yes, of poetry that she understands. She has not much of the emotional vagueness of many young girls."

All this was very delightful for Philip, and for a long time, on one pretext or another, he kept the conversation revolving about this point. He fancied he was very deep in doing this. To his interlocutor he was, however, very transparent. And the young man would have been surprised and flattered if he had known how much her

indulgence of him in this talk was due to her genuine liking for him.

When they returned to the inn, Mrs. Mavick began to rally Philip about his feminine taste in woodsy things. He would gladly have thrown botany or anything else overboard to win the good opinion of Evelyn's mother, but botany now had a real significance and a new meaning for him. Therefore he put in a defense, by saying:

"Botany, in the hands of Miss McDonald, cannot be called very feminine; it is a good deal more difficult to understand and master than law."

"Maybe that's the reason," said Mrs. Mavick, "why so many more girls are eager to study law now than botany."

"Law?" cried Evelyn; "and to practice?"

"Certainly. Don't you think that a bright, clever woman, especially if she were pretty, would have an advantage with judge and jury?"

"Not if judge and jury were women," Miss McDonald interposed.

"And you remember Portia?" Mrs. Mavick continued.

"Portia," said Evelyn; "yes, but that is poetry; and, McDonald, wasn't it a kind of catch? How beautifully she talked about mercy, but she turned the sharp edge of it towards the Jew. I didn't like that."

"Yes," Miss McDonald replied, "it was a kind of trick, a poet's law. What do you say, Mr. Burnett?"

"Why," said Philip, hesitating, "usually it is understood when a man buys or wins anything that the appurtenances necessary to give him full possession go with it. Only in this case another law against the Jew was understood. It was very clever, nothing short of woman's wit."

"Are there any women in your firm, Mr. Burnett?" asked Mrs. Mavick.

"Not yet, but I think there are plenty of lawyers who would be willing to take Portia for a partner."

"Make her what you call a consulting partner. That is just the way with you men−−as soon as you see women succeeding in doing anything independently, you head them off by matrimony."

"Not against their wills," said the governess, with some decision.

"Oh, the poor things are easily hypnotized. And I'm glad they are. The funniest thing is to hear the Woman's Rights women talk of it as a state of subjection," and Mrs. Mavick laughed out of her deep experience.

"Rights, what's that?" asked Evelyn.

"Well, child, your education has been neglected. Thank McDonald for that."

"Don't you know, Evelyn," the governess explained, "that we have always said that women had a right to have any employment, or do anything they were fitted to do?"

"Oh, that, of course; I thought everybody said that. That is natural. But I mean all this fuss. I guess I don't understand what you all are talking about." And her bright face broke out of its look of perplexity into a smile.

"Why, poor thing," said her mother, "you belong to the down−trodden sex. Only you haven't found it out."

"But, mamma," and the girl seemed to be turning the thing over in her mind, as was her wont with any new proposition, "there seem to be in history a good many women who never found it out either."

"It is not so now. I tell you we are all in a wretched condition."

"You look it, mamma," replied Evelyn, who perfectly understood when her mother was chaffing.

"But I think I don't care so much for the lawyers," Mrs. Mavick continued, with more air of conviction; "what I can't stand are the doctors, the female doctors. I'd rather have a female priest about me than a female doctor."

This was not altogether banter, for there had been times in Carmen's career when the externals of the Roman Church attracted her, and she wished she had an impersonal confidant, to whom she could confess−−well, not everything−and get absolution. And she could make a kind of confidant of a sympathetic doctor. But she went on:

"To have a sharp woman prying into all my conditions and affairs ! No, I thank you. Don't you think so, McDonald?"

"They do say," the governess admitted, "that women doctors haven't as much consideration for women's whims as men." And, after a moment, she continued:

"But, for all that, women ought to understand about women better than men can, and be the best doctors for them."

"So it seems to me," said Evelyn, appealing to her mother. "Don't you remember that day you took me down to the infirmary in which you are interested, and how nice it was, nobody but women for doctors and nurses and all that? Would you put that in charge of men?"

"Oh, you child!" cried Mrs. Mavick, turning to her daughter and patting her on the head. "Of course there are exceptions. But I'm not going to be one of the exceptions. Ah, well, I suppose I am quite behind the age; but the conduct of my own sex does get on my nerves sometimes."

Evelyn was silent. She was often so when discussions arose. They were apt to plunge her into deep thought. To those who knew her history, guarded from close contact with anything but the world of ideas, it was very interesting to watch her mental attitude as she was day by day emerging into a knowledge of the actual world and encountering its crosscurrents. To Philip, who was getting a good idea of what her education had been, an understanding promoted by his knowledge of the character and attainments of her governess, her mental processes, it may be safely said, opened a new world of thought. Not that mental processes made much difference to a man in his condition, still, they had the effect of setting her personality still further apart from that of other women. One day when they happened to be tete−a−tete in one of their frequent excursions−−a rare occasion−−Evelyn had said:

"How strange it is that so many things that are self−evident nobody seems to see, and that there are so many things that are right that can't be done."

"That is the way the world is made," Philip had replied. She was frequently coming out with the sort of ideas and questions that are often proposed by bright children, whose thinking processes are not only fresh but undisturbed by the sophistries or concessions that experience has woven into the thinking of our race. "Perhaps it hasn't your faith in the abstract."

"Faith? I wonder. Do you mean that people do not dare go ahead and do things?"

"Well, partly. You see, everybody is hedged in by circumstances."

"Yes. I do begin to see circumstances. I suppose I'm a sort of a goose −−in the abstract, as you say." And Evelyn laughed. It was the spontaneous, contagious laugh of a child. "You know that Miss McDonald says I'm nothing but a little idealist."

"Did you deny it?"

"Oh, no. I said, so were the Apostles, all save one−−he was a realist."

It was Philip's turn to laugh at this new definition, and upon this the talk had drifted into the commonplaces of the summer situation and about Rivervale and its people. Philip regretted that his vacation would so soon be over, and that he must say good−by to all this repose and beauty, and to the intercourse that had been so delightful to him.

"But you will write," Evelyn exclaimed.

Philip was startled.

"Write?"

"Yes, your novel."

"Oh, I suppose so," without any enthusiasm.

"You must. I keep thinking of it. What a pleasure it must be to create a real drama of life."

So this day on the veranda of the inn when Philip spoke of his hateful departure next day, and there was a little chorus of protest, Evelyn was silent; but her silence was of more significance to him than the protests, for he knew her thoughts were on the work he had promised to go on with.

"It is too bad," Mrs. Mavick exclaimed; "we shall be like a lot of sheep without a shepherd."

"That we shall," the governess joined in. "At any rate, you must make us out a memorandum of what is to be seen and done and how to do it."

"Yes," said Philip, gayly, "I'll write tonight a complete guide to Rivervale."

"We are awfully obliged to you for what you have done." Mrs. Mavick was no doubt sincere in this. And she added, "Well, we shall all be back in the city before long."

It was a natural thing to say, and Philip understood that there was no invitation in it, more than that of the most conventional acquaintance. For Mrs. Mavick the chapter was closed.

There were the most cordial hand−shakings and good−bys, and Philip said good−by as lightly as anybody. But as he walked along the road he knew, or thought he was sure, that the thoughts of one of the party were going along with him into his future, and the peaceful scene, the murmuring river, the cat−birds and the blackbirds calling in the meadow, and the spirit of self−confident youth in him said not good−by, but au revoir.

XIV

Of course Philip wrote to Celia about his vacation intimacy with the Mavicks. It was no news to her that the Mavicks were spending the summer there; all the world knew that, and society wondered what whim of Carmen's had taken her out of the regular summer occupations and immured her in the country. Not that it gave much thought to her, but, when her name was mentioned, society resented the closing of the Newport house and the loss of her vivacity in the autumn at Lenox. She is such a hand to set things going, don't you know? Mr. Mavick never made a flying visit to his family−−and he was in Rivervale twice during the season−−that the newspapers did not chronicle his every movement, and attribute other motives than family affection to these excursions into New England. Was the Central system or the Pennsylvania system contemplating another raid? It could not be denied that the big operator's connection with any great interest raised suspicion and often caused anxiety.

Naturally, thought Celia, in such a little village, Philip would fall in with the only strangers there, so that he was giving her no news in saying so. But there was a new tone in his letters; she detected an unusual reserve that was in itself suspicious. Why did he say so much about Mrs. Mavick and the governess, and so little about the girl?

"You don't tell me," she wrote," anything about the Infant Phenomenon. And you know I am dying to know."

This Philip resented. Phenomenon! The little brown girl, with eyes that saw so much and were so impenetrably deep, and the mobile face, so alert− and responsive. If ever there was a natural person, it was Evelyn. So he wrote:

"There is nothing to tell; she is not an infant and she is not a phenomenon. Only this: she has less rubbish in her mind than any person you ever saw. And I guess the things she does not know about life are not worth knowing."

"I see," replied Celia; "poor boy! it's the moth and the star. [That's just like her, muttered Philip, she always assumed to be the older.] But don't mind. I've come to the conclusion that I am a moth myself, and some of the lights I used to think stars have fallen. And, seriously, dear friend, I am glad there is a person who does not know the things not worth knowing. It is a step in the right direction. I have been this summer up in the hills, meditating. And I am not so sure of things as I was. I used to think that all women needed was what is called education− −science, history, literature−−and you could safely turn them loose on the world. It certainly is not safe to turn them loose without education−−but I begin to wonder what we are all coming to. I don't mind telling you that I have got into a pretty psychological muddle, and I don't see much to hold on to.

I suppose that Scotch governess is pious; I mean she has a backbone of what they call dogma; things are right or wrong in her mind−−no haziness. Now, I am going to make a confession. I've been thinking of religion. Don't mock. You know I was brought up religious, and I am religious. I go to church−−well, you know how I feel and especially the things I don't believe. I go to church to be entertained. I read the other day that Cardinal Manning said: 'The three greatest evils in the world today are French devotional books, theatrical music, and the pulpit orator. And the last is the worst.' I wonder. I often feel as if I had been to a performance. No. It is not about sin that I am especially thinking, but the sinner. One ought to do something. Sometimes I think I ought to go to the city. You know I was in a College Settlement for a while. Now I mean something permanent, devoted to the poor as a life occupation, like a nun or something of that sort. You think this is a mood? Perhaps. There have always been so many things before me to do, and I wanted to do them all. And I do not stick to anything? You must not presume to say that, because I confide to you all my errant thoughts. You have not confided in me−−I don't insinuate that you have anything to confide but I cannot help saying that if you have found a pure and clear−minded girl−− Heaven knows what she will be when she is a woman I−−I am sorry she is not poor."

But if Philip did not pour out his heart to his old friend, he did open a lively and frequent correspondence with Alice. Not about the person who was always in his thoughts−−oh, no−−but about himself, and all he was doing, in the not unreasonable expectation that the news would go where he could not send it directly−−so many ingenious ways has love of attaining its object. And if Alice, no doubt, understood all this, she was nevertheless delighted, and took great pleasure in chronicling the news of the village and giving all the details that came in her way about the millionaire family. This connection with the world, if only by correspondence, was an outlet to her reserved

and secluded life. And her letters recorded more of her character, of her feeling, than he had known in all his boyhood. When Alice mentioned, as it were by chance, that Evelyn had asked, more than once, when she had spoken of receiving letters, if her cousin was going on with his story, Philip felt that the connection was not broken.

Going on with his story he was, and with good heart. The thought that "she" might some day read it was inspiration enough. Any real creation, by pen or brush or chisel, must express the artist and be made in independence of the demands of a vague public. Art is vitiated when the commercial demand, which may be a needed stimulus, presides at the creation. But it is doubtful if any artist in letters, or in form or color, ever did anything well without having in mind some special person, whose approval was desired or whose criticism was feared. Such is the universal need of human sympathy. It is, at any rate, true that Philip's story, recast and reinspired, was thenceforth written under the spell of the pure divining eyes of Evelyn Mavick. Unconsciously this was so. For at this time Philip had not come to know that the reason why so many degraded and degrading stories and sketches are written is because the writers' standard is the approval of one or two or a group of persons of vitiated tastes and low ideals.

The Mavicks did not return to town till late in the autumn. By this time Philip's novel had been submitted to a publisher, or, rather, to state the exact truth, it had begun to go the rounds of the publishers. Mr. Brad, to whose nineteenth−century and newspaper eye Philip had shrunk from confiding his modest creation, but who was consulted in the business, consoled him with the suggestion that this was a sure way of getting his production read. There was already in the city a considerable body of professional "readers," mostly young men and women, to whom manuscripts were submitted by the publishers, so that the author could be sure, if he kept at it long enough, to get a pretty fair circulation for his story. They were selected because they were good judges of literature and because they had a keen appreciation of what the public wanted at the moment. Many of them are overworked, naturally so, in the mass of manuscripts turned over to their inspection day after day, and are compelled often to adopt the method of tea−tasters, who sip but do not swallow, for to drink a cup or two of the decoction would spoil their taste and impair their judgment, especially on new brands. Philip liked to imagine, as the weeks passed away−−the story is old and need not be retold here−−that at any given hour somebody was reading him. He did not, however, dwell with much delight upon this process, for the idea that some unknown Rhadamanthus was sitting in judgment upon him much more wounded his 'amour propre', and seemed much more like an invading of his inner, secret life and feeling, than would be an instant appeal to the general public. Why, he thought, it is just as if I had shown it to Brad himself−−apiece of confidence that he could not bring himself to. He did not know that Brad himself was a reader for a well−known house−−which had employed him on the strength of his newspaper notoriety−−and that very likely he had already praised the quality of the work and damned it as lacking "snap."

It was, however, weary waiting, and would have been intolerable if his duties in the law office had not excluded other thoughts from his mind a good part of the time. There were days when he almost resolved to confine himself to the solid and remunerative business of law, and give up the vague aspirations of authorship. But those vague aspirations were in the end more enticing than the courts. Common−sense is not an antidote to the virus of the literary infection when once a young soul has taken it. In his long walks it was not on the law that Philip was ruminating, nor was the fame of success in it occupying his mind. Suppose he could write one book that should touch the heart of the world. Would he exchange the sweetness of that for the fleeting reputation of the most brilliant lawyer? In short, he magnified beyond all reason the career and reputation of the author, and mistook the consideration he occupies in the great world. And what a world it would be if there had not been a continuous line of such mistaken fools as he!

That it was not literature alone that inflated his dreams was evidenced by the direction his walks took. Whatever their original destination or purpose, he was sure to pass through upper Fifth Avenue, and walk by the Mavick mansion. And never without a lift in his spirits. What comfort there is to a lover in gazing at the blank and empty house once occupied by his mistress has never been explained; but Philip would have counted the day lost in

which he did not see it.

After he heard from Alice that the Mavicks had returned, the house had still stronger attractions for him, for there was added the chance of a glimpse of Evelyn or one of the family. Many a day passed, however, before he mustered up courage to mount the steps and touch the button.

"Yes, sir," said the servant, "the family is returned, but they is h'out."

Philip left his card. But nothing came of it, and he did not try again. In fact, he was a little depressed as the days went by. How much doubt and anxiety, even suffering, might have been spared him if the historian at that moment could have informed him of a little shopping incident at Tiffany's a few days after the Mavicks' return.

A middle−aged lady and a young girl were inspecting some antiques. The girl, indeed, had been asking for ancient coins, and they were shown two superb gold staters with the heads of Alexander and Philip.

"Aren't they beautiful?" said the younger. "How lovely one would be for a brooch!"

"Yes, indeed," replied the elder, "and quite in the line of our Greek reading."

The girl held them in her hand and looked at one and the other with a student's discrimination.

"Which would you choose?"

"Oh, both are fine. Philip of Macedon has a certain youthful freshness, in the curling hair and uncovered head. But, of course, Alexander the Great is more important, and then there is the classic casque. I should take the Alexander." The girl still hesitated, weighing the choice in her mind from the classic point of view.

"Doubtless you are right. But"−−and she held up the lovely head−−"this is not quite so common, and−−and−−I think I'll take the Macedon one. Yes, you may set that for me," turning to the salesman.

"Diamonds or pearls?" asked the jeweler.

"Oh, dear, no!" exclaimed the girl; "just the head."

Evelyn's education was advancing. For the first time in her life she had something to conceal. The privilege of this sort of secret is, however, an inheritance of Eve. The first morning she wore it at breakfast Mrs. Mavick asked her what it was.

"It's a coin, antique Greek," Evelyn replied, passing it across the table.

"How pretty it is; it is very pretty. Ought to have pearls around it. Seems to be an inscription on it."

"Yes, it is real old. McDonald says it is a stater, about the same as a Persian daric−something like the value of a sovereign."

"Oh, indeed; very interesting."

To give Evelyn her due, it must be confessed that she blushed at this equivocation about the inscription, and she got quite hot with shame thinking what would become of her if Philip should ever know that she was regarding him as a stater and wearing his name on her breast.

One can fancy what philosophical deductions as to the education of women Celia Howard would have drawn out of this coin incident; one of them doubtless being that a classical education is no protection against love.

But for Philip's connection with the thriving firm of Hunt, Sharp & Tweedle, it is safe to say that he would have known little of the world of affairs in Wall Street, and might never have gained entrance into that other world, for which Wall Street exists, that society where its wealth and ambitious vulgarity are displayed. Thomas Mavick was a client of the firm. At first they had been only associated with his lawyer, and consulted occasionally. But as time went on Mr. Mavick opened to them his affairs more and more, as he found the advantage of being represented to the public by a firm that combined the highest social and professional standing with all the acumen and adroitness that his complicated affairs required.

It was a time of great financial feverishness and uncertainty, and of opportunity for the most reckless adventurers. Houses the most solid were shaken and crippled, and those which were much extended in a variety of adventures were put to their wits' ends to escape shipwreck. Financial operations are perpetual war. It is easy to calculate about the regular forces, but the danger is from the unexpected "raids" and the bushwhackers and guerrillas. And since politics has become inextricably involved in financial speculations (as it has in real war), the excitement and danger of business on a large scale increase.

Philip as a trusted clerk, without being admitted into interior secrets, came to know a good deal about Mavick's affairs, and to be more than ever impressed with his enormous wealth and the magnitude of his operations. From time to time he was sent on errands to Mavick's office, and gradually, as Mavick became accustomed to him as a representative of the firm, they came on a somewhat familiar footing, and talked of other things than business. And Mavick, who was not a bad judge of the capacities of men, conceived a high idea of Philip's single−mindedness, of his integrity and general culture, and, as well, of his agreeableness (for Philip had a certain charm where he felt at ease), while at the same time he discovered that his mind was more upon something else than law, and that, if his success in his profession depended upon his adoption of the business methods of the Street, he could not go very far. Consequently he did not venture upon the same confidences with him that he habitually did with Mr. Sharp. Yet, business aside, he had an intellectual pleasure in exchanging views with Philip which Mr. Sharp's conversation did not offer him.

When, therefore, Mrs. Mavick came to consult her husband about the list for the coming−out reception of Evelyn, Philip found a friend at court.

"It is all plain enough," said Carmen, as she sat down with book and pencil in hand, "till you come to the young men, the unattached young men. Here is my visiting−list, that of course. But for the young ladies we must have more young men. Can't you suggest any?"

"Perhaps. I know a lot of young fellows."

"But I mean available young men, those that count socially. I don't want a broker's board or a Chamber of Commerce here."

Mr. Mavick named half a dozen, and Carmen looked for their names in the social register. "Any more?"

"Why, you forgot young Burnett, who was with you last summer at Rivervale. I thought you liked him."

"So I did in Rivervale. Plain farmer people. Yes, he was very nice to us. I've been thinking if I couldn't send him something Christmas and pay off the debt."

"He'd think a great deal more of an invitation to your reception."

"But you don't understand. You never think of Evelyn's future. We are asking people that we think she ought to know."

"Well, Burnett is a very agreeable fellow."

"Fiddlesticks! He is nothing but a law clerk. Worse than that, he is a magazine writer."

"I thought you liked his essays and stories."

"So I do. But you don't want to associate with everybody you like that way. I am talking about society. You must draw the line somewhere. Oh, I forgot Fogg−−Dr. LeRoy Fogg, from Pittsburg." And down went the name of Fogg.

"You mean that young swell whose business it is to drive a four−in−hand to Yonkers and back, and toot on a horn?"

"Well, what of that? Everybody who is anybody, I mean all the girls, want to go on his coach."

"Oh, Lord! I'd rather go on the Elevated." And Mavick laughed very heartily, for him. "Well, I'll make a compromise. You take Fogg and I'll take Burnett. He is in a good firm, he belongs to a first−rate club, he goes to the Hunts' and the Scammels', I hear of him in good places. Come."

"Well, if you make a point of it. I've nothing against him. But if you knew the feelings of a mother about her only daughter you would know, that you cannot be too careful."

When, several days after this conversation, Philip received his big invitation, gorgeously engraved on what he took to be a sublimated sort of wrapping−paper, he felt ashamed that he had doubted the sincere friendship and the goodness of heart of Mrs. Mavick.

XV

One morning in December, Philip was sent down to Mr. Mavick's office with some important papers. He was kept waiting a considerable time in the outer room where the clerks were at work. A couple of clerks at desks near the chair he occupied were evidently discussing some one and he overheard fragments of sentences−−"Yes, that's he." "Well, I guess the old man's got his match this time."

When he was admitted to the private office, he encountered coming out in the anteroom a man of striking appearance. For an instant they were face to face, and then bowed and passed on. The instant seemed to awaken some memory in Philip which greatly puzzled him.

The man had closely cropped black hair, black Whiskers, a little curling, but also closely trimmed, piercing black eyes, and the complexion of a Spaniard. The nose was large but regular, the mouth square−cut and firm, and the powerful jaw emphasized the decision of the mouth. The frame corresponded with the head. It was Herculean, and yet with no exaggerated developments. The man was over six feet in height, the shoulders were square, the chest deep, the hips and legs modeled for strength, and with no superfluous flesh. Philip noticed, as they fronted each other for an instant and the stranger raised his hat, that his hands and feet were smaller than usually accompany such a large frame. The impression was that of great physical energy, self−confidence, and determined will. The face was not bad, certainly not in detail, and even the penetrating eyes seemed at the moment capable of a humorous expression, but it was that of a man whom you would not like to have your enemy. He wore a business suit of rough material and fashionable cut, but he wore it like a man who did not give much thought to his clothes.

"What a striking−looking man," said Philip, motioning with his hand towards the anteroom as he greeted Mr. Mavick.

"Who, Ault?" answered Mavick, indifferently.

"Ault! What, Murad Ault?"

"Nobody else."

"Is it possible? I thought I saw a resemblance. Several times I have wondered, but I fancied it only a coincidence of names. It seemed absurd. Why, I used to know Murad Ault when we were boys. And to think that he should be the great Murad Ault."

"He hasn't been that for more than a couple of years," Mavick answered, with a smile at the other's astonishment, and then, with more interest, "What do you know about him?"

"If this is the same person, he used to live at Rivervale. Came there, no one knew where from, and lived with his mother, a little withered old woman, on a little cleared patch up in the hills, in a comfortable sort of shanty. She used to come to the village with herbs and roots to sell. Nobody knew whether she was a gypsy or a decayed lady, she had such an air, and the children were half afraid of her, as a sort of witch. Murad went to school, and occasionally worked for some farmer, but nobody knew him; he rarely spoke to any one, and he had the reputation of being a perfect devil; his only delight seemed to be in doing some dare−devil feat to frighten the children. We used to say that Murad Ault would become either a pirate or−−"

"Broker," suggested Mr. Mavick, with a smile.

"I didn't know much about brokers at that time," Philip hastened to say, and then laughed himself at his escape from actual rudeness.

"What became of him?"

"Oh, he just disappeared. After I went away to school I heard that his mother had died, and Murad had gone off−−gone West it was said. Nothing was ever heard of him."

The advent and rise of Murad Ault in New York was the sort of phenomenon to which the metropolis, which picks up its great men as Napoleon did his marshals, is accustomed. The mystery of his origin, which was at first against him, became at length an element of his strength and of the fear he inspired, as a sort of elemental force of unknown power. Newspaper biographies of him constantly appeared, but he had evaded every attempt to include him and his portrait in the Lives of Successful Men. The publishers of these useful volumes for stimulating speculation and ambition did not dare to take the least liberties with Murad Ault.

The man was like the boy whom Philip remembered. Doubtless he appreciated now as then the value of the mystery that surrounded his name and origin; and he very soon had a humorous conception of the situation that made him decline to be pilloried with others in one of those volumes, which won from a reviewer the confession that "lives of great men all remind us we may make our lives sublime." One of the legends current about him was that he first appeared in New York as a "hand" on a canal−boat, that he got employment as a check−clerk on the dock, that he made the acquaintance of politicians in his ward, and went into politics far enough to get a city contract, which paid him very well and showed him how easily a resolute man could get money and use it in the city. He was first heard of in Wall Street as a curbstone broker, taking enormous risks and always lucky. Very soon he set up an office, with one clerk or errand−boy, and his growing reputation for sagacity and boldness began to attract customers; his ventures soon engaged the attention of guerrillas like himself, who were wont to

consult him. They found that his advice was generally sound, and that he had not only sensitiveness but prescience about the state of the market. His office was presently enlarged, and displayed a modest sign of "Murad Ault, Banker and Broker."

Mr. Ault's operations constantly enlarged, his schemes went beyond the business of registering other people's bets and taking a commission on them; he was known as a daring but successful promoter, and he had a visible ownership in steamships and railways, and projected such vast operations as draining the Jersey marshes. If he had been a citizen of Italy he would have attacked the Roman Campagna with the same confidence. At any rate, he made himself so much felt and seemed to command so many resources that it was not long before he forced his way into the Stock Exchange and had a seat in the Board of Brokers. He was at first an odd figure there. There was something flash about his appearance, and his heavy double watch−chain and diamond shirt−studs gave him the look of an ephemeral adventurer. But he soon took his cue, the diamonds disappeared, and the dress was toned down. There seemed to be two models in the Board, the smart and neat, and the hayseed style adopted by some of the most wily old operators, who posed as honest dealers who retained their rural simplicity. Mr. Ault adopted a middle course, and took the respectable yet fashionable, solid dress of a man of affairs.

There is no other place in the world where merit is so quickly recognized as in the Stock Exchange, especially if it is backed by brass and a good head. Ault's audacity made him feared; he was believed to be as unscrupulous as he was reckless, but this did not much injure his reputation when it was seen that he was marvelously successful. That Ault would wreck the market, if he could and it was to his advantage, no one doubted; but still he had a quality that begot confidence. He kept his word. Though men might be shy of entering into a contract with Ault, they learned that what he said he would do he would do literally. He was not a man of many words, but he was always decided and apparently open, and, as whatever he touched seemed to thrive, his associates got the habit of saying, "What Ault says goes."

Murad Ault had married, so it was said, the daughter of a boarding−house keeper on the dock. She was a pretty girl, had been educated in a convent (perhaps by his aid after he was engaged to marry her), and was a sweet mother to a little brood of charming children, and a devout member of her parish church. Those who had seen Mrs. Ault when her carriage took her occasionally to Ault's office in the city were much impressed by her graceful manner and sweet face, and her appearance gave Ault a sort of anchorage in the region of respectability. No one would have accused Ault of being devoted to any special kind of religious worship; but he was equally tolerant of all religions, and report said was liberal in his wife's church charities. Besides the fact that he owned a somewhat pretentious house in Sixtieth Street, society had very little knowledge of him.

It was, however, undeniable that he was a power in the Street. No other man's name was oftener mentioned in the daily journals in connection with some bold and successful operation. He seemed to thrive on panics, and to grow strong and rich with every turn of the wheel. There is only one stock expression in America for a man who is very able and unscrupulous, and carries things successfully with a high hand−−he is Napoleonic. It needed only a few brilliant operations, madly reckless in appearance but successful, to give Ault the newspaper sobriquet of the Young Napoleon.

"Papa, what does he mean?" asked the eldest boy. "Jim Dustin says the papers call you Napoleon."

"It means, my boy," said Ault, with a grim smile, that I am devoted to your mother, St. Helena."

"Don't say that, Murad," exclaimed his wife; I'm far enough from a saint, and your destiny isn't the Island."

"What's the Island, mamma?"

"It's a place people are sent to for their health."

"In a boat? Can I go?"

"You ask too many questions, Sinclair," said Mr. Ault; "it's time you were off to school."

There seems to have been not the least suspicion in this household that the head of it was a pirate.

It must be said that Mavick still looked upon Ault as an adventurer, one of those erratic beings who appear from time to time in the Street, upset everything, and then disappear. They had been associated occasionally in small deals, and Ault had more than once appealed to Mavick, as a great capitalist, with some promising scheme. They had, indeed, co−operated in reorganizing a Western railway, but seemed to have come out of the operation without increased confidence in each other. What had occurred nobody knew, but thereafter there developed a slight antagonism between the two operators. Ault went no more to consult the elder man, and they had two or three little bouts, in which Mavick did not get the best of it. This was not an unusual thing in the Street. Mr. Ault never expressed his opinion of Mr. Mavick, but it became more and more apparent that their interests were opposed. Some one who knew both men, and said that the one was as cold and selfish as a pike, and the other was a most unscrupulous dare−devil, believed that Mavick had attempted some sort of a trick on Ault, and that it was the kind of thing that the Spaniard (his complexion had given him this nickname) never forgot.

It is not intended to enter into a defense of the local pool known as the New York Stock Exchange. It needs none. Some regard it as a necessary standpipe to promote and equalize distribution, others consult it as a sort of Nilometer, to note the rise and fall of the waters and the probabilities of drought or flood. Everybody knows that it is full of the most gamy and beautiful fish in the world−−namely, the speckled trout, whose honest occupation it is to devour whatever is thrown into the pool−−a body governed by the strictest laws of political economy in guarding against over−population, by carrying out the Malthusian idea, in the habit the big ones have of eating the little ones. But occasionally this harmonious family, which is animated by one of the most conspicuous traits of human nature−−to which we owe very much of our progress−− namely, the desire to get hold of everything within reach, and is such a useful object−lesson of the universal law of upward struggle that results in the survival of the fittest, this harmonious family is disturbed by the advent of a pickerel, which makes a raid, introduces confusion into all the calculations of the pool, roils the water, and drives the trout into their holes.

The presence in the pool of a slimy eel or a blundering bullhead or a lethargic sucker is bad enough, but the rush in of the pickerel is the advent of the devil himself. Until he is got rid of, all the delicate machinery for the calculation of chances is hopelessly disturbed; and no one could tell what would become of the business of the country if there were not a considerable number of devoted men engaged in registering its fluctuations and the change of values, and willing to back their opinions by investing their own capital or, more often, the capital of others.

This somewhat mixed figure cannot be pursued further without losing its analogy, becoming fantastic, and violating natural law. For it is matter of observation that in this arena the pickerel, if he succeeds in clearing out the pool, suddenly becomes a trout, and is respected as the biggest and most useful fish in the pond.

What is meant is simply that Murad Ault was fighting for position, and that for some reason, known to himself, Thomas Mavick stood in his way. Mr. Mavick had never been under the necessity of making such a contest. He stepped into a commanding position as the manager if not the owner of the great fortune of Rodney Henderson. His position was undisputed, for the Street believed with the world in the magnitude of that fortune, though there were shrewd operators who said that Mavick had more chicane but not a tenth part of the ability of Rodney Henderson. Mr. Ault had made the fortune the object of keen scrutiny, when his antagonism was aroused, and none knew better than he its assailable points. Henderson had died suddenly in the midst of vast schemes which needed his genius to perfect. Apparently the Mavick estate was second to only a few fortunes in the country. Mr. Ault had set himself to find out whether this vast structure stood upon rock foundations. The knowledge he acquired about it and his intentions he communicated to no one. But the drift of his mind might be gathered from

a remark he made to his wife one day, when some social allusion was made to Mavick: "I'll bring down that snob."

The use of such men as Ault in the social structure is very doubtful, as doubtful as that of a summer tempest or local cyclone, which it is said clears the air and removes rubbish, but is a scourge that involves the innocent as often as the guilty. It is popularly supposed that the disintegration and distribution of a great fortune, especially if it has been accumulated by doubtful methods, is a benefit to mankind. Mr. Ault may have shared this impression, but it is unlikely that he philosophized on the subject. No one, except perhaps his own family, had ever discovered that he had any sensibilities that could be appealed to, and, if he had known the ideas beginning to take shape in the mind of the millionaire heiress in regard to this fortune, he would have approved or comprehended them as little as did her mother.

Evelyn had lived hitherto with little comprehension of her peculiar position. That the world went well with her, and that no obstacle was opposed to the gratification of her reasonable desires, or to her impulses of charity and pity, was about all she knew of her power. But she was now eighteen and about to appear in the world. Her mother, therefore, had been enlightening her in regard to her expectations and the career that lay open to her. And Carmen thought the girl a little perverse, in that this prospect, instead of exciting her worldly ambition, seemed to affect her only seriously as a matter of responsibility.

In their talks Mrs. Mavick was in fact becoming acquainted with the mind of her daughter, and learning, somewhat to her chagrin, the limitations of her education produced by the policy of isolation. To her dismay, she found that the girl did not care much for the things that she herself cared most for. The whole world of society, its strifes, ambitions, triumphs, defeats, rewards, did not seem to Evelyn so real or so important as that world in which she had lived with her governess and her tutors. And, worse than this, the estimate she placed upon the values of material things was shockingly inadequate to her position.

That her father was a very great man was one of the earliest things Evelyn began to know, exterior to herself. This was impressed upon her by the deference paid to him not only at home but wherever they went, and by the deference shown to her as his daughter. And she was proud of this. He was not one of the great men whose careers she was familiar with in literature, not a general or a statesman or an orator or a scientist or a poet or a philanthropist she never thought of him in connection with these heroes of her imagination−−but he was certainly a great power in the world. And she had for him a profound admiration, which might have become affection if Mavick had ever taken the pains to interest himself in the child's affairs. Her mother she loved, and believed there could be no one in the world more sweet and graceful and attractive, and as she grew up she yearned for more of the motherly companionship, for something more than the odd moments of petting that were given to her in the whirl of the life of a woman of the world. What that life was, however, she had only the dimmest comprehension, and it was only in the last two years, since she was sixteen, that she began to understand it, and that mainly in contrast to her own guarded life. And she was now able to see that her own secluded life had been unusual.

Not till long after this did she speak to any one of her experience as a child, of the time when she became conscious that she was never alone, and that she was only free to act within certain limits.

To McDonald, indeed, she had often shown her irritation, and it was only the strong good sense of the governess that kept her from revolt. It was not until very recently that it could be explained to her, without putting her in terror hourly, why she must always be watched and guarded.

It had required all the tact and sophistry of her governess to make her acquiesce in a system of education−−so it was called−that had been devised in order to give her the highest and purest development. That the education was mainly left to McDonald, and that her parents were simply anxious about her safety, she did not learn till long afterwards. In the first years Mrs. Mavick had been greatly relieved to be spared all the care of the baby, and as the years went on, the arrangement seemed more and more convenient, and she gave little thought to the character

that was being formed. To Mr. Mavick, indeed, as to his wife, it was enough to see that she was uncommonly intelligent, and that she had a certain charm that made her attractive. Mrs. Mavick took it for granted that when it came time to introduce her into the world she would be like other girls, eager for its pleasures and susceptible to all its allurements. Of the direction of the undercurrents of the girl's life she had no conception, until she began to unfold to her the views of the world that prevailed in her circle, and what (in the Carmen scheme of life) ought to be a woman's ambition.

That she was to be an heiress Evelyn had long known, that she would one day have a great fortune at her disposal had indeed come into her serious thought, but the brilliant use of it in relation to herself, at which her mother was always lately hinting, came to her as a disagreeable shock. For the moment the fortune seemed to her rather a fetter than an opportunity, if she was to fulfill her mother's expectations. These hints were conveyed with all the tact of which her mother was master, but the girl was nevertheless somewhat alarmed, and she began to regard the "coming out" as an entrance into servitude rather than an enlargement of liberty. One day she surprised Miss McDonald by asking her if she didn't think that rich people were the only ones not free to do as they pleased?

"Why, my dear, it is not generally so considered. Most people fancy that if they had money enough they could do anything."

"Yes, of course," said the girl, putting down her stitching and looking up; "that is not exactly what I mean. They can go in the current, they can do what they like with their money, but I mean with themselves. Aren't they in a condition that binds them half the time to do what they don't wish to do?"

"It's a condition that all the world is trying to get into."

"I know. I've been talking with mamma about the world and about society, and what is expected and what you must live up to."

"But you have always known that you must one day go into the world and take your share in life."

"That, yes. But I would rather live up to myself. Mamma seems to think that society will do a great deal for me, that I will get a wider view of life, that I can do so much for society, and, with my position, mamma says, have such a career. McDonald, what is society for?"

That was such a poser that the governess threw up her hands, and then laughed aloud, and then shook her head. "Wiser people than you have asked that question."

"I asked mamma that, for she is in it all the time. She didn't like it much, and asked, 'What is anything for?' You see, McDonald, I've been with mamma many a time when her friends came to see her, and they never have anything to say, never−−what I call anything. I wonder if in society they go about saying that? What do they do it for?"

Miss McDonald had her own opinion about what is called society and its occupations and functions, but she did not propose to encourage this girl, who would soon take her place in it, in such odd notions.

"Don't you know, child, that there is society and society? That it is all sorts of a world, that it gets into groups and circles about, and that is the way the world is stirred up and kept from stagnation. And, my dear, you have just to do your duty where you are placed, and that is all there is about it."

"Don't be cross, McDonald. I suppose I can think my thoughts?"

"Yes, you can think, and you can learn to keep a good deal that you think to yourself. Now, Evelyn, haven't you any curiosity to see what this world we are talking about is like?"

"Indeed I have," said Evelyn, coming out of her reflective mood into a girlish enthusiasm. "And I want to see what I shall be like in it. Only−−well, how is that?" And she held out the handkerchief she had been plying her needle on.

Miss McDonald looked at the stitches critically, at the letters T.M. enclosed in an oval.

"That is very good, not too mechanical. It will please your father. The oval makes a pretty effect; but what are those signs between the letters?"

"Don't you see? It is a cartouche, and those are hieroglyphics−−his name in Egyptian. I got it out of Petrie's book."

"It certainly is odd."

"And every one of the twelve is going to be different. It is so interesting to hunt up the signs for qualities. If papa can read it he will find out a good deal that I think about him."

The governess only smiled for reply. It was so like Evelyn, so different from others even in the commonplace task of marking handkerchiefs, to work a little archaeology into her expression of family affection.

Mrs. Mavick's talks with her daughter in which she attempted to give Evelyn some conception of her importance as the heiress of a great fortune, of her position in society, what would be expected of her, and of the brilliant social career her mother imagined for her, had an effect opposite to that intended. There had been nothing in her shielded life, provided for at every step without effort, that had given her any idea of the value and importance of money.

To a girl in her position, educated in the ordinary way and mingling with school companions, one of the earliest lessons would be a comprehension of the power that wealth gave her; and by the time that she was of Evelyn's age her opinion of men would begin to be colored by the notion that they were polite or attentive to her on account of her fortune and not for any charm of hers, and so a cruel suspicion of selfishness would have entered her mind to poison the very thought of love.

No such idea had entered Evelyn's mind. She would not readily have understood that love could have any sort of relation to riches or poverty. And if, deep down in her heart, not acknowledged, scarcely recognized, by herself, there had begun to grow an image about which she had sweet and tender thoughts, it certainly did not occur to her that her father's wealth could make any difference in the relations of friendship or even of affection. And as for the fortune, if she was, as her mother said, some day to be mistress of it, she began to turn over in her mind objects quite different from the display and the career suggested by her mother, and to think how she could use it.

In her ignorance of practical life and of what the world generally values, of course the scheme that was rather hazy in her mind was simply Quixotic, as appeared in a conversation with her father one evening while he smoked his cigar. He had called Evelyn to the library, on the suggestion of Carmen that he should "have a little talk with the girl."

Mr. Mavick began, when Evelyn was seated beside him, and he had drawn her close to him and she had taken possession of his big hand with both her little hands, about the reception and about balls to come, and the opera, and what was going on in New York generally in the season, and suddenly asked:

"My dear, if you had a lot of money, what would you do with it?"

"What would you?" said the girl, looking up into his face. "What do people generally do?"

"Why," and Mavick hesitated, "they use it to add more to it."

"And then?" pursued the girl.

"I suppose they leave it to somebody. Suppose it was left to you?"

"Don't think me silly, papa; I've thought a lot about it, and I shall do something quite different."

"Different from what?"

"You know mamma is in the Orthopedic Hospital, and in the Ragged Schools, and in the Infirmary, and I don't know what all."

"And wouldn't you help them?"

"Of course, I would help. But everybody does those things, the practical things, the charities; I mean to do things for the higher life."

Mr. Mavick took his cigar from his mouth and looked puzzled. "You want to build a cathedral?"

"No, I don't mean that sort of higher life, I mean civilization, the things at the top. I read an essay the other day that said it was easy to raise money for anything mechanical and practical in a school, but nobody wanted to give for anything ideal."

"Quite right," said her father; "the world is full of cranks. You seem as vague as your essayist."

"Don't you remember, papa, when we were in Oxford how amused you were with the master, or professor, who grumbled because the college was full of students, and there wasn't a single college for research?

I asked McDonald afterwards what he meant; that is how I first got my idea, but I didn't see exactly what it was until recently. You've got to cultivate the high things−−that essay says−−the abstract, that which does not seem practically useful, or society will become low and material."

"By George!" cried Mavick, with a burst of laughter, "you've got the lingo. Go on, I want to see where you are going to light."

"Well, I'll tell you some more. You know my tutor is English. McDonald says she believes he is the most learned man in eighteenth−century literature living, and his dream is to write a history of it. He is poor, and engaged all the time teaching, and McDonald says he will die, no doubt, and leave nothing of his investigations to the world."

"And you want to endow him?"

"He is only one. There is the tutor of history. Teach, teach, teach, and no time or strength left for investigation. You ought to hear him tell of the things just to be found out in American history. You see what I mean? It is plainer in the sciences. The scholars who could really make investigations, and do something for the world, have to earn their living and have no time or means for experiments. It seems foolish as I say it, but I do think, papa, there is something in it."

"And what would you do?"

Evelyn saw that she was making no headway, and her ideas, exposed to so practical a man as her father, did seem rather ridiculous. But she struck out boldly with the scheme that she had been evolving.

"I'd found Institutions of Research, where there should be no teaching, and students who had demonstrated that they had anything promising in them, in science, literature, languages, history, anything, should have the means and the opportunity to make investigations and do work. See what a hard time inventors and men of genius have; it is pitiful."

"And how much money do you want for this modest scheme of yours?"

"I hadn't thought," said Evelyn, patting her father's hand. And then, at a venture, "I guess about ten millions."

"Whew! Have you any idea how much ten millions are, or how much one million is?"

"Why, ten millions, if you have a hundred, is no more than one million if you have only ten. Doesn't it depend?"

"If it depends upon you, child, I don't think money has any value for you whatever. You are a born financier for getting rid of a surplus. You ought to be Secretary of the Treasury."

Mavick rose, lifted up his daughter, and, kissing her with more than usual tenderness, said, "You'll learn about the world in time," and bade her goodnight.

XVI

Law and love go very well together as occupations, but, when literature is added, the trio is not harmonious. Either of the two might pull together, but the combination of the three is certainly disastrous.

It would be difficult to conceive of a person more obviously up in the air than Philip at this moment. He went through his office duties intelligently and perfunctorily, but his heart was not in the work, and reason as he would his career did not seem to be that way. He was lured too strongly by that siren, the ever−alluring woman who sits upon the rocks and sings so deliciously to youth of the sweets of authorship. He who listens once to that song hears it always in his ears, through disappointment and success−−and the success is often the greatest disappointment−−through poverty and hope deferred and heart−sickness for recognition, through the hot time of youth and the creeping incapacity of old age. The song never ceases. Were the longing and the hunger it arouses ever satisfied with anything, money for instance, any more than with fame?

And if the law had a feeble hold on him, how much more uncertain was his grasp on literature. He had thrown his line, he had been encouraged by nibbles, but publishers were too wary to take hold. It seemed to him that he had literally cast his bread upon the waters, and apparently at an ebb tide, and his venture had gone to the fathomless sea. He had put his heart into the story, and, more than that, his hope of something dearer than any public favor. As he went over the story in his mind, scene after scene, and dwelt upon the theme that held the whole in unity, he felt that Evelyn would be touched by the recognition of her part in the inspiration, and that the great public must give some heed to it. Perhaps not the great public−−for its liking now ran in quite another direction, but a considerable number of people like Celia, who were struggling with problems of life, and the Alices in country homes who still preserved in their souls a belief in the power of a noble life, and perhaps some critics who had not rid themselves of the old traditions. If the publishers would only give him a chance!

But if law and literature were to him little more than unsubstantial dreams, the love he cherished was, in the cool examination of reason, preposterous. What! the heiress of so many millions, brought up doubtless in the

expectation of the most brilliant worldly alliance, the heiress with the world presently at her feet, would she look at a lawyer's clerk and an unsuccessful scribbler? Oh, the vanity of youth and the conceit of intellect!

Down in his heart Philip thought that she might. And he went on nursing this vain passion, knowing as well as any one can know the social code, that Mr. Mavick and Mrs. Mavick would simply laugh in his face at such a preposterous idea. And yet he knew that he had her sympathy in his ambition, that to a certain extent she was interested in him. The girl was too guileless to conceal that. And then suppose he should become famous−−well, not exactly famous, but an author who was talked about, and becoming known, and said to be promising? And then he could fancy Mavick weighing this sort of reputation in his office scales against money, and Mrs. Mavick weighing it in her boudoir against social position. He was a fool to think of it. And yet, suppose, suppose the girl should come to love him. It would not be lightly. He knew that, by looking into her deep, clear, beautiful eyes. There were in them determination and tenacity of purpose as well as the capability of passion. Heavens and earth, if that girl once loved, there was a force that no opposition could subdue! That was true. But what had he to offer to evoke such a love?

In those days Philip saw much of Celia, who at length had given up teaching, and had come to the city to try her experiment, into which she was willing to embark her small income. She had taken a room in the midst of poverty and misery on the East Side, and was studying the situation.

"I am not certain," she said, "whether I or any one else can do anything, or whether any organization down there can effect much. But I will find out."

"Aren't you lonesome−−and disgusted?" asked Philip.

"Disgusted? You might as well be disgusted with one thing as another. I am generally disgusted with the way things go. But, lonely? No, there is too much to do and to learn. And do you know, Philip, that people are more interesting over there, more individual, have more queer sorts of character. I begin to believe, with a lovely philanthropist I know, who had charge of female criminals, that 'wicked women are more interesting than good women.'"

"You have struck a rich mine of interest in New York, then."

"Don't be cynical, Phil. There are different kinds of interest. Stuff! But I won't explain." And then, abruptly changing the subject, "Seems to me you have something on your mind lately. Is it the novel?"

"Perhaps."

"The publishers haven't decided?"

"I am afraid they have."

"Well, Philip, do you know that I think the best thing that could happen to you would be to have the story rejected."

"It has been rejected several times," said Philip. "That didn't seem to do me any good."

"But finally, so that you would stop thinking about it, stop expecting anything that way, and take up your profession in earnest."

"You are a nice comforter!" retorted Philip, with a sort of smirking grin and a look of keen inspection, as if he saw something new in the character of his adviser. "What has come over you? Suppose I should give you that sort of

sympathy in the projects you set your heart on?"

"It does seem hard and mean, doesn't it? I knew you wouldn't like it. That is, not now. But it is for your lifetime. As for me, I've wanted so many things and I've tried so many things. And do you know, Phil, that I have about come to the conclusion that the best things for us in this world are the things we don't get."

"You are always coming to some new conclusion."

"Yes, I know. But just look at it rationally. Suppose your story is published, cast into the sea of new books, and has a very fair sale. What will you get out of it? You can reckon how many copies at ten cents a copy it will need to make as much as some writers get for a trivial magazine paper. Recognition? Yes, from a very few people. Notoriety? You would soon find what that is. Suppose you make what is called a 'hit.' If you did not better that with the next book, you would be called a failure. And you must keep at it, keep giving the public something new all the time, or you will drop out of sight. And then the anxiety and the strain of it, and the temptation, because you must live, to lower your ideal, and go down to what you conceive to be the buying public. And if your story does not take the popular fancy, where will you be then?"

"Celia, you have become a perfect materialist. You don't allow anything for the joy of creation, for the impulse of a man's mind, for the delight in fighting for a place in the world of letters."

"So it seems to you now. If you have anything that must be said, of course you ought to say it, no matter what comes after. If you are looking round for something you can say in order to get the position you covet, that is another thing. People so deceive themselves about this. I know literary workers who lead a dog's life and are slaves to their pursuit, simply because they have deceived themselves in this. I want you to be free and independent, to live your own life and do what work you can in the world. There, I've said it, and of course you will go right on. I know you. And maybe I am all wrong. When I see the story I may take the other side and urge you to go on, even if you are as poor as a church−mouse, and have to be under the harrow of poverty for years."

"Then you have some curiosity to see the story?"

"You know I have. And I know I shall like it. It isn't that, Phil; it is what is the happiest career for you."

"Well, I will send it to you when it comes back."

But the unexpected happened. It did not come back. One morning Philip received a letter from the publishers that set his head in a whirl. The story was accepted. The publisher wrote that the verdict of the readers was favorable, and he would venture on it, though he cautioned Mr. Burnett not to expect a great commercial success. And he added, as to terms, it being a new name, though he hoped one that would become famous, that the copyright of ten per cent. would not begin until after the sale of the first thousand copies.

The latter part of the letter made no impression on Philip. So long as the book was published, and by a respectable firm, he was indifferent as a lord to the ignoble details of royalty. The publisher had recognized the value of the book, and it was accepted on its merits. That was enough. The first thing he did was to enclose the letter to Celia, with the simple remark that he would try to sympathize with her in her disappointment.

Philip would have been a little less jubilant if he had known how the decision of the publishing house was arrived at. It was true that the readers had reported favorably, but had refused to express any opinion on the market value. The manuscript had therefore been put in the grave− yard of manuscripts, from which there is commonly no resurrection except in the funeral progress of the manuscript back to the author. But the head of the house happened to dine at the house of Mr. Hunt, the senior of Philip's law firm. Some chance allusion was made by a lady to an article in a recent magazine which had pleased her more than anything she had seen lately. Mr. Hunt

also had seen it, for his wife had insisted on reading it to him, and he was proud to say that the author was a clerk in his office−−a fine fellow, who, he always fancied, had more taste for literature than for law, but he had the stuff in him to succeed in anything. The publisher pricked up his ears and asked some questions. He found that Mr. Burnett stood well in the most prominent law firm in the city, that ladies of social position recognized his talent, that he dined here and there in a good set, and that he belonged to one of the best clubs. When he went to his office the next morning he sent for the manuscript, looked it over critically, and then announced to his partners that he thought the thing was worth trying.

In a day or two it was announced in the advertising lists as forthcoming. There it stared Philip in the face and seemed to be the only conspicuous thing in the journal. He had not paid much attention before to the advertisements, but now this department seemed the most interesting part of the paper, and he read every announcement, and then came back and read his over and over. There it stood:−−"On Saturday, The Puritan Nun. An Idyl. By Philip Burnett."

The naming of the book had been almost as difficult as the creation. His first choice had been "The Lily of the Valley," but Balzac had pre−empted that. And then he had thought of "The Enclosed Garden" (Hortus Clausus), the title of a lovely picture he had seen. That was Biblical, but in the present ignorance of the old scriptures it would be thought either agricultural or sentimental. It is not uncommon that a book owes its notoriety and sale to its title, and it is not easy to find a title that will attract attention without being too sensational. The title chosen was paradoxical, for while a nun might be a puritan, it was unthinkable that a Puritan should be a nun.

Mr. Brad said he liked it, because it looked well and did not mean anything; he liked all such titles, the "Pious Pirate," the "Lucid Lunatic," the "Sympathetic Siren," the "Guileless Girl," and so on.

The announcement of publication had the effect of putting Philip in high spirits for the Mavick reception−spirits tempered, however, by the embarrassment natural to a modest man that he would be painfully conspicuous. This first placarding of one's name is a peculiar and mixed sensation. The letters seem shamefully naked, and the owner seems exposed and to have parted with a considerable portion of his innate privacy. His first fancy is that everybody will see it. But this fancy only comes once. With experience he comes to doubt if anybody except himself will see it.

To those most concerned the Mavick reception was the event of a lifetime. To the town−−that is, to a thousand or two persons occupying in their own eyes an exclusive position it was one of the events of the season, and, indeed, it was the sensation for a couple of days. The historian of social life formerly had put upon him the task of painfully describing all that went to make such an occasion brilliant−−the house itself, the decorations, the notable company, men distinguished in the State or the Street, women as remarkable for their beauty as for their courage in its exhibition, the whole world of fashion and of splendid extravagance upon which the modiste and the tailor could look with as much pride as the gardener does upon a show of flowers which his genius has brought to perfection.

The historian has no longer this responsibility. It is transferred to a kind of trust. A race of skillful artists has arisen, who, in combination with the caterers, the decorators, and the milliners, produce a composite piece of literature in which all details are woven into a splendid whole−−a composition rhetorical, humorous, lyrical, a noble apotheosis of wealth and beauty which carefully satisfies individual vanity and raises in the mind a noble picture of modern civilization. The pen and the pencil contribute to this splendid result in the daily chronicle of our life. Those who are not present are really witnesses of the scene, and this pictorial and literary triumph is justified in the fact that no other effort of the genius of reproduction is so eagerly studied by the general public. Not only in the city, but in the remote villages, these accounts are perused with interest, and it must be taken as an evidence of the new conception of the duties of the favored of fortune to the public pleasure that the participants in these fetes overcome, though reluctantly, their objection to notoriety.

No other people in the world are so hospitable as the Americans, and so willing to incur discomfort in showing hospitality. No greater proof of this can be needed than the effort to give princely entertainments in un− princely houses, where opposing streams of guests fight for progress in scant passages and on narrow stairways, and pack themselves in stifling rooms. The Mavick house, it should be said, was perfectly adapted to the throng that seemed to fill but did not crowd it. The spacious halls, the noble stairways, the ample drawing−rooms, the ballroom, the music−room, the library, the picture−gallery, the dining−room, the conservatory−−into these the crowd flowed or lingered without confusion or annoyance and in a continual pleasure of surprise. "The best point of view," said an artist of Philip's acquaintance, "is just here." They were standing in the great hall looking up at that noble gallery from which flowed down on either hand a broad stairway.

"I didn't know there was so much beauty in New York. It never before had such an opportunity to display itself. There is room for the exhibition of the most elaborate toilets, and the costumes really look regal in such a setting."

When Philip was shown to the dressing−room, conscious that the servant was weighing him lightly in the social scale on account of his early arrival, he found a few men who were waiting to make their appearance more seasonable. They were young men, who had the air of being bored by this sort of thing, and greeted each other with a look of courteous surprise, as much as to say, "Hello! you here?" One of them, whom Philip knew slightly, who had the reputation of being the distributer if not the fountain of social information, and had the power of attracting gossip as a magnet does iron filings, gave Philip much valuable information concerning the function.

"Mrs. Mavick has done it this time. Everybody has tumbled in. Washington is drained of its foreign diplomats, the heavy part of the cabinet is moved over to represent the President, who sent a gracious letter, the select from Boston, the most ancient from Philadelphia, and I know that Chicago comes in a special train. Oh, it's the thing. I assure you there was a scramble for invitations in the city. Lots of visiting nobility−−Count de 1'Auney, I know, and that little snob, Lord Montague."

"Who is he?"

"Lord Crewe Monmouth Fitzwilliam, the Marquis of Montague, eldest son of the Duke of Tewkesbury. He's a daisy.

They say he is over here looking for capital to carry on his peer business when he comes into it. Don't know who put up the money for the trip. These foreigners keep a sharp eye on our market, I can tell you. They say she is a nice little girl, rather a blue−stocking, face rather intelligent than pretty, but Montague won't care for that−−excuse the old joke, but it is the figure Monte is after. He hasn't any manners, but he's not a bad sort of a fellow, generally good−natured, immensely pleased with New York, and an enthusiastic connoisseur in club drinks."

At the proper hour−−the hour, it came into, his mind, when the dear ones at Rivervale had been long in sleep, lulled by the musical flow of the Deerfield−−Philip made his way to the reception room, where there actually was some press of a crowd, in lines, to approach the attraction of the evening, and as he waited his turn he had leisure to observe the brilliant scene. There was scarcely a person in the room he knew. One or two ladies gave him a preoccupied nod, a plain little woman whom he had talked with about books at a recent dinner smiled upon him encouragingly. But what specially impressed him at the moment was the seriousness of the function, the intentness upon the presentation, and the look of worry on the faces of the women in arranging trains and avoiding catastrophes.

As he approached he fancied that Mr. Mavick looked weary and bored, and that a shade of abstraction occasionally came over his face as if it were difficult to keep his thoughts on the changing line.

But his face lighted up a little when he took Philip's hand and exchanged with him the commonplaces of the evening. But before this he had to wait a moment, for he was preceded by an important personage. A dapper little figure, trim, neat, at the moment drew himself up before Mrs. Mavick, brought his heels together with a click, and made a low bow. Doubtless this was the French count. Mrs. Mavick was radiant. Philip had never seen her in such spirits or so fascinating in manner.

"It is a great honor, count."

"It ees to me," said the count, with a marked accent; "I assure you it is like Paris in ze time of ze monarchy. Ah, ze Great Republic, madame−−so it was in France in ze ancien regime. Ah, mademoiselle! Permit me," and he raised her hand to his lips; "I salute−−is it not" (turning to Mrs. Mavick)−−"ze princess of ze house?"

The next man who shook hands with the host, and then stood in an easy attitude before the hostess, attracted Philip's attention strongly, for he fancied from the deference shown him it must be the lord of whom he had heard. He was a short, little man, with heavy limbs and a clumsy figure, reddish hair, very thin on the crown, small eyes that were not improved in expression by white eyebrows, a red face, smooth shaven and freckled. It might have been the face of a hostler or a billiard−marker.

"I am delighted, my lord, that you could make room in your engagements to come."

"Ah, Mrs. Mavick, I wouldn't have missed it," said my lord, with easy assurance; "I'd have thrown over anything to have come. And, do you know" (looking about him coolly), "it's quite English, 'pon my honor, quite English−−St. James and that sort of thing."

"You flatter me, my lord," replied the lady of the house, with a winning smile.

"No, I do assure you, it's bang−up. Ah, Miss Mavick, delighted, delighted. Most charming. Lucky for me, wasn't it? I'm just in time."

"You've only recently come over, Lord Montague?" asked Evelyn.

"Been here before−−Rockies, shooting, all that. Just arrived now−− beastly trip, beastly."

"And so you were glad to land?"

"Glad to land anywhere. But New York suits me down to the ground. It goes, as you say over here. You know Paris?"

"We have been in Paris. You prefer it?"

"For some thing. Paris as it was in the Empire. For sport, no. For horses, no. And" (looking boldly into her face) "when you speak of American women, Paris ain't in it, as you say over here."

And the noble lord, instead of passing on, wheeled about and took a position near Evelyn, so that he could drop his valuable observations into her ear as occasion offered.

To Philip Mrs. Mavick was civil, but she did not beam upon him, and she did not detain him longer than to say, "Glad to see you." But Evelyn−− could Philip be deceived?−−she gave him her hand cordially and looked into his eyes trustfully, as she had the habit of doing in the country, and as if it were a momentary relief to her to encounter in all this parade a friend.

"I need not say that I am glad you could come. And oh" (there was time only for a word), "I saw the announcement. Later, if you can, you will tell me more about it."

Lord Montague stared at him as if to say, "Who the deuce are you?" and as Philip met his gaze he thought, "No, he hasn't the manner of a stable boy; no one but a born nobleman could be so confident with women and so supercilious to men."

But my lord, was little in his thought. It was the face of Evelyn that he saw, and the dainty little figure; the warmth of the little hand still thrilled him. So simple, and only a bunch of violets in her corsage for all ornament! The clear, dark complexion, the sweet mouth, the wonderful eyes! What could Jenks mean by intimating that she was plain?

Philip drifted along with the crowd. He was very much alone. And he enjoyed his solitude. A word and a smile now and then from an acquaintance did not tempt him to come out of his seclusion. The gay scene pleased him. He looked for a moment into the ballroom. At another time he would have tried his fortune in the whirl. But now he looked on as at a spectacle from which he was detached. He had had his moment and he waited for another. The voluptuous music, the fascinating toilets, the beautiful faces, the graceful forms that were woven together in this shifting kaleidoscope, were, indeed, a part of his beautiful dream. But how unreal they all were! There was no doubt that Evelyn's eyes had kindled for him as for no one else whom she had greeted. She singled him out in all this crush, her look, the cordial pressure of her hand, conveyed the feeling of comradeship and understanding. This was enough to fill his thought with foolish anticipations. Is there any being quite so happy, quite so stupid, as a lover? A lover, who hopes everything and fears everything, who goes in an instant from the heights of bliss to the depths of despair.

When the "reception" was over and the company was breaking up into groups and moving about, Philip again sought Evelyn. But she was the centre of a somewhat noisy group, and it was not easy to join it.

Yet it was something that he could feast his eyes on her and was rewarded by a look now and then that told him she was conscious of his presence. Encouraged by this, he was making his way to her, when there was a movement towards the supper−room, and Mrs. Mavick had taken the arm of the Count de l'Auney, and the little lord was jauntily leading away Evelyn. Philip had a pang of disgust and jealousy. Evelyn was actually chatting with him and seemed amused. Lord Montague was evidently laying himself out to please and exerting all the powers of his subtle humor and exploiting his newly acquired slang. That Philip could hear as they moved past him. "The brute!" Philip said to himself, with the injustice which always clouds the estimate of a lover of a rival whose accomplishments differ from his own.

In the supper−room, however, in the confusion and crowding of it, Philip at length found his opportunity to get to the side of Evelyn, whose smile showed him that he was welcome. It was in that fortunate interval when Lord Montague was showing that devotion to women was not incompatible with careful attention to terrapin and champagne. Philip was at once inspired to say:

"How lovely it is! Aren't you tired?"

"Not at all. Everybody is very kind, and some are very amusing. I am learning a great deal," and there was a quizzical look in her eyes, "about the world."

"Well," said Philip, "t's all here."

"I suppose so. But do you know," and there was quite an ingenuous blush in her cheeks as she said it, "it isn't half so nice, Mr. Burnett, as a picnic in Zoar."

"So you remember that?" Philip had not command of himself enough not to attempt the sentimental.

"You must think I have a weak memory," she replied, with a laugh. "And the story? When shall we have it?"

"Soon, I hope. And, Miss Mavick, I owe so much of it to you that I hope you will let me send you the very first copy from the press."

"Will you? And do you Of course I shall be pleased and" (making him a little curtsy) "honored, as one ought to say in this company."

Lord Montague was evidently getting uneasy, for his attention was distracted from the occupation of feeding.

"No, don't go Lord Montague, an old friend, Mr. Burnett."

"Much pleased," said his lordship, looking round rather inquiringly at the intruder. "I can't say much for the champagne−−ah, not bad, you know−−but I always said that your terrapin isn't half so nasty as it looks." And his lordship laughed most good−humoredly, as if he were paying the American nation a deserved compliment.

"Yes," said Philip, "we have to depend upon France for the champagne, but the terrapin is native."

"Quite so, and devilish good! That ain't bad, 'depend upon France for the champagne!' There is nothing like your American humor, Miss Mavick."

"It needs an Englishman to appreciate it," replied Evelyn, with a twinkle in her eyes which was lost upon her guest.

In the midst of these courtesies Philip bowed himself away. The party was over for him, though he wandered about for a while, was attracted again by the music to the ballroom, and did find there a dinner acquaintance with whom he took a turn. The lady must have thought him a very uninteresting or a very absent−minded companion.

As for Lord Montague, after he had what he called a "go" in the dancing− room, he found his way back to the buffet in the supper−room, and the historian says that he greatly enjoyed himself, and was very amusing, and that he cultivated the friendship of an obliging waiter early in the morning, who conducted his lordship to his cab.

XVII

The morning after The Puritan Nun was out, as Philip sat at his office desk, conscious that the eyes of the world were on him, Mr. Mavick entered, bowed to him absent−mindedly, and was shown into Mr. Hunt's room.

Philip had dreaded to come to the office that morning and encounter the inquisition and perhaps the compliments of his fellow−clerks. He had seen his name in staring capitals in the book−seller's window as he came down, and he felt that it was shamefully exposed to the public gaze, and that everybody had seen it. The clerks, however, gave no sign that the event had disturbed them. He had encountered many people he knew on the street, but there had been no recognition of his leap into notoriety. Not a fellow in the club, where he had stopped a moment, had treated him with any increased interest or deference. In the office only one person seemed aware of his extraordinary good fortune. Mr. Tweedle had come to the desk and offered his hand in his usual conciliatory and unctuous manner.

"I see by the paper, Mr. Burnett, that we are an author. Let me congratulate you. Mrs. Tweedle told me not to come home without bringing your story. Who publishes it?"

"I shall be much honored," said Philip, blushing, "if Mrs. Tweedle will accept a copy from me."

"I didn't mean that, Mr. Burnett; but, of course, gift of the author−− Mrs. Tweedle will be very much pleased."

In half an hour Mr. Mavick came out, passed him without recognition, and hurried from the office, and Philip was summoned to Mr. Hunt's room.

"I want you to go to Washington immediately, Mr. Burnett. Return by the night train. You can do without your grip? Take these papers to Buckston Higgins−−you see the address−−who represents the British Argentine syndicate. Wait till he reads them and get his reply. Here is the money for the trip. Oh, after Mr. Higgins writes his answer, ask him if you can telegraph me 'yes' or 'no.' Good−morning."

While Philip was speeding to Washington, an important conference was taking place in Murad Ault's office. He was seated at his desk, and before him lay two despatches, one from Chicago and a cable from London. Opposite him, leaning forward in his chair, was a lean, hatchet−faced man, with keen eyes and aquiline nose, who watched his old curbstone confidant like a cat.

"I tell you, Wheatstone," said Mr. Ault, with an unmoved face, bringing his fist down on the table, "now is the time to sell these three stocks."

"Why," said Mr. Wheatstone, with a look of wonder, "they are about the strongest on the list. Mavick controls them."

"Does he?" said Ault. "Then he can take care of them."

"Have you any news, Mr. Ault?"

"Nothing to speak of," replied Ault, grimly. "It just looks so to me. All you've got to do is to sell. Make a break this afternoon, about two or three points off."

"They are too strong," protested Mr. Wheatstone.

"That is just the reason. Everybody will think something must be the matter, or nobody would be fool enough to sell. You keep your eye on the Spectrum this afternoon and tomorrow morning. About Organization and one or two other matters."

"Ah, they do say that Mavick is in Argentine up to his neck," said the broker, beginning to be enlightened.

"Is he? Then you think he would rather sell than buy?"

Mr. Wheatstone laughed and looked admiringly at his leader. "He may have to."

Mr. Ault took up the cable cipher and read it to himself again. If Mr. Hunt had known its contents he need not have waited for Philip to telegraph "no" from Washington.

"It's all right, Wheatstone. It's the biggest thing you ever struck. Pitch 'em overboard in the morning. The Street is shaky about Argentine. There'll be h−−− to pay before half past twelve. I guess you can safely go ten points. Lower yet, if Mavick's brokers begin to unload. I guess he will have to unless he can borrow. Rumor is a big thing, especially in a panic, eh? Keep your eye peeled. And, oh, won't you ask Babcock to step round here?"

Mr. Babcock came round, and had his instructions when to buy. He had the reputation of being a reckless broker, and not a safe man to follow.

The panic next day, both in London and New York, was long remembered. In the unreasoning scare the best stocks were sacrificed. Small country "investors" lost their stakes. Some operators were ruined. Many men were poorer at the end of the scrimmage, and a few were richer. Murad Ault was one of the latter. Mavick pulled through, though at an enormous cost, and with some diminution of the notion of his solidity. The wise ones suspected that his resources had been overestimated, or that they were not so well at his command as had been supposed.

When he went home that night he looked five years older, and was too worn and jaded to be civil to his family. The dinner passed mostly in silence. Carmen saw that something serious had happened. Lord Montague had called.

"Eh, what did he want?" said Mavick, surlily.

Carmen looked up surprised. "What does anybody after a reception call for?"

"The Lord only knows."

"He is the funniest little man," Evelyn ventured to say.

"That is no way, child, to speak of the son of a duke," said Mavick, relaxing a little.

Carmen did not like the tone in which this was said, but she prudently kept silent. And presently Evelyn continued:

"He asked for you, papa, and said he wanted to pay his respects."

"I am glad he wants to pay anything," was the ungracious answer. Still Evelyn was not to be put down.

"It was such a bright day in the Park. What were you doing all day, papa?"

"Why, my dear, I was engaged in Research; you will be pleased to know. Looking after those ten millions."

When the dinner was over, Carmen followed Mr. Mavick to his study.

"What is the matter, Tom?"

"Nothing uncommon. It's a beastly hole down there. The Board used to be made up of gentlemen. Now there are such fellows as Ault, a black− hearted scoundrel."

"But he has no influence. He is nothing socially," said Carmen.

"Neither is a wolf or a cyclone. But I don't care to talk about him. Don't you see, I don't want to be bothered?"

While these great events were taking place Philip was enjoying all the tremors and delights of expectation which attend callow authorship. He did not expect much, he said to himself, but deep down in his heart there was that sweet hope, which fortunately always attends young writers, that his would be an exceptional experience in the shoal of candidates for fame, and he was secretly preparing himself not to be surprised if he should "awake one morning and find himself famous."

The first response was from Celia. She wrote warm−heartedly. She wrote at length, analyzing the characters, recalling the striking scenes, and praising without stint the conception and the working out of the character of the heroine. She pointed out the little faults of construction and of language, and then minimized them in comparison with the noble motive and the unity and beauty of the whole. She told Philip that she was proud of him, and then insisted that, when his biography, life, and letters was published, it would appear, she hoped, that his dear friend had just a little to do with inspiring him. It was exactly the sort of letter an author likes to receive, critical, perfectly impartial, and with entire understanding of his purpose. All the author wants is to be understood.

The letter from Alice was quite of another sort, a little shy in speaking of the story, but full of affection. "Perhaps, dear Phil," she wrote, "I ought not to tell you how much I like it, how it quite makes me blush in its revelation of the secrets of a New England girl's heart. I read it through fast, and then I read it again slowly. It seemed better even the second time. I do think, Phil, it is a dear little book. Patience says she hopes it will not become common; it is too fine to be nosed about by the ordinary. I suppose you had to make it pathetic. Dear me! that is just the truth of it. Forgive me for writing so freely. I hope it will not be long before we see you. To think it is done by little Phil!"

The most eagerly expected acknowledgment was, however, a disappointment. Philip knew Mrs. Mavick too well by this time to expect a letter from her daughter, but there might have been a line. But Mrs. Mavick wrote herself. Her daughter, she said, had asked her to acknowledge the receipt of his very charming story. When he had so many friends it was very thoughtful in him to remember the acquaintances of last summer. She hoped the book would have the success it deserved.

This polite note was felt to be a slap in the face, but the effect of it was softened a little later by a cordial and appreciative letter from Miss McDonald, telling the author what great delight and satisfaction they had had in reading it, and thanking him for a prose idyl that showed in the old−fashioned way that common life was not necessarily vulgar.

The critics seemed to Philip very slow in letting the public know of the birth of the book. Presently, however, the little notices, all very much alike, began to drop along, longer or shorter paragraphs, commonly in undiscriminating praise of the beauty of the story, the majority of them evidently written by reviewers who sat down to a pile of volumes to be turned off, and who had not more than five or ten minutes to be lost. Rarely, however, did any one condemn it, and that showed that it was harmless. Mr. Brad had given it quite a lift in the Spectrum. The notice was mainly personal−−the first work of a brilliant young man at the bar who was destined to go high in his profession, unless literature should, fortunately for the public, have stronger attractions for him. That such a country idyl should be born amid law−books was sufficiently remarkable. It was an open secret that the scene of the story was the birthplace of the author−−a lovely village that was brought into notice a summer ago as the chosen residence of Thomas Mavick and his family.

Eagerly looked for at first, the newspaper notices soon palled upon Philip, the uniform tone of good−natured praise, unanimous in the extravagance of unmeaning adjectives. Now and then he welcomed one that was ill−natured and cruelly censorious. That was a relief. And yet there were some reviews of a different sort, half a dozen in all, and half of them from Western journals, which took the book seriously, saw its pathos, its artistic merit, its failure of construction through inexperience. A few commended it warmly to readers who loved ideal purity and could recognize the noble in common life. And some, whom Philip regarded as authorities, welcomed a writer who avoided sensationalism, and predicted for him an honorable career in letters, if he did not become self−conscious and remained true to his ideals. The book clearly had not made a hit, the publishers had sold one edition and ordered half another, and no longer regarded the author as a risk. But, better than this, the book had attracted the attention of many lovers of literature. Philip was surprised day after day by meeting people who had read it. His name began to be known in a small circle who are interested in the business, and it was not long before he had offers from editors, who were always on the lookout for new writers of promise, to send something for their magazines. And, perhaps more flattering than all, he began to have society invitations to dine, and

professional invitations to those little breakfasts that publishers give to old writers and to young whose names are beginning to be spoken of. All this was very exhilarating and encouraging. And yet Philip was not allowed to be unduly elated by the attention of his fellow−craftsmen, for he soon found that a man's consequence in this circle, as well as with the great public, depended largely upon the amount of the sale of his book. How else should it be rated, when a very popular author, by whom Philip sat one day at luncheon, confessed that he never read books?

"So," said Mr. Sharp, one morning, "I see you have gone into literature, Mr. Burnett."

"Not very deep," replied Philip with a smile, as he rose from his desk.

"Going to drop law, eh?"

"I haven't had occasion to drop much of anything yet," said Philip, still smiling.

"Oh well, two masters, you know," and Mr. Sharp passed on to his room.

It was not, however, Mr. Sharp's opinion that Philip was concerned about. The polite note from Mrs. Mavick stuck in his mind. It was a civil way of telling him that all summer debts were now paid, and that his relations with the house of Mavick were at an end. This conclusion was forced upon him when he left his card, a few days after the reception, and had the ill luck not to find the ladies at home. The situation had no element of tragedy in it, but Philip was powerless. He could not storm the house. He had no visible grievance. There was nothing to fight. He had simply run against one of the invisible social barriers that neither offer resistance nor yield. No one had shown him any discourtesy that society would recognize as a matter of offense. Nay, more than that, it could have no sympathy with him. It was only the case of a presumptuous and poor young man who was after a rich girl. The position itself was ignoble, if it were disclosed.

Yet fortune, which sometimes likes to play the mischief with the best social arrangements, did give Philip an unlooked−for chance. At a dinner given by the lady who had been Philip's only partner at the Mavick reception, and who had read his story and had written to "her partner" a most kind little note regretting that she had not known she was dancing with an author, and saying that she and her husband would be delighted to make his acquaintance, Philip was surprised by the presence of the Mavicks in the drawing−room. Neither Mr. nor Mrs. Mavick seemed especially pleased when they encountered him, and in fact his sole welcome from the family was in the eyes of Evelyn.

The hostess had supposed that the Mavicks would be pleased to meet the rising author, and in still further carrying out her benevolent purpose, and with, no doubt, a sympathy in the feelings of the young, Mrs. Van Cortlandt had assigned Miss Mavick to Mr. Burnett. It was certainly a natural arrangement, and yet it called a blank look to Mrs. Mavick's face, that Philip saw, and put her in a bad humor which needed an effort for her to conceal it from Mr. Van Cortlandt. The dinner−party was large, and her ill−temper was not assuaged by the fact that the young people were seated at a distance from her and on the same side of the table.

"How charming your daughter is looking, Mrs. Mavick!" Mr. Van Cortlandt began, by way of being agreeable. Mrs. Mavick inclined her head. "That young Burnett seems to be a nice sort of chap; Mrs. Van Cortlandt says he is very clever."

"Yes?"

"I haven't read his book. They say he is a lawyer."

"Lawyer's clerk, I believe," said Mrs. Mavick, indifferently.

"Authors are pretty plenty nowadays."

"That's a fact. Everybody writes. I don't see how all the poor devils live." Mr. Van Cortlandt had now caught the proper tone, and the conversation drifted away from personalities.

It was a very brilliant dinner, but Philip could not have given much account of it. He made an effort to be civil to his left−hand neighbor, and he affected an ease in replying to cross−table remarks. He fancied that he carried himself very well, and so he did for a man unexpectedly elevated to the seventh heaven, seated for two hours beside the girl whose near presence filled him with indescribable happiness. Every look, every tone of her voice thrilled him. How dear she was! how adorable she was! How radiantly happy she seemed to be whenever she turned her face towards him to ask a question or to make a reply!

At moments his passion seemed so overmastering that he could hardly restrain himself from whispering, "Evelyn, I love you." In a hundred ways he was telling her so. And she must understand. She must know that this was not an affair of the moment, but that there was condensed in it all the constant devotion of months and months.

A woman, even any girl with the least social experience, would have seen this. Was Evelyn's sympathetic attention, her evident enjoyment in talking with him, any evidence of a personal interest, or only a young girl's enjoyment of her new position in the world? That she liked him he was sure. Did she, was she beginning in any degree to return his passion? He could not tell, for guilelessness in a woman is as impenetrable as coquetry.

Of what did they talk? A stenographer would have made a meagre report of it, for the most significant part of this conversation of two fresh, honest natures was not in words. One thing, however, Philip could bring away with him that was not a mere haze of delicious impressions. She had been longing, she said, to talk to him about his story. She told him how eagerly she had read it, and in talking about its meaning she revealed to him her inner thought more completely than she could have done in any other way, her sympathy with his mind, her interest in his work.

"Have you begun another?" she asked, at last.

"No, not on paper."

"But you must. It must be such a world to you. I can't imagine anything so fine as that. There is so much about life to be said. To make people see it as it is; yes, and as it ought to be. Will you?"

"You forget that I am a lawyer."

"And you prefer to be that, a lawyer, rather than an author?"

"It is not exactly what I prefer, Miss Mavick."

"Why not? Does anybody do anything well if his heart is not in it?"

"But circumstances sometimes compel a man."

"I like better for men to compel circumstances," the girl exclaimed, with that disposition to look at things in the abstract that Philip so well remembered.

"Perhaps I do not make myself understood. One must have a career."

"A career?" And Evelyn looked puzzled for a moment. "You mean for himself, for his own self?" There is a lawyer who comes to see papa. I've been in the room sometimes, when they don't mind. Such talk about schemes, and how to do this and that, and twisting about. And not a word about anything any of the time. And one day when he was waiting for papa I talked with him. You would have been surprised.

I told papa that I could not find anything to interest him. Papa laughed and said it was my fault, he was one of the sharpest lawyers in the city. Would you rather be that than to write?"

"Oh, all lawyers are not like that. And, don't you know, literature doesn't pay."

"Yes, I have heard that." And then she thought a minute and with a quizzical look continued: "That is such a queer word, 'pay.' McDonald says that it pays to be good. Do you think, Mr. Burnett, that law would pay you?"

Evidently the girl had a standard of judging people that was not much in use.

Before they rose from the table, Philip asked, speaking low, "Miss Mavick, won't you give me a violet from your bunch in memory of this evening?"

Evelyn hesitated an instant, and then, without looking up, disengaged three, and shyly laid them at her left hand. "I like the number three better."

Philip covered the flowers with his hand, and said, "I will keep them always."

"That is a long time," Evelyn answered, but still without looking up. But when they rose the color mounted to her cheeks, and Philip thought that the glorious eyes turned upon him were full of trust.

"It is all your doing," said Carmen, snappishly, when Mavick joined her in the drawing−room.

"What is?"

"You insisted upon having him at the reception."

"Burnett? Oh, stuff, he isn't a fool!"

There was not much said as the three drove home. Evelyn, flushed with pleasure and absorbed in her own thoughts, saw that something had gone wrong with her mother and kept silent. Mr. Mavick at length broke the silence with:

"Did you have a good time, child?"

"Oh, yes," replied Evelyn, cheerfully, "and Mrs. Van Cortlandt was very sweet to me. Don't you think she is very hospitable, mamma?"

"Tries to be," Mrs. Mavick replied, in no cordial tone. "Good−natured and eccentric. She picks up the queerest lot of people. You can never know whom you will not meet at her house. Just now she goes in for being literary."

Evelyn was not so reticent with McDonald. While she was undressing she disclosed that she had had a beautiful evening, that she was taken out by Mr. Burnett, and talked about his story.

"And, do you know, I think I almost persuaded him to write another."

"It's an awful responsibility," dryly said the shrewd Scotch woman, "advising young men what to do."

XVIII

Upon the recollection of this dinner Philip maintained his hope and courage for a long time. The day after it, New York seemed more brilliant to him than it had ever been. In the afternoon he rode down to the Battery. It was a mild winter day, with a haze in the atmosphere that softened all outlines and gave an enchanting appearance to the harbor shores. The water was silvery, and he watched a long time the craft plying on it−−the businesslike ferry−boats, the spiteful tugs, the great ocean steamers, boldly pushing out upon the Atlantic through the Narrows or cautiously drawing in as if weary with the buffeting of the waves. The scene kindled in him a vigorous sense of life, of prosperity, of longing for the activity of the great world.

Clearly he must do something and not be moping in indecision. Uncertainty is harder to bear than disaster itself. When he thought of Evelyn, and he always thought of her, it seemed cowardly to hesitate. Celia, after her first outburst of enthusiasm, had returned to her cautious advice. The law was much surer. Literature was a mere chance. Why not be content with his little success and buckle down to his profession? Perhaps by−and−by he would have leisure to indulge his inclination. The advice seemed sound.

But there was Evelyn, with her innocent question.

"Would the law pay you?" Evelyn? Would he be more likely to win her by obeying the advice of Celia, or by trusting to Evelyn's inexperienced discernment? Indeed, what chance was there to win her at all? What had he to offer her?

His spirits invariably fell when he thought of submitting his pretensions to the great man of Wall Street or to his worldly wife. Already it was the gossip of the clubs that Lord Montague was a frequent visitor at the Mavicks', that he was often seen in their box at the opera, and that Mrs. Mavick had said to Bob Shafter that it was a scandal to talk of Lord Montague as a fortune−hunter. He was a most kind−hearted, domestic man. She should not join in the newspaper talk about him. He belonged to an old English family, and she should be civil to him. Generally she did not fancy Englishmen, and this one she liked neither better nor worse because he had a title. And when you came to that, why shouldn't any American girl marry her equal?

As to Montague, he was her friend, and she knew that he had not the least intention at present of marrying anybody. And then the uncharitable gossip went on, that there was the Count de l'Auney, and that Mrs. Mavick was playing the one off against the other.

As the days went on and spring began to appear in the light, fleeting clouds in the blue sky and in the greening foliage in the city squares, Philip became more and more restless. The situation was intolerable. Evelyn he could never see. Perhaps she wondered that he made no effort to see her. Perhaps she never thought of him at all, and simply, like an obedient child, accepted her mother's leading, and was getting to like that society life which was recorded in the daily journals. What did it matter to him whether he stuck to the law or launched himself into the Bohemia of literature, so long as doubt about Evelyn haunted him day and night? If she was indifferent to him, he would know the worst, and go about his business like a man. Who were the Mavicks, anyway?

Alice had written him once that Evelyn was a dear girl, no one could help loving her; but she did not like the blood of father and mother. "And remember, Phil−−you must let me say this−−there is not a drop of mean blood in your ancestors."

Philip smiled at this. He was not in love with Mrs. Mavick nor with her husband. They were for him simply guardians of a treasure he very much coveted, and yet they were to a certain extent ennobled in his mind as the authors of the being he worshiped. If it should be true that his love for her was returned, it would not be possible

even for them to insist upon a course that would make their daughter unhappy for life. They might reject him−−no doubt he was a wholly unequal match for the heiress−−but could they, to the very end, be cruel to her?

Thus the ingenuous young man argued with himself, until it seemed plain to him that if Evelyn loved him, and the conviction grew that she did, all obstacles must give way to this overmastering passion of his life. If he were living in a fool's paradise he would know it, and he ventured to put his fortune to the test of experiment. The only manly course was to gain the consent of the parents to ask their daughter to marry him; if not that, then to be permitted to see her. He was nobly resolved to pledge himself to make no proposals to her without their approval.

This seemed a very easy thing to do until he attempted it. He would simply happen into Mr. Mavick's office, and, as Mr. Mavick frequently talked familiarly with him, he would contrive to lead the conversation to Evelyn, and make his confession. He mapped out the whole conversation, and even to the manner in which he would represent his own prospects and ambitions and his hopes of happiness. Of course Mr. Mavick would evade, and say that it would be a long time before they should think of disposing of their daughter's hand, and that−−well, he must see himself that he was in no position to support a wife accustomed to luxury; in short, that one could not create situations in real life as he could in novels, that personally he could give him no encouragement, but that he would consult his wife.

This dream got no further than a private rehearsal. When he called at Mr. Mavick's office he learned that Mr. Mavick had gone to the Pacific coast, and that he would probably be absent several weeks. But Philip could not wait. He resolved to end his torture by a bold stroke. He wrote to Mrs. Mavick, saying that he had called at Mr. Mavick's office, and, not finding him at home, he begged that she would give him an interview concerning a matter of the deepest personal interest to himself.

Mrs. Mavick understood in an instant what this meant. She had feared it. Her first impulse was to write him a curt note of a character that would end at once all intercourse. On second thought she determined to see him, to discover how far the affair had gone, and to have it out with him once for all. She accordingly wrote that she would have a few minutes at half past five the next day.

As Philip went up the steps of the Mavick house at the appointed hour, he met coming out of the door−−and it seemed a bad omen−−Lord Montague, who seemed in high spirits, stared at Philip without recognition, whistled for his cab, and drove away.

Mrs. Mavick received him politely, and, without offering her hand, asked him to be seated. Philip was horribly embarrassed. The woman was so cool, so civil, so perfectly indifferent. He stammered out something about the weather and the coming spring, and made an allusion to the dinner at Mrs. Van Cortlandt's. Mrs. Mavick was not in the mood to help him with any general conversation, and presently said, looking at her watch:

"You wrote me that you wanted to consult me. Is there anything I can do for you?"

"It was a personal matter," said Philip, getting control of himself.

"So you wrote. Mr. Mavick is away, and if it is in regard to anything in your office, any promotion, you know, I don't understand anything about business." And Mrs. Mavick smiled graciously.

"No, it is not about the office. I should not think of troubling my friends in that way. It is just that−−"

"Oh, I see," Mrs. Mavick interrupted, with good−humor, "it's about the novel. I hear that it has sold very well. And you are not certain whether its success will warrant your giving up your clerkship. Now as for me," and she leaned back in her chair, with the air of weighing the chances in her mind, "it doesn't seem to me that a writer−−"

"No, it is not that," said Philip, leaning forward and looking her full in the face with all the courage he could summon, "it is your daughter."

"What!" cried Mrs. Mavick, in a tone of incredulous surprise.

"I was afraid you would think me very presumptuous."

"Presumptuous! Why, she is a child. Do you know what you are talking about?"

"My mother married at eighteen," said Philip, gently.

"That is an interesting piece of information, but I don't see its bearing. Will you tell me, Mr. Burnett, what nonsense you have got into your head?"

"I want," and Philip spoke very gently−−"I want, Mrs. Mavick, permission to see your daughter."

"Ah! I thought in Rivervale, Mr. Burnett, that you were a gentleman. You presume upon my invitation to this house, in an underhand way, to−− What right have you?"

Mrs. Mavick was so beside herself that she could hardly speak. The lines in her face deepened into wrinkles and scowls. There was something malevolent and mean in it. Philip was astonished at the transformation. And she looked old and ugly in her passion.

"You!" she repeated.

"It is only this, Mrs. Mavick," and Philip spoke calmly, though his blood was boiling at her insulting manner−−"it is only this−−I love your daughter."

"And you have told her this?"

"No, never, never a word."

"Does she know anything of this absurd, this silly attempt?"

"I am afraid not."

"Ah! Then you have spared yourself one humiliation. My daughter's affections are not likely to be placed where her parents do not approve. Her mother is her only confidante. I can tell you, Mr. Burnett, and when you are over this delusion you will thank me for being so plain with you, my daughter would laugh at the idea of such a proposal. But I will not have her annoyed by impecunious aspirants."

"Madam!" cried Philip, rising, with a flushed face, and then he remembered that he was talking to Evelyn's mother, and uttered no other word.

"This is ended." And then, with a slight change of manner, she went on: "You must see how impossible it is. You are a man of honor.

I should like to think well of you. I shall trust to your honor that you will never try, by letter or otherwise, to hold any communication with her."

"I shall obey you," said Philip, quite stiffly, "because you are her mother. But I love her, and I shall always love her."

Mrs. Mavick did not condescend to any reply to this, but she made a cold bow of dismissal and turned away from him. He left the house and walked away, scarcely knowing in which direction he went, anger for a time being uppermost in his mind, chagrin and defeat following, and with it the confused feeling of a man who has passed through a cyclone and been landed somewhere amid the scattered remnants of his possessions.

As he strode away he was intensely humiliated. He had been treated like an inferior. He had voluntarily put himself in a position to be insulted. Contempt had been poured upon him, his feelings had been outraged, and there was no way in which he could show his resentment. Presently, as his anger subsided, he began to look at the matter more sanely. What had happened? He had made an honorable proposal. But what right had he to expect that it would be favorably considered? He knew all along that it was most unlikely that Mrs. Mavick would entertain for a moment idea of such a match. He knew what would be the unanimous opinion of society about it. In the case of any other young man aspiring to the hand of a rich girl, he knew very well what he should have thought.

Well, he had done nothing dishonorable. And as he reviewed the bitter interview he began to console himself with the thought that he had not lost his temper, that he had said nothing to be regretted, nothing that he should not have said to the mother of the girl he loved. There was an inner comfort in this, even if his life were ruined.

Mrs. Mavick, on the contrary, had not so good reason to be satisfied with herself. It was a principle of her well−ordered life never to get into a passion, never to let herself go, never to reveal herself by intemperate speech, never to any one, except occasionally to her husband when his cold sarcasm became intolerable. She felt, as soon as the door closed on Philip, that she had made a blunder, and yet in her irritation she committed a worse one. She went at once to Evelyn's room, resolved to make it perfectly sure that the Philip episode was ended. She had had suspicions about her daughter ever since the Van Cortlandt dinner. She would find out if they were justified, and she would act decidedly before any further mischief was done. Evelyn was alone, and her mother kissed her fondly several times and then threw herself into an easy−chair and declared she was tired.

"My dear, I have had such an unpleasant interview."

"I am sorry," said Evelyn, seating herself on the arm of the chair and putting her arm round her mother's neck. "With whom, mamma?"

"Oh, with that Mr. Burnett." Mrs. Mavick felt a nervous start in the arm that caressed her.

"Here?"

"Yes, he came to see your father, I fancy, about some business. I think he is not getting on very well."

"Why, his book−−"

"I know, but that amounts to nothing. There is not much chance for a lawyer's clerk who gets bitten with the idea that he can write."

"If he was in trouble, mamma," said Evelyn, softly, "then you were good to him."

"I tried to be," Mrs. Mavick half sighed, "but you can't do anything with such people" (by "such people" Mrs. Mavick meant those who have no money) "when they don't get on. They are never reasonable. And he was in such an awful bad temper. You cannot show any kindness to such people without exposing yourself. I think he

presumes upon his acquaintance with your father. It was most disagreeable, and he was so rude" (a little thrill in the arm again)−−"well, not exactly rude, but he was not a bit nice to me, and I am afraid I showed by my looks that I was irritated. He was just as disagreeable as he could be.

He met Lord Montague on the steps, and he had something spiteful to say about him. I had to tell him he was presuming a good deal on his acquaintance, and that I considered his manner insulting. He flung out of the house very high and mighty."

"That was not a bit like him, mamma."

"We didn't know him. That is all. Now we do, and I am thankful we do. He will never come here again."

Evelyn was very still for a moment, and then she said: "I'm very sorry for it all. It must be some misunderstanding."

"Of course, it is dreadful to be so disappointed in people. But we have to learn. I don't know anything about his misunderstanding, but I did not misunderstand what he said. At any rate, after such an exposition we can have no further intercourse with him. You will not care to see any one who treated your mother in this way? If you love me, you cannot be friendly with him. I know you would not like to be."

Evelyn did not reply for a moment. Her silence revealed the fact to the shrewd woman that she had not intervened a day too soon.

"You promise me, dear, that you will put the whole thing out of your mind?" and she drew her daughter closer to her and kissed her.

And then Evelyn said slowly: "I shall not have any friends whom you do not approve, but, mamma, I cannot be unjust in my mind."

And Mrs. Mavick had the good sense not to press the question further. She still regarded Evelyn as a child. Her naivete, her simplicity, her ignorance of social conventions and of the worldly wisdom which to Mrs. Mavick was the sum of all knowledge misled her mother as to her power of discernment and her strength of character. Indeed, Mrs. Mavick had only the slightest conception of that range of thought and feeling in which the girl habitually lived, and of the training which at the age of eighteen had given her discipline, and great maturity of judgment as well. She would be obedient, but she was incapable of duplicity, and therefore she had said as plainly as possible that whatever the trouble might be she would not be unjust to Philip.

The interview with her mother left her in a very distressed state of mind. It is a horrible disillusion when a girl begins to suspect that her mother is not sincere, and that her ideals of life are mean. This knowledge may exist with the deepest affection−−indeed, in a noble mind, with an inward tenderness and an almost divine pity. How many times have we seen a daughter loyal to a frivolous, worldly−minded, insincere mother, shielding her and exhibiting to the censorious world the utmost love and trust!

Evelyn was far from suspecting the extent of her mother's duplicity, but her heart told her that an attempt had been made to mislead her, and that there must be some explanation of Philip's conduct that would be consistent with her knowledge of his character. And, as she endeavored to pierce this mystery, it dawned upon her that there had been a method in throwing her so much into the society of Lord Montague, and that it was unnatural that such a friend as Philip should be seen so seldom−−only twice since the days in Rivervale. Naturally the very reverse of suspicious, she had been dreaming on things to come in the seclusion of her awakening womanhood, without the least notion that the freedom of her own soul was to be interfered with by any merely worldly demands. But now things that had occurred, and that her mother had said, came back to her with a new meaning, and her trustful

spirit was overwhelmed. And there, in the silence of her chamber, began the fierce struggle between desire and what she called her duty−−a duty imposed from without.

She began to perceive that she was not free, that she was a part of a social machine, the power of which she had not at all apprehended, and that she was powerless in its clutch. She might resist, but peace was gone. She had heretofore found peace in obedience, but when she consulted her own heart she knew that she could not find peace in obedience now. To a girl differently reared, perhaps, subterfuge, or some manoeuvring justified by the situation, might have been resorted to. But such a thing never occurred to Evelyn. Everything looked dark before her, as she more clearly understood her mother's attitude, and for the first time in years she could do nothing but give way to emotions.

"Why, Evelyn, you have been crying!" exclaimed the governess, who came to seek her. "What is the matter?"

Evelyn arose and threw herself on her friend's neck for a moment, and then, brushing away the tears, said, with an attempt to smile, "Oh, nothing; I got thinking, thinking, thinking, and Don't you ever get blue, McDonald?"

"Not often," said the Scotchwoman, gravely. "But, dear, you have nothing in the world to make you so."

"No, no, nothing;" and then she broke down again, and threw herself upon McDonald's bosom in a passion of sobbing. "I can't help it. Mamma says Phil−−Mr. Burnett−−is never to come to this house again. What have I done? And he will think−−he will think that I hate him."

McDonald drew the girl into her lap, and with uncommon gentleness comforted her with caresses.

"Dear child," she said, "crosses must come into our lives; we cannot help that. Your mother is no doubt doing what she thinks best for your own happiness. Nothing can really hurt us for long, you know that well, except what we do to ourselves. I never told you why I came to this country−−I didn't want to sadden you with my troubles−−but now I want you to understand me better. It is a long story."

But it was not very long in the telling, for the narrator found that what seemed to her so long in the suffering could be conveyed to another in only a few words. And the story was not in any of its features new, except to the auditor. There had been a long attachment, passionate love and perfect trust, long engagement, marriage postponed because both were poor, and the lover struggling into his profession, and then, it seemed sudden and unaccountable, his marriage with some one else. "It was not like him," said the governess in conclusion; "it was his ambition to get on that blinded him."

"And he, was he happy?" asked Evelyn.

"I heard that he was not" (and she spoke reluctantly); "I fear not. How could he be?" And the governess seemed overwhelmed in a flood of tender and painful memories. "That was over twenty years ago. And I have been happy, my darling, I have had such a happy life with you.

I never dreamed I could have such a blessing. And you, child, will be happy too; I know it."

And the two women, locked in each other's arms, found that consolation in sympathy which steals away half the grief of the world. Ah! who knows a woman's heart?

For Philip there was in these days no such consolation. It was a man's way not to seek any, to roll himself up in his trouble like a hibernating bear. And yet there were times when he had an intolerable longing for a confidant, for some one to whom he could relieve himself of part of his burden by talking. To Celia he could say nothing. Instinct told him that he should not go to her. Of the sympathy of Alice he was sure, but why inflict his selfish

grief on her tender heart? But he was writing to her often, he was talking to her freely about his perplexities, about leaving the office and trusting himself to the pursuit of literature in some way. And, in answer to direct questions, he told her that he had seen Evelyn only a few times, and, the fact was, that Mrs. Mavick had cut him dead. He could not give to his correspondent a very humorous turn to this situation, for Alice knew−−had she not seen them often together, and did she not know the depths of Philip's passion? And she read between the lines the real state of the case. Alice was indignant, but she did not think it wise to make too much of the incident. Of Evelyn she wrote affectionately−−she knew she was a noble and high−minded girl. As to her mother, she dismissed her with a country estimate. "You know, Phil, that I never thought she was a lady."

But the lover was not to be wholly without comfort. He met by chance one day on the Avenue Miss McDonald, and her greeting was so cordial that he knew that he had at least one friend in the house of Mavick.

It was a warm spring day, a stray day sent in advance, as it were, to warn the nomads of the city that it was time to move on. The tramps in Washington Square felt the genial impulse, and, seeking the shaded benches, began to dream of the open country, the hospitable farmhouses, the nooning by wayside springs, and the charm of wandering at will among a tolerant and not too watchful people. Having the same abundant leisure, the dwellers up−town−−also nomads−−were casting in their minds how best to employ it, and the fortunate ones were already gathering together their flocks and herds and preparing to move on to their camps at Newport or among the feeding−hills of the New−England coast.

The foliage of Central Park, already heavy, still preserved the freshness of its new birth, and invited the stroller on the Avenue to its protecting shade. At Miss McDonald's suggestion they turned in and found a secluded seat.

"I often come here," she said to Philip; "it is almost as peaceful as the wilderness itself."

To Philip also it seemed peaceful, but the soothing influence he found in it was that he was sitting with the woman who saw Evelyn hourly, who had been with her only an hour ago.

"Yes," she said, in reply to a question, "everybody is well. We are going to leave town earlier than usual this summer, as soon as Mr. Mavick returns. Mrs. Mavick is going to open her Newport house; she says she has had enough of the country. It is still very amusing to me to see how you Americans move about with the seasons, just like the barbarians of Turkestan, half the year in summer camps and half the year in winter camps."

"Perhaps," said Philip, "it is because the social pasturage gets poor."

"Maybe," replied the governess, continuing the conceit, "only the horde keeps pretty well together, wherever it is. I know we are to have a very gay season. Lots of distinguished foreigners and all that."

"But," said Philip, "don't England and the Continent long for the presence of Americans in the season in the same way?"

"Not exactly. It is the shop−keepers and hotels that sigh for the Americans. I don't think that American shop−keepers expect much of foreigners."

"And you are going soon? I suppose Miss Mavick is eager to go also," said Philip, trying to speak indifferently.

Miss McDonald turned towards him with a look of perfect understanding, and then replied, "No, not eager; she hasn't been in her usual spirits lately−−no, not ill−−and probably the change will be good for her. It is her first season, you know, and that is always exciting to a girl. Perhaps it is only the spring weather."

It was some moments before either of them spoke again, and then Miss McDonald looked up−− "Oh, Mr. Burnett, I have wanted to see you and have a talk with you about your novel. I could say so little in my note. We read it first together and then I read it alone, rather to sit in judgment on it, you know. I liked it better the second time, but I could see the faults of construction, and I could see, too, why it will be more popular with a few people than with the general public. You don't mind my saying−−"

"Go on, the words of a friend."

"Yes, I know, are sometimes hardest to bear. Well, it is lovely, ideal, but it seems to me you are still a little too afraid of human nature. You are afraid to say things that are common. And the deep things of life are pretty much all common. No, don't interrupt me. I love the story just as it is. I am glad you wrote it as you did. It was natural, in your state of experience, that you should do it. But in your next, having got rid of what was on top of your mind, so to speak, you will take a firmer, more confident hold of life. You are not offended?"

"No, indeed," cried Philip. "I am very grateful. No doubt you are right. It seems to me, now that I am detached from it, as if it were only a sort of prelude to something else."

"Well, you must not let my single opinion influence you too much, for I must in honesty tell you another thing. Evelyn will not have a word of criticism of it. She says it is like a piece of music, and the impudent thing declares that she does not expect a Scotchwoman to understand anything but ballad music."

Philip laughed at this, such a laugh as he had not indulged in for many days. "I hope you don't quarrel about such a little thing."

"Not seriously. She says I may pick away at the story−−and I like to see her bristle up−−but that she looks at the spirit."

"God bless her," said Philip under his breath.

Miss McDonald rose, and they walked out into the Avenue again. How delightful was the genial air, the light, the blue sky of spring! How the brilliant Avenue, now filling up with afternoon equipages, sparkled in the sunshine!

When they parted, Miss McDonald gave him her hand and held his a moment, looking into his eyes. "Mr. Burnett, authors need some encouragement. When I left Evelyn she was going to her room with your book in her hand."

XIX

Why should not Philip trust the future? He was a free man. He had given no hostages to fortune. Even if he did not succeed, no one else would be involved in his failure. Why not follow his inclination, the dream of his boyhood?

He was at liberty to choose for himself. Everybody in America is; this is the proclamation of its blessed independence. Are we any better off for the privilege of following first one inclination and then another, which is called making a choice? Are they not as well off, and on the whole as likely to find their right place, who inherit their callings in life, whose careers are mapped out from the cradle by circumstance and convention? How much time do we waste in futile experiment? Freedom to try everything, which is before the young man, is commonly freedom to excel in nothing.

There are, of course, exceptions. The blacksmith climbs into a city pulpit. The popular preacher becomes an excellent insurance agent. The saloon−keeper develops into the legislator, and wears the broadcloth and high hat of the politician. The brakeman becomes the railway magnate, and the college graduate a grocer's clerk, and the

messenger−boy, picking up by chance one day the pen, and finding it run easier than his legs, becomes a power on a city journal, and advises society how to conduct itself and the government how to make war and peace. All this adds to the excitement and interest of life. On the whole, we say that people get shaken into their right places, and the predetermined vocation is often a mistake. There is the anecdote of a well−known clergyman who, being in a company with his father, an aged and distinguished doctor of divinity, raised his monitory finger and exclaimed, "Ah, you spoiled a first−rate carpenter when you made a poor minister of me."

Philip thought he was calmly arguing the matter with himself. How often do we deliberately weigh such a choice as we would that of another person, testing our inclination by solid reason? Perhaps no one could have told Philip what he ought to do, but every one who knew him, and the circumstances, knew what he would do. He was, in fact, already doing it while he was paltering with his ostensible profession. But he never would have confessed, probably he would then have been ashamed to confess, how much his decision to break with the pretense of law was influenced by the thought of what a certain dark little maiden, whose image was always in his mind, would wish him to do, and by the very remarkable fact that she was seen going to her room with his well−read story in her hand. Perhaps it was under her pillow at night!

Good−luck seemed to follow his decision−−as it often does when a man makes a questionable choice, as if the devil had taken an interest in his downward road to prosperity. But Philip really gained a permanent advantage. The novel had given him a limited reputation and very little money. Yet it was his stepping−stone, and when he applied to his publishers and told them of his decision, they gave him some work as a reader for the house. At first this was fitful and intermittent, but as he showed both literary discrimination and tact in judging of the market, his services were more in request, and slowly he acquired confidential relations with the house. Whatever he knew, his knowledge of languages and his experience abroad, came into play, and he began to have more confidence in himself, as he saw that his somewhat desultory education had, after all, a market value.

The rather long period of his struggle, which is a common struggle, and often disheartening, need not be dwelt on here. We can anticipate by saying that he obtained in the house a permanent and responsible situation, with an income sufficient for a bachelor without habits of self−indulgence. It was not the crowning of a noble ambition, it was not in the least the career he had dreamed of, but it gave him support and a recognized position, and, above all, did not divert him from such creative work as he was competent to do. Nay, he found very soon that the feeling of security, without any sordid worry, gave freedom to his imagination. There was something stimulating in the atmosphere of books and manuscripts and in that world of letters which seems so large to those who live in it. Fortunately, also, having a support, he was not tempted to debase his talent by sensational ventures. What he wrote for this or that magazine he wrote to please himself, and, although he saw no fortune that way, the little he received was an encouragement as well as an appreciable addition to his income.

There are two sorts of success in letters as in life generally. The one is achieved suddenly, by a dash, and it lasts as long as the author can keep the attention of the spectators upon his scintillating novelties. When the sparks fade there is darkness. How many such glittering spectacles this century has witnessed!

There is another sort of success which does not startlingly or at once declare itself. Sometimes it comes with little observation. The reputation is slowly built up, as by a patient process of nature. It is curious, as Philip wrote once in an essay, to see this unfolding in Lowell's life. There was no one moment when he launched into great popularity−−nay, in detail, he seemed to himself not to have made the strike that ambition is always expecting. But lo! the time came when, by universal public consent, which was in the nature of a surprise to him, he had a high and permanent place in the world of letters.

In anticipating Philip's career, however, it must not be understood that he had attained any wide public recognition. He was simply enrolled in the great army of readers and was serving his apprenticeship. He was recognized as a capable man by those who purvey in letters to the entertainment of the world. Even this little foothold was not easily gained in a day, as the historian discovered in reading some bundles of old letters which

Philip wrote in this time of his novitiate to Celia and to his cousin Alice.

It was against Celia's most strenuous advice that he had trusted himself to a literary career. "I see, my dear friend," she wrote, in reply to his announcement that he was going that day to Mr. Hunt to resign his position, "that you are not happy, but whatever your disappointment or disillusion, you will not better yourself by surrendering a regular occupation. You live too much in the imagination already."

Philip fancied, with that fatuity common to his sex, that he had worn an impenetrable mask in regard to his wild passion for Evelyn, and did not dream that, all along, Celia had read him like an open book. She judged Philip quite accurately. It was herself that she did not know, and she would have repelled as nonsense the suggestion that her own restlessness and her own changing experiments in occupation were due to the unsatisfied longings of a woman's heart.

"You must not think," the letter went on, "that I want to dictate, but I have noticed that men−−it may be different with women−−only succeed by taking one path and diligently walking in it. And literature is not a career, it is just a toss up, a lottery, and woe to you if you once draw a lucky number−−you will always be expecting another . . . You say that I am a pretty one to give advice, for I am always chopping and changing myself. Well, from the time you were a little boy, did I ever give you but one sort of advice? I have been constant in that. And as to myself, you are unjust. I have always had one distinct object in life, and that I have pursued. I wanted to find out about life, to have experience, and then do what I could do best, and what needed most to be done. Why did I not stick to teaching in that woman's college? Well, I began to have doubts, I began to experiment on my pupils. You will laugh, but I will give you a specimen. One day I put a question to my literature class, and I found out that not one of them knew how to boil potatoes. They were all getting an education, and hardly one of them knew how much the happiness of a home depends upon having the potatoes mealy and not soggy. It was so in everything. How are we going to live when we are all educated, without knowing how to live? Then I found that the masses here in New York did not know any better than the classes how to live. Don't think it is just a matter of cooking. It is knowing how, generally, to make the most of yourself and of your opportunities, and have a nice world to live in, a thrifty, self−helpful, disciplined world. Is education giving us this? And then we think that organization will do it, organization instead of self−development. We think we can organize life, as they are trying to organize art. They have organized art as they have the production of cotton.

"Did I tell you I was in that? No? I used to draw in school, and after I had worked in the Settlement here in New York, and while I was working down on the East Side, it came over me that maybe I had one talent wrapped in a napkin; and I have been taking lessons in Fifty−seventh Street with the thousand or two young women who do not know how to boil potatoes, but are pursuing the higher life of art. I did not tell you this because I knew you would say that I am just as inconsistent as you are. But I am not. I have demonstrated the fact that neither I nor one in a hundred of those charming devotees to art could ever earn a living by art, or do anything except to add to the mediocrity of the amazing art product of this free country.

"And you will ask, what now? I am going on in the same way. I am going to be a doctor. In college I was very well up in physiology and anatomy, and I went quite a way in biology. So you see I have a good start. I am going to attend lectures and go into a hospital, as soon as there is an opening, and then I mean to practice. One essential for a young doctor I have in advance. That is patients. I can get all I want on the East Side, and I have already studied many of them. Law and medicine are what I call real professions."

However Celia might undervalue the calling that Philip had now entered on, he had about this time evidence of the growing appreciation of literature by practical business men. He was surprised one day by a brief note from Murad Ault, asking him to call at his office as soon as convenient.

Mr. Ault received him in his private office at exactly the hour named. Evidently Mr. Ault's affairs were prospering. His establishment presented every appearance of a high−pressure business perfectly organized. The

outer rooms were full of industrious clerks, messengers were constantly entering and departing in a feverish rapidity, servants moved silently about, conducting visitors to this or that waiting−room and answering questions, excited speculators in groups were gesticulating and vociferating, and in the anteroom were impatient clients awaiting their turn. In the inner chamber, however, was perfect calm. There at his table sat the dark, impenetrable operator, whose time was exactly apportioned, serene, saturnine, or genial, as the case might be, listening attentively, speaking deliberately, despatching the affair in hand without haste or the waste of a moment.

Mr. Ault arose and shook hands cordially, and then went on, without delay for any conventional talk.

"I sent for you, Mr. Burnett, because I wanted your help, and because I thought I might do you a good turn. You see" (with a grim smile) "I have not forgotten Rivervale days. My wife has been reading your story. I don't have much time for such things myself, but her constant talk about it has given me an idea. I want to suggest to you the scene of a novel, one that would be bound to be a good seller.

I could guarantee a big circulation. I have just become interested in one of the great transcontinental lines." He named the most picturesque of them−−one that he, in fact, absolutely controlled. "Well, I want a story, yes, I guess a good love−story−−a romance of reality you might call it−−strung on that line. You take the idea?"

"Why," said Philip, half amused at the conceit and yet complimented by the recognition of his talent, "I don't know anything about railroads −−how they are run, cost of building, prospect of traffic, engineering difficulties, all that−−nothing whatever."

"So much the better. It is a literary work I want, not a brag about the road or a description of its enterprise. You just take the line as your scene. Let the story run on that. The company, don't you see, must not in any way be suspected with having anything to do with it, no mention of its name as a company, no advertisement of the road on a fly−leaf or cover. Just your own story, pure and simple."

"But," said Philip, more and more astonished at this unlooked−for expansion of the literary field, "I could not embark on an enterprise of such magnitude."

"Oh," said Mr. Ault, complacently, "that will be all arranged. Just a pleasure trip, as far as that goes. You will have a private car, well stocked, a photographer will go along, and I think−−don't you? a water− color artist. You can take your own time, stop when and where you choose−−at the more stations the better. It ought to be profusely illustrated with scenes on the line−−yes, have colored plates, all that would give life and character to your story. Love on a Special, some such title as that. It would run like oil. I will arrange to have it as a serial in one of the big magazines, and then the book would be bound to go. The company, of course, can have nothing to do with it, but I can tell you privately that it would rather distribute a hundred thousand copies of a book of good literature through the country than to encourage the railway truck that is going now.

I shouldn't wonder, Mr. Burnett, if the public would be interested in having the Puritan Nun take that kind of a trip." And Mr. Ault ended his explanation with an interrogatory smile.

Philip hesitated a moment, trying to grasp the conception of this business use of literature. Mr. Ault resumed:

"It isn't anything in the nature of an advertisement. Literature is a power. Why, do you know−−of course you did not intend it−−your story has encouraged the Peacock Inn to double its accommodations, and half the farmhouses in Rivervale are expecting summer boarders. The landlord of the Peacock came to see me the other day, and he says everything is stirred up there, and he has already to enlarge or refuse application."

"It is very kind in you, Mr. Ault, to think of me in that connection, but I fear you have over−estimated my capacity. I could name half a dozen men who could do it much better than I could. They know how to do it, they

have that kind of touch. I have been surprised at the literary ability engaged by the great corporations."

Mr. Ault made a gesture of impatience. "I wouldn't give a damn for that sort of thing. It is money thrown away. If I should get one of the popular writers you refer to, the public would know he was hired. If you lay your story out there, nobody will suspect anything of the sort. It will be a clean literary novel. Not travel, you understand, but a story, and the more love in it the better. It will be a novelty. You can run your car sixty miles an hour in exciting passages, everything will work into it. When people travel on the road the pictures will show them the scenes of the story. It is a big thing," said Mr. Ault in conclusion.

"I see it is," said Philip, rising at the hint that his time had expired. "I am very much obliged to you, Mr. Ault, for your confidence in me. But it is a new idea. I will have to think it over."

"Well, think it over. There is money in it. You would not start till about midsummer. Good−day."

A private car! Travel like a prince! Certainly literature was looking up in the commercial world. Philip walked back to his publishers with a certain elasticity of step, a new sense of power. Yes, the power of the pen. And why not? No doubt it would bring him money and spread his name very widely. There was nothing that a friendly corporation could not do for a favorite. He would then really be a part of the great, active, enterprising world. Was there anything illegitimate in taking advantage of such an opportunity? Surely, he should remain his own master, and write nothing except what his own conscience approved. But would he not feel, even if no one else knew it, that he was the poet−laureate of a corporation?

And suddenly, as he thought how the clear vision of Evelyn would plunge to the bottom of such a temptation, he felt humiliated that such a proposition should have been made to him. Was there nothing, nobody, that commercialism did not think for sale and to be trafficked in?

Nevertheless, he wrote to Alice about it, describing the proposal as it was made to him, without making any comment on it.

Alice replied speedily. "Isn't it funny," she wrote, "and isn't it preposterous? I wonder what such people think? And that horrid young pirate, Ault, a patron of literature! My dear, I cannot conceive of you as the Pirate's Own. Dear Phil, I want you to succeed. I do want you to make money, a lot of it. I like to think you are wanted and appreciated, and that you can get paid better and better for what you do. Sell your manuscripts for as good a price as you can get. Yes, dear, sell your manuscripts, but don't sell your soul."

XX

Did Miss McDonald tell Evelyn of her meeting with Philip in Central Park? The Scotch loyalty to her service would throw a doubt upon this. At the same time, the Scotch affection, the Scotch sympathy with a true and romantic passion, and, above all, the Scotch shrewdness, could be trusted to do what was best under the circumstances. That she gave the least hint of what she said to Mr. Burnett concerning Evelyn is not to be supposed for a moment. Certainly she did not tell Mrs. Mavick. Was she a person to run about with idle gossip? But it is certain that Evelyn knew that Philip had given up his situation in the office, that he had become a reader for a publishing house, that he had definitely decided to take up a literary career. And somehow it came into her mind that Philip knew that this decision would be pleasing to her.

According to the analogy of other things in nature, it would seem that love must have something to feed on to sustain it. But it is remarkable upon how little it can exist, can even thrive and become strong, and develop a power of resistance to hostile influences. Once it gets a lodgment in a woman's heart, it is an exclusive force that transforms her into a heroine of courage and endurance. No arguments, no reason, no considerations of family, of position, of worldly fortune, no prospect of immortal life, nothing but doubt of faith in the object can dislodge it.

The woman may yield to overwhelming circumstances, she may even by her own consent be false to herself, but the love lives, however hidden and smothered, so long as the vital force is capable of responding to a true emotion. Perhaps nothing in human life is so pathetic as this survival in old age of a youthful, unsatisfied love. It may cease to be a passion, it may cease to be a misery, it may have become only a placid sentiment, yet the heart must be quite cold before this sentiment can cease to stir it on occasion−−for the faded flower is still in the memory the bloom of young love.

They say that in the New Education for women love is not taken into account in the regular course; it is an elective study. But the immortal principle of life does not care much for organization, and says, as of old, they reckon ill who leave me out.

In the early season at Newport there was little to distract the attention and much to calm the spirit. Mrs. Mavick was busy in her preparation for the coming campaign, and Evelyn and her governess were left much alone, to drive along the softly lapping sea, to search among the dells of the rocky promontory for wild flowers, or to sit on the cliffs in front of the gardens of bloom and watch the idle play of the waves, that chased each other to the foaming beach and in good−nature tossed about the cat− boats and schooners and set the white sails shimmering and dipping in the changing lights. And Evelyn, drinking in the beauty and the peace of it, no doubt, was more pensive than joyous. Within the last few months life had opened to her with a suddenness that half frightened her.

It was a woman who sat on the cliffs now, watching the ocean of life, no longer a girl into whose fresh soul the sea and the waves and the air, and the whole beauty of the world, were simply responsive to her own gayety and enjoyment of living. It was not the charming scene that held her thought, but the city with its human struggle, and in that struggle one figure was conspicuous. In such moments this one figure of youth outweighed for her all that the world held besides. It was strange. Would she have admitted this? Not in the least, not even to herself, in her virgin musings; nevertheless, the world was changed for her, it was more serious, more doubtful, richer, and more to be feared.

It was not too much to say that one season had much transformed her. She had been so ignorant of the world a year ago. She had taken for granted all that was abstractly right. Now she saw that the conventions of life were like sand−dunes and barriers in the path she was expected to walk. She had learned for one thing what money was. Wealth had been such an accepted part of her life, since she could remember, that she had attached no importance to it, and had only just come to see what distinctions it made, and how it built a barrier round about her. She had come to know what it was that gave her father position and distinction; and the knowledge had been forced upon her by all the obsequious flattery of society that she was, as a great heiress, something apart from others. This position, so much envied, may be to a sensitive soul an awful isolation.

It was only recently that Evelyn had begun to be keenly aware of the circumstances that hedged her in. They were speaking one day as they sat upon the cliffs of the season about to begin. In it Evelyn had always had unalloyed, childish delight. Now it seemed to her something to be borne.

"McDonald," the girl said, abruptly, but evidently continuing her line of thought, "mamma says that Lord Montague is coming next week."

"To be with us?"

"Oh, no. He is to stay with the Danforth−Sibbs. Mamma says that as he is a stranger here we must be very polite to him, and that his being here will give distinction to the season. Do you like him?" There was in Evelyn still, with the penetration of the woman, the naivete of the child.

"I cannot say that he is personally very fascinating, but then I have never talked with him."

"Mamma says he is very interesting about his family, and their place in England, and about his travels. He has been in the South Sea Islands. I asked him about them. He said that the natives were awfully jolly, and that the climate was jolly hot. Do you know, McDonald, that you can't get anything out of him but exclamations and slang. I suppose he talks to other people differently. I tried him. At the reception I asked him who was going to take Tennyson's place. He looked blank, and then said, 'Er−−I must have missed that. What place? Is he out?'"

Miss McDonald laughed, and then said, "You don't understand the classes in English life. Poetry is not in his line. You see, dear, you couldn't talk to him about politics. He is a born legislator, and when he is in the House of Lords he will know right well who is in and who is out. You mustn't be unjust because he seems odd to you and of limited intelligence. Just that sort of youth is liable to turn up some day in India or somewhere and do a mighty plucky thing, and become a hero. I dare say he is a great sportsman."

"Yes, he quite warmed up about shooting. He told me about going for yak in the snow mountains south of Thibet. Bloody cold it was. Nasty beast, if you didn't bring him down first shot. No, I don't doubt his courage nor his impudence. He looks at me so, that I can't help blushing. I wish mamma wouldn't ask him."

"But, my dear, we must live in the world as it is. You are not responsible for Lord Montague."

"And I know he will come," the girl persisted in her line of thought.

"When he called the day before we came away, he asked a lot of questions about Newport, about horses and polo and golf, and all that, and were the roads good. And then, 'Do you bike, Miss Mavick?'

I pretended not to understand, and said I was still studying with my governess and I hadn't got all the irregular verbs yet. For once, he looked quite blank, and after a minute he said, 'That's very good, you know!' McDonald, I just hate him. He makes me so uneasy."

"But don't you know, child," said Miss McDonald, laughing, "that we are required to love our enemies?"

"So I would," replied the girl, quickly, "if he were an enemy and would keep away. Ah, me! McDonald, I want to ask you something. Do you suppose he would hang around a girl who was poor, such a sweet, pretty, dear creature as Alice Maitland, who is a hundred times nicer than I am?"

"He might," said Miss McDonald, still quizzically. "They say that like goes to like, and it is reported that the Duke of Tewkesbury is as good as ruined."

"Do be serious, McDonald." The girl nestled up closer to her and took her hand. "I want to ask you one question more. Do you think−−no, don't look at me, look away off at that sail do you−think that, if I had been poor, Mr. Burnett would have seen me only twice, just twice, all last season?"

Miss McDonald put her arm around Evelyn and clasped the little figure tight. "You must not give way to fancies. We cannot, as life is arranged, be perfectly happy, but we can be true to ourselves, and there is scarcely anything that resolution and patience cannot overcome. I ought not to talk to you about this, Evelyn. But I must say one thing: I think I can read Philip Burnett. Oh, he has plenty of self−esteem, but, unless I mistake him, nothing could so mortify him as to have it said that he was pursuing a girl for the sake of her fortune."

"And he wouldn't!" cried the girl, looking up and speaking in an unsteady voice.

"Let me finish. He is, so I think, the sort of man that would not let any fortune, or anything else, stand in the way when his heart was concerned. I somehow feel that he could not change−−faithfulness, that is his notion. If he only knew−−"

"He never shall! he never shall!" cried the girl in alarm−−"never!"

"And you think, child, that he doesn't know? Come! That sail has been coming straight towards us ever since we sat here, never tacked once. That is omen enough for one day. See how the light strikes it. Come!"

The Newport season was not, after all, very gay. Society has become so complex that it takes more than one Englishman to make a season. Were it the business of the chronicler to study the evolution of this lovely watering−place from its simple, unconventional, animated days of natural hospitality and enjoyment, to its present splendid and palatial isolation of a society−−during the season−−which finds its chief satisfaction in the rivalry of costly luxury and in an atmosphere of what is deemed aristocratic exclusiveness, he would have a theme attractive to the sociologist. But such a noble study is not for him. His is the humble task of following the fortunes of certain individuals, more or less conspicuous in this astonishing flowering of a democratic society, who have become dear to him by long acquaintance.

It was not the fault of Mrs. Mavick that the season was so frigid, its glacial stateliness only now and then breaking out in an illuminating burst of festivity, like the lighting−up of a Montreal ice−palace. Her spacious house was always open, and her efforts, in charity enterprises and novel entertainments, were untiring to stimulate a circulation in the languid body of society.

This clever woman never showed more courage or more tact than in this campaign, and was never more agreeable and fascinating. She was even popular. If she was not accepted as a leader, she had a certain standing with the leaders, as a person of vivacity and social influence. Any company was eager for her presence. Her activity, spirit, and affability quite won the regard of the society reporters, and those who know Newport only through the newspapers would have concluded that the Mavicks were on the top of the wave. She, however, perfectly understood her position, and knew that the sweet friends, who exchanged with her, whenever they met, the conventional phrases of affection commented sarcastically upon her ambitions for her daughter. It was, at the same time, an ambition that they perfectly understood, and did not condemn on any ethical grounds. Evelyn was certainly a sweet girl, rather queerly educated, and never likely to make much of a dash, but she was an heiress, and why should not her money be put to the patriotic use of increasing the growing Anglo−American cordiality?

Lord Montague was, of course, a favorite, in demand for all functions, and in request for the private and intimate entertainments. He was an authority in the stables and the kennels, and an eager comrade in all the sports of the island. His easy manner, his self−possession everywhere, even his slangy talk, were accepted as evidence that he was above conventionalities. "The little man isn't a beauty," said Sally McTabb, "but he shows 'race.'" He might be eccentric, but when you came to know him you couldn't help liking the embryo duke in him.

In fact, things were going very well with Mrs. Mavick, except in her own household. There was something there that did not yield, that did not flow with her plans. With Lord Montague she was on the most intimate and confidential relations. He was almost daily at the house. Often she drove with him; frequently Evelyn was with them. Indeed, the three came to be associated in the public mind. There could be no doubt of the intentions of the young nobleman. That he could meet any opposition was not conceived.

The noble lord, since they had been in Newport, had freely opened his mind to Mrs. Mavick, and on a fit occasion had formally requested her daughter's hand. Needless to say that he was accepted. Nay, more, he felt that he was trusted like a son. He was given every opportunity to press his suit. Somewhat to his surprise, he did not appear to make much headway. He was rarely able to see her alone, even for a moment. Such evasiveness in a young girl to a man of his rank astonished him. There could be no reason for it in himself; there must be some influence at work unknown to his social experience.

He did not reproach Mrs. Mavick with this, but he let her see that he was very much annoyed.

"If I had not your assurance to the contrary, Mrs. Mavick," he said one day in a pet, "I should think she shunned me."

"Oh, no, Lord Montague, that could not be. I told you that she had had a peculiar education; she is perfectly ignorant of the world, she is shy, and−−well, for a girl in her position, she is unconventional. She is so young that she does not yet understand what life is."

"You mean she does not know what I offer her?"

"Why, my dear Lord Montague, did you ever offer her anything?"

"Not flat, no," said my lord, hesitating. "Every time I approach her she shies off like a young filly. There is something I don't understand."

"Evelyn," and Mrs. Mavick spoke with feeling, "is an affectionate and dutiful child. She has never thought of marriage. The prospect is all new to her. But I am sure she would learn to love you if she knew you and her mind were once turned upon such a union. My lord, why not say to her what you feel, and make the offer you intend? You cannot expect a young girl to show her inclination before she is asked." And Mrs. Mavick laughed a little to dispel the seriousness.

"By Jove! that's so, good enough. I'll do it straight out. I'll tell her to take it or leave it. No, I don't mean that, of course. I'll tell her that I can't live without her−−that sort of thing, you know. And I can't, that's just the fact."

"You can leave it confidently to her good judgment and to the friendship of the family for you."

Lord Montague was silent for a moment, and seemed to be looking at a problem in his shrewd mind. For he had a shrewd mind, which took in the whole situation, Mrs. Mavick and all, with a perspicacity that would have astonished that woman of the world.

"There is one thing, perhaps I ought not to say it, but I have seen it, and it is in my head that it is that−−I beg your pardon, madam−−that damned governess."

The shot went home. The suggestion, put into language that could be more easily comprehended than defended, illuminated Mrs. Mavick's mind in a flash, seeming to disclose the source of an opposition to her purposes which secretly irritated her. Doubtless it was the governess. It was her influence that made Evelyn less pliable and amenable to reason than a young girl with such social prospects as she had would naturally be. Besides, how absurd it was that a young lady in society should still have a governess. A companion? The proper companion for a girl on the edge of matrimony was her mother!

XXI

This idea, once implanted in Mrs. Mavick's mind, bore speedy fruit. No one would have accused her of being one of those uncomfortable persons who are always guided by an inflexible sense of justice, nor could it be said that she was unintelligently unjust. Facile as she was, in all her successful life she had never acted upon impulse, but from a conscience keenly alive to what was just to herself. Miss McDonald was in the way. And Mrs. Mavick had one quality of good generalship−−she acted promptly on her convictions.

When Mr. Mavick came over next day to spend Sunday in what was called in print the bosom of his family, he looked very much worn and haggard and was in an irritated mood. He had been very little in Newport that summer, the disturbed state of business confining him to the city. And to a man of his age, New York in midsummer in a panicky season is not a recreation.

The moment Mrs. Mavick got her husband alone she showed a lively solicitude about his health.

"I suppose it has been dreadfully hot in the city?"

"Hot enough. Everything makes it hot."

"Has anything gone wrong? Has that odious Ault turned up again?"

"Turned up is the word. Half the time that man is a mole, half the time a bull in a china−shop. He sails up to you bearing your own flag, and when he gets aboard he shows the skull and cross−bones."

"Is it so bad as that?"

"As bad as what? He is a bad lot, but he is just an adventurer−−a Napoleon who will get his Waterloo before fall. Don't bother about things you don't understand. How are things down here?"

"Going swimmingly." "So I judged by the bills. How is the lord?"

"Now don't be vulgar, Tom. You must keep up your end. Lord Montague is very nice; he is a great favorite here."

"Does Evelyn like him?"

"Yes, she likes him; she likes him very much."

"She didn't show it to me."

"No, she is awfully shy. And she is rather afraid of him, the big title and all that. And then she has never been accustomed to act for herself. She is old enough to be independent and to take her place in the world. At her age I was not in leading−strings."

"I should say not," said Mavick.

"Except in obedience to my mother," continued Carmen, not deigning to notice the sarcasm. "And I've been thinking that McDonald−−"

"So you want to get rid of her?"

"What a brutal way of putting it! No. But if Evelyn is ever to be self− reliant it is time she should depend more on herself. You know I am devoted to McDonald. And, what is more, I am used to her. I wasn't thinking of her. You don't realize that Evelyn is a young lady in society, and it has become ridiculous for her to still have a governess. Everybody would say so."

"Well, call her a companion."

"Ah, don't you see it would be the same? She would still be under her influence and not able to act for herself."

"What are you going to do? Turn her adrift after eighteen−−what is it, seventeen?−−years of faithful service?"

"How brutally you put it. I'm going to tell McDonald just how it is. She is a sensible woman, and she will see that it is for Evelyn's good. And then it happens very luckily. Mrs. Van Cortlandt asked me last winter if I wouldn't let her have McDonald for her little girl when we were through with her. She knew, of course, that we couldn't keep

a governess much longer for Evelyn. I am going to write to her. She will jump at the chance."

"And McDonald?"

"Oh, she likes Mrs. Van Cortlandt. It will just suit her."

"And Evelyn? That will be another wrench." Men are so foolishly tender− hearted about women.

"Of course, I know it seems hard, and will be for a little. But it is for Evelyn's good, I am perfectly sure."

Mr. Mavick was meditating. It was a mighty unpleasant business. But he was getting tired of conflict. There was an undercurrent in the lives of both that made him shrink from going deep into any domestic difference. It was best to yield.

"Well, Carmen, I couldn't have the heart to do it. She has been Evelyn's constant companion all the child's life. Ah, well, it's your own affair. Only don't stir it up till after I am gone. I must go to the city early Monday morning."

Because Mavick, amid all the demands of business and society, and his ambitions for power in the world of finance and politics, had not had much time to devote to his daughter, it must not be supposed that he did not love her. In the odd moments at her service she had always been a delight to him; and, in truth, many of his ambitions had centred in the intelligent, affectionate, responsive child. But there had been no time for much real comradeship.

This Sunday, however, and it was partly because of pity for the shock he felt was in store for her, he devoted himself to her. They had a long walk on the cliff, and he talked to her of his life, of his travels, and his political experience. She was a most appreciative listener, and in the warmth of his confidence she opened her mind to him, and rather surprised him by her range of intelligence and the singular uprightness of her opinions, and more still by her ready wit and playfulness. It was the first time she had felt really free with her father, and he for the first time seemed to know her as she was in her inner life. When they returned to the house, and she was thanking him with a glow of enthusiasm for such a lovely day, he lifted her up and kissed her, with an emotion of affection that brought tears to her eyes.

A couple of days elapsed before Mrs. Mavick was ready for action. During this time she had satisfied herself, by apparently casual conversation with her daughter and Miss McDonald, that the latter would be wholly out of sympathy with her intentions in regard to Evelyn. Left to herself she judged that her daughter would look with more favor upon the brilliant career offered to her by Lord Montague. When, therefore, one morning the governess was summoned to her room, her course was decided on. She received Miss McDonald with more than usual cordiality. She had in her hand a telegram, and beamed upon her as the bearer of good news.

"I have an excellent offer for you, Miss McDonald."

"An offer for me?"

"Yes, from Mrs. Van Cortlandt, to be the governess of her daughter, a sweet little girl of six. She has often spoken about it, and now I have an urgent despatch from her. She is in need of some one at once, and she greatly prefers you."

"Do you mean, Mrs. Mavick, that−−you−−want−−that I am to leave Evelyn, and you?" The room seemed to whirl around her.

"It is not what we want, McDonald," said Mrs. Mavick calmly and still beaming, "but what is best. Your service as governess has continued much longer than could have been anticipated, and of course it must come to an end some time. You understand how hard this separation is for all of us. Mr. Mavick wanted me to express to you his infinite obligation, and I am sure he will take a substantial way of showing it. Evelyn is now a young lady in society, and of course it is absurd for her to continue under pupilage. It will be best for her, for her character, to be independent and learn to act for herself in the world."

"Did she−−has Evelyn−−"

"No, I have said nothing to her of this offer, which is a most advantageous one. Of course she will feel as we do, at first."

"Why, all these years, all her life, since she was a baby, not a day, not a night, Evelyn, and now−−so sweet, so dear−−why Mrs. Mavick!" And the Scotch woman, dazed, with a piteous appeal in her eyes, trying in vain to control her face, looked at her mistress.

"My dear McDonald, you must not take it that way. It is only a change. You are not going away really, we shall all be in the same city. I am sure you will−−like your new home. Shall I tell Mrs. Van Cortlandt?"

"Tell Mrs. Van Cortlandt? Yes, tell her, thanks. I will go−−soon−−at once. In a little time, to get−ready. Thanks." The governess rose and stood a moment to steady herself. All her life was in ruins. The blow crushed her. And she had been so happy. In such great peace. It seemed impossible. To leave Evelyn! She put out her hand as if to speak. Did Mrs. Mavick understand what she was doing? That it was the same as dragging a mother away from her child? But she said nothing. Words would not come. Everything seemed confused and blank. She sank into her chair.

"Excuse me, Mrs. Mavick, I think I am not very strong this morning." And presently she stood on her feet again and steadied herself. "You will please tell Evelyn before−−before I see her." And she walked out of the room as one in a trance.

The news was communicated to Evelyn, quite incidentally, in the manner that all who knew Mrs. Mavick admired in her. Evelyn had just been in and out of her mother's room, on one errand and another, and was going out again, when her mother said:

"Oh, by−the−way, Evelyn, at last we have got a splendid place for McDonald."

Evelyn turned, not exactly comprehending. "A place for McDonald? For what?"

"As governess, of course. With Mrs. Van Cortlandt."

"What! to leave us? "The girl walked back to her mother's chair and stood before her in an attitude of wonder and doubt. "You don't mean, mamma, that she is going away for good?"

"It is a great chance for her. I have been anxious for some time about employment for her, now that you do not need a governess−−haven't really for a year or two."

"But, mamma, it can't be. She is part of us. She belongs to the family; she has been in it almost as long as I have. Why, I have been with her every day of my life. To go away? To give her up? Does she know?"

"Does she know? What a child! She has accepted Mrs. Van Cortlandt's offer. I telegraphed for her this morning. Tomorrow she goes to town to get her belongings together. Mrs. Van Cortlandt needs her at once. I am sorry to

see, my dear, that you are thinking only of yourself."

"Of myself?" The girl had been at first confused, and, as the idea forced itself upon her mind, she felt weak, and trembled, and was deadly pale. But when the certainty came, the enormity and cruelty of the dismissal aroused her indignation. "Myself!" she exclaimed again. Her eyes blazed with a wrath new to their tenderness, and, stepping back and stamping her foot; she cried out: "She shall not go! It is unjust! It is cruel!"

Her mother had never seen her child like that. She was revealing a spirit of resistance, a temper, an independence quite unexpected. And yet it was not altogether displeasing. Mrs. Mavick's respect for her involuntarily rose. And after an instant, instead of responding with severity, as was her first impulse, she said, very calmly:

"Naturally, Evelyn, you do not like to part with her. None of us do. But go to your room and think it over reasonably. The relations of childhood cannot last forever."

Evelyn stood for a moment undecided. Her mother's calm self−control had not deceived her. She was no longer a child. It was a woman reading a woman. All her lifetime came back to her to interpret this moment. In the reaction of the second, the deepest pain was no longer for herself, nor even for Miss McDonald, but for a woman who showed herself so insensible to noble feeling. Protest was useless. But why was the separation desired? She did not fully see, but her instinct told her that it had a relation to her mother's plans for her; and as life rose before her in the society, in the world, into which she was newly launched, she felt that she was alone, absolutely alone. She tried to speak, but before she could collect her thoughts her mother said:

"There, go now. It is useless to discuss the matter. We all have to learn to bear things."

Evelyn went away, in a tumult of passion and of shame, and obeyed her impulse to go where she had always found comfort.

Miss McDonald was in her own room. Her trunk was opened. She had taken her clothes from the closet. She was opening the drawers and laying one article here and another there. She was going from closet to bureau, opening this door and shutting that in her sitting−room and bedroom, in an aimless, distracted way. Out of her efforts nothing had so far come but confusion. It seemed an impossible dream that she was actually packing up to go away forever.

Evelyn entered in a haste that could not wait for permission.

"Is it true?" she cried.

McDonald turned. She could not speak. Her faithful face was gray with suffering. Her eyes were swollen with weeping. For an instant she seemed not to comprehend, and then a flood of motherly feeling overcame her. She stretched out her arms and caught the girl to her breast in a passionate embrace, burying her face in her neck in a vain effort to subdue her sobbing.

What was there to say? Evelyn had come to her refuge for comfort, and to Evelyn the comforter it was she herself who must be the comforter. Presently she disengaged herself and forced the governess into an easy chair. She sat down on the arm of the chair and smoothed her hair and kissed her again and again.

"There. I'm going to help you. You'll see you have not taught me for nothing." She jumped up and began to bustle about. "You don't know what a packer I am."

"I knew it must come some time," she was saying, with a weary air, as she followed with her eyes the light step of the graceful girl, who was beginning to sort things and to bring order out of the confusion, holding up one article

after another and asking questions with an enforced cheerfulness that was more pathetic than any burst of grief.

"Yes, I know. There, that is laid in smooth." She pretended to be thinking what to put in next, and suddenly she threw herself into McDonald's lap and began to talk gayly. "It is all my fault, dear; I should have stayed little. And it doesn't make any difference. I know you love me, and oh, McDonald, I love you more, a hundred times more, than ever. If you did not love me! Think how dreadful that would be. And we shall not be separated−only by streets, don't you know. They can't separate us. I know you want me to be brave. And some day, perhaps" (and she whispered in her ear−−how many hundred times had she told her girl secrets in that way!), "if I do have a home of my own, then−−"

It was not very cheerful talk, however it seemed to be, but it was better than silence, and in the midst of it, with many interruptions, the packing was over, and some sort of serenity was attained even by Miss McDonald. "Yes, dear heart, we have love and trust and hope." But when the preparations were all made, and Evelyn went to her own room, there did not seem to be so much hope, nor any brightness in the midst of this first great catastrophe of her life.

XXII

The great Mavick ball at Newport, in the summer long remembered for its financial disasters, was very much talked about at the time. Long after, in any city club, a man was sure to have attentive listeners if he, began his story or his gossip with the remark that he was at the Mavick ball.

It attracted great attention, both on account of the circumstances that preceded it and the events which speedily followed, and threw a light upon it that gave it a spectacular importance. The city journals made a feature of it. They summoned their best artists to illustrate it, and illuminate it in pen−and−ink, half−tones, startling colors, and photographic reproductions, sketches theatrical, humorous, and poetic, caricatures, pictures of tropical luxury and aristocratic pretension; in short, all the bewildering affluence of modern art which is brought to bear upon the aesthetic cultivation of the lowest popular taste. They summoned their best novelists to throw themselves recklessly upon the English language, and extort from it its highest expression in color and lyrical beauty, the novelists whose mission it is, in the newspaper campaign against realism, to adorn and dramatize the commonest events of life, creating in place of the old−fashioned "news" the highly spiced "story," which is the ideal aspiration of the reporter.

Whatever may be said about the power of the press, it is undeniable that it can set the entire public thinking and talking about any topic, however insignificant in itself, that it may elect to make the sensation of the day−−a wedding, a murder, a political scandal, a divorce, a social event, a defalcation, a lost child, an unidentified victim of accident or crime, an election, or−−that undefined quickener of patriotism called a casus belli. It can impose any topic it pleases upon the public mind. In case there is no topic, it is necessary to make one, for it is an indefeasible right of the public to have news.

These reports of the Mavick ball had a peculiar interest for at least two people in New York. Murad Ault read them with a sardonic smile and an enjoyment that would not have been called altruistic. Philip searched them with the feverish eagerness of a maiden who scans the report of a battle in which her lover has been engaged.

All summer long he had lived upon stray bits of news in the society columns of the newspapers. To see Evelyn's name mentioned, and only rarely, as a guest at some entertainment, and often in connection with that of Lord Montague, did not convey much information, nor was that little encouraging. Was she well? Was she absorbed in the life of the season? Did she think of him in surroundings so brilliant? Was she, perhaps, unhappy and persecuted? No tidings came that could tell him the things that he ached to know.

Only recently intelligence had come to him that at the same time wrung his heart with pity and buoyed him up with hope. He had not seen Miss McDonald since her dismissal, for she had been only one night in the city, but she had written to him. Relieved by her discharge of all obligations of silence, she had written him frankly about the whole affair, and, indeed, put him in possession of unrecorded details and indications that filled him with anxiety, to be sure, but raised his courage and strengthened his determination. If Evelyn loved him, he had faith that no manoeuvres or compulsion could shake her loyalty. And yet she was but a girl; she was now practically alone, and could she resist the family and the social pressure? Few women could, few women do, effectively resist under such circumstances. With one of a tender heart, duty often takes the most specious and deceiving forms. In yielding to the impulses of her heart, which in her inexperience may be mistaken, has a girl the right−−from a purely rational point of view−−to set herself against, nay, to destroy, the long−cherished ambitions of her parents for a brilliant social career for her, founded upon social traditions of success? For what had Mr. Mavick toiled? For what had Mrs. Mavick schemed all these years? Could the girl throw herself away? Such disobedience, such disregard for social law, would seem impossible to her mother.

Some of the events that preceded the Mavick ball throw light upon that interesting function. After the departure of Miss McDonald, Mrs. Mavick, in one of her confidential talks with her proposed son−in−law, confessed that she experienced much relief. An obstacle seemed to be removed.

In fact, Evelyn rather surprised her mother by what seemed a calm acceptance of the situation. There was no further outburst. If the girl was often preoccupied and seemed listless, that was to be expected, on the sudden removal of the companion of her lifetime.

But she did not complain. She ceased after a while to speak of McDonald. If she showed little enthusiasm in what was going on around her, she was compliant, she fell in at once with her mother's suggestions, and went and came in an attitude of entire obedience.

"It isn't best for you to keep up a correspondence, my dear, now that you know that McDonald is nicely settled−−all reminiscent correspondence is very wearing−−and, really, I am more than delighted to see that you are quite capable of walking alone. Do you know, Evelyn, that I am more and more proud of you every day, as my daughter. I don't dare to tell you half the nice things that are said of you. It would make you vain." And the proud mother kissed her affectionately. The letters ceased. If the governess wrote, Evelyn did not see the letters.

As the days went by, Lord Montague, in high and confident spirits, became more and more a familiar inmate of the house. Daily he sent flowers to Evelyn; he contrived little excursions and suppers; he was marked in his attentions wherever they went. "He is such a dear fellow," said Mrs. Mavick to one of her friends; "I don't know how we should get on without him."

Only, in the house, owing to some unnatural perversity of circumstances, he did not see much of Evelyn, never alone for more than a moment. It is wonderful what efficient, though invisible, defenses most women, when they will, can throw about themselves.

That the affair was "arranged" Lord Montague had no doubt. It was not conceivable that the daughter of an American stock−broker would refuse the offer of a position so transcendent and so evidently coveted in a democratic society. Not that the single−minded young man reasoned about it this way. He was born with a most comfortable belief in himself and the knowledge that when he decided to become a domestic man he had simply, as the phrase is, to throw his handkerchief.

At home, where such qualities as distinguished him from the common were appreciated without the need of personal exertion, this might be true; but in America it did seem to be somehow different. American women, at least some of them, did need to be personally wooed; and many of them had a sort of independence in the bestowal of their affections or, what they understood to be the same thing, themselves that must be taken into

account. And it gradually dawned upon the mind of this inheritor of privilege that in this case the approval of the family, even the pressure of the mother, was not sufficient; he must have also Evelyn's consent. If she were a mature woman who knew and appreciated the world, she would perceive the advantages offered to her without argument. But a girl, just released from the care of her governess, unaccustomed to society, might have notions, or, in the vernacular of the scion, might be skittish.

And then, again, to do the wooer entire justice, the dark little girl, so much mistress of herself, so evidently spirited, with such an air of distinction, began to separate herself in his mind as a good goer against the field, and he had a real desire to win her affection. The more indifferent she was to him, the keener was his desire to possess her. His unsuccessful wooing had passed through several stages, first astonishment, then pique, and finally something very like passion, or a fair semblance of devotion, backed, of course, since all natures are more or less mixed, by the fact that this attractive figure of the woman was thrown into high relief by the colossal fortune behind her.

And Evelyn herself? Neither her mother nor her suitor appreciated the uncommon circumstances that her education, her whole training in familiarity with pure and lofty ideals, had rendered her measurably insensible to the social considerations that seemed paramount to them, or that there could be any real obstacle to the bestowal of her person. where her heart was not engaged. Yet she perfectly understood her situation, and, at times, deprived of her lifelong support, she felt powerless in it, and she suffered as only the pure and the noble can suffer. Day after day she fought her battle alone, now and then, as the situation confronted her, assailed by a shudder of fear, as of one awakening in the night from a dream of peril, the clutch of an assassin, or the walking on an icy precipice. If McDonald were only with her! If she could only hear from Philip! Perhaps he had lost hope and was submitting to the inevitable.

The opportunity which Lord Montague had long sought came one day unexpectedly, or perhaps it was contrived. They were waiting in the drawing−room for an afternoon drive. The carriage was delayed, and Mrs. Mavick excused herself to ascertain the cause of the delay. Evelyn and her suitor were left alone. She was standing by a window looking out, and he was standing by the fireplace watching the swing of the figure on the pendulum of the tall mantelpiece clock. He was the first to break the silence.

"Your clock, Miss Mavick, is a little fast." No reply. "Or else I am slow." Still no reply. "They say, you know, that I am a little slow, over here." No reply. "I am not, really, you know. I know my mind. And there was something, Miss Mavick, something particular, that I wanted to say to you."

"Yes?" without turning round. "The carriage will be here in a minute."

"Never mind that," and Lord Montague moved away from the fireplace and approached the girl; "take care of the minutes and the hours will take care of themselves, as the saying is." At this unexpected stroke of brilliancy Evelyn did turn round, and stood in an expectant attitude. The moment had evidently come, and she would not meet it like a coward.

"We have been friends a long time; not so very long, but it seems to me the best part of my life," he was looking down and speaking slowly, with the modest deference of a gentleman, "and you must have seen, that is, I wanted you to see, you know well, that is−−er−−what I was staying on here for."

"Because you like America, I suppose," said Evelyn, coolly.

"Because I like some things in America−−that is just the fact," continued the little lord, with more confidence. "And that is why I stayed. You see I couldn't go away and leave what was best in the world to me."

There was an air of simplicity and sincerity about this that was unexpected, and could not but be respected by any woman. But Evelyn waited, still immovable.

"It wasn't reasonable that you should like a stranger right off," he went on, "just at first, and I waited till you got to know me better. Ways are different here and over there, I know that, but if you came to know me, Miss Mavick, you would see that I am not such a bad sort of a fellow." And a deprecatory smile lighted up his face that was almost pathetic. To Evelyn this humility seemed genuine, and perhaps it was, for the moment. Certainly the eyes she bent on, the odd little figure were less severe.

"All this is painful to me, Lord Montague."

"I'm sorry," he continued, in the same tone. "I cannot help it. I must say it. I−−you must know that I love you." And then, not heeding the nervous start the girl gave in stepping backward, "And−−and, will you be my wife?"

"You do me too much honor, Lord Montague," said Evelyn, summoning up all her courage.

"No, no, not a bit of it."

"I am obliged to you for your good opinion, but you know I am almost a school−girl. My governess has just left me. I have never thought of such a thing. And, Lord Montague, I cannot return your feeling. That is all. You must see how painful this is to me."

"I wouldn't give you pain, Miss Mavick, not for the world. Perhaps when you think it over it will seem different to you. I am sure it will. Don't answer now, for good."

"No, no, it cannot be," said Evelyn, with something of alarm in her tone, for the full meaning of it all came over her as she thought of her mother.

"You are not offended?"

"No," said Evelyn.

"I couldn't bear to offend you. You cannot think I would. And you will not be hard−hearted. You know me, Miss Mavick, just where I am. I'm just as I said."

"The carriage is coming," said Mrs. Mavick, who returned at this moment.

The group for an instant was silent, and then Evelyn said:

"We have waited so long; mamma, that I am a little tired, and you will excuse me from the drive this afternoon?"

"Certainly, my dear."

When the two were seated in the carriage, Mrs. Mavick turned to Lord Montague:

"Well?"

"No go," replied my lord, as sententiously, and in evident bad humor.

"What? And you made a direct proposal?"

"Showed her my whole hand. Made a square offer. Damme, I am not used to this sort of thing."

"You don't mean that she refused you?"

"Don't know what you call it. Wouldn't start."

"She couldn't have understood you. What did she say?"

"Said it was too much honor, and that rot. By Jove, she didn't look it. I rather liked her pluck. She didn't flinch."

"Oh, is that all?" And Mrs. Mavick spoke as if her mind were relieved. "What could you expect from such a sudden proposal to a young girl, almost a child, wholly unused to the world? I should have done the same thing at her age. It will look different to her when she reflects, and understands what the position is that is offered her. Leave that to me.

Lord Montague shook his head and screwed up his keen little eyes. His mind was in full play. "I know women, Mrs. Mavick, and I tell you there is something behind this. Somebody has been in the stable." The noble lord usually dropped into slang when he was excited.

"I don't understand your language," said Mrs. Mavick, straightening herself up in her seat.

"I beg pardon. It is just a way of speaking on the turf. When a favorite goes lame the morning of the race, we know some one has been tampering with him. I tell you there is some one else. She has some one else in her mind. That's the reason of it."

"Nonsense." cried Mrs. Mavick, with the energy of conviction. "It's impossible. There is nobody, couldn't be anybody. She has led a secluded life till this hour. She hasn't a fancy, I know."

"I hope you are right," he replied, in the tone of a man wishing to take a cheerful view. "Perhaps I don't understand American girls."

"I think I do," she said, smiling. "They are generally amenable to reason. Evelyn now has something definite before her. I am glad you proposed."

And this was the truth. Mrs. Mavick was elated. So far her scheme was completely successful. As to Evelyn, she trusted to various influences she could bring to bear. Ultimate disobedience of her own wishes she did not admit as a possible thing.

A part of her tactics was the pressure of public opinion, so far as society represents it−−that is, what society expects. And therefore it happened in a few days that a strong suspicion got about that Lord Montague had proposed formally to the heiress. The suspicion was strengthened by appearances. Mrs. Mavick did not deny the rumor. That there was an engagement was not affirmed, but that the honor had been or would be declined was hardly supposable.

In the painful interview between mother and daughter concerning this proposal, Evelyn had no reason to give for her opposition, except that she did not love him. This point Mrs. Mavick skillfully evaded and minimized. Of course she would love him in time. The happiest marriages were founded on social fitness and the judgment of parents, and not on the inexperienced fancies of young girls. And in this case things had gone too far to retreat. Lord Montague's attentions had been too open and undisguised. He had been treated almost as a son by the house. Society looked upon the affair as already settled. Had Evelyn reflected on the mortification that would fall upon her mother if she persisted in her unreasonable attitude? And Mrs. Mavick shed actual tears in thinking upon her

own humiliation.

The ball which followed these private events was also a part of Mrs. Mavick's superb tactics. It would be in a way a verification of the public rumors and a definite form of pressure which public expectation would exercise upon the lonely girl.

The splendor of this function is still remembered. There were, however, features in the glowing descriptions of it which need to be mentioned. It was assumed that it was for a purpose, that it was in fact, if not a proclamation, at least an intimation of a new and brilliant Anglo−Saxon alliance. No one asserted that an engagement existed. But the prominent figures in the spectacle were the English lord and the young and beautiful American heiress. There were portraits of both in half−tone. The full names and titles expectant of Lord Montague were given, a history of the dukedom of Tewkesbury and its ancient glory, with the long line of noble names allied to the young lord, who was a social star of the first magnitude, a great traveler, a sportsman of the stalwart race that has the world for its field. ("Poor little Monte," said the managing editor as he passed along these embellishments with his approval.)

On the other hand, the proposed alliance was no fall in dignity or family to the English house. The heiress was the direct descendant of the Eschelles, an old French family, distinguished in camp and court in the glorious days of the Grand Monarch.

XXIII

Probably no man ever wrote and published a book, a magazine story, or a bit of verse without an instant decision to repeat the experiment. The inclination once indulged becomes insatiable. It is not altogether the gratified vanity of seeing one's self in print, for, before printing was, the composers and reciters of romances and songs were driven along the same path of unrest and anxiety, when once they had the least recognition of their individual distinction. The impulse is more subtle than the desire for wealth or the craving for political place. In some cases it is in simple obedience to the longing to create; in others it is a lower ambition for notoriety, for praise.

In any case the experiment of authorship, in however humble, a way, has an analogy to that other tempting occupation of making "investments" in the stock−market: the first trial is certain to lead to another. If the author succeeds in any degree, his spirit rises to another attempt in the hope of a wider recognition. If he fails, that is a reason why he should convince his fellows that the failure was not inherent in himself, but in ill−luck or a misdirection of his powers. And the experiment has another analogy to the noble occupation of levying toll upon the change of values−−a first brilliant success is often a misfortune, inducing an overestimate of capacity, while a very moderate success, recognized indeed only as a trial, steadies a man, and sets him upon that serious diligence upon which alone, either in art or business, any solid fortune is built.

Philip was fortunate in that his first novel won him a few friends and a little recognition, but no popularity. It excited neither envy nor hostility. In the perfunctory and somewhat commercial good words it received, he recognized the good−nature of the world. In the few short reviews that dealt seriously with his work, he was able, when the excitement of seeing himself discussed had subsided, to read between the lines why The Puritan Nun had failed to make a larger appeal. It was idyllic and poetic, but it lacked virility; it lacked also simplicity in dealing with the simple and profound facts of life. He had been too solicitous to express himself, to write beautifully, instead of letting the human emotions with which he had to deal show themselves. One notice had said that it was too "literary"; by which, of course, the critic meant that he did not follow the solid traditions, the essential elements in all the great masterpieces of literature that have been created. And yet he had shown a quality, a facility, a promise, that had gained him a foothold and a support in the world of books and of the making of books. And though he had declined Mr. Ault's tempting offer to illuminate his transcontinental road with a literary torch, he none the less was pleased with this recognition of his capacity and the value of his name.

To say that Philip lived on hope during this summer of heat, suspensions, and business derangement would be to allow him a too substantial subsistence. Evelyn, indeed, seemed, at the distance of Newport, more unattainable than ever, and the scant news he had of the drama enacted there was a perpetual notice to him of the social gulf that lay between them. And yet his dream was sustained by occasional assurances from Miss McDonald of her confidence in Evelyn's belief in him, nay, of her trust, and she even went so far as to say affection. So he went on building castles in the air, which melted and were renewed day after day, like the transient but unfailing splendor of the sunset.

There was a certain exaltation in this indulgence of his passion that stimulated his creative faculties, and, while his daily tasks kept him from being morbid, his imagination was free to play with the construction of a new story, to which his recent experience would give a certain solidity and a knowledge of the human struggle as it is.

He found himself observing character more closely than before, looking for it not so much in books as in the people he met. There was Murad Ault, for instance. How he would like to put him into a book! Of course it would not do to copy a model, raw, like' that, but he fell to studying his traits, trying to see the common humanity exhibited in him. Was he a type or was he a freak? This was, however, too dangerous ground until he knew more of life.

The week's vacation allowed him by his house was passed in Rivervale. There, in the calmness of country life, and in the domestic atmosphere of affection which believed in him, he was far enough removed from the scene of the spectres of his imagination to see them in proper perspective, and there the lines of his new venture were laid down, to be worked out later on, he well knew, in the anxiety and the toil which should endue the skeleton with life. Rivervale, to be sure, was haunted by the remembrance of Evelyn; very often the familiar scenes filled him with an intolerable longing to see again the eyes that had inspired him, to hear the voice that was like no other in the world, to take the little hand that had often been so frankly placed in his, and to draw to him the form in which was embodied all the grace and tender witchery of womanhood. But the knowledge of what she expected of him was an inspiration, always present in his visions of her.

Something of his hopes and fears Alice divined, and he felt her sympathy, although she did not intrude upon his reticence by any questions. They talked about Evelyn, but it was Evelyn in Rivervale, not in Newport. In fact, the sensible girl could regard her cousin's passion as nothing more than a romance in a young author's life, and to her it was a sign of his security that he had projected a new story.

With instinctive perception of his need, she was ever turning his thoughts upon his literary career. Of course she and all the household seemed in a conspiracy to flatter and encourage the vanity of authorship. Was not all the village talking about the reputation he had conferred on it? Was it not proud of him? Indeed, it did imagine that the world outside of Rivervale was very much interested in him, and that he was already an author of distinction. The county Gazette had announced, as an important piece of news, that the author of The Puritan Nun was on a visit to his relatives, the Maitlands. This paragraph seemed to stand out in the paper as an almost immodest exposure of family life, read furtively at first, and not talked of, and yet every member of the family was conscious of an increase in the family importance. Aunt Patience discovered, from her outlook on the road, that summer visitors had a habit of driving or walking past the house and then turning back to look at it again.

So Philip was not only distinguished, but he had the power of conferring distinction. No one can envy a young author this first taste of fame, this home recognition. Whatever he may do hereafter, how much more substantial rewards he may attain, this first sweetness of incense to his ambition will never come to him again.

When Philip returned to town, the city was still a social desert, and he plunged into the work piled up on his desk, the never−ceasing accumulation of manuscripts, most of them shells which the workers have dredged up from the mud of the literary ocean, in which the eager publisher is always expecting to find pearls. Even Celia was still in the country, and Philip's hours spared from drudgery were given to the new story. His days, therefore, passed

without incident, but not without pleasure. For whatever annoyances the great city may have usually, it is in the dull season−−that is, the season of its summer out−of−doors animation−−a most attractive and, even stimulating place for the man who has an absorbing pursuit, say a work in creative fiction. Undisturbed by social claims or public interests, the very noise and whirl of the gay metropolis seem to hem him in and protect the world of his own imagination.

The first disturbing event in this serenity was the report of the Mavick ball, already referred to, and the interpretation put upon it by the newspapers. In this light his plans seemed the merest moonshine. What became of his fallacious hope of waiting when events were driving on at this rate? What chance had he in such a social current? Would Evelyn be strong enough to stem it and to wait also? And to wait for what? For the indefinite and improbable event of a poor author, hardly yet recognized as an author, coming into position, into an income (for that was the weak point in his aspirations) that would not be laughed at by the millionaire. When he coolly considered it, was it reasonable to expect that Mr. and Mrs. Mavick would ever permit Evelyn to throw away the brilliant opportunity for their daughter which was to be the crowning end of their social ambition? The mere statement of the proposition was enough to overwhelm him.

That this would be the opinion of the world he could not doubt. He felt very much alone. It was not, however, in any resolve to make a confidante of Celia, but in an absolute need of companionship, that he went to see if she had returned. That he had any personal interest in this ball he did not intend to let Celia know, but talk with somebody he must. Of his deep affection for this friend of his boyhood, there was no doubt, nor of his knowledge of her devotion to his interests. Why, then, was he reserved with her upon the absorbing interest of his life?

Celia had returned, before the opening of the medical college, full of a new idea. This was nothing new in her restless nature; but if Philip had not been blinded by the common selfishness of his sex, he might have seen in the gladness of her welcome of him something more than mere sisterly affection.

"Are you real glad to see me, Phil? I thought you might be lonesome by this time in the deserted city."

"I was, horribly." He was still holding her hand. "Without a chance to talk with you or Alice, I am quite an orphan."

"Ah! You or Alice! "A shade of disappointment came over her face as she dropped his hand. But she rallied in a moment.

"Poor boy! You ought to have a guardian. What heroine of romance are you running after now?"

"In my new story?"

"Of course."

"She isn't very well defined in my mind yet. But a lovely girl, without anything peculiar, no education to speak of, or career, fascinating in her womanhood, such as might walk out of the Bible. Don't you think that would be a novelty? But it is the most difficult to do."

"Negative. That sort has gone out. Philip, why don't you take the heroine of the Mavick ball? There is a theme." She was watching him shrewdly, and saw the flush in his face as he hurriedly asked,

"Did you ever see her?"

"Only at a distance. But you must know her well enough for a literary purpose. The reports of the ball give you the setting of the drama."

"Did you read them?"

"I should say I did. Most amusing."

"Celia, don't you think it would be an ungentlemanly thing to take a social event like that?"

"Why, you must take life as it is. Of course you would change the details. You could lay the scene in Philadelphia. Nobody would suspect you then."

Philip shook his head. The conversation was not taking the turn that was congenial to him. The ball seemed to him a kind of maelstrom in which all his hopes were likely to be wrecked. And here was his old friend, the keenest−sighted woman he knew, looking upon it simply as literary material−−a ridiculous social event. He had better change the subject.

"So the college is not open yet?"

"No, I came back because I had a new idea, and wanted time to look around. We haven't got quite the right idea in our city missions. They have another side. We need country missions."

"Aren't they that now?"

"No, I mean for the country. I've been about a good deal all this vacation, and my ideas are confirmed. The country towns and villages are full of young hoodlums and toughs, and all sorts of wickedness. They could be improved by sending city boys up there−−yes, and girls of tender age. I don't mean the worst ones, not altogether. The young of a certain low class growing up in the country are even worse than the same class in the city, and they lack a civility of manner which is pretty sure to exist in a city−bred person."

"If the country is so bad, why send any more unregenerates into it?"

"How do you know that anybody is always to be unregenerate? But I wouldn't send thieves and imbeciles. I would select children of some capacity, whose circumstances are against them where they are, and I am sure they would make better material than a good deal of the young generation in country villages now. This is what I mean by a mission for the country. We have been bending all our efforts to the reformation of the cities. What we need to go at now is the reforming of the country."

"You have taken a big contract," said Philip, smiling at her enthusiasm. "Don't you intend to go on with medicine?"

"Certainly. At least far enough to be of some use in breaking up people's ignorance about their own bodies. Half the physical as well as moral misery comes from ignorance. Didn't I always tell you that I want to know? A good many of my associates pretend to be agnostics, neither believe or disbelieve in anything. The further I go the more I am convinced that there is a positive basis for things. They talk about the religion of humanity. I tell you, Philip, that humanity is pretty poor stuff to build a religion on."

The talk was wandering far away from what was in Philip's mind, and presently Celia perceived his want of interest.

"There, that is enough about myself. I want to know all about you, your visit to Rivervale, how the publishing house suits you, how the story is growing."

And Philip talked about himself, and the rumors in Wall Street, and Mr. Ault and his offer, and at last about the Mavicks−−he could not help that−−until he felt that Celia was what she had always been to him, and when he went away he held her hand and said what a dear, sweet friend she was.

And when he had gone, Celia sat a long time by the window, not seeing much of the hot street into which she looked, until there were tears in her eyes.

XXIV

There was one man in New York who thoroughly enjoyed the summer. Murad Ault was, as we say of a man who is free to indulge his natural powers, in his element. There are ingenious people who think that if the ordering of nature had been left to them, they could maintain moral conditions, or at least restore a disturbed equilibrium, without violence, without calling in the aid of cyclones and of uncontrollable electric displays, in order to clear the air. There are people also who hold that the moral atmosphere of the world does not require the occasional intervention of Murad Ault.

The conceit is flattering to human nature, but it is not borne out by the performance of human nature in what is called the business world, which is in such intimate alliance with the social world in such great centres of conflict as London, New York, or Chicago. Mr. Ault is everywhere an integral and necessary part of the prevailing system−−that is, the system by which the moral law is applied to business. The system, perhaps, cannot be defended, but it cannot be explained without Mr. Ault. We may argue that such a man is a disturber of trade, of legitimate operations, of the fairest speculations, but when we see how uniform he is as a phenomenon, we begin to be convinced that he is somehow indispensable to the system itself. We cannot exactly understand why a cyclone should pick up a peaceful village in Nebraska and deposit it in Kansas, where there, is already enough of that sort, but we cannot conceive of Wall Street continuing to be Wall Street unless it were now and then visited by a powerful adjuster like Mr. Ault.

The advent, then, of Murad Ault in New York was not a novelty, but a continuation of like phenomena in the Street, ever since the day when ingenious men discovered that the ability to guess correctly which of two sparrows, sold for a farthing, lighting on the spire of Trinity Church, will fly first, is an element in a successful and distinguished career. There was nothing peculiar in kind in his career, only in the force exhibited which lifted him among the few whose destructive energy the world condones and admires as Napoleonic. He may have been an instrument of Providence. When we do not know exactly what to do with an exceptional man who is disagreeable, we call him an Instrument of Providence.

It is not, then, in anything exceptional that we are interested in the operations of Murad Ault, but simply on account of his fortuitous connection with a great fortune which had its origin in very much the same cyclonic conditions that Mr. Ault reveled in. Those who know Wall Street best, by reason of sad experience, say that the presiding deity there is not the Chinese god, Luck, but the awful pagan deity, Nemesis. Alas! how many innocent persons suffer in order to get justice done in this world.

Those who have unimpaired memories may recollect the fortune amassed, many years previous to this history, by one Rodney Henderson, gathered and enlarged by means not indictable, but which illustrate the wide divergence between the criminal code and the moral law. This fortune, upon the sudden death of its creator, had been largely diverted from its charitable destination by fraud, by a crime that would have fallen within the code if it had been known. This fortune had been enjoyed by those who seized it for many years of great social success, rising into acknowledged respectability and distinction; and had become the basis of the chance of social elevation, which is dear to the hearts of so many excellent people, who are compelled to wander about in a chaotic society that has no hereditary titles. It was this fortune, the stake in such an ambition, or perhaps destined in a new possessor to a nobler one, that came in the way of Mr. Ault's extensive schemes.

It is not necessary to infer that Mr. Ault was originally actuated by any greed as to this special accumulation of property, or that he had any malevolence towards Mr. Mavick; but the eagerness of his personal pursuit led him into collisions. There were certain possessions of Mr. Mavick that were desirable for the rounding−out of his plans−−these graspings were many of them understood by the public as necessary to the "development of a system"−−and in this collision of interests and fierce strength a vindictive feeling was engendered, a feeling born, as has been hinted, by Mr. Mavick's attempt to trick his temporary ally in a certain operation, so that Mr. Ault's main purpose was to "down Mavick." This was no doubt an exaggeration concerning a man with so many domestic virtues as Mr. Ault, meaning by domestic virtues indulgence of his family; but a fight for place or property in politics or in the Street is pretty certain to take on a personal character.

We can understand now why Mr. Ault read the accounts of the Mavick ball with a grim smile. In speaking of it he used the vulgar term "splurge," a word especially offensive to the refined society in which the Mavicks had gained a foothold. And yet the word was on the lips of a great many men on the Street. The shifting application of sympathy is a very queer thing in this world. Mr. Ault was not a snob. Whatever else he was, he made few pretensions. In his first advent he had been resisted as an intruder and shunned as a vulgarian; but in time respect for his force and luck mingled with fear of his reckless talent, and in the course of events it began to be admitted that the rough diamond was being polished into one of the corner−stones of the great business edifice. At the time of this writing he did not altogether lack the sympathy of the Street, and an increasing number of people were not sorry to see Mr. Mavick get the worst of it in repeated trials of strength. And in each of these trials it became increasingly difficult for Mr. Mavick to obtain the assistance and the credit which are often indispensable to the strongest men in a panic.

The truth was that there were many men in the Street who were not sorry to see Mr. Mavick worried. They remembered perfectly well the omniscient snobbishness of Thomas Mavick when he held a position in the State Department at Washington and was at the same time a secret agent of Rodney Henderson. They did not change their opinion of him when, by his alliance with Mrs. Henderson, he stepped into control of Mr. Henderson's property and obtained the mission to Rome; but later on he had been accepted as one of the powers in the financial world. There were a few of the old stagers who never trusted him. Uncle Jerry Hollowell, for instance, used to say, "Mavick is smart, smart as lightnin'; I guess he'll make ducks and drakes of the Henderson property." They are very superficial observers of Wall Street who think that character does not tell there. Mr. Mavick may have realized that when in his straits he looked around for assistance.

The history of this panic summer in New York would not be worthy the reader's attention were not the fortunes of some of his acquaintances involved in it. It was not more intense than the usual panics, but it lasted longer on account of the complications with uncertain government policy, and it produced stagnation in social as well as business circles. So quiet a place as Rivervale felt it in the diminution of city visitors, and the great resorts showed it in increased civility to the small number of guests.

The summer at Newport, which had not been distinguished by many great events, was drawing to a close−−that is, it was in the period when those who really loved the charming promenade which is so loved of the sea began to enjoy themselves, and those who indulge in the pleasures of hope, based upon a comfortable matrimonial establishment, are reckoning up the results of the campaign.

Mrs. Mavick, according to her own assertion, was one of those who enjoy nature. "Nature and a few friends, not too many, only those whom one trusts and who are companionable," she had said to Lord Montague.

This young gentleman had found the pursuit of courtship in America attended by a good many incidental social luxuries. It had been a wise policy to impress him with the charm of a society which has unlimited millions to make it attractive. Even to an impecunious noble there is a charm in this, although the society itself has some of the lingering conditions of its money origin. But since the great display of the ball, and the legitimate inferences drawn from it by the press and the fashionable world, Mrs. Mavick had endeavored to surround her intended

son−in−law with the toils of domestic peace.

He must be made to feel at home. And this she did. Mrs. Mavick was as admirable in the role of a domestic woman as of a woman of the world. The simple pleasures, the confidences, the intimacies of home life surrounded him. His own mother, the aged duchess, could not have looked upon him with more affection, and possibly not have pampered him with so many luxuries. There was only one thing wanting to make this home complete. In conventional Europe the contracting parties are not the signers of the marriage contract. In the United States the parties most interested take the initiative in making the contract.

Here lay the difficulty of the situation, a situation that puzzled Lord Montague and enraged Mrs. Mavick. Evelyn maintained as much indifference to the domestic as to the worldly situation. Her mother thought her lifeless and insensible; she even went so far as to call her unwomanly in her indifference to what any other woman would regard as an opportunity for a brilliant career.

Lifeless indeed she was, poor child; physically languid and scarcely able to drag herself through the daily demands upon her strength. Her mother made it a reproach that she was so pale and unresponsive. Apparently she did not resist, she did everything she was told to do. She passed, indeed, hours with Lord Montague, occasions contrived when she was left alone in the house with him, and she made heroic efforts to be interested, to find something in his mind that was in sympathy with her own thoughts. With a woman's ready instinct she avoided committing herself to his renewed proposals, sometimes covert, sometimes direct, but the struggle tired her. At the end of all such interviews she had to meet her mother, who, with a smile of hope and encouragement, always said, "Well, I suppose you and Lord Montague have made it up," and then to encounter the contempt expressed for her as a "goose."

She was helpless in such toils. At times she felt actually abandoned of any human aid, and in moods of despondency almost resolved to give up the struggle. In the eyes of the world it was a good match, it would make her mother happy, no doubt her father also; and was it not her duty to put aside her repugnance, and go with the current of the social and family forces that seemed irresistible?

Few people can resist doing what is universally expected of them. This invisible pressure is more difficult to stand against than individual tyranny. There are no tragedies in our modern life so pathetic as the ossification of women's hearts when love is crushed under the compulsion of social and caste requirements. Everybody expected that Evelyn would accept Lord Montague. It could be said that for her own reputation the situation required this consummation of the intimacy of the season. And the mother did not hesitate to put this interpretation upon the events which were her own creation.

But with such a character as Evelyn, who was a constant puzzle to her mother, this argument had very little weight compared with her own sense of duty to her parents. Her somewhat ideal education made worldly advantages of little force in her mind, and love the one priceless possession of a woman's heart which could not be bartered. And yet might there not be an element of selfishness in this−−might not its sacrifice be a family duty? Mrs. Mavick having found this weak spot in her daughter's armor, played upon it with all her sweet persuasive skill and show of tenderness.

"Of course, dear," she said, "you know what would make me happy. But I do not want you to yield to my selfishness or even to your father's ambition to see his only child in an exalted position in life. I can bear the disappointment. I have had to bear many. But it is your own happiness I am thinking of. And I think also of the cruel blow your refusal will inflict upon a man whose heart is bound up in you."

"But I don't love him." The girl was very pale, and she spoke with an air of weariness, but still with a sort of dogged persistence.

"You will in time. A young girl never knows her own heart, any more than she knows the world."

"Mother, that isn't all. It would be a sin to him to pretend to give him a heart that was not his. I can't; I can't."

"My dear child, that is his affair. He is willing to trust you, and to win your love. When we act from a sense of duty the way is apt to open to us. I have never told you of my own earlier experience. I was not so young as you are when I married Mr. Henderson, but I had not been without the fancies and experiences of a young girl. I might have yielded to one of them but for family reasons. My father had lost his fortune and had died, disappointed and broken down. My mother, a lovely woman, was not strong, was not capable of fighting the world alone, and she depended upon me, for in those days I had plenty of courage and spirit. Mr. Henderson was a widower whom we had known as a friend before the death of his accomplished wife. In his lonesomeness he turned to me. In our friendlessness I turned to him. Did I love him? I esteemed him, I respected him, I trusted him, that was all. He did not ask more than that. And what a happy life we had! I shared in all his great plans. And when in the midst of his career, with such large ideas of public service and philanthropy, he was stricken down, he left to me, in the confidence of his love, all that fortune which is some day to be yours." Mrs. Mavick put her handkerchief to her eyes. "Ah, well, our destiny is not in our hands. Heaven raised up for me another protector, another friend. Perhaps some of my youthful illusions have vanished, but should I have been happier if I had indulged them? I know your dear father does not think so."

"Mother," cried Evelyn, deeply moved by this unprecedented confidence, "I cannot bear to see you suffer on my account. But must not every one decide for herself what is right before God?"

At this inopportune appeal to a higher power Mrs. Mavick had some difficulty in restraining her surprise and indignation at what she considered her child's stubbornness. But she conquered the inclination, and simply looked sad and appealing when she said:

"Yes, yes, you must decide for yourself. You must not consider your mother as I did mine."

This cruel remark cut the girl to the heart. The world seemed to whirl around her, right and wrong and duty in a confused maze. Was she, then, such a monster of ingratitude? She half rose to throw herself at her mother's feet, upon her mother's mercy. And at the moment it was not her reason but her heart that saved her. In the moral confusion rose the image of Philip. Suppose she should gain the whole world and lose him! And it was love, simple, trusting love, that put courage into her sinking heart.

"Mother, it is very hard. I love you; I could die for you. I am so forlorn. But I cannot, I dare not, do such a thing, such a dreadful thing!"

She spoke brokenly, excitedly, she shuddered as she said the last words, and her eyes were full of tears as she bent down and kissed her mother.

When she had gone, Mrs. Mavick sat long in her chair, motionless between bewilderment and rage. In her heart she was saying, "The obstinate, foolish girl must be brought to reason.""

A servant entered with a telegram. Mrs. Mavick took it, and held it listlessly while the servant waited. "You can sign." After the door closed−−she was still thinking of Evelyn−−she waited a moment before she tore the envelope, and with no eagerness unfolded the official yellow paper. And then she read:

"I have made an assignment. T. M."

A half−hour afterwards when a maid entered the room she found Mrs. Mavick still seated in the armchair, her hands powerless at her side, her eyes staring into space, her face haggard and old.

XXV

The action of Thomas Mavick in giving up the fight was as unexpected in New York as it was in Newport. It was a shock even to those familiar with the Street. It was known that he was in trouble, but he had been in trouble before. It was known that there had been sacrifices, efforts at extension, efforts at compromise, but the general public fancied that the Mavick fortune had a core too solid to be washed away by any storm. Only a very few people knew−−such old hands as Uncle Jerry Hollowell, and such inquisitive bandits as Murad Ault−−that the house of Mavick was a house of cards, and that it might go down when the belief was destroyed that it was of granite.

The failure was not an ordinary sensation, and, according to the excellent practices and differing humors of the daily newspapers, it was made the most of, until the time came for the heavy weeklies to handle it in its moral aspects as an illustration of modern civilization. On the first morning there was substantial unanimity in assuming the totality of the disaster, and the most ingenious artists in headlines vied with each other in startling effects: "Crash in Wall Street." " Mavick Runs Up the White Flag." " King of Wall Street Called Down." "Ault Takes the Pot." "Dangerous to Dukes." "Mavick Bankrupt." "The House of Mavick a Ruin." " Dukes and Drakes." "The Sea Goes Over Him."

This, however, was only the beginning. The sensation must be prolonged. The next day there were attenuating circumstances. It might be only a temporary embarrassment. The assets were vastly greater than the liabilities. There was talk in financial circles of an adjustment. With time the house could go on. The next day it was made a reproach to the house that such deceptive hopes were put upon the public. Journalistic enterprise had discovered that the extent of the liabilities had been concealed. This attempt to deceive the public, these defenders of the public interest would expose. The next day the wind blew from another direction. The alarmists were rebuked. The creditors were disposed to be lenient. Doubtful securities were likely to realize more than was expected. The assignees were sharply scored for not taking the newspapers into their confidence.

And so for ten days the failure went on in the newspapers, backward and forward, now hopeless, now relieved, now sunk in endless complications, and fallen into the hands of the lawyers who could be trusted with the most equitable distribution of the property involved, until the reading public were glad to turn, with the same eager zest, to the case of the actress who was found dead in a hotel in Jersey City. She was attended only by her pet poodle, in whose collar was embedded a jewel of great price. This jewel was traced to a New York establishment, whence it had disappeared under circumstances that pointed to the criminality of a scion of a well−known family−−an exposure which would shake society to its foundations.

Meantime affairs took their usual course. The downfall of Mavick is too well known in the Street to need explanation here. For a time it was hoped that sacrifices of great interests would leave a modest little fortune, but under the pressure of liquidation these hopes melted away. If anything could be saved it would be only comparatively valueless securities and embarrassed bits of property that usually are only a delusion and a source of infinite worry to a bankrupt. It seemed incredible that such a vast fortune should so disappear; but there were wise men who, so they declared, had always predicted this disaster. For some years after Henderson's death the fortune had appeared to expand marvelously. It was, however, expanded, and not solidified. It had been risked in many gigantic speculations (such as the Argentine), and it had been liable to collapse at any time if its central credit was doubted. Mavick's combinations were splendidly conceived, but he lacked the power of coordination. And great as were his admitted abilities, he had never inspired confidence.

"And, besides," said Uncle Jerry, philosophizing about it in his homely way, "there's that little devil of a Carmen, the most fascinating woman I ever knew−−it would take the Bank of England to run her. Why, when I see that Golden House going up, I said I'd give 'em five years to balloon in it. I was mistaken. They've floated it about eighteen. Some folks are lucky−−up to a certain point.'

Grave history gives but a paragraph to a personal celebrity of this sort. When a ship goes down in a tempest off the New England coast, there is a brief period of public shock and sympathy, and then the world passes on to other accidents and pleasures; but for months relics of the great vessel float ashore on lonely headlands or are cast up on sandy beaches, and for years, in many a home made forlorn by the shipwreck, are aching hearts and an ever−present calamity.

The disaster of the house of Mavick was not accepted without a struggle, lasting long after the public interest in the spectacle had abated−−a struggle to save the ship and then to pick up some debris from the great wreck. The most pathetic sight in the business world is that of a bankrupt, old and broken, pursuing with always deluded expectations the remnants of his fortune, striving to make new combinations, involved in lawsuits, alternately despairing, alternately hopeful in the chaos of his affairs. This was the fate of Thomas Mavick.

The news was all over Newport in a few hours after it had stricken down Mrs. Mavick. The newspaper details the morning after were read with that eager interest that the misfortunes of neighbors always excite. After her first stupor, Mrs. Mavick refused to believe it. It could not be, and her spirit of resistance rose with the frantic messages she sent to her husband. Alas, the cold fact of the assignment remained. Still her courage was not quite beaten down. The suspension could only be temporary. She would not have it otherwise. Two days she showed herself as usual in Newport, and carried herself bravely. The sympathy looked or expressed was wormwood to her, but she met it with a reassuring smile. To be sure it was very hard to bear such a blow, the result of a stock intrigue, but it would soon pass over−−it was a temporary embarrassment−− that she said everywhere.

She had not, however, told the news to Evelyn with any such smiling confidence. There was still rage in her heart against her daughter, as if her obstinacy had some connection with this blow of fate, and she did not soften the announcement. She expected to sting her, and she did astonish and she did grieve her, for the breaking−up of her world could not do otherwise; but it was for her mother and not for herself that Evelyn showed emotion. If their fortune was gone, then the obstacle was removed that separated her from Philip. The world well lost! This flashed through her mind before she had fairly grasped the extent of the fatality, and it blunted her appreciation of it as an unmixed ruin.

"Poor mamma!" was what she said.

"Poor me!" cried Mrs. Mavick, looking with amazement at her daughter," don't you understand that our life is all ruined?"

"Yes, that part of it, but we are left. It might have been so much worse."

"Worse? You have no more feeling than a chip. You are a beggar! That is all. What do you mean by worse?"

"If father had done anything dishonorable!" suggested the girl, timidly, a little scared by her mother's outburst.

"Evelyn, you are a fool!"

And perhaps she was, with such preposterous notions of what is really valuable in life. There could be no doubt of it from Mrs. Mavick's point of view.

If Evelyn's conduct exasperated her, the non−appearance of Lord Montague after the publication of the news seriously alarmed her. No doubt he was shocked, but she could explain it to him, and perhaps he was too much interested in Evelyn to be thrown off by this misfortune. The third day she wrote him a note, a familiar, almost affectionate note, chiding him for deserting them in their trouble. She assured him that the news was greatly exaggerated, the embarrassment was only temporary, such things were always happening in the Street. "You know," she said, playfully, "it is our American way to be up in a minute when we seem to be down." She asked

him to call, for she had something that was important to tell him, and, besides, she needed his counsel as a friend of the house. The note was despatched by a messenger.

In an hour it was returned, unopened, with a verbal message from his host, saying that Lord Montague had received important news from London, and that he had left town the day before.

"Coward!" muttered the enraged woman, with closed teeth. "Men are all cowards, put them to the test."

The energetic woman judged from a too narrow basis. Because Mavick was weak−−and she had always secretly despised him for yielding to her−−weak as compared with her own indomitable spirit, she generalized wildly. Her opinion of men would have been modified if she had come in contact with Murad Ault.

To one man in New York besides Mr. Ault the failure did not seem a personal calamity. When Philip saw in the steamer departures the name of Lord Montague, his spirits rose in spite of the thought that the heiress was no longer an heiress. The sky lifted, there was a promise of fair weather, the storm, for him, had indeed cleared the air.

"Dear Philip," wrote Miss McDonald, "it is really dreadful news, but I cannot be so very downhearted. It is the least of calamities that could happen to my dear child. Didn't I tell you that it is always darkest just before the dawn?"

And Philip needed the hope of the dawn. Trial is good for any one, but hopeless suffering for none. Philip had not been without hope, but it was a visionary indulgence, against all evidence. It was the hope of youth, not of reason. He stuck to his business doggedly, he stuck to his writing doggedly, but over all his mind was a cloud, an oppression not favorable to creative effort−−that is, creative effort sweet and not cynical, sunny and not morbid.

And yet, who shall say that this very experience, this oppression of circumstance, was not the thing needed for the development of the best that was in him? Thrown back upon himself and denied an airy soaring in the heights of a prosperous fancy, he had come to know himself and his limitations. And in the year he had learned a great deal about his art. For one thing he had come to the ground. He was looking more at life as it is. His experience at the publishers had taught him one important truth, and that is that a big subject does not make a big writer, that all that any mind can contribute to the general thought of the world in literature is what is in itself, and if there is nothing in himself it is vain for the writer to go far afield for a theme. He had seen the young artists, fretting for want of subjects, wandering the world over in search of an object fitted to their genius, setting up their easels in front of the marvels of nature and of art, in the expectation that genius would descend upon them.

If they could find something big enough to paint! And he had seen, in exhibition after exhibition, that the artist who cannot paint a rail− fence cannot paint a pyramid. A man does not become a good rider by mounting an elephant; ten to one a donkey would suit him better. Philip had begun to see that the life around him had elements enough of the comic and the tragic to give full play to all his powers.

He began to observe human beings as he had never done before. There were only two questions, and they are at the bottom of all creative literature−−could he see them, could he make others see them?

This was all as true before the Mavick failure as after; but, before, what was the use of effort? Now there was every inducement to effort. Ambition to succeed had taken on him the hold of necessity. And with a free mind as to the obstacles that lay between him and the realization of the great dream of his life, the winning of the one woman who could make his life complete, Philip set to work with an earnestness and a clearness of vision that had never been given him before.

In the wreck of the Mavick estate, in its distribution, there are one or two things of interest to the general reader. One of these was the fate of the Golden House, as it was called. Mrs. Mavick had hurried back to her town house, determined to save it at all hazard. The impossibility of this was, however, soon apparent even to her intrepid spirit. She would either sacrifice all else to save it, or−−dark thoughts of ending it in a conflagration entered her mind. This was only her first temper. But to keep the house without a vast fortune to sustain it was an impossibility, and, as it was the most conspicuous of Mavick's visible possessions, perhaps the surrender of it, which she could not prevent, would save certain odds and ends here and there. Whether she liked it or not, the woman learned for once that her will had little to do with the course of events.

Its destination was gall and wormwood both to Carmen and her husband. For it fell into the hands of Murad Ault. He coveted it as the most striking symbol of the position he had conquered in the metropolis. Its semi−barbaric splendor appealed also to his passion for display. And it was notable that the taste of the rude lad of poverty−−this uncultivated offspring of a wandering gypsy and herb−−collector−−perhaps she had ancient and noble blood in her veins−−should be the same for material ostentation and luxury as that of the cultivated, fastidious Mavick and his worldly−minded wife. So persistent is the instinct of barbarism in our modern civilization.

When Ault told his wife what he had done, that sweet, domestic, and sensible woman was very far from being elated.

"I am almost sorry," she said.

"Sorry for what?" asked Mr. Ault, gently, but greatly surprised.

"For the Mavicks. I don't mean for Mrs. Mavick−−I hear she is a worldly and revengeful woman−−but for the girl. It must be dreadful to turn her out of all the surroundings of her happy life. And I hear she is as good as she is lovely. Think what it would be for our own girls."

"But it can't be helped," said Ault, persuasively. "The house had to be sold, and it makes no difference who has it, so far as the girl is concerned."

"And don't you fear a little for our own girls, launching out that way?"

"You are afraid they will get lost in that big house?" And Mr. Ault laughed. "It isn't a bit too big or too good for them. At any rate, my dear, in they go, and you must get ready to move. The house will be empty in a week."

"Murad," and Mrs. Ault spoke as if she were not thinking of the change for herself, "there is one thing I wish you would do for me, dear."

"What is that?"

"Go to Mr. Mavick, or to Mrs. Mavick, or the assignees or whoever, and have the daughter−−yes, and her mother−−free to take away anything they want, anything dear to them by long association. Will you?"

"I don't see how. Mavick wouldn't do it for us, and I guess he is too proud to accept anything from me. I don't owe him anything. And then the property is in the assignment. Whatever is there I bought with the house."

"I should be so much happier if you could do something about it."

"Well, it don't matter much. I guess the assignees can make Mrs. Mavick believe easy enough that certain things belong to her. But I would not do it for any other living being but you."

"By−the−way," he added, "there is another bit of property that I didn't take, the Newport palace."

"I should have dreaded that more than the other."

"So I thought. And I have another plan. It's long been in my mind, and we will carry it out next summer. There is a little plateau on the side of the East Mountain in Rivervale, where there used to stand a shack of a cabin, with a wild sort of garden−patch about it, a tumble−down root fence, all in the midst of brush and briers. Lord, what a habitation it was! But such a view−−rivers, mountains, meadows, and orchards in the distance! That is where I lived with my mother. What a life! I hated everything, everybody but her."

Mr. Ault paused, his strong, dark face working with passion, as the memory of his outlawed boyhood revived. Is it possible that this pirate of the Street had a bit of sentiment at the bottom of his heart? After a moment he continued:

"That was the spot to which my mother took me when I was knee−high. I've bought it, bought the whole hillside. Next summer we will put up a house there, not a very big house, just a long, low sort of a Moorish pavilion, the architect calls it. I wish she could see it."

Mrs. Ault rose, with tears in her gentle eyes, stood by her husband's chair a moment, ran her fingers through his heavy black locks, bent down and kissed him, and went away without a word.

There was another bit of property that was not included in the wreck. It belonged to Mrs. Mavick. This was a little house in Irving Place, in which Carmen Eschelle lived with her mother, in the days before the death of Henderson's first wife, not very happy days for that wife. Carmen had a fancy for keeping it after her marriage. Not from any sentiment, she told Mr. Mavick on the occasion of her second marriage, oh, no, but somehow it seemed to her, in all her vast possessions left to her by Henderson, the only real estate she had. It was the only thing that had not passed into the absolute possession and control of Mavick. The great town house, with all the rest, stood in Mavick's name. What secret influence had he over her that made her submit to such a foolish surrender?

It was in this little house that the reduced family stowed itself after the downfall. The little house, had it been sentient, would have been astonished at the entrance into it of the furniture and the remnants of luxurious living that Mrs. Mavick was persuaded belonged to her personally. These reminders of former days were, after all, a mockery in the narrow quarters and the pinched economy of the bankrupt. Yet they were, for a time useful in preserving to Mrs. Mavick a measure of self− respect, her self−respect having always been based upon what she had and not what she was. In truth, the change of lot was harder for Mrs. Mavick than for Evelyn, since the world in which the latter lived had not been destroyed. She still had her books, she still had a great love in her heart, and hope, almost now a sure hope, that her love would blossom into a great happiness.

But where was Philip? In all this time why did he make no sign? At moments a great fear came over her. She was so ignorant of life. Could he know what misery she was in, the daily witness of her father's broken condition, of her mother's uncertain temper?

XXVI

Is justice done in this world only by a succession of injustices? Is there any law that a wrong must right a wrong? Did it rebuke the means by which the vast fortune of Henderson was accumulated, that it was defeated of any good use by the fraud of his wife? Was her action punished by the same unscrupulous tactics of the Street that originally made the fortune? And Ault? Would a stronger pirate arise in time to despoil him, and so act as the Nemesis of all violation of the law of honest relations between men?

The comfort is, in all this struggle of the evil powers, masked as justice, that the Almighty Ruler of the world does not forget his own, and shows them a smiling face in the midst of disaster. There is no mystery in this. For the noble part in man cannot be touched in its integrity by such vulgar disasters as we are considering. In those days when Evelyn saw dissolving about her the material splendors of her old life, while the Golden House was being dismantled, and she was taking sad leave of the scenes of her girlhood, so vivid with memory of affection and of intellectual activity, they seemed only the shell, the casting−off of which gave her freedom. The sun never shone brighter, there was never such singing in her heart, as on the morning when she was free to go to Mrs. Van Cortlandt's and throw herself into the arms of her dear governess and talk of Philip.

Why not? Perhaps she had not that kind of maidenly shyness, sometimes called conventional propriety, sometimes described as 'mauvaise honte' which a woman of the world would have shown. The impulses of her heart followed as direct lines as the reasoning of her brain. Was it due to her peculiar education, education only in the noblest ideas of the race, that she should be a sort of reversion, in our complicated life, to the type of woman in the old societies (we like to believe there was such a type as the poets love, the Nausicaas), who were single−minded, as frank to avow affection as opinion?

"Have you seen him?" she asked.

"No, but he has written."

"And you think he−−" the girl had her arms around her friend's neck again, and concealed her blushing face don't make me say it, McDonald."

"Yes, dear, I am sure−−I know he does."

There was a little quiver in her form, but it was not of agony; then she put her hands on the shoulders of her governess, and, looking in her eyes, said:

"When you did see him, how did he look−−how did he look?−−pretty sad?"

"How could he help it?"

"The dear! But was he well?"

"Splendidly, so he said. Like his old self."

"Tell me," said the girl.

And Miss McDonald went into delightful details, how he looked, how he walked, how his voice sounded, how he talked, how melancholy he was, and how full of determination he was, his eyes were so kindly, and his smile was never so sweet as now when there was sadness in it.

"It is very long since," drearily murmured the girl. And then she continued, partly to herself, partly to Miss McDonald: "He will come now, can't he? Not to that house. Never would I wish him to set foot in it. But he is not forbidden to come to the place where we are going. Soon, you think? Perhaps you might hint−−oh no, not from me−−just your idea. Wouldn't it be natural, after our misfortune? Perhaps mamma would feel differently after what has happened. Oh, that Montague! that horrid little man! I think−−I think I shall receive him coolly at first, just to see."

But it was not immediately that the chance for a guileless woman to show her coolness to her lover was to occur. This postponement was not due to the coolness or to the good sense of Philip. When the catastrophe came, his

first impulse was that of a fireman who plunges into a burning building to rescue the imperiled inmates. He pictured in his mind a certain nobility of action in going forward to the unfortunate family with his sympathy, and appearing to them in the heroic attitude of a man whose love has no alloy of self−interest. They should speedily understand that it was not the heiress, but the woman, with whom he was in love.

But Miss McDonald understood human nature better than that, at least the nature of Mrs. Mavick. People of her temperament, humiliated and enraged, are best left alone. The fierceness with which she would have turned upon any of her society friends who should have presumed to offer her condolence, however sweetly the condescension were concealed, would have been vented without mercy upon the man whose presence would have reminded her of her foolish rudeness to him, and of the bitter failure of her schemes for her daughter. "Wait, wait," said the good counselor, "until the turmoil has subsided, and the hard pressure of circumstances compels her to look at things in their natural relations. She is too sore now in−−the wreck of all her hopes."

But, indeed, her hopes were not all surrendered in a moment. She had more spirit than her husband in their calamity. She was, in fact, a born gambler; she had the qualities of her temperament, and would not believe that courage and luck could not retrieve, at least partially, their fortune. It seemed incredible in the Street that the widow of Henderson should have given over her property so completely to her second husband, and it was a surprise to find that there was very little of value that the assignment of Mavick did not carry with it. The Street did not know the guilty secret between Mavick and his wife that made them cowards to each other. Nor did it understand that Carmen was the more venturesome gambler of the two, and that gradually, for the success of promising schemes, she had thrown one thing after another into the common speculation, until practically all the property stood in Mavick's name. Was she a fool in this, as so many women are about their separate property, or was she cheated?

The palace on Fifth Avenue was not even in her name. When she realized that, there was a scene−−but this is not a history of the quarrels of Carmen and her husband after the break−down.

The reader would not be interested−−the public of the time were not−−in the adjustment of Mavick and his wife to their new conditions. The broken−down, defeated bankrupt is no novelty in Wall Street, the man struggling to keep his foothold in the business of the Street, and descending lower and lower in the scale. The shrewd curbstone broker may climb to a seat in the Stock Exchange; quite as often a lord of the Board, a commander of millions, may be reduced to the seedy watcher of the bulletin−board in a bucket−shop.

At first, in the excitement and the confusion, amid the debris of so much possible wealth, Mavick kept a sort of position, and did not immediately feel the pinch of vulgar poverty. But the day came when all illusion vanished, and it was a question of providing from day to day for the small requirements of the house in Irving Place.

It was not a cheerful household; reproaches are hard to bear when physical energy is wanting to resist them. Mavick had visibly aged during the year. It was only in his office that he maintained anything of the spruce appearance and 'sang froid' which had distinguished the diplomatist and the young adventurer. At home he had fallen into the slovenliness that marks a disappointed old age. Was Mrs. Mavick peevish and unreasonable? Very likely. And had she not reason to be? Was she, as a woman, any more likely to be reconciled to her fate when her mirror told her, with pitiless reflection, that she was an old woman?

Philip waited. Under the circumstances would not both Philip and Evelyn have been justified in disregarding the prohibition that forbade their meeting or even writing to each other? It may be a nice question, but it did not seem so to these two, who did not juggle with their consciences. Philip had given his word. Evelyn would tolerate no concealments; she was just that simple−minded in her filial notions.

The girl, however, had one comfort, and that was the knowledge of Philip through Miss McDonald, whom she saw frequently, and to whom even Mrs. Mavick was in a manner reconciled. She was often in the little house in

Irving Place. There was nothing in her manner to remind Mrs. Mavick that she had done her a great wrong, and her cheerfulness and good sense made her presence and talk a relief from the monotony of the defeated woman's life.

It came about, therefore, that one day Philip made his way down into the city to seek an interview with Mr. Mavick. He found him, after some inquiry, in a barren little office, occupying one of the rented desks with three or four habitues of the Street, one of them an old man like himself, the others mere lads who did not intend to remain long in such cramped quarters.

Mr. Mavick arose when his visitor stood at his desk, buttoned up his frock−coat, and extended his hand with a show of business cordiality, and motioned him to a chair. Philip was greatly shocked at the change in Mr. Mavick's appearance.

"I beg your pardon," he said, "for disturbing you in business hours."

"No disturbance," he answered, with something of the old cynical smile on his lips.

"Long ago I called to see you on the errand I have now, but you were not in town. It was, Mr. Mavick," and Philip hesitated and looked down, "in regard to your daughter."

"Ah, I did not hear of it."

"No? Well, Mr. Mavick, I was pretty presumptuous, for I had no foothold in the city, except a law clerkship."

"I remember−−Hunt, Sharp &Tweedle; why didn't you keep it?"

"I wasn't fitted for the law."

"Oh, literature? Does literature pay?"

"Not in itself, not for many," and Philip forced a laugh. "But it led to a situation in a first−rate publishing house−−an apprenticeship that has now given me a position that seems to be permanent, with prospects beyond, and a very fair salary. It would not seem much to you, Mr. Mavick," and Philip tried to laugh again.

"I don't know," replied Mr. Mavick. "If a fellow has any sort of salary these times, I should advise him to hold on to it. By−the−way, Mr. Burnett, Hunt's a Republican, isn't he?"

"He was," replied Philip, "the last I knew."

"Do you happen to know whether he knows Bilbrick, the present Collector?"

"Mr. Bilbrick used to be a client of his."

"Just so. I think I'll see Hunt. A salary isn't a bad thing for a−−for a man who has retired pretty much from business. But you were saying, Mr. Burnett?"

"I was going to say, Mr. Mavick, that there was a little something more than my salary that I can count on pretty regularly now from the magazines, and I have had another story, a novel, accepted, and−−you won't think me vain−−the publisher says it will go; if it doesn't have a big sale he will−−"

"Make it up to you?"

"Not exactly," and Philip laughed; "he will be greatly mistaken."

"I suppose it is a kind of lottery, like most things. The publishers have to take risks. The only harm I wish them is that they were compelled to read all the stuff they try to make us read. Ah, well. Mr. Burnett, I hope you have made a hit. It is pretty much the same thing in our business. The publisher bulls his own book and bears the other fellow's. Is it a New York story?"

"Partly; things come to a focus here, you know."

"I could give you points. It's a devil of a place. I guess the novelists are too near to see the romance of it. When I was in Rome I amused myself by diving into the mediaeval records. Steel and poison were the weapons then. We have a different method now, but it comes to the same thing, and we say we are more civilized. I think our way is more devilishly dramatic than the old brute fashion. Yes, I could give you points."

"I should be greatly obliged," said Philip, seeing the way to bring the conversation back to its starting point; "your wide experience of life−− if you had leisure at home some time."

"Oh," replied Mavick, with more good−humor in his laugh than he had shown before, "you needn't beat about the bush. Have you seen Evelyn?"

"No, not since that dinner at the Van Cortlandts'."

"Huh! for myself, I should be pleased to see you any time, Mr. Burnett. Mrs. Mavick hasn't felt like seeing anybody lately. But I'll see, I'll see."

The two men rose and shook hands, as men shake hands when they have an understanding.

"I'm glad you are doing well," Mr. Mavick added; "your life is before you, mine is behind me; that makes a heap of difference."

Within a few days Philip received a note from Mrs. Mavick−−not an effusive note, not an explanatory note, not an apologetic note, simply a note as if nothing unusual had happened−−if Mr. Burnett had leisure, would he drop in at five o'clock in Irving Place for a cup of tea?

Not one minute by his watch after the hour named, Philip rang the bell and was shown into a little parlor at the front. There was only one person in the room, a lady in exquisite toilet, who rose rather languidly to meet him, exactly as if the visitor were accustomed to drop in to tea at that hour.

Philip hesitated a moment near the door, embarrassed by a mortifying recollection of his last interview with Mrs. Mavick, and in that moment he saw her face. Heavens, what a change! And yet it was a smiling face.

There is a portrait of Carmen by a foreign artist, who was years ago the temporary fashion in New York, painted the year after her second marriage and her return from Rome, which excited much comment at the time. Philip had seen it in more than one portrait exhibition.

Its technical excellence was considerable. The artist had evidently intended to represent a woman piquant and fascinating, if not strictly beautiful. Many persons said it was lovely. Other critics said that, whether the artist intended it or not, he had revealed the real character of the subject. There was something sinister in its beauty. One artist, who was out of fashion as an idealist, said, of course privately, that the more he looked at it the more hideous it became to him−−like one of Blake's objective portraits of a "soul"−−the naked soul of an evil woman showing through the mask of all her feminine fascinations−−the possible hell, so he put it, under a woman's

charm.

It was this in the portrait that Philip saw in the face smiling a welcome−−like an old, sweetly smiling Lalage−−from which had passed away youth and the sustaining consciousness of wealth and of a place in the great world. The smile was no longer sweet, though the words from the lips were honeyed.

"It is very good of you to drop in in this way, Mr. Burnett," she said, as she gave him her hand. "It is very quiet down here."

"It is to me the pleasantest part of the city."

"You think so now. I thought so once," and there was a note of sadness in her voice. "But it isn't New York. It is a place for the people who are left."

"But it has associations."

"Yes, I know. We pretend that it is more aristocratic. That means the rents are lower. It is a place for youth to begin and for age to end. We seem to go round in a circle. Mr. Mavick began in the service of the government, now he has entered it again−−ah, you did not know?−−a place in the Custom−House. He says it is easier to collect other people's revenues than your own. Do you know, Mr. Burnett, I do not see much use in collecting revenues anyway−−so far as New York is concerned the people get little good of them. Look out there at that cloud of dust in the street."

Mrs. Mavick rambled on in the whimsical, cynical fashion of old ladies when they cease to have any active responsibility in life and become spectators of it. Their remaining enjoyment is the indulgence of frank speech.

"But I thought," Philip interrupted, "that this part of the town was specially New York."

"New York!" cried Carmen, with animation. "The New York of the newspapers, of the country imagination; the New York as it is known in Paris is in Wall Street and in the palaces up−town. Who are the kings of Wall Street, and who build the palaces up−town? They say that there are no Athenians in Athens, and no Romans in Rome. How many New−Yorkers are there in New York? Do New−Yorkers control the capital, rule the politics, build the palaces, direct the newspapers, furnish the entertainment, manufacture the literature, set the pace in society? Even the socialists and mobocrats are not native. Successive invaders, as in Rome, overrun and occupy the town.

No, Mr. Burnett, I have left the existing New York. How queer it is to think about it. My first husband was from New Hampshire. My second husband was from Illinois. And there is your Murad Ault. The Lord knows where he came from.

Talk about the barbarians occupying Rome! Look at that Ault in a palace! Who was that emperor−−Caligula?−−I am like the young lady from a finishing−school who said she never could remember which came first in history, Greece or Rome−−who stabled his horses with stalls and mangers of gold? The Aults stable themselves that way. Ah, me! Let me give you a cup of tea. Even that is English."

"It's an innocent pastime," she continued, as Philip stirred his tea, in perplexity as to how he should begin to say what he had to say−−"you won't object if I light a cigarette? One ought to retain at least one bad habit to keep from spiritual pride. Tea is an excuse for this. I don't think it a bad habit, though some people say that civilization is only exchanging one bad habit for another. Everything changes."

"I don't think I have changed, Mrs. Mavick," said Philip, with earnestness.

"No? But you will. I have known lots of people who said they never would change. They all did. No, you need not protest. I believe in you now, or I should not be drinking tea with you. But you must be tired of an old woman's gossip. Evelyn has gone out for a walk; she didn't know. I expect her any minute. Ah, I think that is her ring. I will let her in. There is nothing so hateful as a surprise."

She turned and gave Philip her hand, and perhaps she was sincere−−she had a habit of being so when it suited her interests−−when she said, "There are no bygones, my friend."

Philip waited, his heart beating a hundred to the minute. He heard greetings and whisperings in the passage−way, and then−−time seemed to stand still−−the door opened and Evelyn stood on the threshold, radiant from her walk, her face flushed, the dainty little figure poised in timid expectation, in maidenly hesitation, and then she stepped forward to meet his advance, with welcome in her great eyes, and gave him her hand in the old−fashioned frankness.

"I am so glad to see you."

Philip murmured something in reply and they were seated.

That was all. It was so different from the meeting as Philip had a hundred times imagined it.

"It has been very long," said Philip, who was devouring the girl with his eyes very long to me."

"I thought you had been very busy," she replied, demurely. Her composure was very irritating.

"If you thought about it at all, Miss Mavick."

"That is not like you, Mr. Burnett," Evelyn replied, looking up suddenly with troubled eyes.

"I didn't mean that," said Philip, moving uneasily in his chair, "I−−so many things have happened. You know a person can be busy and not happy."

"I know that. I was not always happy," said the girl, with the air of making a confession. "But I liked to hear from time to time of the success of my friends," she added, ingenuously. And then, quite inconsequently, "I suppose you have news from Rivervale?"

Yes, Philip heard often from Alice, and he told the news as well as he could, and the talk drifted along−−how strange it seemed!−−about things in which neither of them felt any interest at the moment. Was there no way to break the barrier that the little brown girl had thrown around herself? Were all women, then, alike in parrying and fencing? The talk went on, friendly enough at last, about a thousand things. It might have been any afternoon call on a dear friend. And at length Philip rose to go.

"I hope I may see you again, soon."

"Of course," said Evelyn, cheerfully. "I am sure father will be delighted to see you. He enjoys so little now."

He had taken both her hands to say good−by, and was looking hungrily into her eyes.

"I can't go so. Evelyn, you know, you must know, I love you."

And before the girl comprehended him he had drawn her to him and pressed his lips upon hers.

The girl started back as if stung, and looked at him with flashing eyes.

"What have you done, what have you done to me?"

Her eyes were clouded, and she put her hands to her face, trembling, and then with a cry, as of a soul born into the world, threw herself upon him, her arms around his neck−−

"Philip, Philip, my Philip!"

XXVII

Perhaps Philip's announcement of his good−fortune to Alice and to Celia was not very coherent, but his meaning was plain. Perhaps he was conscious that the tidings would not increase the cheerfulness of Celia's single−handed struggle for the ideal life; at least, he would rather write than tell her face to face.

However he put the matter to her, with what protestations of affectionate friendship and trust he wrapped up the statement that he made as matter of fact as possible, he could not conceal the ecstatic state of his mind.

Nothing like it certainly had happened to anybody in the world before. All the dream of his boyhood, romantic and rose−colored, all the aspirations of his manhood, for recognition, honor, a place in the life of his time, were mere illusions compared to this wonderful crown of life−−a woman's love. Where did it come from into this miserable world, this heavenly ray, this pure gift out of the divine beneficence, this spotless flower in a humanity so astray, this sure prophecy of the final redemption of the world? The immeasurable love of a good woman! And to him! Philip felt humble in his exaltation, charitable in his selfish appropriation. He wanted to write to Celia−−but he did not−−that he loved her more than ever. But to Alice he could pour out his wealth of affection, quickened to all the world by this great love, for he knew that her happiness would be in his happiness.

The response from Alice was what he expected, tender, sweet, domestic, and it was full of praise of Evelyn, of love for her. "Perhaps, dear Phil," she wrote, "I shall love her more than I do you. I almost think−− did I not remember what a bad boy you could be sometimes−−that each one of you is too good for the other. But, Phil, if you should ever come to think that she is not too good for you, you will not be good enough for her. I can't think she is perfect, any more than you are perfect−−you will find that she is just a woman−−but there is nothing in all life so precious as such a heart as hers. You will come here, of course, and at once, whenever it is. You know that big, square, old−fashioned corner chamber, with the high−poster. That is yours. Evelyn never saw it. The morning and the evening sun shoot across it, and the front windows look on the great green crown of Mount Peak. You know it. There is not such a place in the world to hear the low and peaceful murmur of the river, all night long, rushing, tumbling, crooning, I used to think when I was a little girl and dreamed of things unseen, and still going on when the birds begin to sing in the dawn. And with Evelyn! Dear Phil!"

It was in another strain, but not less full of real affection, that Celia wrote:

"I am not going to congratulate you. You are long past the need of that. But you know that I am happy in having you happy. You thought I never saw anything? I wonder if men are as blind as they seem to be? And I had fears. Do you know a man ought to build his own monument. If he goes into a monument built for him, that is the end of him. Now you can work, and you will. I am so glad she isn't an heiress any more. I guess there was a curse on that fortune. But she has eluded it. I believe all you tell me about her. Perhaps there are more such women in the world than you think. Some day I shall know her, and soon. I do long to see her. Love her I feel sure I shall.

"You ask about myself. I am the same, but things change. When I get my medical diploma I shall decide what to do. My little property just suffices, with economy, and I enjoy economy. I doubt if I do any general practice for pay. There are so many young doctors that need the money for practice more than I do. And perhaps taking it up

as a living would make me sort of hard and perfunctory. And there is so much to do in this great New York among the unfortunate that a woman who knows medicine can do better than any one else.

"Ah, me, I am happy in a way, or I expect to be. Everybody−−it isn't because I am a woman I say this−−needs something to lean on now and then. There isn't much to lean on in the college, nor in many of my zealous and ambitious companions there. There is more faith in the poor people down in the wards where I go. They are kind to each other, and most of them, not all, believe in something. They, have that, at any rate, in all their trials and poverty. Philip, don't despise the invisible. I have got into the habit of going into a Catholic church down there, when I am tired and discouraged, and getting the peace of it. It is a sort of open door! You need not jump to the conclusion that I am 'going over.' Maybe I am going back. I don't know. I have always you know, been looking for something.

I like to sit there in that dim quiet and think of things I can't think of elsewhere. Do you think I am queer? Philip, all women are queer. They haven't yet been explained. That is the reason why the novelists find it next to impossible, with all the materials at hand, to make a good woman−−that is a woman. Do you know what it is to want what you don't want? Longing is one thing and reason another.

Perhaps I have depended too much on my reason. If you long to go to a place where you will have peace, why should you let what you call your reason stand in the way? Perhaps your reason is foolishness. You will laugh a little at this, and say that I am tired. No. Only I am not so sure of things as I used to be. Do you remember when we children used to sit under that tree by the Deerfield, how confident I was that I understood all about life, and my airs of superiority?

Well, I don't know as much now. But there is one thing that has survived and grown with the years, and that, Philip, is your dear friendship."

What was it in this unassuming, but no doubt sufficiently conceited and ambitious, young fellow that he should have the affection, the love, of three such women?

Is affection as whimsically, as blindly distributed as wealth? It is the experience of life that it is rare to keep either to the end, but as a man is judged not so much by his ability to make money as to keep it, so it is fair to estimate his qualities by his power to retain friendship. New York is full of failures, bankrupts in fortune and bankrupts in affection, but this melancholy aspect of the town is on the surface, and is not to be considered in comparison with the great body of moderately contented, moderately successful, and on the whole happy households. In this it is a microcosm of the world.

To Evelyn and Philip, judging the world a good deal by each other, in those months before their marriage, when surprising perfection and new tenderness were daily developed, the gay and busy city seemed a sort of paradise.

Mysterious things were going on in the weeks immediately preceding the wedding. There was a conspiracy between Miss McDonald and Philip in the furnishing and setting in order a tiny apartment on the Heights, overlooking the city, the lordly Hudson, and its romantic hills. And when, after the ceremony, on a radiant afternoon in early June, the wedded lovers went to their new home, it was the housekeeper, the old governess, who opened the door and took into her arms the child she had loved and lost awhile.

This fragment of history leaves Philip Burnett on the threshold of his career. Those who know him only by his books may have been interested in his experiences, in the merciful interposition of disaster, before he came into the great fortune of the love of Evelyn Mavick.