A Modern Chronicle, Book III

Winston Churchill

Table of Contents

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BOOK III

CHAPTER I. ASCENDI

HONORA did not go back to Quicksands. Neither, in this modern chronicle, shall we.

The sphere we have left, which we know is sordid, sometimes shines in the retrospect. And there came a time, after the excitement of furnishing the new house was over, when our heroine, as it were, swung for a time in space: not for a very long time; that month, perhaps, between autumn and winter.

We need not be worried about her, though we may pause for a moment or two to sympathize with her in her loneliness or rather in the moods it produced. She even felt, in those days, slightly akin to the Lady of the Victoria (perfectly respectable), whom all of us fortunate enough occasionally to go to New York have seen driving on Fifth Avenue with an expression of wistful haughtiness, and who changes her costumes four times a day.

Sympathy! We have seen Honora surrounded by friends what has become of them? Her husband is president of a trust company, and she has one of the most desirable houses in New York. What more could be wished for? To jump at conclusions in this way is by no means to understand a heroine with an Ideal. She had these things, and strange as it may seem suffered.

Her sunny drawing−room, with its gathered silk curtains, was especially beautiful; whatever the Leffingwells or Allisons may have lacked, it was not taste. Honora sat in it and wondered: wondered, as she looked back over the road she had threaded somewhat blindly towards the Ideal, whether she might not somewhere have taken the wrong turn. The farther she travelled, the more she seemed to penetrate into a land of unrealities. The exquisite objects by which she was surrounded, and which she had collected with such care, had no substance: she would not have been greatly surprised, at any moment, to see them vanish like a scene in a theatre, leaving an empty, windy stage behind them. They did not belong to her, nor she to them.

Past generations of another blood, no doubt, had been justified in looking upon the hazy landscapes in the great tapestries as their own: and children's children had knelt, in times gone by, beside the carved stone mantel. The big, gilded chairs with the silken seats might appropriately have graced the table of the Hôtel de Rambouillet. Would not the warriors and the wits, the patient ladies of high degree and of many children, and even the précieuses ridicules themselves, turn over in their graves if they could so much as imagine the contents of the single street in modern New York where Honora lived?

One morning, as she sat in that room, possessed by these whimsical though painful fancies, she picked up a newspaper and glanced through it, absently, until her eye fell by chance upon a name on the editorial page. Something like an electric shock ran through her, and the letters of the name seemed to quiver and become red. Slowly they spelled Peter Erwin.

"The argument of Mr. Peter Erwin, of St. Louis, before the Supreme Court of the United States in the now celebrated Snowden case is universally acknowledged by lawyers to have been masterly, and reminiscent of the great names of the profession in the past. Mr. Erwin is not dramatic. He appears to carry all before him by the sheer force of intellect, and by a kind of Lincolnian ability to expose a fallacy. He is still a young man, self−made, and studied law under Judge Brice of St. Louis, once President of the National Bar Association, whose partner he is" . . .

Honora cut out the editorial and thrust it in her gown, and threw the newspaper in the fire. She stood for a time after it had burned, watching the twisted remnants fade from flame colour to rose, and finally blacken. Then she went slowly up the stairs and put on her hat and coat and veil. Although a cloudless day, it was windy in the park, and cold, the ruffled waters an intense blue. She walked fast.

She lunched with Mrs. Holt, who had but just come to town; and the light, like a speeding guest, was departing from the city when she reached her own door.

"There is a gentleman in the drawing−room, madam," said the butler. "He said he was an old friend, and a stranger in New York, and asked if he might wait."

She stood still with presentiment.

"What is his name?" she asked.

"Mr. Erwin," said the man.

Still she hesitated. In the strange state in which she found herself that day, the supernatural itself had seemed credible. And yet − she was not prepared.

"I beg pardon, madam," the butler was saying, "perhaps I shouldn't −?"

"Yes, yes, you should," she interrupted him, and pushed past him up the stairs. At the drawing−room door she paused he was unaware of her presence. And he had not changed! She wondered why she had expected him to

change. Even the glow of his newly acquired fame was not discernible behind his well−remembered head. He seemed no older and no younger. And he was standing with his hands behind his back gazing in simple, silent appreciation at the big tapestry nearest the windows.

"Peter," she said, in a low voice.

He turned quickly, and then she saw the glow. But it was the old glow, not the new the light in which her early years had been spent.

"What a coincidence!" she exclaimed, as he took her hand.

"Coincidence?"

"It was only this morning that I was reading in the newspaper all sorts of nice things about you. It made me feel like going out and telling everybody you were an old friend of mine." Still holding his fingers, she pushed him away from her at arm's length, and looked at him. "What does it feel like to be famous, and have editorials about one's self in the New York newspapers?"

He laughed, and released his hands somewhat abruptly.

"It seems as strange to me, Honora, as it does to you."

"How unkind of you, Peter!" she exclaimed.

She felt his eyes upon her, and their searching, yet kindly and humorous rays seemed to illuminate chambers within her which she would have kept in darkness: which she herself did not wish to examine.

"I'm so glad to see you," she said a little breathlessly, flinging her muff and boa on a chair. "Sit there, where I can look at you, and tell me why you didn't let me know you were coming to New York."

He glanced a little comically at the gilt and silk arm−chair which she designated, and then at her; and she smiled and coloured, divining the humour in his unspoken phrase.

"For a great man," she declared, "you are absurd."

He sat down. In spite of his black clothes and the lounging attitude he habitually assumed, with his knees crossed, he did not appear incongruous in a seat that would have harmonized with the flowing robes of the renowned French Cardinal himself. Honora wondered why. He impressed her to−day as force tremendous force in repose, and yet he was the same Peter. Why was it? Had the clipping that even then lay in her bosom effected this magic change? He had intimated as much, but she denied it fiercely.

She rang for tea.

"You haven't told me why you came to New York," she said.

"I was telegraphed for, from Washington, by a Mr. Wing," he explained.

"A Mr. Wing," she repeated. "You don't mean by any chance James Wing?"

"The Mr. Wing," said Peter.

"The reason I asked," explained Honora, flushing, "was because Howard is associated with him. Mr. Wing is largely interested in the Orange Trust Company."

"Yes, I know," said Peter. His elbows were resting on the arms of his chair, and he looked at the tips of his fingers, which met. Honora thought it strange that he did not congratulate her, but he appeared to be reflecting.

"What did Mr. Wing want?" she inquired in her momentary confusion, and added hastily, "I beg your pardon, Peter. I suppose I ought not to ask that."

"He was kind enough to wish me to live in New York," he answered, still staring at the tips of his fingers.

"Oh, how nice!" she cried and wondered at the same time whether, on second thoughts, she would think it so. "I suppose he wants you to be the counsel for one of his trusts. When when do you come?"

"I'm not coming."

"Not coming! Why? Isn't it a great compliment?"

He ignored the latter part of her remark; and it seemed to her, when she recalled the conversation afterwards, that she had heard a certain note of sadness under the lightness of his reply.

"To attempt to explain to a New Yorker why any one might prefer to live in any other place would be a difficult task."

"You are incomprehensible, Peter," she declared. And yet she felt a relief that surprised her, and a desire to get away from the subject. "Dear old St. Louis! Somehow, in spite of your greatness, it seems to fit you."

"It's growing," said Peter and they laughed together.

"Why didn't you come to lunch?" she said.

"Lunch! I didn't know that any one ever went to lunch in New York in this part of it, at least with less than three weeks' notice. And by the way, if I am interfering with any engagement −"

"My book is not so full as all that. Of course you'll come and stay with us, Peter."

He shook his head regretfully.

"My train leaves at six, from Forty−Second Street," he replied.

"Oh, you are niggardly, she cried. "To think how little I see of you, Peter. And sometimes I long for you. It's strange, but I still miss you terribly after five years. It seems longer than that," she added, as she poured the boiling water into the tea−pot. But she did not look at him.

He got up and walked as far as a water−colour on the wall.

"You have some beautiful things here, Honora," he said. "I am glad I have had a glimpse of you surrounded by them to carry back to your aunt and uncle."

She glanced about the room as he spoke, and then at him. He seemed the only reality in it, but she did not say so.

"You'll see them soon," was what she said. And considered the miracle of him staying there where Providence had placed him, and bringing the world to him. Whereas she, who had gone forth to seek it "The day after to−morrow will be Sunday," he reminded her.

Nothing had changed there. She closed her eyes and saw the little dining room in all the dignity of Sunday dinner, the big silver soup tureen catching the sun, the flowered china with the gilt edges, and even a glimpse of lace paper when the closet door opened; Aunt Mary and Uncle Tom with Peter between them. And these, strangely, were the only tangible things and immutable.

"You'll give them a good account of me?" she said. "I know that you do not care for New York," she added with a smile. "But it is possible to be happy here."

"I am glad you are happy, Honora, and that you have got what you wanted in life. Although I may be unreasonable and provincial and and Western," he confessed with a twinkle for he had the characteristic national trait of shading off his most serious remarks "I have never gone so far as to declare that happiness was a question of locality."

She laughed.

"Nor fame." Her mind returned to the loadstar.

"Oh, fame!" he exclaimed, with a touch of impatience, and he used the word that had possessed her all day. "There is no reality in that. Men are not loved for it."

She set down her cup quickly. He was looking at the water−colour.

"Have you been to the Metropolitan Museum lately?" he asked.

"The Metropolitan Museum?" she repeated in bewilderment.

"That would be one of the temptations of New York for me," he said. "I was there for half an hour this afternoon before I presented myself at your door as a suspicious character. There is a picture there, by Coffins called 'The Rain,' I believe. I am very fond of it. And looking at it on such a winter's day as this brings back the summer. The squall coming, and the sound of it in the trees, and the very smell of the wet meadow−grass in the wind. Do you know it?" "No," replied Honora, and she was suddenly filled with shame at the thought that she had never been in the Museum. "I didn't know you were so fond of pictures."

"I am beginning to be a rival of Mr. Dwyer," he declared. "I've bought four although I haven't built my gallery. When you come to St. Louis I'll show them to you and let us hope it will be soon."

For some time after she had heard the street door close behind him Honora remained where she was, staring into the fire, and then she crossed the room to a reading lamp, and turned it up.

Some one spoke in the doorway.

"Mr. Grainger, madam."

Before she could rouse herself and recover from her astonishment, the gentleman himself appeared, blinking as though the vision of her were too bright to be steadily gaze at. If the city had been searched, it is doubtful whether a more striking contrast to the man who had just left could have been found than Cecil Grainger in the braided, grey cutaway that clung to the semblance of a waist he still possessed. In him Hyde Park and Fifth Avenue, so to

speak, shook hands across the sea: put him in either, and he would have appeared indigenous.

"Hope you'll forgive my comin' 'round on such slight acquaintance, Mrs. Spence," said he. "Couldn't resist the opportunity to pay my respects. Shorter told me where you were."

"That was very good of Mr. Shorter," said Honora, whose surprise had given place to a very natural resentment, since she had not the honour of knowing Mrs. Grainger.

"Oh," said Mr. Grainger, "Shorter's a good sort. Said he'd been here himself to see how you were fixed, and hadn't found you in. Uncommonly well fixed, I should say," he added, glancing around the room with undisguised approval. "Why the deuce did she furnish it, since she's gone to Paris to live with Rindge?"

"I suppose you mean Mrs. Rindge," said Honora. "She didn't furnish it." Mr. Grainger winked at her rapidly, like a man suddenly brought face to face with a mystery.

"Oh!" he replied, as though he had solved it. The solution came a few moments later. "It's ripping!" he said. "Farwell couldn't have done it any better."

Honora laughed, and momentarily forgot her resentment.

"Will you have tea?" she asked. "Oh, don't sit down there!"

"Why not?" he asked, jumping. It was the chair that had held Peter, and Mr. Grainger examined the seat as though he suspected a bent pin.

"Because," said Honora, "because it isn't comfortable. Pull up that other one."

Again mystified, he did as he was told. She remembered his reputation for going to sleep, and wondered whether she had been wise in her second choice. But it soon became apparent that Mr. Grainger, as he gazed at her from among the cushions, had no intention of dozing. His eyelids reminded her of the shutters of a camera, and she had the feeling of sitting for thousands of instantaneous photographs for his benefit. She was by turns annoyed, amused, and distrait: Peter was leaving his hotel; now he was taking the train. Was he thinking of her? He had said he was glad she was happy! She caught herself up with a start after one of these silences to realize that Mr. Grainger was making unwonted and indeed pathetic exertions to entertain her, and it needed no feminine eye to perceive that he was thoroughly uncomfortable. She had, unconsciously and in thinking of Peter, rather overdone the note of rebuke of his visit. And Honora was, above all else, an artist. His air was distinctly apologetic as he rose, perhaps a little mortified, like that of a man who has got into the wrong house.

"I very much fear I've intruded, Mrs. Spence," he stammered, and he was winking now with bewildering rapidity. "We we had such a pleasant drive together that day to Westchester I was tempted −" "We did have a good time," she agreed. "And it has been a pleasure to see you again."

Thus, in the kindness of her heart, she assisted him to cover his retreat, for it was a strange and somewhat awful experience to see Mr. Cecil Grainger discountenanced. He glanced again, as he went out, at the chair in which he had been forbidden to sit.

She went to the piano, played over a few bars of Thais, and dropped her hands listlessly. Cross currents of the strange events of the day flowed through her mind: Peter's arrival and its odd heralding, and the discomfort of Mr. Grainger.

Howard came in. He did not see her under the shaded lamp, and she sat watching him with a curious feeling of detachment as he unfolded his newspaper and sank, with a sigh of content, into the cushioned chair which Mr. Grainger had vacated. Was it fancy that her husband's physical attributes had changed since he had attained his new position of dignity? She could have sworn that he had visibly swollen on the evening when he had announced to her his promotion, and he seemed to have remained swollen. Not bloated, of course: he was fatter, and if possible pinker. But there was a growing suggestion in him of humming−and−hawing greatness. If there were leisure in this too−leisurely chronicle for what might be called aftermath, the dinner that Honora had given to some of her Quicksands friends might be described. Suffice it to recall, with Honora, that Lily Dallam, with a sure instinct, had put the finger of her wit on this new attribute of Howard's.

"You'll kill me, Howard!" she had cried. "He even looks at the soup as though he were examining a security!"

Needless to say, it did not cure him, although it sealed Lily Dallam's fate and incidentally that of Quicksands. Honora's thoughts as she sat now at the piano watching him, flew back unexpectedly to the summer at Silverdale when she had met him, and she tried to imagine the genial and boyish representative of finance that he was then. In the midst of this effort he looked up and discovered her.

"What are you doing over there, Honora?" he asked.

"Thinking," she answered.

"That's a great way to treat a man when he comes home after a day's work."

"I beg your pardon, Howard," she said with unusual meekness. "Who do you think was here this afternoon?"

"Erwin? I've just come from Mr. Wing's house he has gout to−day and didn't go down town. He offered Erwin a hundred thousand a year to come to New York as corporation counsel. And if you'll believe me he refused it."

"I'll believe you," she said.

"Did he say anything about it to you?"

"He simply mentioned that Mr. Wing asked him to come to New York. He didn't say why."

"Well," Howard remarked, "he's one too many for me. He can't be making over thirty thousand where he is."

CHAPTER II. THE PATH OF PHILANTHROPY

MRS. CECIL, GRAINGER may safely have been called a Personality, and one of the proofs of this was that she haunted people who had never seen her. Honora might have looked at her, it is true, on the memorable night of the dinner with Mrs. Holt and Trixton Brent; but for sufficiently obvious reasons refrained. It would be an exaggeration to say that Mrs. Grainger became an obsession with our heroine; yet it cannot be denied that, since Honora's arrival at Quicksands, this lady had, in increasing degrees, been the subject of her speculations. The threads of Mrs. Grainger's influence were so ramified, indeed, as to be found in Mrs. Dallam, who declared she was the rudest woman in New York and yet had copied her brougham; in Mr. Cuthbert and Trixton Brent; in Mrs. Kame; in Mrs. Holt, who proclaimed her a tower of strength in charities; and lastly in Mr. Grainger himself, who, although he did not spend much time in his wife's company, had for her an admiration that amounted to awe.

Elizabeth Grainger, who was at once modern and tenaciously conservative, might have been likened to some of the Roman matrons of the aristocracy in the last years of the Republic. Her family, the Pendletons, had traditions:

so, for that matter, had the Graingers. But Senator Pendleton, antiquâ homo virtute et fide, had been a Roman of the old school who would have preferred exile after the battle of Philippi; and who, could he have foreseen modern New York and modern finance, would have been more content to die when he did. He had lived in Washington Square. His daughter inherited his executive ability, many of his prejudices (as they would now be called), and his habit of regarding favourable impressions with profound suspicion. She had never known the necessity of making friends: hers she had inherited, and for some reason specially decreed, they were better than those of less fortunate people.

Mrs. Grainger was very tall. And Sargent, in his portrait of her, had caught with admirable art the indefinable, yet partly supercilious and scornful smile with which she looked down upon the world about her. She possessed the rare gift of combining conventionality with personal distinction in her dress. Her hair was almost Titian red in colour, and her face (on the authority of Mr. Reginald Farwell) was at once modern and Italian Renaissance. Not the languid, amorous Renaissance, but the lady of decision who chose, and did not wait to be chosen. Her eyes had all the colours of the topaz, and her regard was so baffling as to arouse intense antagonism in those who were not her friends.

To Honora, groping about for a better and a higher life, the path of philanthropy had more than once suggested itself. And on the day of Peter's visit to New York, when she had lunched with Mrs. Holt, she had signified her willingness (now that she had come to live in town) to join the Working Girls' Relief Society. Mrs. Holt, needless to say, was overjoyed: they were to have a meeting at her house in the near future which Honora must not fail to attend. It was not, however without a feeling of trepidation natural to a stranger that she made her way to that meeting when the afternoon arrived.

No sooner was she seated in Mrs. Holt's drawing−room filled with camp−chairs for the occasion than she found herself listening breathlessly to a recital of personal experiences by a young woman who worked in a bindery on the East side. Honora's heart was soft: her sympathies, as we know, easily aroused. And after the young woman had told with great simplicity and earnestness of the struggle to support herself and lead an honest and self−respecting existence, it seemed to Honora that at last she had opened the book of life at the proper page. Afterwards there were questions, and a report by Miss Harber, a middle−aged lady with glasses who was the secretary. Honora looked around her. The membership of the Society, judging by those present, was surely of a sufficiently heterogeneous character to satisfy even the catholic tastes of her hostess. There were elderly ladies, some benevolent and some formidable, some bedecked and others unadorned; there were earnest−looking younger women, to whom dress was evidently a secondary consideration; and there was a sprinkling of others, perfectly gowned, several of whom were gathered in an opposite corner. Honora's eyes, as the reading of the report progressed, were drawn by a continual and resistless attraction to this group; or rather to the face of one of the women in it, which seemed to stare out at her like the cat in the tree of an old−fashioned picture puzzle, or the lineaments of George Washington among a mass of boulders on a cliff. Once one has discovered it, one can see nothing else. In vain Honora dropped her eyes; some strange fascination compelled her to raise them again until they met those of the other woman. Did their glances meet? She could never quite be sure, so disconcerting were the lights in that regard lights, seemingly, of laughter and mockery.

Some instinct informed Honora that the woman was Mrs. Grainger, and immediately the scene in the Holland House dining−room came back to her. Never until now had she felt the full horror of its comedy. And then, as though to fill the cup of humiliation, came the thought of Cecil Grainger's call. She longed, in an agony with which sensitive natures will sympathize, for the reading to be over.

The last paragraph of the report contained tributes to Mrs. Joshua Holt and Mrs. Cecil Grainger for the work each had done during the year, and amidst enthusiastic handclapping the formal part of the meeting came to an end. The servants were entering with tea as Honora made her way towards the door, where she was stopped by Susan Holt. "My dear Honora," cried Mrs. Holt, who had hurried after her daughter, "you're not going?"

Honora suddenly found herself without an excuse.

"I really ought to, Mrs. Holt. I've had such a good time and I've been so interested. I never realized that such things occurred. And I've got one of the reports, which I intend to read over again."

"But my dear," protested Mrs. Holt, "you must meet some of the members of the Society. Bessie!"

Mrs. Grainger, indeed for Honora had been right in her surmise was standing within ear−shot of this conversation. And Honora, who knew she was there, could not help feeling that she took a rather redoubtable interest in it. At Mrs. Holt's words she turned.

"Bessie, I've found a new recruit one that I can answer for. Mrs. Spence, whom I spoke to you about."

Mrs. Grainger bestowed upon Honora her enigmatic smile.

"Oh," she declared, "I've heard of Mrs. Spence from other sources, and I've seen her, too."

Honora grew a fiery red. There was obviously no answer to such a remark, which seemed the quintessence of rudeness. But Mrs. Grainger continued to smile, and to stare at her with the air of trying to solve a riddle.

"I'm coming to see you, if I may," she said. "I've been intending to since I've been in town, but I'm always so busy that I don't get time to do the things I want to do."

An announcement that fairly took away Honora's breath. She managed to express her appreciation of Mrs. Grainger's intention, and presently found herself walking rapidly up−town through swirling snow, somewhat dazed by the events of the afternoon. And these, by the way, were not yet finished. As she reached her own door, a voice vaguely familiar called her name.

"Honora!"

She turned. The slim, tall figure of a young woman descended from a carriage and crossed the pavement, and in the soft light of the vestibule she recognized Ethel Wing. "I'm so glad I caught you," said that young lady when they entered the drawing−room. And she gazed at her school friend. The colour glowed in Honora's cheeks, but health alone could not account for the sparkle in her eyes. "Why, you look radiant. You are more beautiful than you were at Sutcliffe. Is it marriage?"

Honora laughed happily, and they sat down side by side on the lounge behind the tea table.

"I heard you'd married," said Ethel, "but I didn't know what had become of you until the other day. Jim never tells me anything. It appears that he's seen something of you. But it wasn't from Jim that I heard about you first. You'd never guess who told me you were here."

"Who?" asked Honora, curiously.

"Mr. Erwin."

"Peter Erwin!"

"I'm perfectly shameless," proclaimed Ethel Wing. "I've lost my heart to him, and I don't care who knows it. Why in the world didn't you marry him?"

"But where did you see him?" Honora demanded as soon as she could command herself sufficiently to speak. Her voice must have sounded odd. Ethel did not appear to notice that. "He lunched with us one day when father had gout. Didn't he tell you about it? He said he was coming to see you that afternoon."

"Yes he came. But he didn't mention being at lunch at your house."

"I'm sure that was like him," declared her friend. And for the first time in her life Honora experienced a twinge of that world−old ailment jealousy. How did Ethel know what was like him? "I made father give him up for a little while after lunch, and he talked about you the whole time. But he was most interesting at the table," continued Ethel, sublimely unconscious of the lack of compliment in the comparison; "as Jim would say, he fairly wiped up the ground with father, and it isn't an easy thing to do."

"Wiped up the ground with Mr. Wing!" Honora repeated.

"Oh, in a delightfully quiet, humorous way. That's what made it so effective. I couldn't understand all of it, but I grasped enough to enjoy it hugely. Father's so used to bullying people that it's become second nature with him. I've seen him lay down the law to some of the biggest lawyers in New York, and they took it like little lambs. He caught a Tartar in Mr. Erwin. I didn't dare to laugh, but I wanted to."

"What was the discussion about?" asked Honora.

"I'm not sure that I can give you a very clear idea of it," said Ethel. "Generally speaking, it was about modern trust methods, and what a self−respecting lawyer would do and what he wouldn't. Father took the ground that the laws weren't logical, and that they were different and conflicting, anyway, in different States. He said they impeded the natural development of business, and that it was justifiable for the great legal brains of the country to devise means by which these laws could be eluded. He didn't quite say that, but he meant it, and he honestly believes it. The manner in which Mr. Erwin refuted it was a revelation to me. I've been thinking about it since. You see, I'd never heard that side of the argument. Mr. Erwin said, in the nicest way possible, but very firmly, that a lawyer who hired himself out to enable one man to take advantage of another prostituted his talents: that the brains of the legal profession were out of politics in these days, and that it was almost impossible for the men in the legislatures to frame laws that couldn't be evaded by clever and unscrupulous devices. He cited ever so many cases . . ."

Ethel's voice became indistinct, as though some one had shut a door in front of it. Honora was trembling on the brink of a discovery: holding herself back from it, as one who has climbed a fair mountain recoils from the lip of an unsuspected crater at sight of the lazy, sulphurous fumes. All the years of her marriage, ever since she had first heard his name, the stature of James Wing had been insensibly growing, and the vastness of his empire gradually disclosed. She had lived in that empire: in it his word had stood for authority, his genius had been worshipped, his decrees had been absolute.

She had met him once, in Howard's office, when he had greeted her gruffly, and the memory of his rugged features and small red eyes, like live coals, had remained. And she saw now the drama that had taken place before Ethel's eyes. The capitalist, overbearing, tyrannical, hearing a few, simple truths in his own house from Peter her Peter. And she recalled her husband's account of his talk with James Wing. Peter had refused to sell himself. Had Howard? Many times during the days that followed she summoned her courage to ask her husband that question, and kept silence. She did not wish to know.

"I don't want to seem disloyal to papa," Ethel was saying. "He is under great responsibilities to other people, to stockholders; and he must get things done. But oh, Honora, I'm so tired of money, money, money and its standards, and the things people are willing to do for it. I've seen too much."

Honora looked at her friend, and believed her. One glance at the girl's tired eyes a weariness somehow enhanced in effect by the gold sheen of her hair confirmed the truth of her words. "You've changed, Ethel, since Sutcliffe," she said.

"Yes, I've changed," said Ethel Wing, and the weariness was in her voice, too. "I've had too much, Honora. Life was all glitter, like a Christmas tree, when I left Sutcliffe. I had no heart. I'm not at all sure that I have one now. I've known all kinds of people except the right kind. And if I were to tell you some of the things that have happened to me in five years you wouldn't believe them. Money has been at the bottom of it all, it ruined my brother, and it has ruined me. And then, the other day, I beheld a man whose standards simply take no account of money, a man who holds something else higher. I I had been groping lately, and then I seemed to see clear for the first time in my life. But I'm afraid it comes too late."

Honora took her friend's hand in her own and pressed it.

"I don't know why I'm telling you all this," said Ethel. "It seems to−day as though I had always known you, and yet we weren't particularly intimate at school. I suppose I'm inclined to be over−suspicious. Heaven knows I've had enough to make me so. But I always thought that you were a little ambitious. You'll forgive my frankness, Honora. I don't think you're at all so, now." She glanced at Honora suddenly. "Perhaps you've changed, too," she said.

Honora nodded.

"I think I'm changing all the time," she replied.

After a moment's silence, Ethel Wing pursued her own train of thought.

"Curiously enough when he when Mr. Erwin spoke of you I seemed to get a very different idea of you than the one I had always had. I had to go out of town, but I made up my mind I'd come to see you as soon as I got back, and ask you to tell me something about him."

"What shall I tell you?" asked Honora. "He is what you think he is, and more."

"Tell me something of his early life," said Ethel Wing.

There is a famous river in the western part of our country that disappears into a cañon, the walls of which are some thousands of feet high, and the bottom so narrow that the confined waters roar through it at breakneck speed. Sometimes they disappear entirely under the rock, to emerge again below more furiously than ever. From the river−bed can be seen, far, far above, a blue ribbon of sky. Once upon a time, not long ago, two heroes in the service of the government of the United States, whose names should be graven in the immortal rock and whose story read wherever the language is spoken, made the journey through this cañon and came out alive. That journey once started, there could be no turning back. Down and down they were buffeted by the rushing waters, over the falls and through the tunnels, with time to think only of that which would save them from immediate death, until they emerged into the sunlight of the plain below.

All of which by way of parallel. For our own chronicle, hitherto leisurely enough, is coming to its cañon perhaps even now begins to feel the pressure of the shelving sides. And if our heroine be somewhat rudely tossed from one boulder to another, if we fail wholly to understand her emotions and her acts, we must blame the cañon. She had, indeed, little time to think.

One evening, three weeks or so after the conversation with Ethel Wing just related, Honora's husband entered her room as her maid was giving the finishing touches to her toilet.

"You're not going to wear that dress!" he exclaimed.

"Why not?" she asked, without turning from the mirror.

He lighted a cigarette.

"I thought you'd put on something handsome to go to the Graingers'. And where are your jewels? You'll find the women there loaded with 'em."

"One string of pearls is all I care to wear," said Honora a reply with which he was fain to be content until they were in the carriage, when she added: "Howard, I must ask you as a favour not to talk that way before the servants."

"What way?" he demanded.

"Oh," she exclaimed, "if you don't know I suppose it is impossible to explain. You wouldn't understand." "I understand one thing, Honora, that you're too confoundedly clever for me," he declared.

Honora did not reply. For at that moment they drew up at a carpet stretched across the pavement.

Unlike the mansions of vast and imposing facades that were beginning everywhere to catch the eye on Fifth Avenue, and that followed mostly the continental styles of architecture, the house of the Cecil Graingers had a substantial, "middle of−the−eighties" appearance. It stood on a corner, with a high iron fence protecting the area around it. Within, it gave one an idea of space that the exterior strangely belied; and it was furnished, not in a French, but in what might be called a comfortably English, manner. It was filled, Honora saw, with handsome and priceless things which did not immediately and aggressively strike the eye, but which somehow gave the impression of having always been there. What struck her, as she sat in the little withdrawing room while the maid removed her overshoes, was the note of permanence.

Some of those who were present at Mrs. Grainger's that evening remember her entrance into the drawing−room. Her gown, the colour of a rose−tinted cloud, set off the exceeding whiteness of her neck and arms and vied with the crimson in her cheeks, and the single glistening string of pearls about the slender column of her neck served as a contrast to the shadowy masses of her hair. Mr. Reginald Farwell, who was there, afterwards declared that she seemed to have stepped out of the gentle landscape of an old painting. She stood, indeed, hesitating for a moment in the doorway, her eyes softly alight, in the very pose of expectancy that such a picture suggested. Honora herself was almost frightened by a sense of augury, of triumph, as she went forward to greet her hostess. Conversation, for the moment, had stopped. Cecil Grainger, with the air of one who had pulled aside the curtain and revealed this vision of beauty and innocence, crossed the room to welcome her. And Mrs. Grainger herself was not a little surprised; she was not a dramatic person, and it was not often that her drawing−room was the scene of even a mild sensation. No entrance could have been at once so startling and so unexceptionable as Honora's.

"I was sorry not to find you when I called," she said.

"I was sorry, too," replied Mrs. Grainger, regarding her with an interest that was undisguised, and a little embarrassing. "I'm scarcely ever at home, except when I'm with the children. Do you know these people?"

"I'm not sure," said Honora, "but I must introduce my husband to you."

"How d'ye do!" said Mr. Grainger, blinking at her when this ceremony was accomplished. "I'm awfully glad to see you, Mrs. Spence, upon my word."

Honora could not doubt it. But he had little time to express his joy, because of the appearance of his wife at Honora's elbow with a tall man she had summoned from a corner.

"Before we go to dinner I must introduce my cousin, Mr. Chiltern he is to have the pleasure of taking you out," she said.

His name was in the class of those vaguely familiar: vaguely familiar, too, was his face. An extraordinary face, Honora thought, glancing at it as she took his arm, although she was struck by something less tangible than the unusual features. He might have belonged to any nationality within the limits of the Caucasian race. His short, kinky, black hair suggested great virility, an effect intensified by a strongly bridged nose, sinewy hands, and bushy eyebrows. But the intangible distinction was in the eyes that looked out from under these brows: the glimpse she had of them as he bowed to her gravely, might be likened to the hasty reading of a chance page in a forbidden book. Her attention was arrested, her curiosity aroused. She was on that evening, so to speak, exposed for and sensitive to impressions. She was on the threshold of the Alhambra.

"Hugh has such a faculty," complained Mr. Grainger, "of turning up at the wrong moment!"

Dinner was announced. She took Chiltern's arm, and they fell into file behind a lady in yellow, with a long train, who looked at her rather hard. It was Mrs. Freddy Maitland. Her glance shifted to Chiltern, and it seemed to Honora that she started a little.

"Hello, Hugh," she said indifferently, looking back over her shoulder; "have you turned up again?"

"Still sticking to the same side of your horse, I see." he replied, ignoring the question. "I told you you'd get lop−sided."

The deformity, if there were any, did not seem to trouble her.

"I'm going to Florida Wednesday. We want another man. Think it over."

"Sorry, but I've got something else to do," he said.

"The devil and idle hands," retorted Mrs. Maitland.

Honora was sure as she could be that Chiltern was angry, although he gave no visible sign of this. It was as though the current ran from his arm into hers.

"Have you been away?" she asked.

"It seems to me as though I had never been anywhere else," he answered, and he glanced curiously at the guests ranging about the great, flower−laden table. They sat down.

She was a little repelled, a little piqued; and a little relieved when the man on her other side spoke to her, and she recognized Mr. Reginald Farwell, the architect. The table capriciously swung that way. She did not feel prepared to talk to Mr. Chiltern. And before entering upon her explorations she was in need of a guide. She could have found none more charming, none more impersonal, none more subtly aware of her wants (which had once been his) than Mr. Farwell. With his hair parted with geometrical precision from the back of his collar to his forehead, with his silky mustache and eyes of soft hazel lights, he was all things to all men and women within reason. He was an achievement that civilization had not hitherto produced, a combination of the Beaux Arts and the Jockey Club and American adaptability. He was of those upon whom labour leaves no trace.

There were preliminaries, mutually satisfactory. To see Mrs. Spence was never to forget her, but more delicately intimated. He remembered to have caught a glimpse of her at the Quicksands Club, and Mrs. Dallam nor her house were not mentioned by either. Honora could not have been in New York long. No, it was her first winter, and she felt like a stranger. Would Mr. Farwell tell her who some of these people were? Nothing charmed Mr. Farwell so much as simplicity when it was combined with personal attractions. He did not say so, but contrived to intimate the former.

"It's always difficult when one first comes to New York," he declared, "but it soon straightens itself out, and one is surprised at how few people there are, after all. We'll begin on Cecil's right. That's Mrs. George Grenfell."

"Oh, yes," said Honora, looking at a tall, thin woman of middle age who wore a tiara, and whose throat was covered with jewels. Honora did not imply that Mrs. Grenfell's name, and most of those that followed, were extremely familiar to her.

"In my opinion she's got the best garden in Newport, and she did most of it herself. Next to her, with the bald head, is Freddy Maitland. Next to him is Miss Godfrey. She's a little eccentric, but she can afford to be the Godfreys for generations have done so much for the city. The man with the beard, next her, is John Laurens, the philanthropist. That pretty woman, who's just as nice as she looks, is Mrs. Victor Strange. She was Agatha Pendleton Mrs. Grainger's cousin. And the gentleman with the pink face, whom she is entertaining −" "Is my husband," said Honora, smiling. "I know something about him."

Mr. Farwell laughed. He admired her aplomb, and he did not himself change countenance. Indeed, the incident seemed rather to heighten the confidence between them. Honora was looking rather critically at Howard. It was a fact that his face did grow red at this stage of a dinner, and she wondered what Mrs. Strange found to talk to him about.

"And the woman on the other side of him?" she asked. "By the way, she has a red face, too."

"So she has," he replied amusedly. "That is Mrs. Littleton Pryor, the greatest living rebuke to the modern woman. Most of those jewels are inherited, but she has accustomed herself by long practice to carry them, as well as other burdens. She has eight children, and she's on every charity list. Her ancestors were the very roots of Manhattan. She looks like a Holbein doesn't she?"

"And the extraordinary looking man on my right?" Honora asked. "I've got to talk to him presently."

"Chiltern!" he said. "Is it possible you haven't heard something about Hugh Chiltern?"

"Is it such lamentable ignorance?" she asked.

"That depends upon one's point of view," he replied. "He's always been a sort of a well, Viking," said Farwell.

Honora was struck by the appropriateness of the word.

"Viking yes, he looks it exactly. I couldn't think. Tell me something about him."

"Well," he laughed, lowering his voice a little, "here goes for a little rough and ready editing. One thing about Chiltern that's to be admired is that he's never cared a rap what people think. Of course, in a way, he never had to. His family own a section of the state, where they've had woollen mills for a hundred years, more or less. I believe Hugh Chiltern has sold 'em, or they've gone into a trust, or something, but the estate is still there, at Grenoble one of the most beautiful places I've ever seen. The General this man's father was a violent, dictatorial man. There is a story about his taking a battery at Gettysburg which is almost incredible. But he went back to Grenoble after the

war, and became the typical public−spirited citizen; built up the mills which his own pioneer grandfather had founded, and all that. He married an aunt of Mrs. Grainger's, one of those delicate, gentle women who never dare to call their soul their own."

"And then?" prompted Honora, with interest.

"It's only fair to Hugh," Farwell continued, "to take his early years into account. The General never understood him, and his mother died before he went off to school. Men who were at Harvard with him say he has a brilliant mind, but he spent most of his time across the Charles River breaking things. It was, probably, the energy the General got rid of at Gettysburg. What Hugh really needed was a war, and he had too much money. He has a curious literary streak, I'm told, and wrote a rather remarkable article I've forgotten just where it appeared. He raced a yacht for a while in a dare−devil, fiendish way, as one might expect; and used to go off on cruises and not be heard of for months. At last he got engaged to Sally Harrington Mrs. Freddy Maitland."

Honora glanced across the table.

"Exactly," said Mr. Farwell. "That was seven or eight years ago. Nobody ever knew the reason why she broke it though it may have been pretty closely guessed. He went away, and nobody's laid eyes on him until he turned up to−night."

Honora's innocence was not too great to enable her to read between the lines of this biography which Reginald Farwell had related with such praiseworthy delicacy. It was a biography, she well knew, that, like a score of others, had been guarded as jealously as possible within the circle on the borders of which she now found herself. Mrs. Grainger with her charities, Mrs. Littleton Pryor with her good works, Miss Godfrey with her virtue all swallowed it as gracefully as possible. Noblesse oblige. Honora had read French and English memoirs, and knew that history repeats itself. And a biography that is printed in black letter and illuminated in gold is attractive in spite of its contents. The contents, indeed, our heroine had not found uninteresting, and she turned now to the subject with a flutter of anticipation.

He looked at her intently, almost boldly, she thought, and before she dropped her eyes she had made a discovery. The thing stamped upon his face and burning in his eyes was not world−weariness, disappointment, despair. She could not tell what it was, yet; that it was none of these, she knew. It was not unrelated to experience, but transcended it. There was an element of purpose in it, of determination, almost she would have believed of hope. That Mrs. Maitland nor any other woman was a part of it she became equally sure. Nothing could have been more commonplace than the conversation which began, and yet it held for her, between the lines as in the biography, the thrill of interest. She was a woman, and embarked on a voyage of discovery.

"Do you live in New York?" he asked.

"Yes," said Honora, "since this autumn."

"I've been away a good many years," he said, in explanation of his question. "I haven't quite got my bearings. I can't tell you how queerly this sort of thing affects me."

"You mean civilization?" she hazarded.

"Yes. And yet I've come back to it."

Of course she did not ask him why. Their talk was like the starting of a heavy train a series of jerks; and yet both were aware of an irresistible forward traction. She had not recovered from her surprise in finding herself already so far in his confidence.

"And the time will come, I suppose, when you'll long to get away again."

"No," he said, "I've come back to stay. It's taken me a long while to learn it, but there's only one place for a man, and that's his own country."

Her eyes lighted.

"There's always so much for a man to do."

"What would you do?" he asked curiously.

She considered this. "If you had asked me that question two years ago even a year ago I should have given you a different answer. It's taken me some time to learn it, too, you see, and I'm not a man. I once thought I should have liked to have been a king amongst money changers, and own railroad and steamship lines, and dominate men by sheer power."

He was clearly interested.

"And now?" he prompted her.

She laughed a little, to relieve the tension.

Well I've found out that there are some men that kind of power can't control the best kind. And I've found out that that isn't the best kind of power. It seems to be a brutal, barbarous cunning power now that I've seen it at close range. There's another kind that springs from a man himself, that speaks through his works and acts, that influences first those around him, and then his community, convincing people of their own folly, and that finally spreads in ever widening circles to those whom he cannot see, and never will see."

She paused, breathing deeply, a little frightened at her own eloquence. Something told her that she was not only addressing her own soul she was speaking to his.

"I'm afraid you'll think I'm preaching," she apologized.

"No," he said impatiently, "no."

"To answer your question, then, if I were a man of independent means, I think I should go into politics. And I should put on my first campaign banner the words, 'No Compromise.'"

It was a little strange that, until now to−night she had not definitely formulated these ambitions. The idea of the banner with its inscription had come as an inspiration. He did not answer, but sat regarding her, drumming on the cloth with his strong, brown fingers.

"I have learned this much in New York," she said, carried on by her impetus, "that men and women are like plants. To be useful, and to grow properly, they must be firmly rooted in their own soil. This city seems to me like a luxurious, overgrown hothouse. Of course," she added hastily, "there are many people who belong here, and whose best work is done here. I was thinking about those whom it attracts. And I have seen so many who are only watered and fed and warmed, and who become distorted."

"It's extraordinary," replied Chiltern, slowly, "that you should say this to me. It is what I have come to believe, but I couldn't have said it half so well."

Mrs. Grainger gave the signal to rise. Honora took Chiltern's arm, and he led her back to the drawing−room. She was standing alone by the fire when Mrs. Maitland approached her.

"Haven't I seen you before?" she asked.

CHAPTER III. VINELAND

IT was a pleasant Newport to which Honora went early in June, a fair city shining in the midst of summer seas, a place to light the fires of imagination. It wore at once an air of age, and of a new and sparkling unreality. Honora found in the very atmosphere a certain magic which she did not try to define, but to the enjoyment of which she abandoned herself; and in those first days after her arrival she took a sheer delight in driving about the island. Narrow Thames Street, crowded with gay carriages, with its aspect of the eighteenth and it shops of the twentieth century; the whiffs of the sea; Bellevue Avenue, with its glorious serried ranks of trees, its erring perfumes from bright gardens, its massed flowering shrubs beckoning the eye, its lawns of a truly enchanted green. Through tree and hedge, as she drove, came ever changing glimpses of gleaming palace fronts; glimpses that made her turn and look again; that stimulated but did not satisfy, and left a pleasant longing for something on the seeming verge of fulfilment.

The very stillness and solitude that seemed to envelop these palaces suggested the enchanter's wand. To−morrow, perhaps, the perfect lawns where the robins hopped amidst the shrubbery would become again the rock−bound, windswept New England pasture above the sea, and screaming gulls circle where now the swallows hovered about the steep blue roof of a French château. Hundreds of years hence, would these great pleasure houses still be standing behind their screens and walls and hedges? or would, indeed, the shattered, vine−covered marble of a balustrade alone mark the crumbling terraces whence once the fabled owners scanned the sparkling waters of the ocean? Who could say?

The onward rush of our story between its cañon walls compels us reluctantly to skip the narrative of the winter conquests of the lady who is our heroine. Popularity had not spoiled her, and the best proof of this lay in the comments of a world that is nothing if not critical. No beauty could have received with more modesty the triumph which had greeted her at Mrs. Grenfell's tableaux, in April, when she had appeared as Circe, in an architectural frame especially designed by Mr. Farwell himself. There had been a moment of hushed astonishment, followed by an acclaim that sent the curtain up twice again.

We must try to imagine, too, the logical continuation of that triumph in the Baiæ of our modern republic and empire, Newport. Open, Sesamê! seems, as ever, to be the countersign of her life. Even the palace gates swung wide to her: most of them with the more readiness because she had already passed through other gates Mrs. Grainger's, for instance. Baiæ, apparently, is a topsy−turvy world in which, if one alights upside down, it is difficult to become righted. To alight upside down, is to alight in a palace. The Graingers did not live in one, but in a garden that existed before the palaces were, and one that the palace owners could not copy: a garden that three generations of Graingers, somewhat assisted by a remarkable climate, had made with loving care. The box was priceless, the spreading trees in the miniature park no less so, and time, the unbribeable, alone could now have produced the wide, carefully cherished Victorian mansion. Likewise not purchasable by California gold was a grandfather whose name had been written large in the pages of American history. His library was now lined with English sporting prints; but these, too, were old and mellow and rare.

To reach Honora's cottage, you turned away from the pomp and glitter and noise of Bellevue Avenue into the inviting tunnel of a leafy lane that presently stopped of itself. As though to provide against the contingency of a stray excursionist, a purple−plumed guard of old lilac trees massed themselves before the house, and seemed to look down with contempt on the new brick wall across the lane. Odi profanum vulgus. It was on account of the new brick wall, in fact, that Honora, through the intervention of Mrs. Grainger and Mrs. Shorter, had been able to

obtain this most desirable of retreats, which belonged to a great−aunt of Miss Godfrey, Mrs. Forsythe.

Mr. Chamberlin, none other than he of whom we caught a glimpse some years ago in a castle near Silverdale, owned the wall and the grounds and the palace it enclosed. This gentleman was of those who arrive in Newport upside down; and was even now, with the somewhat doubtful assistance of his wife, making lavish and pathetic attempts to right himself. Newport had never forgiven him for the razing of a mansion and the felling of trees which had been landmarks, and for the driving out of Mrs. Forsythe. The mere sight of the modern wall had been too much for this lady the lilacs and the leaves in the lane mercifully hid the palace and after five and thirty peaceful summers she had moved out, and let the cottage. It was furnished with delightful old−fashioned things that seemed to express, at every turn, the aristocratic and uncompromising personality of the owner who had lived so long in their midst.

Mr. Chamberlin, who has nothing whatever to do with this chronicle except to have been the indirect means of Honora's installation, used to come through the wall once a week or so to sit for half an hour on her porch as long as he ever sat anywhere. He had reddish side−whiskers, and he reminded her of a buzzing toy locomotive wound up tight and suddenly taken from the floor. She caught glimpses of him sometimes in the mornings buzzing around his gardeners, his painters, his carpenters, and his grooms. He would buzz the rest of his life, but nothing short of a revolution could take his possessions away.

The Graingers and the Grenfells and the Stranges might move mountains, but not Mr. Chamberlin's house. Whatever heartburnings he may have had because certain people refused to come to his balls, he was in Newport to remain. He would sit under the battlements until the crack of doom; or rather and more appropriate in Mr. Chamberlin's case walk around them and around, blowing trumpets until they capitulated.

Honora magically found herself within them, and without a siege. Behold her at last in the setting for which we always felt she was destined. Why is it, in this world, that realization is so difficult a thing? Now that she is there, how shall we proceed to give the joys of her Elysium their full value? Not, certainly, by repeating the word pleasure over and over again: not by describing the palaces at which she lunched and danced and dined, or the bright waters in which she bathed, or the yachts in which she sailed. During the week, indeed, she moved untrammelled in a world with which she found herself in perfect harmony: it was new, it was dazzling, it was unexplored. During the week it possessed still another and more valuable attribute it was real. And she, Honora Leffingwell Spence, was part and parcel of its permanence. The life relationships of the people by whom she was surrounded became her own. She had little time for thought during the week.

We are dealing, now, in emotions as delicate as cloud shadows, and these drew on as Saturday approached. On Saturdays and Sundays the quality and texture of life seemed to undergo a change. Who does not recall the Monday mornings of the school days of youth, and the indefinite feeling betwixt sleep and waking that to−day would not be as yesterday or the day before? On Saturday mornings, when she went downstairs, she was wont to find the porch littered with newspapers and her husband lounging in a wicker chair behind the disapproving lilacs. Although they had long ceased to bloom, their colour was purple his was pink.

Honora did not at first analyze or define these emotions, and was conscious only of a stirring within her, and a change. Reality became unreality. The house in which she lived, and for which she felt a passion of ownership, was for two days a rented house. Other women in Newport had week−end guests in the guise of husbands, and some of them went so far as to bewail the fact. Some had got rid of them. Honora kissed hers dutifully, and picked up the newspapers, drove him to the beach, and took him out to dinner, where he talked oracularly of finance. On Sunday night he departed, without visible regrets, for New York.

One Monday morning a storm was raging over Newport. Seized by a sudden whim, she rang her bell, breakfasted at an unusual hour, and nine o'clock found her, with her skirts flying, on the road above the cliffs that leads to the Fort. The wind had increased to a gale, and as she stood on the rocks the harbour below her was full of tossing

white yachts straining at their anchors. Serene in the midst of all this hubbub lay a great grey battleship.

Presently, however, her thoughts were distracted by the sight of something moving rapidly across her line of vision. A sloop yacht, with a ridiculously shortened sail, was coming in from the Narrows, scudding before the wind like a frightened bird. She watched its approach in a sort of fascination, for of late she had been upon the water enough to realize that the feat of which she was witness was not without its difficulties. As the sloop drew nearer she made out a bare−headed figure bent tensely at the wheel, and four others clinging to the yellow deck. In a flash the boat had rounded to, the mainsail fell, and a veil of spray hid the actors of her drama. When it cleared the yacht was tugging like a wild thing at its anchor.

That night was Mrs. Grenfell's ball, and many times in later years has the scene come back to Honora. It was not a large ball, by no means on the scale of Mr. Chamberlin's, for instance. The great room reminded one of the gallery of a royal French château, with its dished ceiling, in the oval of which the colours of a pastoral fresco glowed in the ruby lights of the heavy chandeliers; its grey panelling, hidden here and there by tapestries, and its series of deep, arched windows that gave glimpses of a lantern−hung terrace. Out there, beyond a marble balustrade, the lights of fishing schooners tossed on a blue−black ocean. The same ocean on which she had looked that morning, and which she heard now, in the intervals of talk and laughter, crashing against the cliffs, although the wind had gone down. Like a woman stirred to the depths of her being, its bosom was heaving still at the memory of the passion of the morning. This night after the storm was capriciously mild, the velvet gown of heaven sewn with stars. The music had ceased, and supper was being served at little tables on the terrace. The conversation was desultory.

"Who is that with Reggie Farwell?" Ethel Wing asked.

"It's the Farrenden girl," replied Mr. Cuthbert, whose business it was to know everybody. "Chicago wheat. She looks like Ceres, doesn't she? Quite becoming to Reggie's dark beauty. She was sixteen, they tell me, when the old gentleman emerged from the pit, and they packed her off to a convent by the next steamer. Reggie may have the blissful experience of living in one of his own houses if he marries her." The fourth at the table was Ned Carrington, who had been first secretary at an Embassy, and he had many stories to tell of ambassadors who spoke commercial American and asked royalties after their wives. Some one had said about him that he was the only edition of the Almanach de Gotha that included the United States. He somewhat resembled a golden seal emerging from a cold bath, and from time to time screwed an eyeglass into his eye and made a careful survey of Mrs. Grenfell's guests.

"By George!" he exclaimed. "Isn't that Hugh Chiltern?"

Honora started, and followed the direction of Mr. Carrington's glance. At sight of him, a vivid memory of the man's personality possessed her.

"Yes," Cuthbert was saying, "that's Chiltern sure enough. He came in on Dicky Farnham's yacht this morning from New York."

"This morning!" said Ethel Wing. "Surely not! No yacht could have come in this morning."

"Nobody but Chiltern would have brought one in, you mean," he corrected her. "He sailed her. They say Dicky was half dead with fright, and wanted to put in anywhere. Chiltern sent him below and kept right on. He has a devil in him, I believe. By the way, that's Dicky Farnham's ex−wife he's talking to Adèle. She keeps her good looks, doesn't she? What's happened to Rindge?"

"Left him on the other side, I hear," said Carrington.

"Perhaps she'll take Chiltern next. She looked as though she were ready to. And they say it's easier every time."

"C'est le second mari qui coûte," paraphrased Cuthbert, tossing his cigar over the balustrade. The strains of a waltz floated out of the windows, the groups at the tables broke up, and the cotillon began.

As Honora danced, Chiltern remained in the back of her mind, or rather an indefinite impression was there which in flashes she connected with him. She wondered, at times, what had become of him, and once or twice she caught herself scanning the bewildering, shifting sheen of gowns and jewels for his face. At last she saw him by the windows, holding a favour in his hand, coming in her direction. She looked away, towards the red uniforms of the Hungarian band on the raised platform at the end of the room. He was standing beside her.

"Do you remember me, Mrs. Spence?" he asked.

She glanced up at him and smiled. He was not a person one would be likely to forget, but she did not say so.

"I met you at Mrs. Grainger's," was what she said.

He handed her the favour. She placed it amongst the collection at the back of her chair and rose, and they danced. Was it dancing? The music throbbed; nay, the musicians seemed suddenly to have been carried out of themselves, and played as they had not played before. Her veins were filled with pulsing fire as she was swung, guided, carried out of herself by the extraordinary virility of the man who held her. She had tasted mastery.

"Thank you," she faltered, as they came around the second time to her seat.

He released her.

"I stayed to dance with you," he said. "I had to await my opportunity."

"It was kind of you to remember me," she replied, as she went off with Mr. Carrington.

A moment later she saw him bidding good night to his hostess. His face, she thought, had not lost that strange look of determination that she recalled. And yet how account for his recklessness?

"Rum chap, Chiltern," remarked Carrington. "He might be almost anything, if he only knew it."

In the morning, when she awoke, her eye fell on the cotillon favours scattered over the lounge. One amongst them stood out a silver−mounted pin−cushion. Honora arose, picked it up contemplatively, stared at it awhile, and smiled. Then she turned to her window, breathing in the perfumes, gazing out through the horse−chestnut leaves at the green, shadow−dappled lawn below.

On her breakfast tray, amidst some invitations, was a letter from her uncle. This she opened first. "Dear Honora," he wrote, "amongst your father's papers, which have been in my possession since his death, was a certificate for three hundred shares in a land company. He bought them for very little, and I had always thought them worthless. It turns out that these holdings are in a part of the state of Texas that is now being developed; on the advice of Mr. Isham and others I have accepted an offer of thirty dollars a share, and I enclose a draft on New York for nine thousand dollars. I need not dwell upon the pleasure it is for me to send you this legacy from your father. And I shall only add the counsel of an old uncle, to invest this money by your husband's advice in some safe securities." . . .

Honora put down the letter, and sat staring at the cheque in her hand. Nine thousand dollars and her own! Her first impulse was to send it back to her uncle. But that would be, she knew, to hurt his feelings he had taken such

a pride in handing her this inheritance. She read the letter again, and resolved that she would not ask Howard to invest the money. This, at least, should be her very own, and she made up her mind to take it to a bank in Thames Street that morning.

While she was still under the influence of the excitement aroused by the unexpected legacy, Mrs. Shorter came in, a lady with whom Honora's intimacy had been of steady growth. The tie between them might perhaps have been described as intellectual, for Elsie Shorter professed only to like people who were "worth while." She lent Honora French plays, discussed them with her, and likewise a wider range of literature, including certain brightly bound books on evolution and sociology.

In the eighteenth century, Mrs. Shorter would have had a title and a salon in the Faubourg: in the twentieth, she was the wife of a most fashionable and successful real estate agent in New York, and was aware of no incongruity. Bourgeoise was the last thing that could be said of her; she was as ready as a George Sand to discuss the whole range of human emotions; which she did many times a week with certain gentlemen of intellectual bent who had the habit of calling on her. She had never, to the knowledge of her acquaintances, been shocked. But while she believed that a great love carried, mysteriously concealed in its flame, its own pardon, she had through some fifteen years of married life remained faithful to Jerry Shorter: who was not, to say the least, a Lochinvar or a Roland. Although she had had nervous prostration and was thirty−four, she was undeniably pretty. She was of the suggestive, and not the strong−minded type, and the secret of her strength with the other sex was that she was in the habit of submitting her opinions for their approval.

"My dear," she said to Honora, "you may thank heaven that you are still young enough to look beautiful in negligée. How, far have you got? Have you guessed of which woman Vivarce was the lover? And isn't it the most exciting play you've ever read? Ned Carrington saw it in Paris, and declares it frightened him into being good for a whole week!"

"Oh, Elsie," exclaimed Honora, apologetically, "I haven't read a word of it."

Mrs. Shorter glanced at the pile of favours.

"How was the dance?" she asked. "I was too tired to go. Hugh Chiltern offered to take me."

"I saw Mr. Chiltern there. I met him last winter at the Graingers'."

"He's staying with us," said Mrs. Shorter; "you know he's a sort of cousin of Jerry's, and devoted to him. He turned up yesterday morning on Dicky Farnham's yacht, in the midst of all that storm. It appears that Dicky met him in New York, and Hugh said he was coming up here, and Dicky offered to sail him up. When the storm broke they were just outside, and all on board lost their heads, and Hugh took charge and sailed in. Dicky told me that himself."

"Then it wasn't recklessness," said Honora, involuntarily. But Mrs. Shorter did not appear to be surprised by the remark.

"That's what everybody thinks, of course," she answered. "They say that he had a chance to run in somewhere, and browbeat Dicky into keeping on for Newport at the risk of their lives. They do Hugh an injustice. He might have done that some years ago, but he's changed."

Curiosity got the better of Honora.

"Changed?" she repeated.

"Of course you didn't know him in the old days, Honora," said Mrs. Shorter. "You wouldn't recognize him now. I've seen a good deal of men, but he is the most interesting and astounding transformation I've ever known."

"How?" asked Honora. She was sitting before the glass, with her hand raised to her hair.

Mrs. Shorter appeared puzzled.

"That's what interests me," she said. "My dear, don't you think life tremendously interesting? I do. I wish I could write a novel. Between ourselves, I've tried. I had Mr. Deming send it to a publisher, who said it was clever, but had no plot. If I only could get a plot!"

Honora laughed.

"How would 'The Transformation of Mr. Chiltern' do, Elsie?"

"If I only knew what's happened to him, and how he's going to end!" sighed Mrs. Shorter.

"You were saying," said Honora, for her friend seemed to have relapsed into a contemplation of this problem, "you were saying that he had changed."

"He goes away for seven years, and he suddenly turns up filled with ambition and a purpose in life, something he had never dreamed of. He's been at Grenoble, where the Chiltern estate is, making improvements and preparing to settle down there. And he's actually getting ready to write a life of his father, the General that's the most surprising thing! They never met but to strike fire while the General was alive. It appears that Jerry and Cecil Grainger and one or two other people have some of the old gentleman's letters, and that's the reason why Hugh's come to Newport. And the strangest thing about it, my dear," added Mrs. Shorter, inconsequently, "is that I don't think it's a love affair." Honora laughed again. It was the first time she had ever heard Mrs. Shorter attribute unusual human phenomena to any other source.

"He wrote Jerry that he was coming back to live on the estate, from England. And he wasn't there a week. I can't think where he's seen any women that is," Mrs. Shorter corrected herself hastily, "of his own class. He's been in the jungle India, Africa, Corea. That was after Sally Harrington broke the engagement. And I'm positive he's not still in love with Sally. She lunched with me yesterday, and I watched him. Oh, I should have known it. But Sally hasn't got over it. It wasn't a grand passion with Hugh. I don't believe he's ever had such a thing. Not that he isn't capable of it on the contrary, he's one of the few men I can think of who is."

At this point in the conversation Honora thought that her curiosity had gone far enough.

CHAPTER IV. THE VIKING

SHE was returning on foot from the bank in Thames Street, where she had deposited her legacy, when she met him who had been the subject of her conversation with Mrs. Shorter. And the encounter seemed and was − the most natural thing in the world. She did not stop to ask herself why it was so fitting that the Viking should be a part of Vineland: why his coming should have given it the one and final needful touch. For that designation of Reginald Farwell's had come back to her. Despite the fact that Hugh Chiltern had with such apparent resolution set his face towards literature and the tillage of the land, it was as the Viking still that her imagination pictured him. By these tokens we may perceive that this faculty of our heroine's has been at work, and her canvas already sketched in.

Whether by design or accident he was at the leafy entrance of her lane she was not to know. She spied him

standing there; and in her leisurely approach a strange conceit of reincarnation possessed her, and she smiled at the contrast thus summoned up. Despite the jingling harnesses of Bellevue Avenue and the background of Mr. Chamberlin's palace wall; despite the straw hat and white trousers and blue double−breasted serge coat in which he was conventionally arrayed, he was the sea fighter still of all the ages. M. Vipsanius Agrippa, who had won an empire for Augustus, had just such a head.

Their greeting, too, was conventional enough, and he turned and walked with her up the lane, and halted before the lilacs. "You have Mrs. Forsythe's house," he said. "How well I remember it! My mother used to bring me here years ago."

"Won't you come in?" asked Honora, gently.

He seemed to have forgotten her as they mounted in silence to the porch, and she watched him with curious feelings as he gazed about him, and peered through the windows into the drawing−room.

"It's just as it was," he said. "Even the furniture. I'm glad you haven't moved it. They used to sit over there in the corner, and have tea on the ebony table. And it was always dark just as it is now. I can see them. They wore dresses with wide skirts and flounces, and queer low collars and bonnets. And they talked in subdued voices unlike so many women in these days."

She was a little surprised, and moved, by the genuine feeling with which he spoke.

"I was most fortunate to get the house," she answered. "And I have grown to love it. Sometimes it seems as though I had always lived here."

"Then you don't envy that," he said, flinging his hand towards an opening in the shrubbery which revealed a glimpse of one of the pilasters of the palace across the way. The instinct of tradition which had been the cause of Mrs. Forsythe's departure was in him, too. He, likewise, seemed to belong to the little house as he took one of the wicker chairs.

"Not," said Honora, "when I can have this."

She was dressed in white, her background of lilac leaves. Seated on the railing, with the tip of one toe resting on the porch, she smiled down at him from under the shadows of her wide hat.

"I didn't think you would," he declared. "This place seems to suit you, as I imagined you. I have thought of you often since we first met last winter."

"Yes," she replied hastily, "I am very happy here. Mrs. Shorter tells me you are staying with them."

"When I saw you again last night," he continued, ignoring her attempt to divert the stream from his channel, "I had a vivid impression as of having just left you. Have you ever felt that way about people?"

"Yes," she admitted, and poked the toe of her boot with her parasol.

"And then I find you in this house, which has so many associations for me. Harmoniously here," he added, "if you know what I mean. Not a newcomer, but some one who must always have been logically expected."

She glanced at him quickly, with parted lips. It was she who had done most of the talking at Mrs. Grainger's dinner; and the imaginative quality of mind he was now revealing was unlooked for. She was surprised not to find it out of character. It is a little difficult to know what she expected of him, since she did not know herself: the

methods, perhaps, of the Viking in Longfellow's poem. She was aware, at least, that she had attracted him, and she was beginning to realize it was not a thing that could be done lightly. This gave her a little flutter of fear.

"Are you going to be long in Newport?" she asked.

"I am leaving on Friday," he replied. "It seems strange to be here again after so many years. I find I've got out of touch with it. And I haven't a boat, although Farnham's been kind enough to offer me his."

"I can't imagine you, somehow, without a boat," she said, and added hastily: "Mrs. Shorter was speaking of you this morning, and said that you were always on the water when you were here. Newport must have been quite different then."

He accepted the topic, and during the remainder of his visit she succeeded in keeping the conversation in the middle ground, although she had a sense of the ultimate futility of the effort; a sense of pressure being exerted, no matter what she said. She presently discovered, however, that the taste for literature attributed to him which had seemed so incongruous existed. He spoke with a new fire when she led him that way, albeit she suspected that some of the fuel was derived from the revelation that she shared his liking for books. As the extent of his reading became gradually disclosed, however, her feeling of inadequacy grew, and she resolved in the future to make better use of her odd moments. On her table, in two green volumes, was the life of a Massachusetts statesman that Mrs. Shorter had lent her. She picked it up after Chiltern had gone. He had praised it.

He left behind him a blurred portrait on her mind, as that of two men superimposed. And only that morning she had had such a distinct impression of one. It was from a consideration of this strange phenomenon, with her book lying open in her lap, that her maid aroused her to go to Mrs. Pryor's. This was Tuesday.

Some of the modern inventions we deem most marvellous have been fitted for ages to man and woman. Woman, particularly, possesses for instance a kind of submarine bell; and, if she listens, she can at times hear it tinkling faintly. And the following morning, Wednesday, Honora heard hers when she received an invitation to lunch at Mrs. Shorter's. After a struggle, she refused, but Mrs. Shorter called her up over the telephone, and she yielded.

"I've got Alfred Deming for myself," said Elsie Shorter, as she greeted Honora in the hall. "He writes those very clever things you've read them. And Hugh for you," she added significantly.

The Shorter cottage, though commodious, was simplicity itself. From the vine−covered pergola where they lunched they beheld the distant sea like a lavender haze across the flats. And Honora wondered whether there were not an element of truth in what Mr. Deming said of their hostess that she thought nothing immoral except novels with happy endings. Chiltern did not talk much: he looked at Honora.

"Hugh has got so serious," said Elsie Shorter, "that sometimes I'm actually afraid of him. You ought to have done something to be as serious as that, Hugh."

"Done something!"

"Written the 'Origin of Species,' or founded a new political party, or executed a coup d'état. Half the time I'm under the delusion that I'm entertaining a celebrity under my roof, and I wake up and it's only Hugh." "It's because he looks as though he might do any of those things," suggested Mr. Deming. "Perhaps he may."

"Oh," said Elsie Shorter, "the men who do them are usually little wobbly specimens."

Honora was silent, watching Chiltern. At times the completeness of her understanding of him gave her an uncanny sensation, and again she failed to comprehend him at all. She felt his anger go to a white heat, but the

others seemed blissfully unaware of the fact. The arrival of coffee made a diversion.

"You and Hugh may have the pergola, Honora. I'll take Mr. Deming into the garden."

"I really ought to go in a few minutes, Elsie," said Honora.

"What nonsense!" exclaimed Mrs. Shorter. "If it's bridge at the Playfairs', I'll telephone and get you out of it."

"No −"

"Then I don't see where you can be going," declared Mrs. Shorter, and departed with her cavalier.

"Why are you so anxious to get away?" asked Chiltern, abruptly.

Honora coloured.

"Oh did I seem so? Elsie has such a mania for pairing people off − sometimes it's quite embarrassing."

"She was a little rash in assuming that you'd rather talk to me," he said, smiling.

"You were not consulted, either."

"I was consulted before lunch," he replied.

"You mean −?"

"I mean that I wanted you," he said. She had known it, of course. The submarine bell had told her. And he could have found no woman in Newport who would have brought more enthusiasm to his aid than Elsie Shorter.

"And you usually get what you want," she retorted with a spark of rebellion.

"Yes," he admitted. "Only hitherto I haven't wanted very desirable things." She laughed, but her curiosity got the better of her.

"Hitherto," she said, "you have just taken what you desired."

From the smouldering fires in his eyes darted an arrow−point of flame.

"What kind of a man are you?" she asked, throwing the impersonal to the winds. "Somebody called you a Viking once." "Who?" he demanded.

"It doesn't matter. I'm beginning to think the name singularly appropriate. It wouldn't be the first time one landed in Newport, according to legend," she added.

"I haven't read the poem since childhood," said Chiltern, looking at her fixedly, "but he became domesticated, if I remember rightly."

"Yes," she admitted, "the impossible happened to him, as it usually does in books. And then, circumstances helped. There were no other women."

"When the lady died," said Chiltern, "he fell upon his spear."

"The final argument for my theory," declared Honora.

"On the contrary," he maintained, smiling, "it proves there is always one woman for every man if he can find her. If this man had lived in modern times, he would probably have changed from a Captain Kidd into a useful citizen of the kind you once said you admired."

"Is a woman necessary," she asked, "for the transformation?"

He looked at her so intently that she blushed to the hair clustering at her temples. She had not meant that her badinage should go so deep.

"It was not a woman," he said slowly, "that brought me back to America."

"Oh," she exclaimed, suffused, "I hope you won't think that curiosity" and got no farther.

He was silent a moment, and when she ventured to glance up at him one of those enigmatical changes had taken place. He was looking at her gravely, though intently, and the Viking had disappeared.

"I wanted you to know," he answered. "You must have heard more or less about me. People talk. Naturally these things haven't been repeated to me, but I dare say many of them are true. I haven't been a saint, and I don't pretend to be now. I've never taken the trouble to deceive any one. And I've never cared, I'm sorry to say, what was said. But I'd like you to believe that when I agreed with with the sentiments you expressed the first time I saw you, I was sincere. And I am still sincere."

"Indeed, I do believe it!" cried Honora.

His face lighted.

"You seemed different from the other women I had known of my generation, at least," he went on steadily. "None of them could have spoken as you did. I had just landed that morning, and I should have gone direct to Grenoble, but there was some necessary business to be attended to in New York. I didn't want to go to Bessie's dinner, but she insisted. She was short of a man. I went. I sat next to you, and you interpreted my mind. It seemed too extraordinary not to have had a significance."

Honora did not reply. She felt instinctively that he was a man who was not wont ordinarily to talk about his affairs. Beneath his speech was an undercurrent or undertow, perhaps carrying her swiftly, easily, helpless into the deep waters of intimacy. For the moment she let herself go without a struggle. Her silence was of a breathless quality which he must have felt.

"And I am going to tell you why I came home," he said. "I have spoken of it to nobody, but I wish you to know that it had nothing to do with any ordinary complication these people may invent. Nor was there anything supernatural about it: what happened to me, I suppose, is as old a story as civilization itself. I'd been knocking about the world for a good many years, and I'd had time to think. One day I found myself in the interior of China with a few coolies and a man who I suspect was a ticket−of−leave Englishman. I can see the place now the yellow fog, the sand piled up against the wall like yellow snow. Desolation was a mild name for it. I think I began with a consideration of the Englishman who was asleep in the shadow of a tower. There was something inconceivably hopeless in his face in that ochre light. Then the place where I was born and brought up came to me with a startling completeness, and I began to go over my own life, step by step. To make a long story short, I perceived that what my father had tried to teach me, in his own way, had some reason in it. He was a good deal of a man. I made up my mind I'd come home and start in where I belonged. But I didn't do so right away I finished the trip first, and lent the Englishman a thousand pounds to buy into a firm in Shanghai. I suppose," he added,

"that is what is called suggestion. In my case it was merely the cumulative result of many reflections in waste places."

"And since then?"

"Since then I have been at Grenoble, making repairs and trying to learn something about agriculture. I've never been as happy in my life."

"And you're going back on Friday," she said.

He glanced at her quickly. He had detected the note in her speech: though lightly uttered, it was unmistakably a command. She tried to soften its effect in her next sentence.

"I can't express how much I appreciate your telling me this," she said. "I'll confess to you I wished to think that something of that kind had happened. I wished to believe that that you had made this determination alone. When I met you that night there was something about you I couldn't account for. I haven't been able to account for it until now."

She paused, confused, fearful that she had gone too far. A moment later she was sure of it. A look came into his eyes that frightened her.

"You've thought of me?" he said.

"You must know," she replied, "that you have an unusual personality − a striking one. I can go so far as to say that I remembered you when you reappeared at Mrs. Grenfell's −" she hesitated.

He rose, and walked to the far end of the tiled pavement of the pergola, and stood for a moment looking out over the sea. Then he turned to her.

"I either like a person or I don't," he said. "And I tell you frankly I have never met a woman whom I cared for as I do you. I hope you're not going to insist upon a probationary period of months before you decide whether you can reciprocate."

Here indeed was a speech in his other character, and she seemed to see, in a flash, his whole life in it. There was a touch of boyishness that appealed, a touch of insistent masterfulness that alarmed. She recalled that Mrs. Shorter had said of him that he had never had to besiege a fortress the white flag had always appeared too quickly. Of course there was the mystery of Mrs. Maitland still to be cleared up. It was plain, at least, that resistance merely made him unmanageable. She smiled.

"It seems to me," she said, "that in two days we have become astonishingly intimate."

"Why shouldn't we?" he demanded.

But she was not to be led into casuistry.

"I've been reading the biography you recommended," she said.

He continued to look at her a moment, and laughed as he sat down beside her. Later he walked home with her. A dinner and bridge followed, and it was after midnight when she returned. As her maid unfastened her gown she perceived that her pincushion had been replaced by the one she had received at the ball.

"Did you put that there, Mathilde?" she asked.

Mathilde had. She had seen it on madame's bureau, and thought madame wished it there. She would replace the old one at once.

"No," said Honora, "you may leave it, now."

"Bien, madame," said the maid, and glanced at her mistress, who appeared to have fallen into a revery.

It had seemed strange to her to hear people talking about him at the dinner that night, and once or twice her soul had sprung to arms to champion him, only to remember that her knowledge was special. She alone of all of them understood, and she found herself exulting in the superiority. The amazed comment when the heir to the Chiltern fortune had returned to the soil of his ancestors had been revived on his arrival in Newport. Ned Carrington, amid much laughter, had quoted the lines about Prince Hal:

"To mock the expectations of the world, To frustrate prophecies."

Honora disliked Mr. Carrington.

Perhaps the events of Thursday would better be left in the confusion in which they remained in Honora's mind. She was awakened by penetrating, persistent, and mournful notes which for some time she could not identify, although they sounded oddly familiar; and it was not until she felt the dampness of the coverlet and looked at the white square of her open windows that she realized there was a fog. And it had not lifted when Chiltern came in the afternoon. They discussed literature but the book had fallen to the floor. Absit omen! If printing had then been invented, undoubtedly there would have been a book instead of an apple in the third chapter of Genesis. He confided to her his plan of collecting his father's letters and of writing the General's life. Honora, too, would enjoy writing a book. Perhaps the thought of the pleasure of collaboration occurred to them both at once; it was Chiltern who wished that he might have her help in the difficult places; she had, he felt, the literary instinct. It was not the Viking who was talking now. And then, at last, he had risen reluctantly to leave. The afternoon had flown. She held out her hand with a frank smile.

"Good−by," she said. "Good−by, and good luck."

"But I may not go," he replied.

She stood dismayed.

"I thought you told me you were going on Friday to−morrow."

"I merely set that as a probable date. I have changed my mind. There is no immediate necessity. Do you wish me to go?" he demanded.

She had turned away, and was straightening the books on the table.

"Why should I?" she said.

"You wouldn't object to my remaining a few days more?" He had reached the doorway. "What have I to do with your staying?" she asked.

"Everything," he answered and was gone.

She stood still. The feeling that possessed her now was rebellion, and akin to hate.

Her conduct, therefore, becomes all the more incomprehensible when we find her accepting, the next afternoon, his invitation to sail on Mr. Farnham's yacht, the Folly. It is true that the gods will not exonerate Mrs. Shorter. That lady, who had been bribed with Alfred Deming, used her persuasive powers; she might be likened to a skilful artisan who blew wonderful rainbow fabrics out of glass without breaking it; she blew the tender passion into a thousand shapes, and admired every one. Her criminal culpability consisted in forgetting the fact that it could not be trusted with children.

Nature seems to delight in contrasts. As though to atone for the fog she sent a dazzling day out of the northwest, and the summer world was stained in new colours. The yachts were whiter, the water bluer, the grass greener; the stern grey rocks themselves flushed with purple. The wharves were gay, and dark clustering foliage hid an enchanted city as the Folly glided between dancing buoys. Honora, with a frightened glance upward at the great sail, caught her breath. And she felt rather than saw the man beside her guiding her seaward. A discreet expanse of striped yellow deck separated them from the wicker chairs where Mrs. Shorter and Mr. Deming were already established. She glanced at the profile of the Viking, and allowed her mind to dwell for an instant upon the sensations of that other woman who had been snatched up and carried across the ocean. Which was the quality in him that attracted her? his lawlessness, or his intellect and ambition? Never, she knew, had he appealed to her more than at this moment, when he stood, a stern figure at the wheel, and vouchsafed her nothing but commonplaces. This, surely, was his element.

Presently, however, the yacht slid out from the infolding land into an open sea that stretched before them to a silver−lined horizon. And he turned to her with a disconcerting directness, as though taking for granted a subtle understanding between them.

"How well you sail," she said, hurriedly.

"I ought to be able to do that, at least," he declared.

"I saw you when you came in the other day, although I didn't know who it was until afterwards. I was standing on the rocks near the Fort, and my heart was in my mouth."

He answered that the Folly was a good sea boat.

"So you decided to forgive me," he said.

"For what?"

"For staying in Newport."

Before accepting the invitation she had formulated a policy, cheerfully confident in her ability to carry it out. For his decision not to leave Newport had had an opposite effect upon her than that she had anticipated; it had oddly relieved the pressure. It had given her a chance to rally her forces; to smile, indeed, at an onslaught that had so disturbed her; to examine the matter in a more rational light. It had been a cause for self−congratulation that she had scarcely thought of him the night before. And to−day, in her blue veil and blue serge gown, she had boarded the Folly with her wits about her. She forgot that it was he who, so to speak, had the choice of ground and weapons. "I have forgiven you. Why shouldn't I, when you have so royally atoned."

But he obstinately refused to fence. There was nothing apologetic in this man, no indirectness in his method of attack. Parry adroitly as she might, he beat down her guard. As the afternoon wore on there were silences, when Honora, by staring over the waters, tried to collect her thoughts. But the sea was his ally, and she turned her face

appealingly toward the receding land. Fascination and fear struggled within her as she had listened to his onslaughts, and she was conscious of being moved by what he was, not by what he said. Vainly she glanced at the two representatives of an ironically satisfied convention, only to realize that they were absorbed in a milder but no less entrancing aspect of the same topic, and would not thank her for an interruption.

"Do you wish me to go away?" he asked at last abruptly, almost rudely.

"Surely," she said, "your work, your future isn't in Newport."

"You haven't answered my question."

"It's because I have no right to answer it," she replied. "Although we have known each other so short a time, I am your friend. You must realize that. I am not conventional. I have lived long enough to understand that the people one likes best are not necessarily those one has known longest. You interest me I admit it frankly I speak to you sincerely. I am even concerned that you shall find happiness, and I feel that you have the power to make something of yourself. What more can I say? It seems to me a little strange," she added, "that under the circumstances I should say so much. I can give no higher proof of my friendship."

He did not reply, but gave a sharp order to the crew. The sheet was shortened, and the Folly obediently headed westward against the swell, flinging rainbows from her bows as she ran. Mrs. Shorter and Deming returned at this moment from the cabin, where they had been on a tour of inspection. "Where are you taking us, Hugh?" said Mrs. Shorter.

"Nowhere in particular," he replied.

"Please don't forget that I am having people to dinner to−night. That's all I ask. What have you done to him, Honora, to put him in such a humour?"

Honora laughed.

"I hadn't noticed anything peculiar about him," she answered.

"This boat reminds me of Adèle," said Mrs. Shorter. "She loved it. I can see how she could get a divorce from Dicky but the Folly! She told me yesterday that the sight of it made her homesick, and Eustace Rindge won't leave Paris."

It suddenly occurred to Honora, as she glanced around the yacht, that Mrs. Rindge rather haunted her.

"So that is your answer," said Chiltern, when they were alone again.

"What other can I give you?"

"Is it because you are married?" he demanded.

She grew crimson.

"Isn't that an unnecessary question?"

No," he declared. "It concerns me vitally to understand you. You were good enough to wish that I should find happiness. I have found the possibility of it in you."

"Oh," she cried, "don't say such things!"

"Have you found happiness?" he asked.

She turned her face from him towards their shining wake. But he had seen that her eyes were filled with sudden tears.

"Forgive me," he pleaded; "I did not mean to be brutal. I said that because I felt as I have never in my life felt before. As I did not know I could feel. I can't account for it, but I ask you to believe me."

"I can account for it," she answered presently, with a strange gentleness. "It is because you met me at a critical time. Such coincidences often occur in life. I happened to be a woman; and, I confess it, a woman who was interested. I could not have been interested if you had been less real, less sincere. But I saw that you were going through a crisis; that you might, with your powers, build up your life into a splendid and useful thing. And, womanlike, my instinct was to help you. I should not have allowed you to go on, but but it all happened so quickly that I was bewildered. I I do not understand it myself."

He listened hungrily, and yet at times with evident impatience.

"No," he said, "I cannot believe that it was an accident. It was you −"

She stopped him with an imploring gesture.

"Please," she said, "please let us go in."

Without an instant's hesitation he brought the sloop about and headed her for the light−ship on Brenton's reef, and they sailed in silence. Awhile she watched the sapphire waters break to dazzling whiteness under the westerning sun. Then, in an ecstasy she did not seek to question, she closed her eyes to feel more keenly the swift motion of their flight. Why not? The sea, the winds of heaven, had aided others since the dawn of history. Legend was eternally true. On these very shores happiness had awaited those who had dared to face primeval things.

She looked again, this time towards an unpeopled shore. No sentinel guarded the uncharted reefs, and the very skies were smiling, after the storm, at the scudding fates.

It was not until they were landlocked once more, and the Folly was reluctantly beating back through the Narrows, that he spoke again.

"So you wish me to go away?"

"I cannot see any use in your staying," she replied, "after what you have said. I cannot see," she added in a low voice, "that for you to remain would be to promote the happiness of either of us. You should have gone to−day."

"You care!" he exclaimed.

"It is because I do not wish to care that I tell you to go."

"And you refuse happiness?" "It could be happiness for neither of us," said Honora. "The situation would be impossible. You are not a man who would be satisfied with moderation. You would insist upon having all. And you do not know what you are asking."

"I know that I want you," he said, "and that my life is won or lost with or without you."

"You have no right to say such a thing."

"We have each of us but one life to live."

"And one life to ruin," she answered. "See, you are running on the rocks!"

He swung the boat around.

"Others have rebuilt upon ruins," he declared.

She smiled at him.

"But you are taking my ruins for granted," she said. "You would make them first."

He relapsed into silence again. The Folly needed watching. Once he turned and spoke her name, and she did not rebuke him.

"Women have a clearer vision of the future than men," she began presently, "and I know you better than you know yourself. What what you desire would not mend your life, but break it utterly. I am speaking plainly. As I have told you, you interest me; so far that is the extent of my feelings. I do not know whether they would go any farther, but on your account as well as my own I will not take the risk. We have come to an impasse. I am sorry. I wish we might have been friends, but what you have said makes it impossible. There is only one thing to do, and that is for you to go away."

He eased off his sheet, rounded the fort, and set a course for the moorings. The sun hung red above the silhouetted roofs of Conanicut, and a quaint tower in the shape of a minaret stood forth to cap the illusions of a day.

The wind was falling, the harbour quieting for the night, and across the waters, to the tones of a trumpet, the red bars of the battleship's flag fluttered to the deck. The Folly, making a wide circle, shot into the breeze, and ended by gliding gently up to the buoy.

CHAPTER V. THE SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST

IT was Saturday morning, but Honora had forgotten the fact. Not until she was on the bottom step did the odour of cigarettes reach her and turn her faint; and she clutched suddenly at the banisters. Thus she stood for a while, motionless, and then went quietly into the drawing−room. The French windows looking out on the porch were, as usual, open.

It was an odd sensation thus to be regarding one's husband objectively. For the first time he appeared to her definitely as a stranger; as much a stranger as the man who came once a week to wind Mrs. Forsythe's clocks. Nay, more. There was a sense of intrusion in this visit, of invasion of a life with which he had nothing to do. She examined him ruthlessly, very much as one might examine a burglar taken unawares. There was the inevitable shirt with the wide pink stripes, of the abolishment or even of the effective toning down of which she had long since despaired. On the contrary, like his complexion, they evinced a continual tendency towards a more aggressive colour. There was also the jewelled ring, now conspicuously held aloft on a fat little finger. The stripes appeared that morning as the banner of a hated suzerain, the ring as the emblem of his overlordship. He did not belong in that house; everything in it cried out for his removal; and yet it was, in the eyes of the law at least, his. By grace of that fact she was here, enjoying it. At that instant, as though in evidence of this, he laid down a burning cigarette on a mahogany stand he had had brought out to him. Honora seized an ash tray, hurried to the porch, and picked up the cigarette in the tips of her fingers. "Howard, I wish you would be more careful of Mrs.

Forsythe's furniture," she exclaimed.

"Hello, Honora," he said, without looking up. "I see by the Newport paper that old Maitland is back from Europe. Things are skyrocketing in Wall Street." He glanced at the ash tray, which she had pushed towards him. "What's the difference about the table? If the old lady makes a row, I'll pay for it."

"Some things are priceless," she replied; "you do not seem to realize that."

"Not this rubbish," said Howard. "Judging by the fuss she made over the inventory, you'd think it might be worth something."

"She has trusted us with it," said Honora. Her voice shook.

He stared at her.

"I never saw you look like that," he declared.

"It's because you never look at me closely," she answered.

He laughed, and resumed his reading. She stood awhile by the railing. Across the way, beyond the wall, she heard Mr. Chamberlin's shrill voice berating a gardener.

"Howard," she asked presently, "why do you come to Newport at all?"

"Why do I come to Newport?" he repeated. "I don't understand you."

"Why do you come up here every week?"

"Well," he said, "it isn't a bad trip on the boat, and I get a change from New York, and see men I shouldn't probably see otherwise." He paused and looked at her again, doubtfully. "Why do you ask such a question?"

"I wished to be sure," said Honora.

"Sure of what?"

"That the−arrangement suited you perfectly. You do not feel the lack of anything, do you?"

"What do you mean?"

"You wouldn't care to stay in Newport all the time?"

"Not if I know myself," he replied. "I leave that part of it to you." "What part of it?" she demanded.

"You ought to know. You do it pretty well," he laughed. "By the way, Honora, I've got to have a conference with Mr. Wing to−day, and I may not be home to lunch."

"We're dining there to−night," she told him, in a listless voice.

Upon Ethel Wing had descended the dominating characteristics of the elder James, who, whatever the power he might wield in Wall Street, was little more than a visitor in Newport. It was Ethel's house, from the hour she had swept the Reel and Carter plans (which her father had brought home) from the table and sent for Mr. Farwell. The

forehanded Reginald arrived with a sketch, and the result, as every one knows, is one of the chief monuments to his reputation. So exquisitely proportioned is its simple, two−storied marble front as seen through the trees left standing on the old estate, that tourists, having beheld the Chamberlin and other mansions, are apt to think this niggardly for a palace. Two infolding wings, stretching towards the water, enclose a court, and through the slender white pillars of the peristyle one beholds in fancy the summer seas of Greece.

Looking out on the court, and sustaining this classic illusion, is a marble−paved dining room, with hangings of Pompeiian red, and frescoes of nymphs and satyrs and piping shepherds, framed between fluted pilasters, dimly discernible in the soft lights.

In the midst of these surroundings, at the head of his table, sat the great financier whose story but faintly concerns this chronicle; the man who, every day that he had spent down town in New York in the past thirty years, had eaten the same meal in the same little restaurant under the street. This he told Honora, on his left, as though it were not history. He preferred apple pie to the greatest of artistic triumphs of his daughter's chef, and had it; a glorified apple pie, with frills and furbelows, and whipped cream which he angrily swept to one side with contempt.

"That isn't apple pie," he said. "I'd like to take that Frenchman to the little New England hill−town where I went to school and show him what apple pie is."

Such were the autobiographical snatches by no means so crude as they sound that reached her intelligence from time to time. Mr. Wing was too subtle to be crude; and he had married a Playfair, a family noted for good living. Honora did not know that he was fond of talking of that apple pie and the New England school at public banquets; nor did Mr. Wing suspect that the young woman whom he was apparently addressing, and who seemed to be hanging on his words, was not present. It was not until she had put her napkin on the table that she awoke with a start and gazed into his face and saw written there still another history than the one he had been telling her. The face was hidden, indeed, by the red beard. What she read was in the little eyes that swept her with a look of possession: possession in a large sense, let it be emphasized, that an exact justice be done Mr. James Wing, she was one of the many chattels over which his ownership extended; bought and paid for with her husband. A hot resentment ran through her at the thought.

Mr. Cuthbert, who was many kinds of a barometer, sought her out later in the courtyard.

"Your husband's feeling tiptop, isn't he?" said he. "He's been locked up with old Wing all day. Something's in the wind, and I'd give a good deal to know what it is."

"I'm afraid I can't inform you," replied Honora.

Mr. Cuthbert apologized.

"Oh, I didn't mean to ask you for a tip," he declared, quite confused. "I didn't suppose you knew. The old man is getting ready to make another killing, that's all. You don't mind my telling you you look stunning tonight, do you?"

Honora smiled.

"No, I don't mind," she said.

Mr. Cuthbert appeared to be ransacking the corners of his brain for words.

"I was watching you to−night at the table while Mr. Wing was talking to you. I don't believe you heard a thing he said."

"Such astuteness," she answered, smiling at him, "astounds me."

He laughed nervously.

"You're different than you've ever been since I've known you," he went on, undismayed. "I hope you won't think I'm making love to you. Not that I shouldn't like to, but I've got sense enough to see it's no use."

Her reply was unexpected.

"What makes you think that?" she asked curiously. "Oh, I'm not a fool," said Mr. Cuthbert. "But if I were a poet, or that fellow Deming, I might be able to tell you what your eyes were like to−night."

"I'm glad you're not," said Honora.

As they were going in, she turned for a lingering look at the sea. A strong young moon rode serenely in the sky and struck a path of light across the restless waters. Along this shimmering way the eyes of her companion followed hers.

"I can tell you what that colour is, at least. Do you remember the blue, transparent substance that used to be on favours at children's parties?" he asked. "There were caps inside of them, and crackers."

"I believe you are a poet, after all," she said.

A shadow fell across the flags. Honora did not move.

"Hello, Chiltern," said Cuthbert. "I thought you were playing bridge. . . ."

"You haven't looked at me once to−night," he said, when Cuthbert had gone in.

She was silent.

"Are you angry?"

"Yes, a little," she answered. "Do you blame me?"

The vibration of his voice in the moonlit court awoke an answering chord in her; and a note of supplication from him touched her strangely. Logic in his presence was a little difficult there can be no doubt of that.

"I must go in," she said unsteadily, "my carriage is waiting."

But he stood in front of her.

"I should have thought you would have gone," she said.

"I wanted to see you again."

"And now?"

"I can't leave while you feel this way," he pleaded. "I can't abandon what I have of you what you will let me take. If I told you I would be reasonable −"

"I don't believe in miracles," she said, recovering a little; "at least in modern ones. The question is, could you become reasonable?" "As a last resort," he replied, with a flash of humour and a touch of hope. "If you would commute my sentence."

She passed him, and picking up her skirts, paused in the window.

"I will give you one more chance," she said.

This was the conversation that, by repeating itself, filled the interval of her drive home. So oblivious was she to Howard's presence, that he called her twice from her corner of the carriage after the vehicle had stopped; and he halted her by seizing her arm as she was about to go up the stairs. She followed him mechanically into the drawing−room.

He closed the door behind them, and the other door into the darkened dining room. He even took a precautionary glance out of the window of the porch. And these movements, which ordinarily might have aroused her curiosity, if not her alarm, she watched with a profound indifference. He took a stand before the Japanese screen in front of the fireplace, thrust his hands in his pockets, cleared his throat, and surveyed her from her white shoulders to the gold−embroidered tips of her slippers.

"I'm leaving for the West in the morning, Honora. If you've made any arrangements for me on Sunday, you'll have to cancel them. I may be gone two weeks, I may be gone a month. I don't know."

"Yes," she said.

"I'm going to tell you something those fellows in the smoking room to−night did their best to screw out of me. If you say anything about it, all's up between me and Wing. The fact that he picked me out to engineer the thing, and that he's going to let me in if I push it through, is a pretty good sign that he thinks something of my business ability, eh?"

"You'd better not tell me, Howard," she said.

"You're too clever to let it out," he assured her; and added with a chuckle: "If it goes through, order what you like. Rent a house on Bellevue Avenue anything in reason." "What is it?" she asked, with a sudden premonition that the thing had a vital significance for her.

"It's the greatest scheme extant," he answered with elation. "I won't go into details you wouldn't understand 'em. Mr. Wing and some others have tried the thing before, nearer home, and it worked like a charm. Street railways. We buy up the little lines for nothing, and get an interest in the big ones, and sell the little lines for fifty times what they cost us, and guarantee big dividends for the big lines."

"It sounds to me," said Honora, slowly, "as though some one would get cheated."

"Some one get cheated!" he exclaimed, laughing. "Every one gets cheated, as you call it, if they haven't enough sense to know what their property's worth, and how to use it to the best advantage. It's a case," he announced, "of the survival of the fittest. Which reminds me that if I'm going to be fit to−morrow I'd better go to bed. Mr. Wing's to take me to New York on his yacht, and you've got to have your wits about you when you talk to the old man."

CHAPTER VI. CLIO, OR THALIA?

ACCORDING to the ordinary and inaccurate method of measuring time, a fortnight may have gone by since the event last narrated, and Honora had tasted at last the joys of authorship. Her name was not to appear, to be sure, on the cover of the Life and Letters of General Angus Chiltern; nor indeed, so far, had she written so much as a chapter or a page of a work intended to inspire young and old with the virtues of citizenship. At present the biography was in the crucial constructive stage. Should the letters be put in one volume, and the life in another? or should the letters be inserted in the text of the life? or could not there be a third and judicious mixture of both of these methods? Honora's counsel on this and other problems was, it seems, invaluable. Her own table was fairly littered with biographies more or less famous which had been fetched from the library, and the method of each considered.

Even as Mr. Garrick would never have been taken for an actor in his coach and four, so our heroine did not in the least resemble George Eliot, for instance, as she sat before her mirror at high noon with Monsieur Cadron and her maid Mathilde in worshipful attendance. Some of the ladies, indeed, who have left us those chatty memoirs of the days before the guillotine, she might have been likened to. Monsieur Cadron was an artist, and his branch of art was hair−dressing. It was by his own wish he was here to−day, since he had conceived a new coiffure especially adapted, he declared, to the type of Madame Spence. Behold him declaring ecstatically that seldom in his experience had he had such hairs to work with.

"Avec une telle chevelure, l'on peut tout faire, madame. Être simple, c'est le comble de l'art. Ça vous donne," he added, with clasped hands and a step backward, "ca vous donne tout à fait l'air d'une dame de Nattier."

Madame took the hand−glass, and did not deny that she was éblouissante. If madame, suggested Monsieur Cadron, had but a little dress a la Marie Antoinette? Madame had, cried madame's maid, running to fetch one with little pink flowers and green leaves on an ecru ground. Could any coiffure or any gown be more appropriate for an entertainment at which Clio was to preside?

It is obviously impossible that a masterpiece should be executed under the rules laid down by convention. It would never be finished. Mr. Chiltern was coming to lunch, and it was not the first time. On her appearance in the doorway he halted abruptly in his pacing of the drawing−room, and stared at her.

"I'm sorry I kept you waiting," she said.

"It was worth it," he said. And they entered the dining room. A subdued, golden−green light came in through the tall glass doors that opened out on the little garden which had been Mrs. Forsythe's pride. The scent of roses was in the air, and a mass of them filled a silver bowl in the middle of the table. On the dark walls were Mrs. Forsythe's precious prints, and above the mantel a portrait of a thin, aristocratic gentleman who resembled the poet Tennyson. In the noonday shadows of a recess was a dark mahogany sideboard loaded with softly gleaming silver Honora's. Chiltern sat down facing her. He looked at Honora over the roses, and she looked at him. A sense of unreality that was, paradoxically, stronger than reality itself came over her, a sense of fitness, of harmony. And for the moment an imagination, ever straining at its leash, was allowed to soar. It was Chiltern who broke the silence.

"What a wonderful bowl!" he said.

"It has been in my father's family a great many years. He was very fond of it," she answered, and with a sudden, impulsive movement she reached over and set the bowl aside.

"That's better," he declared, "much as I admire the bowl, and the roses."

She coloured faintly, and smiled. The feast of reason that we are impatiently awaiting is deferred. It were best to attempt to record the intangible things; the golden−green light, the perfumes, and the faint musical laughter which we can hear if we listen. Thalia's laughter, surely, not Clio's. Thalia, enamoured with such a theme, has taken the stage herself and as Vesta, goddess of hearths. It was Vesta whom they felt to be presiding. They lingered, therefore, over the coffee, and Chiltern lighted a cigar. He did not smoke cigarettes.

"I've lived long enough," he said, "to know that I have never lived at all. There is only one thing in life worth having."

"What is it?" asked Honora.

"This," he answered, with a gesture; "when it is permanent."

She smiled.

"And how is one to know whether it would be permanent?"

"Through experience and failure," he answered quickly, "we learn to distinguish the reality when it comes. It is unmistakable."

"Suppose it comes too late?" she said, forgetting the ancient verse inscribed in her youthful diary: "Those who walk on ice will slide against their wills."

"To admit that is to be a coward," he declared.

"Such a philosophy may be fitting for a man," she replied, "but for a woman −"

"We are no longer in the dark ages," he interrupted. "Every one, man or woman, has the right to happiness. There is no reason why we should suffer all our lives for a mistake."

"A mistake!" she echoed.

"Certainly," he said. "It is all a matter of luck, or fate, or whatever you choose to call it. Do you suppose, if I could have found fifteen years ago the woman to have made me happy, I should have spent so much time in seeking distraction?"

"Perhaps you could not have been capable of appreciating her fifteen years ago," suggested Honora. And, lest he might misconstrue her remark, she avoided his eyes.

"Perhaps," he admitted. "But suppose I have found her now, when I know the value of things."

"Suppose you should find her now within a reasonable time. What would you do?"

"Marry her," he exclaimed promptly. "Marry her and take her to Grenoble, and live the life my father lived before me."

She did not reply, but rose, and he followed her to the shaded corner of the porch where they usually sat. The bundle of yellow−stained envelopes he had brought were lying on the table, and Honora picked them up mechanically.

"I have been thinking," she said as she removed the elastics, "that it is a mistake to begin a biography by the enumeration of one's ancestors. Readers become frightfully bored before they get through the first chapter."

"I'm beginning to believe," he laughed, "that you will have to write this one alone. All the ideas I have got so far have been yours. Why shouldn't you write it, and I arrange the material, and talk about it! That appears to be all I'm good for."

If she allowed her mind to dwell on the vista he thus presented, she did not betray herself.

"Another thing," she said, "it should be written like fiction."

"Like fiction?"

"Fact should be written like fiction, and fiction like fact. It's difficult to express what I mean. But this life of your father deserves to be widely known, and it should be entertainingly done, like Lockhart, or Parton's works −"

An envelope fell to the floor, spilling its contents. Among them were several photographs. "Oh," she exclaimed, "how beautiful! What place is this?"

"I hadn't gone over these letters," he answered. "I only got them yesterday from Cecil Grainger. These are some pictures of Grenoble which must leave been taken shortly before my father died."

She gazed in silence at the old house half hidden by great maples and beeches, their weighted branches sweeping the ground. The building was of wood, painted white, and through an archway of verdure one saw the generous doorway with its circular steps, with its fan−light above, and its windows at the side. Other quaint windows, some of them of triple width, suggested an interior of mystery and interest.

"My great−great−grandfather, Alexander Chiltern, built it," he said, "on land granted to him before the Revolution. Of course the house has been added to since then, but the simplicity of the original has always been kept. My father put on the conservatory, for instance," and Chiltern pointed to a portion at the end of one of the long low wings. "He got the idea from the orangery of a Georgian house in England, and an English architect designed it."

Honora took up the other photographs. One of them, over which she lingered, was of a charming, old−fashioned garden spattered with sunlight, and shut out from the world by a high brick wall. Behind the wall, again, were the dense masses of the trees, and at the end of a path between nodding foxgloves and Canterbury bells, in a curved recess, a stone seat.

She turned her face. His was at her shoulder.

"How could you ever have left it?" she asked reproachfully.

She voiced his own regrets, which the crowding memories had awakened.

"I don't know," he answered, not without emotion. "I have often asked myself that question." He crossed over to the railing of the porch, swung about, and looked at her. Her eyes were still on the picture. "I can imagine you in that garden," he said. Did the garden cast the spell by which she saw herself on the seat? or was it Chiltern's voice? She would indeed love and cherish it. And was it true that she belonged there, securely infolded within those peaceful walls? How marvellously well was Thalia playing her comedy! Which was the real, and which the false? What of true value, what of peace and security was contained in her present existence? She had missed the meaning of things, and suddenly it was held up before her, in a garden.

A later hour found them in Honora's runabout wandering northward along quiet country roads on the eastern side of the island. Chiltern, who was driving, seemed to take no thought of their direction, until at last, with an exclamation, he stopped the horse; and Honora beheld an abandoned mansion of a bygone age sheltered by ancient trees, with wide lands beside it sloping to the water.

"What is it?" she asked.

"Beaulieu," he replied. "It was built in the seventeenth century, I believe, and must have been a fascinating place in colonial days." He drove in between the fences and tied the horse, and came around by the side of the runabout. "Won't you get out and look at it?"

She hesitated, and their eyes met as he held out his hand, but she avoided it and leaped quickly to the ground: neither spoke as they walked around the deserted house and gazed at the quaint façade, broken by a crumbling, shaded balcony let in above the entrance door. No sound broke the stillness of the summer's day a pregnant stillness. The air was heavy with perfumes, and the leaves formed a tracery against the marvellous blue of the sky. Mystery brooded in the place. Here, in this remote paradise now in ruins, people had dwelt and loved. Thought ended there; and feeling, which is unformed thought, began. Again she glanced at him, and again their eyes met, and hers faltered. They turned, as with one consent, down the path toward the distant water. Paradise overgrown! Could it be reconstructed, redeemed?

In former days the ground they trod had been a pleasance the width of the house, bordered, doubtless, by the forest. Trees grew out of the flower beds now, and underbrush choked the paths. The box itself, that once primly lined the alleys, was gnarled and shapeless. Labyrinth had replaced order, nature had reaped her vengeance. At length, in the deepening shade, they came, at what had been the edge of the old terrace, to the daintiest of summer−houses, crumbling too, the shutters off their hinges, the floor−boards loose. Past and gone were the idyls of which it had been the stage.

They turned to the left, through tangled box that wound hither and thither, until they stopped at a stone wall bordering a tree−arched lane. At the bottom of the lane was a glimpse of blue water.

Honora sat down on the wall with her back to a great trunk. Chiltern, with a hand on the stones, leaped over lightly, and stood for some moments in the lane, his feet a little apart and firmly planted, his hands behind his back.

What had Thalia been about to allow the message of that morning to creep into her comedy? a message announcing the coming of an intruder not in the play, in the person of a husband bearing gifts. What right had he, in the eternal essence of things, to return? He was out of all time and place. Such had been her feeling when she had first read the hastily written letter, but even when she had burned it it had risen again from the ashes. Anything but that! In trying not to think of it, she had picked up the newspaper, learned of a railroad accident, and shuddered. Anything but his return! Her marriage was a sin, there could be no sacrament in it. She would flee first, and abandon all rather than submit to it.

Chiltern's step aroused her now. He came back to the wall where she was sitting, and faced her.

"You are sad," he said.

She shook her head at him, slowly, and tried to smile.

"What has happened?" he demanded rudely. "I can't bear to see you sad."

"I am going away," she said. The decision had suddenly come to her. Why had she not seen before that it was inevitable?

He seized her wrist as it lay on the wall, and she winced from the sudden pain of his grip.

"Honora, I love you," he said, "I must have you I will have you. I will make you happy. I promise it on my soul. I can't, I won't live without you."

She did not listen to his words she could not have repeated them afterwards. The very tone of his voice was changed by passion; creation spoke through him, and she heard and thrilled and swayed and soared, forgetting heaven and earth and hell as he seized her in his arms and covered her face with kisses. Thus Eric the Red might have wooed. And by what grace she spoke the word that delivered her she never knew. As suddenly as he had seized her he released her, and she stood before him with flaming cheeks and painful breath.

"I love you," he said, "I love you. I have searched the world for you and found you, and by all the laws of God you are mine."

And love was written in her eyes. He had but to read it there, though her lips might deny it. This was the man of all men she would have chosen, and she was his by right of conquest. Yet she held up her hand with a gesture of entreaty.

"No, Hugh it cannot be," she said.

"Cannot!" he cried. "I will take you. You love me."

"I am married."

"Married! Do you mean that you would let that man stand between you and happiness?"

"What do you mean?" she asked, in a frightened voice.

"Just what I say," he cried, with incredible vehemence. "Leave him − divorce him. You cannot live with him. He isn't worthy to touch your hand."

The idea planted itself with the force of a barbed arrow from a strong−bow. Struggle as she might, she could not henceforth extract it.

"Oh!" she cried.

He took her arm, gently, and forced her to sit down on the wall. Such was the completeness of his mastery that she did not resist. He sat down beside her.

"Listen, Honora," he said, and tried to speak calmly, though his voice was still vibrant; "let us look the situation in the face. As I told you once, the days of useless martyrdom are past. The world is more enlightened today, and recognizes an individual right to happiness."

"To happiness," she repeated after him, like a child. He forgot his words as he looked into her eyes: they were lighted as with all the candles of heaven in his honour.

"Listen," he said hoarsely, and his fingers tightened on her arm. The current running through her from him made her his instrument. Did he say the sky was black, she would have exclaimed at the discovery.

"Yes I am listening."

"Honora!"

"Hugh," she answered, and blinded him. He was possessed by the tragic fear that she was acting a dream; presently she would awake and shatter the universe. His dominance was too complete. "I love you I respect you. You are making it very hard for me. Please try to understand what I am saying," he cried almost fiercely. "This thing, this miracle, has happened in spite of us. Henceforth you belong to me − do you hear?"

Once more the candles flared up.

"We cannot drift. We must decide now upon some definite action. Our lives are our own, to make as we choose. You said you were going away. And you meant alone?"

The eyes were wide, now, with fright.

"Oh, I must I must," she said. "Don't don't talk about it." And she put forth a hand over his.

"I will talk about it," he declared, trembling. "I have thought it all out," and this time it was her fingers that tightened. "You are going away. And presently when you are free I will come to you."

For a moment the current stopped.

"No, no!" she cried, almost in terror. The first fatalist must have been a woman, and the vision of rent prison bars drove her mad. "No, we could never be happy."

"We can we will be happy," he said, with a conviction that was unshaken. "Do you hear me? I will not debase what I have to say by resorting to comparisons. But others I know have been happy are happy, though their happiness cannot be spoken of with ours. Listen. You will go away for a little while and afterwards we shall be together for all time. Nothing shall separate us. We never have known life, either of us, until now. I, missing you, have run after the false gods. And you I say it with truth needed me. We will go to live at Grenoble, as my father and mother lived. We will take up their duties there. And if it seems possible, I will go into public life. When I return, I shall find you waiting for me in the garden."

So real had the mirage become, that Honora did not answer. The desert and its journey fell away. Could such a thing, after all, be possible? Did fate deal twice to those whom she had made novices? The mirage, indeed, suddenly became reality a mirage only because she had proclaimed it such. She had beheld in it, as he spoke, a Grenoble which was paradise regained. And why should paradise regained be a paradox? Why paradise regained? Paradise gained. She had never known it, until he had flung wide the gates. She had sought for it, and never found it until now, and her senses doubted it. It was a paradise of love, to be sure; but one, too, of duty. Duty made it real. Work was there, and fulfilment of the purpose of life itself. And if his days hitherto had been useless, hers had in truth been barren.

It was only of late, after a life−long groping, that she had discovered their barrenness. The right to happiness! Could she begin anew, and found it upon a rock? And was he the rock?

The question startled her, and she drew away from him first her hand, and then she turned her body, staring at him with widened eyes. He did not resist the movement; nor could he, being male, divine what was passing within her, though he watched her anxiously. She had no thought of the first days, but afterwards. For at such times it is the woman who scans the veil of the future. How long would that beacon burn which flamed now in such prodigal waste? Would not the very springs of it dry up? She looked at him, and she saw the Viking. But the Viking had

fled from the world, and they they would be going into it. Could love prevail against its dangers and pitfalls and duties? Love was the word that rang out, as one calling through the garden, and her thoughts ran molten. Let love overflow she gloried in the waste! And let the lean years come, she defied them to−day.

"Oh, Hugh!" she faltered.

"My dearest!" he cried, and would have seized her in his arms again but for a look of supplication. That he had in him this innate and unsuspected chivalry filled her with an exquisite sweetness.

"You will protect me?" she asked. "With my life and with my honour," he answered. "Honora, there will be no happiness like ours."

"I wish I knew," she sighed: and then, her look returning from the veil, rested on him with a tenderness that was inexpressible. "I I don't care, Hugh. I trust you."

The sun was setting. Slowly they went back together through the paths of the tangled garden, which had doubtless seen many dramas, and the courses changed of many lives: overgrown and outworn now, yet love was loth to leave it. Honora paused on the lawn before the house, and looked back at him over her shoulder.

"How happy we could have been here, in those days," she sighed.

"We will be happier there," he said.

Honora loved. Many times in her life had she believed herself to have had this sensation, and yet had known nothing of these aches and ecstasies! Her mortal body, unattended, went out to dinner that evening. Never, it is said, was her success more pronounced. The charm of Randolph Leffingwell, which had fascinated the nobility of three kingdoms, had descended on her, and hostesses had discovered that she possessed the magic touch necessary to make a dinner complete. Her quality, as we know, was not wit: it was something as old as the world, as new as modern psychology. It was, in short, the power to stimulate. She infused a sense of well−being; and ordinary people, in her presence, surprised themselves by saying clever things.

Lord Ayllington, a lean, hard−riding gentleman, who was supposed to be on the verge of contracting an alliance with the eldest of the Grenfell girls, regretted that Mrs. Spence was neither unmarried nor an heiress.

"You know," he said to Cecil Grainger, who happened to be gracing his wife's dinner−party, "she's the sort of woman for whom a man might consent to live in Venice."

"And she's the sort of woman," replied Mr. Grainger, "a man couldn't get to go to Venice." Lord Ayllington's sigh was a proof of an intimate knowledge of the world.

"I suppose not," he said. "It's always so. And there are few American women who would throw everything overboard for a grand passion."

"You ought to see her on the beach," Mr. Grainger suggested.

"I intend to," said Ayllington. "By the way, not a few of your American women get divorced, and keep their cake and eat it, too. It's a bit difficult, here at Newport, for a stranger, you know."

"I'm willing to bet," declared Mr. Grainger, "that it doesn't pay. When you're divorced and married again you've got to keep up appearances the first time you don't. Some of these people are working pretty hard."

Whereupon, for the Englishman's enlightenment, he recounted a little gossip.

This, of course, was in the smoking room. In the drawing−room, Mrs. Grainger's cousin did not escape, and the biography was the subject of laughter.

"You see something of him, I hear," remarked Mrs. Playfair, a lady the deficiency of whose neck was supplied by jewels, and whose conversation sounded like liquid coming out of an inverted bottle.

"Is he really serious about the biography?"

"You'll have to ask Mr. Grainger," replied Honora.

"Hugh ought to marry," Mrs. Grenfell observed.

"Why did he cone back?" inquired another who had just returned from a prolonged residence abroad. "Was there a woman in the case?"

"Put it in the plural, and you'll be nearer right," laughed Mrs. Grenfell, and added to Honora, "You'd best take care, my dear, he's dangerous."

Honora seemed to be looking down on them from a great height, and to Reginald Farwell alone is due the discovery of this altitude; his reputation for astuteness, after that evening, was secure. He had sat next her, and had merely put two and two together an operation that is probably at the root of most prophecies. More than once that summer Mr. Farwell had taken sketches down Honora's lane, for she was on what was known as his list of advisers: a sheepfold of ewes, some one had called it, and he was always piqued when one of them went astray. In addition to this, intuition told him that he had taken the name of a deity in vain and that deity was Chiltern. These reflections resulted in another after−dinner conversation to which we are not supposed to listen.

He found Jerry Shorter in a receptive mood, and drew him into Cecil Grainger's study, where this latter gentleman, when awake, carried on his lifework of keeping a record of prize winners.

"I believe there is something between Mrs. Spence and Hugh Chiltern, after all, Jerry," he said.

"By jinks, you don't say so!" exclaimed Mr. Shorter, who had a profound respect for his friend's diagnoses in these matters. "She was dazzling to−night, and her eyes were like stars. I passed her in the hall just now, and I might as well have been in Halifax."

"She fairly withered me when I made a little fun of Chiltern," declared Farwell.

"I tell you what it is, Reggie," remarked Mr. Shorter, with more frankness than tact, "you could talk architecture with 'em from now to Christmas, and nothing'd happen, but it would take an iceberg to write a book with Hugh and see him alone six days out of seven. Chiltern knocks women into a cocked hat. I've seen 'em stark raving crazy. Why, there was that Mrs. Slicer six or seven years ago you remember that Cecil Grainger had such a deuce of a time with. And there was Mrs. Dutton I was a committee to see her, when the old General was alive, − to say nothing about a good many women you and I know."

Mr. Farwell nodded.

"I'm confoundedly sorry if it's so," Mr. Shorter continued, with sincerity. "She has a brilliant future ahead of her. She's got good blood in her, she's stunning to look at, and she's made her own way in spite of that Billy− cock of a husband who talks like the original Rothschild. By the bye, Wing is using him for a good thing. He's sent him out

West to pull that street railway chestnut out of the fire. I'm not particularly squeamish, Reggie, though I try to play the game straight myself the way my father played it. But by the lord Harry, I can't see the difference between Dick Turpin and Wing and Trixy Brent. It's hold and deliver with those fellows. But if the police get anybody, they get Spence."

"The police never get anybody," said Farwell, pessimistically; for the change of topic bored him.

"No, I suppose they don't," answered Mr. Shorter, cheerfully finishing his chartreuse, and fixing his eye on one of the coloured lithographs of lean horses on Cecil Grainger's wall. "I'd talk to Hugh, if I wasn't as much afraid of him as of Jim Jeffries. I don't want to see him ruin her career."

"Why should an affair with him ruin it?" asked Farwell, unexpectedly. "There was Constance Witherspoon. I understand that went pretty far."

"My dear boy," said Mr. Shorter, "it's the women. Bessie Grainger here, for instance she'd go right up in the air. And the women had well, a childhood interest in Constance. Self−preservation is the first law of women."

"They say Hugh has changed that he wants to settle down," said Farwell.

"If you'd ever gone to church, Reggie," said Mr. Shorter, you'd know something about the limitations of the leopard."

CHAPTER VII. "LIBERTY, AND THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS"

THAT night was Honora's soul played upon by the unknown musician of the sleepless hours. Now a mad, ecstatic chorus dinned in her ears and set her blood coursing; and again despair seized her with a dirge. Periods of semiconsciousness only came to her, and from one of these she was suddenly startled into wakefulness by her own words. "I have the right to make of my life what I can." But when she beheld the road of terrors that stretched between her and the shining places, it seemed as though she would never have the courage to fare forth along its way. To look back was to survey a prospect even more dreadful.

The incidents of her life ranged by in procession. Not in natural sequence, but a group here and a group there. And it was given her, for the first time, to see many things clearly. But now she loved. God alone knew what she felt for this man, and when she thought of him the very perils of her path were dwarfed. On returning home that night she had given her maid her cloak, and had stood for a long time immobile, gazing at her image in the pierglass.

"Madame est belle comme l'Impératrice d'Autriche!" said the maid at length.

"Am I really beautiful, Mathilde?"

Mathilde raised her eyes and hands to heaven in a gesture that admitted no doubt. Mathilde, moreover, could read a certain kind of history if the print were large enough.

Honora looked in the glass again. Yes, she was beautiful. He had found her so, he had told her so. And here was the testimony of her own eyes. The bloom on the nectarines that came every morning from Mr. Chamberlin's greenhouse could not compare with the colour of her cheeks; her hair was like the dusk; her eyes like the blue pools among the rocks, and touched now by the sun; her neck and arms of the whiteness of sea−foam. It was meet that she should be thus for him and for the love he brought her.

She turned suddenly to the maid.

"Do you love me, Mathilde?" she asked.

Mathilde was not surprised. She was, on the contrary, profoundly touched.

"How can madame ask?" she cried impulsively, and seized Honora's hand. How was it possible to be near madame, and not love her?

"And would you go anywhere with me?"

The scene came back to her in the night watches. For the little maid had wept and vowed eternal fidelity.

It was not until the first faint herald of the morning that Honora could bring herself to pronounce the fateful thing that stood between her and happiness, that threatened to mar the perfection of a heaven−born love Divorce! And thus, having named it resolutely several times, the demon of salvation began gradually to assume a kindly aspect that at times became almost benign. In fact, this one was not a demon at all, but a liberator: the demon, she perceived, stalked behind him, and his name was Notoriety. It was he who would flay her for coquetting with the liberator.

What if she were flayed? Once married to Chiltern, once embarked upon that life of usefulness, once firmly established on ground of her own tilling, and she was immune. And this led her to a consideration of those she knew who had been flayed. They were not few, and a surfeit of publicity is a sufficient reason for not enumerating them here. And during this process of exorcism Notoriety became a bogey, too: he had been powerless to hurt them. It must be true what Chiltern had said that the world was changing. The tragic and the ridiculous here joining hands, she remembered that Reggie Farwell had told her that he had recently made a trip to western New York to inspect a house he had built for a "remarried" couple who were not wholly unknown. The dove−cote, he had called it. The man, in his former marriage, had been renowned all up and down tidewater as a rake and a brute, and now it was an exception when he did not have at least one baby on his knee. And he knew, according to Mr. Farwell, more about infant diet than the whole staff of a maternity hospital.

At length, as she stared into the darkness, dissolution came upon it. The sills of her windows outlined themselves, and a blurred foliage was sketched into the frame. With a problem but half solved the day had surprised her. She marvelled to see that it grew apace, and presently arose to look out upon a stillness like that of eternity: in the grey light the very leaves seemed to be holding their breath in expectancy of the thing that was to come. Presently the drooping roses raised their heads, from pearl to silver grew the light, and comparison ended. The reds were aflame, the greens resplendent, the lawn sewn with the diamonds of the dew.

A little travelling table was beside the window, and Honora took her pen and wrote.

"My dearest, above all created things I love you. Morning has come, and it seems to me that I have travelled far since last I saw you. I have come to a new place, which is neither hell nor heaven, and in the mystery of it you you alone are real. It is to your strength that I cling, and I know that you will not fail me.

"Since I saw you, Hugh, I have been through the Valley of the Shadow. I have thought of many things. One truth alone is clear that I love you transcendently. You have touched and awakened me into life. I walk in a world unknown.

"There is the glory of martyrdom in this message I send you now. You must not come to me again until I send for you. I cannot, I will not trust myself or you. I will keep this love which has come to me undefiled. It has brought with it to me a new spirit, a spirit with a scorn for things base and mean. Though it were my last chance in life, I

would not see you if you came. If I thought you would not understand what I feel, I could not love you as I do.

"I will write to you again, when I see my way more clearly. I told you in the garden before you spoke that I was going away. Do not seek to know my plans. For the sake of the years to come, obey me.

"HONORA."

She reread the letter, and sealed it. A new and different exaltation had come to her begotten, perhaps, in the act of writing. A new courage filled her, and now she contemplated the ordeal with a tranquillity that surprised her. The disorder and chaos of the night were passed, and she welcomed the coming day, and those that were to follow it. As though the fates were inclined to humour her impatience, there was a telegram on her breakfast tray, dated at New York, and informing her that her husband would be in Newport about the middle of the afternoon. His western trip was finished a day earlier than he expected. Honora rang her bell.

"Mathilde, I am going away."

"Oui, madame."

"And I should like you to go with me."

"Oui, madame."

"It is only fair that you should understand, Mathilde. I am going away alone. I am not coming back."

The maid's eyes filled with sudden tears.

"Oh, madame," she cried, in a burst of loyalty, "if madame will permit me to stay with her!"

Honora was troubled, but her strange calmness did not forsake her. The morning was spent in packing, which was a simple matter. She took only such things as she needed, and left her dinner−gowns hanging in the closets. A few precious books of her own she chose, but the jewellery her husband had given her was put in boxes and laid upon the dressing−table. In one of these boxes was her wedding ring. When luncheon was over, an astonished and perturbed butler packed the Leffingwell silver and sent it off to storage.

There had been but one interruption in Honora's labours. A note had arrived from him a note and a box. He would obey her! She had known he would understand, and respect her the more. What would their love have been, without that respect? She shuddered to think. And he sent her this ring, as a token of that love, as undying as the fire in its stones. Would she wear it, that in her absence she might think of him? Honora kissed it and slipped it on her finger, where it sparkled. The letter was beneath her gown, though she knew it by heart. Chiltern had gone at last: he could not, he said, remain in Newport and not see her.

At midday she made but the pretence of a meal. It was not until afterwards, in wandering through the lower rooms of this house, become so dear to her, that agitation seized her, and a desire to weep. What was she leaving so precipitately? and whither going? The world indeed was wide, and these rooms had been her home. The day had grown blue−grey, and in the dining room the gentle face seemed to look down upon her compassionately from the portrait. The scent of the roses overpowered her. As she listened, no sound broke the quiet of the place.

Would Howard never come? The train was in had been in ten minutes. Hark, the sound of wheels! Her heart beating wildly, she ran to the windows of the drawing−room and peered through the lilacs. Yes, there he was, ascending the steps.

"Mrs. Spence is out, I suppose," she heard him say to the butler, who followed with his bag.

"No, sir, she's in the drawing−room."

The sight of him, with his air of satisfaction and importance, proved an unexpected tonic to her strength. It was as though he had brought into the room, marshalled behind him, all the horrors of her marriage, and she marvelled and shuddered anew at the thought of the years of that sufferance. "Well, I'm back," he said, "and we've made a great killing, as I wrote you. They were easier than I expected."

He came forward for the usual perfunctory kiss, but she recoiled, and it was then that his eye seemed to grasp the significance of her travelling suit and veil, and he glanced at her face.

"What's up? Where are you going?" he demanded. "Has anything happened?"

"Everything," she said, and it was then, suddenly, that she felt the store of her resolution begin to ebb, and she trembled. "Howard, I am going away."

He stopped short, and thrust his hands into the pockets of his checked trousers.

"Going away," he repeated. "Where?"

"I don't know," said Honora; "I'm going away."

As though to cap the climax of tragedy, he smiled as he produced his cigarette case. And she was swept, as it were, by a scarlet flame that deprived her for the moment of speech.

"Well," he said complacently, "there's no accounting for women. A case of nerves eh, Honora? Been hitting the pace a little too hard, I guess." He lighted a match, blissfully unaware of the quality of her look. "All of us have to get toned up once in a while. I need it myself. I've had to drink a case of Scotch whiskey out West to get this deal through. Now what's the name of that new boat with everything on her from a café to a Stock Exchange? A German name."

"I don't know," said Honora. She had answered automatically.

To the imminent peril of one of the frailest of Mrs. Forsythe's chairs, he sat down on it, placed his hands on his knees, flung back his head, and blew the smoke towards the ceiling. Still she stared at him, as in a state of semi−hypnosis.

"Instead of going off to one of those thousand−dollar−a−minute doctors, let me prescribe for you," he said. "I've handled some nervous men in my time, and I guess nervous women aren't much different. You've had these little attacks before, and they blow over don't they? Wing owes me a vacation. If I do say it myself, there are not five men in New York who would have pulled off this deal for him. Now the proposition I was going to make to you is this: that we get cosey in a cabin de luxe on that German boat, hire an automobile on the other side, and do up Europe. It's a sort of a handicap never to have been over there."

"Oh, you're making it very hard for me, Howard," she cried. "I might have known that you couldn't understand, that you never could understand why I am going away. I've lived with you all this time, and you do not know me any better than you know the scrub−woman. I'm going away from you forever."

In spite of herself, she ended with an uncontrollable sob.

"Forever!" he repeated, but he continued to smoke and to look at her without any evidences of emotion, very much as though he had received an ultimatum in a business transaction. And then there crept into his expression something of a complacent pity that braced her to continue. "Why?" he asked. "Because because I don't love you. Because you don't love me. You don't know what love is you never will."

"But we're married," he said. "We get along all right."

"Oh, can't you see that that makes it all the worse!" she cried. "I can stand it no longer. I can't live with you I won't live with you. I'm of no use to you you're sufficient unto yourself. It was all a frightful mistake. I brought nothing into your life, and I take nothing out of it. We are strangers we have always been so. I am not even your housekeeper. Your whole interest in life is in your business, and you come home to read the newspapers and to sleep! Home! The very word is a mockery. If you had to choose between me and your business you wouldn't hesitate an instant. And I I have been starved. It isn't your fault, perhaps, that you don't understand that a woman needs something more than dinner−gowns and jewels and and trips abroad. Her only possible compensation for living with a man is love. Love and you haven't the faintest conception of it. It isn't your fault, perhaps. It's my fault for marrying you. I didn't know any better."

She paused with her breast heaving. He rose and walked over to the fireplace and flicked his ashes into it before he spoke. His calmness maddened her.

"Why didn't you say something about this before?" he asked.

"Because I didn't know it I didn't realize it until now."

"When you married me," he went on, "you had an idea that you were going to live in a house on Fifth Avenue with a ballroom, didn't you?"

"Yes," said Honora. "I do not say I am not to blame. I was a fool. My standards were false. In spite of the fact that my aunt and uncle are the most unworldly people that ever lived perhaps because of it I knew nothing of the values of life. I have but one thing to say in my defence. I thought I loved you, and that you could give me what every woman needs." "You were never satisfied from the first," he retorted. "You wanted money and position a mania with American women. I've made a success that few men of my age can duplicate. And even now you are not satisfied when I come back to tell you that I have money enough to snap my fingers at half these people you know."

"How," asked Honora, "how did you make it?"

"What do you mean?" he asked.

She turned away from him with a gesture of weariness.

"No, you wouldn't understand that, either, Howard."

It was not until then that he showed feeling.

"Somebody has been talking to you about this deal. I'm not surprised. A lot of these people are angry because we didn't let them in. What have they been saying?" he demanded.

Her eyes flashed.

"Nobody has spoken to me on the subject," she said. "I only know what I have read, and what you have told me. In the first place, you deceived the stockholders of these railways into believing their property was worthless, and in the second place, you intend to sell it to the public for much more than it is worth."

At first he stared at her in surprise. Then he laughed.

"By George, you'd make something of a financier yourself, Honora," he exclaimed. And seeing that she did not answer, continued: "Well, you've got it about right, only it's easier said than done. It takes brains. That's what business is a survival of the fittest. If you don't do the other man, he'll do you." He opened the cigarette case once more. "And now," he said, "let me give you a little piece of advice. It's a good motto for a woman not to meddle with what doesn't concern her. It isn't her business to make the money, but to spend it; and she can usually do that to the queen's taste."

"A high ideal!" she exclaimed.

"You ought to have some notion of where that ideal came from," he retorted. "You were all for getting rich, in order to compete with these people. Now you've got what you want −" "And I am going to throw it away. That is like a woman, isn't it?"

He glanced at her, and then at his watch.

"See here, Honora, I ought to go over to Mr. Wing's. I wired him I'd be there at four−thirty."

"Don't let me keep you," she replied.

"By gad, you are pale!" he said. "What's got into the women these days? They never used to have these confounded nerves. Well, if you are bent on it, I suppose there's no use trying to stop you. Go off somewhere and take a rest, and when you come back you'll see things differently."

She held out her hand.

"Good−by, Howard," she said. "I wanted you to know that I didn't bear you any ill−will that I blame myself as much as you. More, if anything. I hope you will be happy I know you will. But I must ask you to believe me when I say that I shan't come back. I I am leaving all the valuable things you gave me. You will find them on my dressing−table. And I wanted to tell you that my uncle sent me a little legacy from my father an unexpected one that makes me independent."

He did not take her hand, but was staring at her now, incredulously.

"You mean you are actually going?" he exclaimed.

"Yes."

"But what shall I say to Mr. Wing? What will he think?"

Despite the ache in her heart, she smiled.

"Does it make any difference what Mr. Wing thinks?" she asked gently. "Need he know? Isn't this a matter which concerns us alone? I shall go off, and after a certain time people will understand that I am not coming back."

"But have you considered that it may interfere with my prospects?" he asked.

"Why should it? You are invaluable to Mr. Wing. He can't afford to dispense with your services just because you will be divorced. That would be ridiculous. Some of his own associates are divorced." "Divorced!" he cried, and she saw that he had grown pasty white. "On what grounds? Have you been −"

He did not finish.

"No," she said, "you need fear no scandal. There will be nothing in any way harmful to your prospects."

"What can I do?" he said, though more to himself than to her. Her quick ear detected in his voice a note of relief. And yet he struck in her, standing helplessly smoking in the middle of the floor, chords of pity.

"You can do nothing, Howard," she said. "If you lived with me from now to the millennium you couldn't make me love you, nor could you love me the way I must be loved. Try to realize it. The wrench is what you dread. After it is over you will be much more contented, much happier, than you have been with me. Believe me."

His next remark astonished her.

"What's the use of being so damned precipitate?" he demanded.

Precipitate!

"Because I can stand it no longer. I should go mad," she answered.

He took a turn up and down the room, stopped suddenly, and stared at her with eyes that had grown smaller. Suspicion is slow to seize the complacent. Was it possible that he had been supplanted?

Honora, with an instinct of what was coming, held up her head. Had he been angry, had he been a man, how much humiliation he would have spared her!

"So you're in love!" he said. "I might have known that something was at the bottom of this."

She took account of and quivered at the many meanings behind his speech meanings which he was too cowardly to voice in words.

"Yes," she answered, "I am in love in love as I never hoped to be − as I did not think it possible to be. My love is such that I would go through hell fire for the sake of it. I do not expect you to believe me when I tell you that such is not the reason why I am leaving you. If you had loved me with the least spark of passion, if I thought I were in the least bit needful to you as a woman and as a soul, as a helper and a confidante, instead of a mere puppet to advertise your prosperity, this would not could not have happened. I love a man who would give up the world for me to−morrow. I have but one life to live, and I am going to find happiness if I can."

She paused, afire with an eloquence that had come unsought. But her husband only stared at her. She was transformed beyond his recognition. Surely he had not married this woman! And, if the truth be told, down in his secret soul whispered a small, congratulatory voice. Although he did not yet fully realize it, he was glad he had not.

Honora, with an involuntary movement, pressed her handkerchief to her eyes.

"Good−by, Howard," she said. "I I did not expect you to understand. If I had stayed, I should have made you miserably unhappy."

He took her hand in a dazed manner, as though he knew not in the least what he was doing. He muttered something and found speech impossible. He gulped once, uncomfortably. The English language had ceased to be a medium. Great is the force of habit! In the emergency he reached for his cigarette case.

Honora had given orders that the carriage was to wait at the door. The servants might suspect, but that was all. Her maid had been discreet. She drew down her veil as she descended the steps, and told the coachman to drive to the station.

It was raining. Leaning forward from under the hood as the horses started, she took her last look at the lilacs.

CHAPTER VIII. IN WHICH THE LAW BETRAYS A HEART

IT was still raining when she got into a carriage at Boston and drove under the elevated tracks, through the narrow, slippery business streets, to the hotel. From the windows of her room, as the night fell, she looked out across the dripping foliage of the Common. Below her, and robbed from that sacred ground, were the little granite buildings that housed the entrances to the subway, and for a long time she stood watching the people crowding into these. Most of them had homes to go to! In the gathering gloom the arc−lights shone, casting yellow streaks on the glistening pavement; wagons and carriages plunged into the maelstrom at the corner; pedestrians dodged and slipped; lightnings flashed from overhead wires, and clanging trolley cars pushed their greater bulk through the mass. And presently the higher toned and more ominous bell of an ambulance sounded on its way to the scene of an accident.

It was Mathilde who ordered her dinner and pressed her to eat. But she had no heart for food. In her bright sitting−room, with the shades tightly drawn, an inexpressible loneliness assailed her. A large engraving of a picture of a sentimental school hung on the wall: she could not bear to look at it, and yet her eyes, from time to time, were fatally drawn thither. It was of a young girl taking leave of her lover, in early Christian times, before entering the arena. It haunted Honora, and wrought upon her imagination to such a pitch that she went into her bedroom to write.

For a long time nothing more was written of the letter than "Dear Uncle Tom and Aunt Mary": what to say to them? "I do not know what you will think of me. I do not know, to−night, what to think of myself. I have left Howard. It is not because he was cruel to me, or untrue. He does not love me, nor I him. I cannot expect you, who have known the happiness of marriage, to realize the tortures of it without love. My pain in telling you this now is all the greater because I realize your belief as to the sacredness of the tie and it is not your fault that you did not instil that belief into me. I have had to live and to think and to suffer for myself. I do not attempt to account for my action, and I hesitate to lay the blame upon the modern conditions and atmosphere in which I lived; for I feel that, above all things, I must be honest with myself.

"My marriage with Howard was a frightful mistake, and I have grown slowly to realize it, until life with him became insupportable. Since he does not love me, since his one interest is his business, my departure makes no great difference to him.

"Dear Aunt Mary and Uncle Tom, I realize that I owe you much everything that I am. I do not expect you to understand or to condone what I have done. I only beg that you will continue to love your niece,

"HONORA."

She tried to review this letter. Incoherent though it were and incomplete, in her present state of mind she was able to add but a few words as a postscript. "I will write you my plans in a day or two, when I see my way more clearly. I would fly to you but I cannot. I am going to get a divorce."

She sat for a time picturing the scene in the sitting−room when they should read it, and a longing which was almost irresistible seized her to go back to that shelter. One force alone held her in misery where she was, her love for Chiltern; it drew her on to suffer the horrors of exile and publicity. When she suffered most, his image rose before her, and she kissed the ring on her hand. Where was he now, on this rainy night? On the seas? At the thought she heard again the fog−horns and the sirens.

Her sleep was fitful. Many times she went over again her talk with Howard, and she surprised herself by wondering what he had thought and felt since her departure. And ever and anon she was startled out of chimerical dreams by the clamour of bells the trolley cars on their ceaseless round passing below. At last came the slumber of exhaustion.

It was nine o'clock when she awoke and faced the distasteful task she had set herself for the day. In her predicament she descended to the office, where the face of one of the clerks attracted her, and she waited until he was unoccupied.

"I should like you to tell me the name of some reputable lawyer," she said.

"Certainly, Mrs. Spence," he replied, and Honora was startled at the sound of her name. She might have realized that he would know her.

"I suppose a young lawyer would do if the matter is not very important."

"Oh, no!" she cried, blushing to her temples. "A young lawyer would do very well."

The clerk reflected. He glanced at Honora again, and later in the day she divined what had been going on in his mind.

"Well," he said, "there are a great many. I happen to think of Mr. Wentworth, because he was in the hotel this morning. He is in the Tremont Building."

She thanked him hurriedly, and was driven to the Tremont Building, through the soggy street that faced the still dripping trees of the Common. Mounting in the elevator, she read on the glass door amongst the names of the four members of the firm that of Alden Wentworth, and suddenly found herself face to face with the young man, in his private office. He was well groomed and deeply tanned, and he rose to meet her with a smile that revealed a line of perfect white teeth.

"How do you do, Mrs. Spence?" he said. "I did not think, when I met you at Mrs. Grenfell's, that I should see you so soon in Boston. Won't you sit down?" Honora sat down. There seemed nothing else to do. She remembered him perfectly now, and she realized that the nimble−witted clerk had meant to send her to a gentleman.

"I thought," she faltered, "I thought I was coming to a a stranger. They gave me your address at the hotel when I asked for a lawyer."

"Perhaps," suggested Mr. Wentworth, delicately, "perhaps you would prefer to go to someone else. I can give you any number of addresses, if you like."

She looked up at him gratefully. He seemed very human and understanding, very honourable. He belonged to her generation, after all, and she feared an older man.

"If you will be kind enough to listen to me, I think I will stay here. It is only a matter of of knowledge of the law." She looked at him again, and the pathos of her smile went straight to his heart. For Mr. Wentworth

possessed that organ, although he did not wear it on his sleeve.

He crossed the room, closed the door, and sat down beside her.

"Anything I can do," he said.

She glanced at him once more, helplessly.

"I do not know how to tell you," she began. "It all seems so dreadful." She paused, but he had the lawyer's gift of silence of sympathetic silence. "I want to get a divorce from my husband."

If Mr. Wentworth was surprised, he concealed it admirably. His attitude of sympathy did not change, but he managed to ask her, in a business−like tone which she welcomed:

"On what grounds?"

"I was going to ask you that question," said Honora.

This time Mr. Wentworth was surprised genuinely so, and he showed it.

"But, my dear Mrs. Spence," he protested, "you must remember that that I know nothing of the case."

"What are the grounds one can get divorced on?" she asked. He coloured a little under his tan.

"They are different in different states," he replied. "I think perhaps the best way would be to read you the Massachusetts statutes."

"No wait a moment," she said. "It's very simple, after all, what I have to tell you. I don't love my husband, and he doesn't love me, and it has become torture to live together. I have left him with his knowledge and consent, and he understands that I will get a divorce."

Mr. Wentworth appeared to be pondering perhaps not wholly on the legal aspects of the case thus naïvely presented. Whatever may have been his private comments, they were hidden. He pronounced tentatively, and a little absently, the word "desertion."

"If the case could possibly be construed as desertion on your husband's part, you could probably get a divorce in three years in Massachusetts."

"Three years!" cried Honora, appalled. "I could never wait three years!"

She did not remark the young lawyer's smile, which revealed a greater knowledge of the world than one would have suspected. He said nothing, however.

"Three years!" she repeated. "Why, it can't be, Mr. Wentworth. There are the Waterfords she was Mrs. Boutwell, you remember. And and Mrs. Rindge it was scarcely a year before −"

He had the grace to nod gravely, and to pretend not to notice the confusion in which she halted. Lawyers, even young ones with white teeth and clear eyes, are apt to be a little cynical. He had doubtless seen from the beginning that there was a man in the background. It was not his business to comment or to preach.

"Some of the western states grant divorces on on much easier terms," he said politely. "If you care to wait, I will go into our library and look up the laws of those states."

"I wish you would," answered Honora. "I don't think I could bear to spend three years in such in such an anomalous condition. And at any rate I should much rather go West, out of sight, and have it all as quickly over with as possible."

He bowed, and departed on his quest. And Honora waited, at moments growing hot at the recollection of her conversation with him. Why she asked herself should the law make it so difficult, and subject her to such humiliation in a course which she felt to be right and natural and noble? Finally, her thoughts becoming too painful, she got up and looked out of the window. And far below her, through the mist, she beheld the burying−ground of Boston's illustrious dead which her cabman had pointed out to her as he passed. She did not hear the door open as Mr. Wentworth returned, and she started at the sound of his voice.

"I take it for granted that you are really serious in this matter, Mrs. Spence," he said.

"Oh!" she exclaimed.

"And that you have thoroughly reflected," he continued imperturbably. Evidently, in spite of the cold impartiality of the law, a New England conscience had assailed him in the library. "I cannot take er the responsibility of advising you as to a course of action. You have asked me the laws of certain western states as to divorce I will read them."

An office boy followed him, deposited several volumes on the table, and Mr. Wentworth read from them in a voice magnificently judicial.

"There's not much choice, is there?" she faltered, when he had finished.

He smiled.

"As places of residence −" he began, in an attempt to relieve the pathos.

"Oh, I didn't mean that," she cried. "Exile is is exile." She flushed. After a few moments of hesitation she named at random a state the laws of which required a six months' residence. She contemplated him. "I hardly dare to ask you to give me the name of some reputable lawyer out there."

He had looked for an instant into her eyes. Men of the law are not invulnerable, particularly at Mr. Wentworth's age, and New England consciences to the contrary notwithstanding. In spite of himself, her eyes had made him a partisan: an accomplice, he told himself afterwards.

"Really, Mrs. Spence," he began, and caught another appealing look. He remembered the husband now, and a lecture on finance in the Grenfell smoking room which Howard Spence had delivered, and which had grated on Boston sensibility. "It is only right to tell you that our firm does not does not take divorce cases as a rule. Not that we are taking this one," he added hurriedly. "But as a friend −"

"Oh, thank you!" said Honora.

"Merely as a friend who would be glad to do you a service," he continued, "I will, during the day, try to get you the name of of as reputable a lawyer as possible in that place."

And Mr. Wentworth paused, as red as though he had asked her to marry him.

"How good of you!" she cried. "I shall be at the Touraine until this evening."

He escorted her through the corridor, bowed her into the elevator, and her spirits had risen perceptibly as she got into her cab and returned to the hotel. There, she studied railroad folders. One confidant was enough, and she dared not even ask the head porter the way to a locality where it was well known divorces were sold across a counter. And as she worked over the intricacies of this problem the word her husband had applied to her action recurred to her precipitate. No doubt Mr. Wentworth, too, had thought her precipitate. Nearly every important act of her life had been precipitate. But she was conscious in this instance of no regret. Delay, she felt, would have killed her. Let her exile begin at once.

She had scarcely finished luncheon when Mr. Wentworth was announced. For reasons best known to himself he had come in person; and he handed her, written on a card, the name of the Honourable David Beckwith. "I'll have to confess I don't know much about him, Mrs. Spence," he said, "except that he has been in Congress, and is one of the prominent lawyers of that state."

The gift of enlisting sympathy and assistance was peculiarly Honora's. And if some one had predicted that morning to Mr. Wentworth that before nightfall he would not only have put a lady in distress on the highroad to obtaining a western divorce (which he had hitherto looked upon as disgraceful), but that likewise he would miss his train for Pride's Crossing, buy the lady's tickets, and see her off at the South Station for Chicago, he would have regarded the prophet as a lunatic. But that is precisely what Mr. Wentworth did. And when, as her train pulled out, Honora bade him good−by, she felt the tug at her heartstrings which comes at parting with an old friend.

"And anything I can do for you here in the East, while while you are out there, be sure to let me know," he said.

She promised and waved at him from the platform as he stood motionless, staring after her. Romance had spent a whole day in Boston! And with Mr. Alden Wentworth, of all people!

Fortunately for the sanity of the human race, the tension of grief is variable. Honora, closed in her stateroom, eased herself that night by writing a long, if somewhat undecipherable, letter to Chiltern; and was able, the next day, to read the greater portion of a novel. It was only when she arrived in Chicago, after nightfall, that loneliness again assailed her. She was within nine hours so the time−table said − of St. Louis! Of all her trials, the homesickness which she experienced as she drove through the deserted streets of the metropolis of the Middle West was perhaps the worst. A great city on Sunday night! What traveller has not felt the depressing effect of it? And, so far as the incoming traveller is concerned, Chicago does not put her best foot forward. The way from the station to the Auditorium Hotel was hacked and bruised so it seemed by the cruel battle of trade. And she stared, in a kind of fascination that increased the ache in her heart, at the ugliness and cruelty of the twentieth century.

To have imagination is unquestionably to possess a great capacity for suffering, and Honora was paying the penalty for hers. It ran riot now. The huge buildings towered like formless monsters against the blackness of the sky: under the sickly blue of the electric lights, across the dirty, foot−scarred pavements, strange black human figures seemed to wander aimlessly: an elevated train thundered overhead. And presently she found herself the tenant of two rooms in that vast refuge of the homeless, the modern hotel, where she sat until the small hours looking down upon the myriad lights of the shore front, and out beyond them on the black waters of an inland sea.

From Newport to Salomon City, in a state not far from the Pacific tier, is something of a transition in less than a week, though in modern life we should be surprised at nothing. Limited trains are wonderful enough; but what shall be said of the modern mind, that travels faster than light? and much too fast for the pages of a chronicle. Martha Washington and the good ladies of her acquaintance knew nothing about the upper waters of the Missouri, and the words "for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer" were not merely literature to them.

Nous avons changé tout cela, although there are yet certain crudities to be eliminated. In these enlightened times, if in one week a lady is not entirely at home with husband number one, in the next week she may have travelled in comparative comfort some two−thirds across a continent, and be on the highroad to husband number two. Why travel? Why have to put up with all this useless expense and worry and waste of time? Why not have one's divorce sent, C.O.D., to one's door, or establish a new branch of the Post−office Department? American enterprise has surely lagged in this.

Seated in a plush−covered rocking−chair that rocked on a track of its own, and thus saved the yellow−and−red hotel carpet, the Honourable Dave Beckwith patiently explained the vexatious process demanded by his particular sovereign state before she should consent to cut the Gordian knot of marriage. And his state the Honourable Dave remarked was in the very forefront of enlightenment in this respect: practically all that she demanded was that ladies in Mrs. Spence's predicament should become, pro tempore, her citizens. Married misery did not exist in the Honourable Dave's state, amongst her own bona fide citizens. And, by a wise provision in the Constitution of our glorious American Union, no one state could tie the nuptial knot so tight that another state could not cut it at a blow.

Six months' residence, and a whole year before the divorce could be granted! Honora looked at the plush rocking−chair, the yellow−and−red carpet, the inevitable ice−water on the marble−topped table, and the picture of a lady the shape of a liqueur bottle playing tennis in the late eighties, and sighed. For one who is sensitive to surroundings, that room was a torture chamber.

"But Mr. Beckwith," she exclaimed, "I never could spend a year here! Isn't there a house I could get that is a a little a little better furnished? And then there is a certain publicity about staying at a hotel."

The Honourable Dave might have been justly called the friend of ladies in a temporary condition of loneliness. His mission in life was not merely that of a liberator, but his natural goodness led him to perform a hundred acts of kindness to make as comfortable as possible the purgatory of the unfortunates under his charge. He was a man of a remarkable appearance, and not to be lightly forgotten. His hair, above all, fascinated Honora, and she found her eyes continually returning to it. So incredibly short it was, and so incredibly stiff, that it reminded her of the needle points on the cylinder of an old−fashioned music−box; and she wondered, if it were properly inserted, what would be the resultant melody.

The Honourable Dave's head was like a cannon−ball painted white. Across the top of it (a blemish that would undoubtedly have spoiled the tune) was a long scar, a relic of one of the gentleman's many personal difficulties. He who made the scar, Honora reflected, must have been a strong man. The Honourable Dave, indeed, had fought his way upward through life to the Congress of the United States; and many were the harrowing tales of frontier life he told Honora in the long winter evenings when the blizzards came down the river valley. They would fill a book; unfortunately, not this book. The growing responsibilities of taking care of the lonely ladies that came in increasing numbers to Salomon City from the effeter portions of the continent had at length compelled him to give up his congressional career. The Honourable Dave was unmarried; and, he told Honora, not likely to become so. He was thus at once human and invulnerable, a high priest dedicated to freedom.

It is needless to say that the plush rocking−chair and the picture of the liqueur−bottle lady did not jar on his sensibilities. Like an eminent physician who has never himself experienced neurosis, the Honourable Dave firmly believed that he understood the trouble from which his client was suffering. He had seen many cases of it in ladies from the Atlantic coast: the first had surprised him, no doubt. Salomon City, though it contained the great Boon, was not æsthetic. Being a keen student of human nature, he rightly supposed that she would not care to join the colony, but he thought it his duty to mention that there was a colony.

Honora repeated the word.

"Out there," he said, waving his cigar to the westward, "some of the ladies have ranches." Some of the gentlemen, too, he added, for it appeared that exiles were not confined to one sex. "It's social a little too social, I guess," declared Mr. Beckwith, "for you." A delicate compliment of differentiation that Honora accepted gravely. "They've got a casino, and they burn a good deal of electricity first and last. They don't bother Salomon City much. Once in a while, in the winter, they come in a bunch to the theatre. Soon as I looked at you I knew you wouldn't want to go there."

Her exclamation was sufficiently eloquent.

"I've got just the thing for you," he said. "It looks a little as if I was reaching out into the sanitarium business. Are you acquainted by any chance with Mrs. Boutwell, who married a fellow named Waterford?" he asked, taking momentarily out of his mouth the cigar he was smoking by permission.

Honora confessed, with no great enthusiasm, that she knew the present Mrs. Waterford. Not the least of her tribulations had been to listen to a partial recapitulation, by the Honourable Dave, of the ladies he had assisted to a transfer of husbands. What, indeed, had these ladies to do with her? She felt that the very mention of them tended to soil the pure garments of her martyrdom.

"What I was going to say was this," the Honourable Dave continued. "Mrs. Boutwell that is to say Mrs. Waterford couldn't stand this hotel any more than you, and she felt like you do about the colony, so she rented a little house up on Wylie Street and furnished it from the East. I took the furniture off her hands: it's still in the house, by the way, which hasn't been rented. For I figured it out that another lady would be coming along with the same notions. Now you can look at the house any time you like."

Although she had to overcome the distaste of its antecedents, the house, or rather the furniture, was too much of a find in Salomon City to be resisted. It had but six rooms, and was of wood, and painted grey, like its twin beside it. But Mrs. Waterford had removed the stained−glass window−lights in the front door, deftly hidden the highly ornamental steam radiators, and made other eliminations and improvements, including the white bookshelves that still contained the lady's winter reading fifty or more yellow−and−green−backed French novels and plays. Honora's first care, after taking possession, was to order her maid to remove these from her sight: but it is to be feared that they found their way, directly, to Mathilde's room. Honora would have liked to fumigate the house; and yet, at the same time, she thanked her stars for it. Mr. Beckwith obligingly found her a cook, and on Thursday evening she sat down to supper in her tiny dining room. She had found a temporary haven, at last.

Suddenly she remembered that it was an anniversary. One week ago that day, in the old garden at Beaulieu, had occurred the momentous event that had changed the current of her life!

CHAPTER IX. WYLIE STREET

THERE was a little spindle−supported porch before Honora's front door, and had she chosen she might have followed the example of her neighbours and sat there in the evenings. She preferred to watch the life about her from the window−seat in the little parlour. The word exile suggests, perhaps, to those who have never tried it, empty wastes, isolation, loneliness. She had been prepared for these things, and Wylie Street was a shock to her: in sending her there at this crisis in her life fate had perpetrated nothing less than a huge practical joke. Next door, for instance, in the twin house to hers, flaunted in the face of liberal divorce laws, was a young couple with five children. Honora counted them, from the eldest ones that ran over her little grass plot on their way to and from the public school, to the youngest that spent much of his time gazing skyward from a perambulator on the sidewalk. Six days of the week, about six o'clock in the evening, there was a celebration in the family. Father came home from work! He was a smooth−faced young man whom a fortnight in the woods might have helped wonderfully a clerk in the big department store.

He radiated happiness. When opposite Honora's front door he would open his arms the signal for a race across her lawn. Sometimes it was the little girl, with pigtails the colour of pulled molasses candy, who won the prize of the first kiss: again it was her brother, a year her junior; and when he was raised it was seen that the seat of his trousers was obviously double. But each of the five received a reward, and the baby was invariably lifted out of the perambulator. And finally there was a conjugal kiss on the spindled porch. The wife was a roly−poly little body. In the mornings, at the side windows, Honora heard her singing as she worked, and sometimes the sun struck with a blinding flash the pan she was in the act of shining. And one day she looked up and nodded and smiled. Strange indeed was the effect upon our heroine of that greeting! It amazed Honora herself. A strange current ran through her and left her hot, and even as she smiled and nodded back, unbidden tears rose scalding to her eyes. What was it? Why was it?

She went downstairs to the little bookcase, filled now with volumes that were not trash. For Hugh's sake, she would try to improve herself this winter by reading serious things. But between her eyes and the book was the little woman's smile. A month before, at Newport, how little she would have valued it!

One morning, as Honora was starting out for her lonely walk that usually led her to the bare clay banks of the great river she ran across her neighbour on the sidewalk. The little woman was settling the baby for his airing, and she gave Honora the same dazzling smile.

"Good morning, Mrs. Spence," she said. "Good morning," replied Honora, and in her strange confusion she leaned over the carriage. "Oh, what a beautiful baby!"

"Isn't he!" cried the little woman. "Of all of 'em, I think he's the prize. His father says so. I guess," she added, "I guess it was because I didn't know so much about 'em when they first began to come. You take my word for it, the best way is to leave 'em alone. Don't dandle 'em. It's hard to keep your hands off 'em, but it's right."

"I'm sure of it," said Honora, who was very red.

They made a strange contrast as they stood on that new street, with its new vitrified brick paving and white stone curbs, and new little trees set out in front of new little houses: Mrs. Mayo (for such, Honora's cook had informed her, was her name) in a housekeeper's apron and a shirtwaist, and Honora, almost a head taller, in a walking costume of dark grey that would have done justice to Fifth Avenue. The admiration in the little woman's eyes was undisguised.

"You're getting a bill, I hear," she said, after a moment.

"A bill?" repeated Honora.

"A bill of divorce," explained Mrs. Mayo.

Honora was conscious of conflicting emotions: astonishment, resentment, and most curiously of relief that the little woman knew it.

"Yes," she answered.

But Mrs. Mayo did not appear to notice or resent her brevity.

"I took a fancy to you the minute I saw you," she said. "I can't say as much for the other Easterner that was here last year. But I made up my mind that it must be a mighty mean man who would treat you badly."

Honora stood as though rooted to the pavement. She found a reply impossible.

"When I think of my luck," her neighbour continued, "I'm almost ashamed. We were married on fifteen dollars a week. Of course there have been trials, we must always expect that; and we've had to work hard, but it hasn't hurt us." She paused and looked up at Honora, and added contritely: "There! I shouldn't have said anything. It's mean of me to talk of my happiness. I'll drop in some afternoon if you'll let me when I get through my work," said the little woman.

"I wish you would," replied Honora.

She had much to think of on her walk that morning, and new resolutions to make. Here was happiness growing and thriving, so far as she could see, without any of that rarer nourishment she had once thought so necessary. And she had come two thousand miles to behold it!

She walked many miles, as a part of the regimen and discipline to which she had set herself. Her haunting horror in this place, as she thought of the colony of which Mr. Beckwith had spoken and of Mrs. Boutwell's row of French novels, was degeneration. She was resolved to return to Chiltern a better and a wiser and a truer woman, unstained by the ordeal. At the outskirts of the town she halted by the river's bank, breathing deeply of the pure air of the vast plains that surrounded her.

She was seated that afternoon at her desk in the sitting−room upstairs when she heard the tinkle of the door−bell, and remembered her neighbour's promise to call. With something of a pang she pushed back her chair. Since the episode of the morning, the friendship of the little woman had grown to have a definite value; for it was no small thing, in Honora's situation, to feel the presence of a warm heart next door. All day she had been thinking of Mrs. Mayo and her strange happiness, and longing to talk with her again, and dreading it. And while she was bracing herself for the trial Mathilde entered with a card.

"Tell Mrs. Mayo I shall be down in a minute," she said.

It was not a lady, Mathilde replied, but a monsieur.

Honora took the card. For a long time she sat staring at it, while Mathilde waited. It read:

Mr. Peter Erwin.

Madame will see monsieur?"

A great sculptor once said to the statesman who was to be his model: "Wear your old coat. There is as much of a man in the back of his old coat, I think, as there is in his face." As Honora halted on the threshold, Peter was standing looking out of the five−foot plate−glass window, and his back was to her.

She was suddenly stricken. Not since she had been a child, not even in the weeks just passed, had she felt that pain. And as a child, self−pity seized her as a lost child, when darkness is setting in, and the will fails and distance appalls. Scalding tears welled into her eyes as she seized the frame of the door, but it must have been her breathing that he heard. He turned and crossed the room to her as she had known he would, and she clung to him as she had so often done in days gone by when, hurt and bruised, he had rescued and soothed her. For the moment, the delusion that his power was still limitless prevailed, and her faith whole again, so many times had he mended a world all awry.

He led her to the window−seat and gently disengaged her hands from his shoulders and took one of them and held it between his own. He did not speak, for his was a rare intuition; and gradually her hand ceased to tremble, and the uncontrollable sobs that shook her became less frequent.

"Why did you come? Why did you come?" she cried.

"To see you, Honora."

"But you might have warned me."

"Yes," he said, "it's true, I might."

She drew her hand away, and gazed steadfastly at his face.

"Why aren't you angry?" she said. "You don't believe in what I have done −you don't sympathize with it you don't understand it."

"I have come here to try," he said.

She shook her head.

"You can't you can't you never could."

"Perhaps," he answered, "it may not be so difficult as you think." Grown calmer, she considered this. What did he mean by it? to imply a knowledge of herself?

"It will be useless," she said inconsequently.

"No," he said, "it will not be useless."

She considered this also, and took the broader meaning that such acts are not wasted.

"What do you intend to try to do?" she asked.

He smiled a little.

"To listen to as much as you care to tell me, Honora."

She looked at him again, and an errant thought slipped in between her larger anxieties. Wherever he went, how extraordinarily he seemed to harmonize with his surroundings! At Silverdale, and in the drawing−room of the New York house, and in the little parlour in this far western town. What was it? His permanence? Was it his power? She felt that, but it was a strange kind of power not like other men's. She felt, as she sat there beside him, that his was a power more difficult to combat. That to defeat it was at once to make it stronger, and to grow weaker. She summoned her pride, she summoned her wrongs: she summoned the ego which had winged its triumphant flight far above his kindly, disapproving eye. He had the ability to make her taste defeat in the very hour of victory. And she knew that, when she fell, he would be there in his strength to lift her up.

"Did did they tell you to come?" she asked.

"There was no question of that, Honora. I was away when when they learned you were here. As soon as I returned, I came."

"Tell me how they feel," she said, in a low voice.

"They think only of you. And the thought that you are unhappy overshadows all others. They believe that it is to them you should have come, if you were in trouble, instead of coming here."

"How could I?" she cried. "How can you ask? That is what makes it so hard, that I cannot be with them now. But I should only have made them still more unhappy, if I had gone. They would not have understood − they cannot understand, who have every reason to believe in marriage, why those to whom it has been a mockery and a torture should be driven to divorce."

"Why divorce?" he said.

"Do you mean do you mean that you wish me to give you the reasons why I felt justified in leaving my husband?"

"Not unless you care to," he replied. "I have no right to demand them. I only ask you to remember, Honora, that you have not explained these reasons very clearly in your letters to your aunt and uncle. They do not understand them. Your uncle was unable, on many accounts, to come here; and he thought that that as an old friend, you might be willing to talk to me."

"I can't live with with my husband," she cried. "I don't love him, and he doesn't love me. He doesn't know what love is."

Peter Erwin glanced at her, but she was too absorbed then to see the thing in his eyes. He made no comment.

"We haven't the same tastes, nor nor the same way of looking at things the same views about making money for instance. We became absolute strangers. What more is there to say?" she added, a little defiantly.

"Your husband committed no flagrant offence against you?" he inquired.

"That would have made him human, at least," she cried. "It would have proved that he could feel something. No, all he cares for in the world is to make money, and he doesn't care how he makes it. No woman with an atom of soul can live with a man like that."

If Peter Erwin deemed this statement a trifle revolutionary, he did not say so.

"So you just left him," he said.

Yes," said Honora. "He didn't care. He was rather relieved than otherwise. If I had lived with him till I died, I couldn't have made him happy."

"You tried, and failed," said Peter.

She flushed.

"I couldn't have made him happier," she declared, correcting herself. "He has no conception of what real happiness is. He thinks he is happy, he doesn't need me. He'll be much more contented without me. I have nothing against him. I was to blame for marrying him, I know. But I have only one life to live, and I can't throw it away, Peter, I can't. And I can't believe that a woman and a man were intended to live together without love. It is too horrible. Surely that isn't your idea of marriage."

"My idea of marriage isn't worth very much, I'm afraid," he said. "If I talked about it, I should have to confine myself to theories and − and dreams."

"The moment I saw your card, Peter, I knew why you had come here," she said, trying to steady her voice. "It was to induce me to go back to my husband. You don't know how it hurts me to give you pain. I love you I love you as I love Uncle Tom and Aunt Mary. You are apart of me. But oh, you can't understand! I knew you could not. You have never made any mistakes you have never lived. It is useless. I won't go back to him. If you stayed here for weeks you could not make me change my mind."

He was silent.

"You think that I could have prevented this, if I had been less selfish," she said.

"Where you are concerned, Honora, I have but one desire," he answered, "and that is to see you happy in the best sense of the term. If I could induce you to go back and give your husband another trial, I should return with a lighter heart. You ask me whether I think you have been selfish. I answer frankly that I think you have. I don't pretend to say your husband has not been selfish also. Neither of you have ever tried, apparently, to make your marriage a success. It can't be done without an honest effort. You have abandoned the most serious and sacred enterprise in the world as lightly as though it had been a piece of embroidery. All that I can gather from your remarks is that you have left your husband because you have grown tired of him." "Yes," said Honora, "and you can never realize how tired, unless you knew him as I did. When love dies, it turns into hate."

He rose, and walked to the other end of the room, and turned.

"Could you be induced," he said, "for the sake of your aunt and uncle, if not for your own, to consider a legal separation?"

For an instant she stared at him hopelessly, and then she buried her face in her hands.

No," she cried. "No, I couldn't. You don't know what you ask."

He went to her, and laid his hand lightly on her shoulder.

"I think I do," he said.

There was a moment's tense silence, and then she got to her feet and looked at him proudly.

"Yes," she cried, "it is true. And I am not ashamed of it. I have discovered what love is, and what life is, and I am going to take them while I can."

She saw the blood slowly leave his face, and his hands tighten. It was not until then that she guessed at the depth of his wound, and knew that it was unhealed. For him had been reserved this supreme irony, that he should come here to plead for her husband, and learn from her own lips that she loved another man. She was suddenly filled with awe, though he turned away from her that she might not see his face. And she sought in vain for words. She touched his hand, fearfully, and now it was he who trembled.

"Peter," she exclaimed, "why do you bother with me? I I am what I am. I can't help it. I was made so. I cannot tell you that I am sorry for what I have done for what I am going to do. I will not lie to you − and you forced me to speak. I know that you don't understand, and that I caused you pain, and that I shall cause them pain. It may be selfishness I don't know. God alone knows. Whatever it is, it is stronger than I. It is what I am. Though I were to be thrown into eternal fire I would not renounce it." FOR A FEW MOMENTS SHE STOOD MOTIONLESS WHERE HE HAD LEFT HER She looked at him again, and her breath caught. While she had been speaking, he had changed. There was a fire in his eyes she had never seen before, in all the years she had known him.

"Honora," he said quietly, "the man who has done this is a scoundrel."

She stared at him, doubting her senses, her pupils wide with terror.

"How dare you, Peter! How dare you!" she cried.

"I dare to speak the truth," he said, and crossed the room to where his hat was lying and picked it up. She watched him as in a trance. Then he came back to her.

"Some day, perhaps, you will forgive me for saying that, Honora. I hope that day will come, although I shall never regret having said it. I have caused you pain. Sometimes, it seems, pain is unavoidable. I hope you will remember that, with the exception of your aunt and uncle, you have no better friend than I. Nothing can alter that friendship, wherever you go, whatever you do. Good−by."

He caught her hand, held it for a moment in his own, and the door had closed before she realized that he had gone. For a few moments. she stood motionless where he had left her, and then she went slowly up the stairs to her own room. . . .

CHAPTER X. THE PRICE OF FREEDOM

HAD he, Hugh Chiltern, been anathematized from all the high pulpits of the world, Honora's belief in him could not have been shaken. Ivanhoe and the Knights of the Round Table to the contrary, there is no chivalry so exalted as that of a woman who loves, no courage higher, no endurance greater. Her knowledge is complete; and hers the supreme faith that is unmoved by calumny and unbelief. She alone knows. The old Chiltern did not belong to her: hers was the new man sprung undefiled from the sacred fire of their love; and in that fire she, too, had been born again. Peter even Peter had no power to share such a faith, though what he had said of Chiltern had wounded her wounded her because Peter, of all others, should misjudge and condemn him. Sometimes she drew consolation from the thought that Peter had never seen him. But she knew he could not understand him, or her, or what they had passed through: that kind of understanding comes alone through experience.

In the long days that followed she thought much about Peter, and failed to comprehend her feelings towards him. She told herself that she ought to hate him for what he had so cruelly said, and at times indeed her resentment was akin to hatred: again, his face rose before her as she had seen it when he had left her, and she was swept by an incomprehensible wave of tenderness and reverence. And yet paradox of paradoxes Chiltern possessed her!

On the days when his letters came it was as his emissary that the sun shone to give her light in darkness, and she went about the house with a song on her lips. They were filled, these letters, with an elixir of which she drank thirstily to behold visions, and the weariness of her exile fell away. The elixir of High Purpose. Never was love on such a plane! He lifting her, no marvel in this; and she by a magic power of levitation at which she never ceased to wonder sustaining him. By her aid he would make something of himself which would be worthy of her. At last he had the incentive to enable him to take his place in the world. He pictured their future life at Grenoble until her heart was strained with yearning for it to begin. Here would be duty, let him who would gainsay it, duty and love combined with a wondrous happiness. He at a man's labour, she at a woman's; labour not for themselves alone, but for others. A paradise such as never was heard of a God−fearing paradise, and the reward of courage.

He told her he could not go to Grenoble now and begin the life without her. Until that blessed time he would remain a wanderer, avoiding the haunts of men. First he had cruised in the Folly, and then camped and shot in Canada; and again, as winter drew on apace, had chartered another yacht, a larger one, and sailed away for the West Indies, whence the letters came, stamped in strange ports, and sometimes as many as five together. He, too, was in exile until his regeneration should begin.

Well he might be at such a time. One bright day in early winter Honora, returning from her walk across the bleak plains in the hope of letters, found newspapers and periodicals instead, addressed in an unknown hand. It matters not whose hand: Honora never sought to know. She had long regarded as inevitable this acutest phase of her martyrdom, and the long nights of tears when entire paragraphs of the loathed stuff she had burned ran ceaselessly in her mind. Would she had burned it before reading it! An insensate curiosity had seized her, and she had read and read again until it was beyond the reach of fire.

Save for its effect upon Honora, it is immaterial to this chronicle. It was merely the heaviest of her heavy payments for liberty. But what, she asked herself shamefully, would be its effect upon Chiltern? Her face burned that she should doubt his loyalty and love, and yet the question returned. There had been a sketch of Howard, dwelling upon the prominence into which he had sprung through his connection with Mr. Wing. There had been a sketch of her; and how she had taken what the writer was pleased to call Society by storm: it had been intimated, with a cruelty known only to writers of such paragraphs, that ambition to marry a Chiltern had been her motive! There had been a sketch of Chiltern's career, in carefully veiled but thoroughly comprehensible language, which might have made a Bluebeard shudder. This, of course, she bore best of all; or, let it be said rather, that it cost her the least suffering. Was it not she who had changed and redeemed him?

What tortured her most was the intimation that Chiltern's family connections were bringing pressure to bear upon him to save him from this supremest of all his follies. And when she thought of this the strange eyes and baffling expression of Mrs. Grainger rose before her. Was it true? And if true, would Chiltern resist, even as she, Honora, had resisted, loyally? Might this love for her not be another of his mad caprices?

How Honora hated herself for the thought that thus insistently returned at this period of snows and blasts! It was January. Had he seen the newspapers? He had not, for he was cruising: he had, for of course they had been sent him. And he must have received, from his relatives, protesting letters. A fortnight passed, and her mail contained nothing from him! Perhaps something had happened to his yacht! Visions of shipwreck caused her to scan the newspapers for storms at sea, but the shipwreck that haunted her most was that of her happiness. How easy it is to doubt in exile, with happiness so far away! One morning, when the wind dashed the snow against her windows, she found it impossible to rise.

If the big doctor suspected the cause of her illness, Mathilde knew it. The maid tended her day and night, and sought, with the tact of her nation, to console and reassure her. The little woman next door came and sat by her bedside. Cruel and infinitely happy little woman, filled with compassion, who brought delicacies in the making of which she had spent precious hours, and which Honora could not eat! The Lord, when he had made Mrs. Mayo, had mercifully withheld the gift of imagination. One topic filled her, she lived to one end: her Alpha and Omega were husband and children, and she talked continually of their goodness and badness, of their illnesses, of their health, of their likes and dislikes, of their accomplishments and defects, until one day a surprising thing happened. Surprising for Mrs. Mayo.

"Oh, don't!" cried Honora, suddenly. "Oh, don't! I can't bear it."

"What is it?" cried Mrs. Mayo, frightened out of her wits. "A turn? Shall I telephone for the doctor?"

"No," replied Honora, "but but I can't talk any more to−day."

She apologized on the morrow, as she held Mrs. Mayo's hand.

"It it was your happiness," she said; "I was unstrung. I couldn't listen to it. Forgive me."

The little woman burst into tears, and kissed her as she sat in bed.

"Forgive you, deary!" she cried. "I never thought."

"It has been so easy for you," Honora faltered.

"Yes, it has. I ought to thank God, and I do every night."

She looked long and earnestly, through her tears, at the young lady from the far away East as she lay against the lace pillows, her paleness enhanced by the pink gown, her dark hair in two great braids on her shoulders.

"And to think how pretty you are!" she exclaimed.

It was thus she expressed her opinion of mankind in general, outside of her own family circle. Once she had passionately desired beauty, the high school and the story of Helen of Troy notwithstanding. Now she began to look at it askance, as a fatal gift; and to pity, rather than envy, its possessors.

As a by−industry, Mrs. Mayo raised geraniums and carnations in her front cellar, near the furnace, and once in a while Peggy, with the pulled−molasses hair, or chubby Abraham Lincoln, would come puffing up Honora's stairs under the weight of a flower−pot and deposit it triumphantly on the table at Honora's bedside. Abraham Lincoln did not object to being kissed: he had, at least, grown to accept the process as one of the unaccountable mysteries of life. But something happened to him one afternoon, on the occasion of his giving proof of an intellect which may eventually bring him, in the footsteps of his great namesake, to the White House. Entering Honora's front door, he saw on the hall table a number of letters which the cook (not gifted with his brains) had left there. He seized them in one fat hand, while with the other he hugged the flower−pot to his breast, mounted the steps, and arrived, breathless but radiant, on the threshold of the beautiful lady's room, and there calamity overtook him in the shape of one of the thousand articles which are left on the floor purposely to trip up little boys.

Great was the disaster. Letters, geranium, pieces of flower−pot, a quantity of black earth, and a howling Abraham Lincoln bestrewed the floor. And similar episodes, in his brief experience with this world, had not brought rewards. It was from sheer amazement that his tears ceased to flow amazement and lack of breath for the beautiful lady sprang up and seized him in her arms, and called Mathilde, who eventually brought a white and gold box. And while Abraham sat consuming its contents in ecstasy he suddenly realized that the beautiful lady had forgotten him. She had picked up the letters, every one, and stood reading them with parted lips and staring eyes. . . .

It was Mathilde who saved him from a violent illness, closing the box and leading him downstairs, and whispered something incomprehensible in his ear as she pointed him homeward.

"Le vrai médecin c'est toi, mon mignon."

There was a reason why Chiltern's letters had not arrived, and great were Honora's self−reproach and penitence. With a party of Englishmen he had gone up into the interior of a Central American country to visit some famous ruins. He sent her photographs of them, and of the Englishmen, and of himself. Yes, he had seen the newspapers. If she had not seen them, she was not to read them if they came to her. And if she had, she was to remember that their love was too sacred to be soiled, and too perfect to be troubled. As for himself, as she knew, he was a changed man, who thought of his former life with loathing. She had made him clean, and filled him with a new strength.

The winter passed. The last snow melted on the little grass plot, which changed by patches from brown to emerald green; and the children ran over it again, and tracked it in the soft places, but Honora only smiled. Warm, still days were interspersed between the windy ones, when the sky was turquoise blue, when the very river banks were steeped in new colours, when the distant, shadowy mountains became real. Liberty ran riot within her. If he

thought with loathing on his former life, so did she. Only a year ago she had been penned up in a New York street in that prison−house of her own making, hemmed in by surroundings which she had now learned to detest from her soul.

A few more penalties remained to be paid, and the heaviest of these was her letter to her aunt and uncle. Even as they had accepted other things in life, so had they accepted the hardest of all to bear Honora's divorce. A memorable letter her Uncle Tom had written her after Peter's return to tell them that remonstrances were useless! She was their daughter in all but name, and they would not forsake her. When she should have obtained her divorce, she should go back to them. Their house, which had been her home, should always remain so. Honora wept and pondered long over that letter. Should she write and tell them the truth, as she had told Peter? It was not because she was ashamed of the truth that she had kept it from them throughout the winter: it was because she wished to spare them as long as possible. Cruellest circumstance of all, that a love so divine as hers should not be understood by them, and should cause them infinite pain!

The weeks and months slipped by. Their letters, after that first one, were such as she had always received from them: accounts of the weather, and of the doings of her friends at home. But now the time was at hand when she must prepare them for her marriage with Chiltern; for they would expect her in St. Louis, and she could not go there. And if she wrote them, they might try to stop the marriage, or at least to delay it for some years.

Was it possible that a lingering doubt remained in her mind that to postpone her happiness would perhaps be to lose it? In her exile she had learned enough to know that a divorced woman is like a rudderless ship at sea, at the mercy of wind and wave and current. She could not go back to her life in St. Louis: her situation there would be unbearable: her friends would not be the same friends. No, she had crossed her Rubicon and destroyed the bridge: deep within her she felt that delay would be fatal, both to her and Chiltern. Long enough had the banner of their love been trailed in the dust.

Summer came again, with its anniversaries and its dragging, interminable weeks: demoralizing summer, when Mrs. Mayo quite frankly appeared at her side window in a dressing sacque, and Honora longed to do the same. But time never stands absolutely still, and the day arrived when Mr. Beckwith called in a carriage. Honora, with an audibly beating heart, got into it, and they drove down town, past the department store where Mr. Mayo spent his days, and new blocks of banks and business houses that flanked the wide street, where the roaring and clanging of the ubiquitous trolley cars resounded.

Honora could not define her sensations excitement and shame and fear and hope and joy were so commingled. The colours of the red and yellow brick had never been so brilliant in the sunshine. They stopped before the new court−house and climbed the granite steps. In her sensitive state, Honora thought that some of the people paused to look after them, and that some were smiling. One woman, she thought, looked compassionate. Within, they crossed the marble pavement, the Honourable Dave handed her into an elevator, and when it stopped she followed him as in a dream to an oak−panelled door marked with a legend she did not read. Within was an office, with leather chairs, a large oak desk, a spittoon, and portraits of grave legal gentlemen on the wall.

"This is Judge Whitman's office," explained the Honourable Dave. "He'll let you stay here until the case is called."

"Is he the judge before whom the case is to be tried?" asked Honora.

"He surely is," answered the Honourable Dave. "Whitman's a good friend of mine. In fact, I may say, without exaggeration, I had something to do with his election. Now you mustn't get flustered," he added. "It isn't anything like as bad as goin' to the dentist. It don't amount to shucks, as we used to say in Missouri."

With these cheerful words of encouragement he slipped out of a side door into what was evidently the court room, for Honora heard a droning. After a long interval he reappeared and beckoned her with a crooked finger. She

arose and followed him into the court room. All was bustle and confusion there, and her counsel whispered that they were breaking up for the day. The judge was stretching himself; several men who must have been lawyers, and with whom Mr. Beckwith was exchanging amenities behind the railing, were arranging their books and papers; some of the people were leaving, and others talking in groups about the room. The Honourable Dave whispered to the judge, a tall, lank, cadaverous gentleman with iron−grey hair, who nodded. Honora was led forward. The Honourable Dave, standing very close to the judge and some distance from her, read in a low voice something that she could not catch supposedly the petition. It was all quite as vague to Honora as the trial of the Jack of Hearts; the buzzing of the groups still continued around the court room, and nobody appeared in the least interested. This was a comfort, though it robbed the ceremony of all vestige of reality. It seemed incredible that the majestic and awful Institution of the ages could be dissolved with no smoke or fire, with such infinite indifference, and so much spitting. What was the use of all the pomp and circumstance and ceremony to tie the knot if it could be cut in the routine of a day's business?

The solemn fact that she was being put under oath meant nothing to her. This, too, was slurred and mumbled. She found herself, trembling, answering questions now from her counsel, now from the judge; and it is to be doubted to this day whether either heard her answers. Most convenient and considerate questions they were. When and where she was married, how long she had lived with her husband, what happened when they ceased to live together, and had he failed ever since to contribute to her support? Mercifully, Mr. Beckwith was in the habit of coaching his wards beforehand. A reputable citizen of Salomon City was produced to prove her residence, and somebody cried out something, not loudly, in which she heard the name of Spence mentioned twice. The judge said, "Take your decree," and picked up a roll of papers and walked away. Her knees became weak, she looked around her dizzily, and beheld the triumphant professional smile of the Honourable Dave Beckwith.

"It didn't hurt much, did it?" he asked. "Allow me to congratulate you."

"Is it is it all over?" she said, quite dazed.

"Just like that," he said. "You're free."

"Free!" The word rang in her ears as she drove back to the little house that had been her home. The Honourable Dave lifted his felt hat as he handed her out of the carriage, and said he would call again in the evening to see if he could do anything further for her. Mathilde, who had been watching from the window, opened the door, and led her mistress into the parlour.

"It's it's all over, Mathilde," she said.

"Mon dieu, madame," said Mathilde, "c'est simple comme bonjour!"

CHAPTER XI. IN WHICH IT IS ALL DONE OVER AGAIN

ALL morning she had gazed on the shining reaches of the Hudson, their colour deepening to blue as she neared the sea. A gold−bound volume of Shelley, with his name on the fly−leaf, lay in her lap. And two lines she repeated softly to herself two lines that held a vision:

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"He was as the sun in his fierce youth,

As terrible and lovely as a tempest;"
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She summoned him out of the chaos of the past, and the past became the present, and he stood before her as though in the flesh. Nay, she heard his voice, his laugh, she even recognized again the smouldering flames in his

eyes as he glanced into hers, and his characteristic manners and gestures. Honora wondered. In vain, during those long months of exile had she tried to reconstruct him thus the vision in its entirety would not come: rare, fleeting, partial, and tantalizing glimpses she had been vouchsafed, it is true. The whole of him had been withheld until this breathless hour before the dawn of her happiness.

Yet, though his own impatient spirit had fared forth to meet her with this premature gift of his attributes, she had to fight the growing fear within her. Now that the days of suffering were as they had not been, insistent questions dinned in her ears: was she entitled to the joys to come? What had she done to earn them? Had hers not been an attempt, on a gigantic scale, to cheat the fates? Nor could she say whether this feeling were a wholly natural failure to grasp a future too big, or the old sense of the unreality of events that had followed her so persistently.

The Hudson disappeared. Factories, bridges, beflagged week−end resorts, ramshackle houses, and blocks of new buildings were scattered here and there. The train was running on a causeway between miles of tenements where women and children, overtaken by lassitude, hung out of the windows: then the blackness of the tunnel, and Honora closed her eyes. Four minutes, three minutes, two minutes. . . . The motion ceased. At the steps of the car a uniformed station porter seized her bag, and she started to walk down the long, narrow platform. Suddenly she halted.

"Drop anything, Miss?" inquired the porter.

"No," answered Honora faintly. He looked at her in concern, and she began to walk on again, more slowly.

It had suddenly come over her that the man she was going to meet she scarcely knew! Shyness seized her, a shyness that bordered on panic. And what was he really like, that she should put her whole trust in him? She glanced behind her: that way was closed: she had a mad desire to get away, to hide, to think. It must have been an obsession that had possessed her all these months. The porter was looking again, and he voiced her predicament.

"There's only one way out, Miss."

And then, amongst the figures massed behind the exit in the grill, she saw him, his face red−bronze with the sea tan, his crisp, curly head bared, his eyes alight with a terrifying welcome; and a tremor of a fear akin to ecstasy ran through her: the fear of the women of days gone by whose courage carried them to the postern or the strand, and fainted there. She could have taken no step farther and there was no need. New strength flowed from the hand she held that was to carry her on and on. . . .

He spoke her name. He led her passive, obedient, through the press to the side street, and then he paused and looked into her burning face.

"I have you at last," he said. "Are you happy?"

"I don't know," she faltered. "Oh, Hugh, it all seems so strange! I don't know what I have done."

"I know," he said exultantly; "but to save my soul I can't believe it."

She watched him, bewildered, while he put her maid into a cab, and by an effort roused herself.

"Where are you going, Hugh?"

"To get married," he replied promptly.

She pulled down her veil.

"Please be sensible," she implored. "I've arranged to go to a hotel."

"What hotel?"

"The the Barnstable," she said. The place had come to her memory on the train. "It's very nice and and quiet so I've been told. And I've telegraphed for my rooms."

"I'll humour you this once," he answered, and gave the order.

She got into the carriage. It had blue cushions with the familiar smell of carriage upholstery, and the people in the street still hurried about their business as though nothing in particular were happening. The horses started, and some forgotten key in her brain was touched as Chiltern raised her veil again.

"You'll tear it, Hugh," she said, and perforce lifted it herself. Her eyes met his and she awoke. Not to memories or regrets, but to the future, for the recording angel had mercifully destroyed his book.

"Did you miss me?" she said.

"Miss you! My God, Honora, how can you ask? When I look back upon these last months, I don't see how I ever passed through them. And you are changed," he said. "I could not have believed it possible, but you are. You are you are finer."

He had chosen his word exquisitely. And then, as they trotted sedately through Madison Avenue, he strained her in his arms and kissed her.

"Oh, Hugh!" she cried, scarlet, as she disengaged herself, "you mustn't here!"

"You're free!" he exclaimed. "You're mine at last! I can't believe it! Look at me, and tell me so."

She tried.

"Yes," she faltered. "Yes what?"

Yes. I I am yours."

She looked out of the window to avoid those eyes. Was this New York, or Jerusalem? Were these the streets through which she had driven and trod in her former life? Her whole soul cried out denial. No episode, no accusing reminiscences stood out not one: the very corners were changed. Would it all change back again if he were to lessen the insistent pressure on the hand in her lap?

"Honora?"

"Yes?" she answered, with a start.

"You missed me? Look at me and tell me the truth."

"The truth!" she faltered, and shuddered. The contrast was too great the horror of it too great for her to speak of. The pen of Dante had not been adequate! "Don't ask me, Hugh," she begged, "I can't talk about it I never shall be able to talk about it. If I had not loved you, I should have died."

How deeply he felt and understood and sympathized she knew by the quivering pressure on her hand. Ah, if he had not! If he had failed to grasp the meaning of her purgatory −!

"You are wonderful, Honora," was what he said in a voice broken by emotion.

She thanked him with one fleeting, tearful glance that was as a grant of all her priceless possessions. The carriage stopped, but it was some moments before they realized it. "You may come up in a little while," she whispered, "and lunch with me if you like."

"If I like I" he repeated.

But she was on the sidewalk, following the bell boy into the cool, marble−lined area of the hotel. A smiling clerk handed her a pen, and set the new universe to rocking.

"Mrs. Leffingwell, I presume? We have your telegram."

"Mrs. Leffingwell! Who was that person? For an instant she stood blankly holding the pen, and then she wrote rapidly, if a trifle unsteadily:

"Mrs. Leffingwell and maid." A pause. Where was her home? Then she added the words, "St. Louis."

Her rooms were above the narrow cañon of the side street, looking over the roofs of the inevitable brownstone fronts opposite. While Mathilde, in the adjoining chamber, unpacked her bag, Honora stood gazing out of the sitting−room windows, trying to collect her thoughts. Her spirits had unaccountably fallen, the sense of homelessness that had pursued her all these months overtaken her once more. Never, never, she told herself, would she enter a hotel again alone; and when at last he came she clung to him with a passion that thrilled him the more because he could not understand it.

"Hugh you will care for me?" she cried.

He kissed away her tears. He could not follow her; he only knew that what he held to him was a woman such as he had never known before. Tender, and again strangely and fiercely tender: an instrument of such miraculous delicacy as to respond, quivering, to the lightest touch; an harmonious and perfect blending of strength and weakness, of joy and sorrow, of all the warring elements in the world. What he felt was the supreme masculine joy of possession.

At last they sat down on either side of the white cloth the waiter had laid, for even the gods must eat. Not that our deified mortals ate much on this occasion. Vesta presided once more, and after the feast was over gently led them down the slopes until certain practical affairs began to take shape in the mind of the man. Presently he looked at his watch, and then at the woman, and made a suggestion.

"Marry you now this afternoon!" she cried, aghast. "Hugh, are you in your right senses?"

"Yes," he said, "I'm reasonable for the first time in my life."

She laughed, and immediately became serious. But when she sought to marshal her arguments, she found that they had fled.

"Oh, but I couldn't," she answered. "And besides, there are so many things I ought to do. I I haven't any clothes."

But this was a plea he could not be expected to recognize. He saw no reason why she could not buy as many as she wanted after the ceremony.

"Is that all?" he demanded.

"No that isn't all. Can't you see that that we ought to wait, Hugh?"

"No," he exclaimed, "I can't see it. I can only see that every moment of waiting would be a misery for us both. I can only see that the situation, as it is to−day, is an intolerable one for you."

She had not expected him to see this.

"There are others to be thought of," she said, after a moment's hesitation.

"What others?"

The answer she should have made died on her lips.

"It seems so indecorous, Hugh."

"Indecorous!" he cried, and pushed back his chair and rose. "What's indecorous about it? To leave you here alone in a hotel in New York would not only be indecorous, but senseless. How long would you put it off? a week a month a year? Where would you go in the meantime, and what would you do?"

"But your friends, Hugh and mine?"

"Friends! What have they got to do with it?"

It was the woman, now, who for a moment turned practical and for the man's sake. She loved, and the fair fabric of the future which they were to weave together, and the plans with which his letters had been filled and of which she had dreamed in exile, had become to−day as the stuff of which moonbeams are made. As she looked up at him, eternity itself did not seem long enough for the fulfilment of that love. But he? Would the time not come when he would demand something more? and suppose that something were denied? She tried to rouse herself, to think, to consider a situation in which her instinct had whispered just once there must be some hidden danger: but the electric touch of his hand destroyed the process, and made her incapable of reason.

". . . What should we gain by a week's or a fortnight's delay," he was saying, "except so much misery?"

She looked around the hotel sitting−room, and tried to imagine the desolation of it, stripped of his presence. Why not? There was reason in what he said. And yet, if she had known it, it was not to reason she yielded, but to the touch of his hand.

"We will be married to−day," he decreed. "I have planned it all. I have bought the Adhemar, the yacht which I chartered last winter. She is here. We'll go off on her together, away from the world, for as long as you like. And then," he ended triumphantly, "then we'll go back to Grenoble and begin our life."

"And begin our life!" she repeated. But it was not to him that she spoke. "Hugh, I positively have to have some clothes."

"Clothes!" His voice expressed his contempt for the mundane thought.

"Yes, clothes," she repeated resolutely.

He looked at his watch once more.

"Very well," he said, "we'll get 'em on the way."

"On the way?" she asked.

"We'll have to have a marriage license, I'm afraid," he explained apologetically.

Honora grew crimson. A marriage license?

She yielded, of course. Who could resist him? Nor need the details of that interminable journey down the crowded artery of Broadway to the Centre of Things be entered into. An ignoble errand, Honora thought; and she sat very still, with flushed cheeks, in the corner of the carriage. Chiltern's finer feelings came to her rescue. He, too, resented this senseless demand of civilization as an indignity to their Olympian loves. And he was a man to chafe at all restraints. But at last the odious thing was over, grim and implacable Law satisfied after he had compelled them to stand in line for an interminable period before his grill, and mingle with those whom he chose, in his ignorance, to call their peers. Honora felt degraded as they emerged with the hateful paper, bought at such a price. The City Hall Park, with its moving streams of people, etched itself in her memory.

"Leave me, Hugh," she said; "I will take this carriage you must get another one."

For once, he accepted his dismissal with comparative meekness.

"When shall I come?" he asked.

She smiled a little, in spite of herself.

"You may come for me at six o'clock," she replied.

"Six o'clock!" he exclaimed; but accepted with resignation and closed the carriage door. Enigmatical sex!

Enigmatical sex indeed! Honora spent a feverish afternoon, rest and reflection being things she feared. An afternoon in familiar places; and (strangest of all facts to be recorded!) memories and regrets troubled her not at all. Her old dressmakers, her old milliners, welcomed her as one risen, radiant, from the grave; risen, in their estimation, to a higher life. Honora knew this, and was indifferent to the wealth of meaning that lay behind their discretion. Milliners and dressmakers read the newspapers and periodicals certain periodicals. Well they knew that the lady they flattered was the future Mrs. Hugh Chiltern.

Nothing whatever of an indelicate nature happened. There was no mention of where to send the bill, or of whom to send it to. Such things as she bought on the spot were placed in her carriage. And happiest of all omissions, she met no one she knew. The praise that Madame Barrière lavished on Honora's figure was not flattery, because the Paris models fitted her to perfection. A little after five she returned to her hotel, to a Mathilde in a high state of suppressed excitement. And at six, the appointed fateful hour, arrayed in a new street gown of dark green cloth, she stood awaiting him.

He was no laggard. The bell on the church near by was still singing from the last stroke when he knocked, flung open the door, and stood for a moment staring at her. Not that she had been shabby when he had wished to marry her at noon: no self−respecting woman is ever shabby; not that her present costume had any of the elements of overdress; far from it. Being a woman, she had her thrill of triumph at his exclamation. Diana had no need,

perhaps, of a French dressmaker, but it is an open question whether she would have scorned them. Honora stood motionless, but her smile for him was like the first quivering shaft of day. He opened a box, and with a strange mixture of impetuosity and reverence came forward. And she saw that he held in his hand a string of great, glistening pearls.

"They were my mother's," he said. "I have had them restrung for you."

"Oh, Hugh!" she cried. She could find no words to express the tremor within. And she stood passively, her eyes half closed, while he clasped the string around the lace collar that pressed the slender column of her neck and kissed her.

Even the humble beings who work in hotels are responsive to unusual disturbances in the ether. At the Barnstable, a gala note prevailed: bell boys, porters, clerk, and cashier, proud of their sudden wisdom, were wreathed in smiles. A new automobile, in Chiltern's colours, with his crest on the panel, was panting beside the curb.

"I meant to have had it this morning," he apologized as he handed her in, "but it wasn't ready in time." Honora heard him, and said something in reply. She tried in vain to rouse herself from the lethargy into which she had fallen, to cast off the spell. Up Fifth Avenue they sped, past meaningless houses, to the Park. The crystal air of evening was suffused with the level evening light; and as they wound in and out under the spreading trees she caught glimpses across the shrubbery of the deepening blue of waters. Pools of mystery were her eyes.

The upper West Side is a definite place on the map, and full, undoubtedly, of palpitating human joys and sorrows. So far as Honora was concerned, it might have been Bagdad. The automobile had stopped before a residence, and she found herself mounting the steps at Chiltern's side. A Swedish maid opened the door.

"Is Mr. White at home?" Chiltern asked.

It seemed that "the Reverend Mr. White" was. He appeared, a portly gentleman with frock coat and lawn tie who resembled the man in the moon. His head, like polished ivory, increased the beaming effect of his welcome, and the hand that pressed Honora's was large and soft and warm. But dreams are queer things, in which no events surprise us.

The reverend gentleman, as he greeted Chiltern, pronounced his name with unction. His air of hospitality, of good−fellowship, of taking the world as he found it, could not have been improved upon. He made it apparent at once that nothing could surprise him. It was the most natural circumstance in life that two people should arrive at his house in an automobile at half−past six in the evening and wish to get married: if they chose this method instead of the one involving awnings and policemen and uncomfortably−arrayed relations and friends, it was none of Mr. White's affair. He led them into the Gothic sanctum at the rear of the house where the famous sermons were written that shook the sounding−board of the temple where the gentleman preached, the sermons that sometimes got into the newspapers. Mr. White cleared his throat.

"I am very familiar with your name, Mr. Chiltern," he said, "and it is a pleasure to be able to serve you, and the lady who is so shortly to be your wife. Your servant arrived with your note at four o'clock. Ten minutes later, and I should have missed him."

And then Honora heard Chiltern saying somewhat coldly:

"In order to save time, Mr. White; I wish to tell you that Mrs. Leffingwell has been divorced −"

The Reverend Mr. White put up a hand before him, and looked down at the carpet, as one who would not dwell upon painful things.

"Unfortunate ahem mistakes will occur in life, Mr. Chiltern in the best of lives," he replied. "Say no more about it. I am sure, looking at you both −"

"Very well then," said Chiltern brusquely, "I knew you would have to know. And here," he added, "is an essential paper."

A few minutes later, in continuation of the same strange dream, Honora was standing at Chiltern's side and the Reverend Mr. White was addressing them. What he said apart of it at least seemed curiously familiar. Chiltern put a ring on a finger of her ungloved hand. It was a supreme moment in her destiny this she knew. Between her responses she repeated it to herself, but the mighty fact refused to be registered. And then, suddenly, rang out the words:

"Those whom God hath joined together let no man put asunder."

Those whom God hath joined together! Mr. White was congratulating her. Other people were in the room the minister's son, his wife, his brother−in−law. She was in the street again, in the automobile, without knowing how she got there, and Chiltern close beside her in the limousine.

"My wife!" he whispered.

Was she? Could it be true, be lasting, be binding for ever and ever? Her hand pressed his convulsively.

"Oh, Hugh!" she cried, "care for me stay by me forever. Will you promise?"

"I promise, Honora," he repeated. "Henceforth we are one."

Honora would have prolonged forever that honeymoon on summer seas. In those blissful days she was content to sit by the hour watching him as, bareheaded in the damp salt breeze, he sailed the great schooner and gave sharp orders to the crew. He was a man who would be obeyed, and even his flashes of temper pleased her. He was her master, too, and she gloried in the fact. By the aid of the precious light within her, she studied him.

He loved her mightily, fiercely, but withal tenderly. With her alone he was infinitely tender, and it seemed that something in him cried out for battle against the rest of the world. He had his way, in port and out of it. He brooked no opposition, and delighted to carry, against his captain's advice, more canvas than was wise when it blew heavily. But the yacht, like a woman, seemed a creature of his will; to know no fear when she felt his guiding hand, even though the green water ran in the scuppers.

And every day anew she scanned his face, even as he scanned the face of the waters. What was she searching for? To have so much is to become miserly, to fear lest a grain of the precious store be lost. On the second day they had anchored, for an hour or two, between the sandy headlands of a small New England port, and she had stood on the deck watching his receding figure under the flag of the gasoline launch as it made its way towards the deserted wharves. Beyond the wharves was an elm−arched village street, and above the verdure rose the white cupola of the house of some prosperous sea−captain of bygone times. Honora had not wished to go ashore. First he had begged, and then he had laughed as he had leaped into the launch. She lay in a chaise longue, watching it swinging idly at the dock.

The night before he had written letters and telegrams. Once he had looked up at her as she sat with a book in her hand across the saloon, and caught her eyes. She had been pretending not to watch him.

"Wedding announcements," he said.

And she had smiled back at him bravely. Such was the first acknowledgment between them that the world existed.

"A little late," he observed, smiling in his turn as he changed his pen, "but they'll have to make allowances for the exigencies of the situation. And they've been after me to settle down for so many years that they ought to be thankful to get them at all. I've told them that after a decent period they may come to Grenoble in the late autumn. We don't want anybody before then, do we, Honora?"

"No," she said faintly; and added, "I shall always be satisfied with you alone, Hugh."

He laughed happily, and presently she went up on deck and stood with her face to the breeze. There were no sounds save the musical beat of the water against the strakes, and the low hum of wind on the towering vibrant sails. One moulten silver star stood out above all others. To the northward, somewhere beyond the spot where sea and sky met in the hidden kiss of night, was Newport, were his relations and her friends. What did they think? He, at least, had no anxieties about the world, why should she? Their defiance of it had been no greater than that of an hundred others on whom it had smiled benignly. But had not the others truckled more to its conventions? Little she cared about it, indeed, and if he had turned the prow of the Adhemar towards the unpeopled places of the earth, her joy would have been untroubled.

One after another the days glided by, while with the sharpened senses of a great love she watched for a sign of the thing that slept in him of the thing that had driven him home from his wanderings to re−create his life. When it awoke, she would have to share him; now he was hers alone. Her feelings towards this thing did not assume the proportions of jealousy or fear; they were merely alert, vaguely disquieting. The sleeping thing was not a monster. No, but it might grow into one, if its appetite were not satisfied, and blame her!

She told herself that, had he lacked ambition, she could not have loved him, and did not stop to reflect upon the completeness of her satisfaction with the Viking. He seemed, indeed, in these weeks, one whom the sea has marked for its own, and her delight in watching him as he moved about the boat never palled. His nose reminded her of the prow of a ship of war, and his deep−set eyes were continually searching the horizon for an enemy. Such were her fancies. In the early morning when he donned his sleeveless bathing suit, she could never resist the temptation to follow him on deck to see him plunge into the cold ocean: it gave her a delightful little shiver and he was made like one of the gods of Valhalla.

She had discovered, too, in these intimate days, that he had the Northman's temperament; she both loved and dreaded his moods. And sometimes, when the yacht glided over smoother seas, it was his pleasure to read to her, even poetry and the great epics. That he should be fond of the cruel Scotch ballads she was not surprised; but his familiarity with the book of Job, and his love for it, astonished her. It was a singular library that he had put on board the Adhemar.

One evening when the sails flapped idly and the blocks rattled, when they had been watching in silence the flaming orange of the sunset above the amethystine Camden hills, he spoke the words for which she had been waiting.

"Honora, what do you say to going back to Grenoble?"

She succeeded in smiling at him.

"Whenever you like, Hugh," she said.

So the bowsprit of the Adhemar was turned homewards; and with every league of water they left behind them his excitement and impatience seemed to grow.

"I can't wait to show it to you, Honora to see you in it," he exclaimed. " I have so long pictured you there, and our life as it will be."

CHAPTER XII. THE ENTRANCE INTO EDEN

THEY had travelled through the night, and in the early morning left the express at a junction. Honora sat in the straight−backed seat of the smaller train with parted lips and beating heart, gazing now and again at the pearly mists rising from the little river valley they were climbing. Chiltern was like a schoolboy.

"We'll soon be there," he cried, but it was nearly nine o'clock when they reached the Gothic station that marked the end of the line. It was a Chiltern line, he told her, and she was already within the feudal domain. Time indeed that she awoke! She reached the platform to confront a group of upturned, staring faces, and for the moment her courage failed her. Somehow, with Chiltern's help, she made her way to a waiting omnibus backed up against the boards. The footman touched his hat, the grey−headed coachman saluted, and they got in. As the horses started off at a quick trot, Honora saw that the group on the station platform had with one consent swung about to stare after them.

They passed through the main street of the town, lined with plate−glass windows and lively signs, and already bustling with the business of the day, through humbler thoroughfares, and presently rumbled over a bridge that spanned a rushing stream confined between the foundation walls of mills. Hundreds of yards of mills stretched away on either side; mills with windows wide open, and within them Honora heard the clicking and roaring of machinery, and saw the men and women at their daily tasks. Life was a strange thing that they should be doing this while she should be going to live in luxury at a great country place. On one of the walls she read the legend: Chiltern and Company.

"They still keep our name," said Hugh, "although they are in the trust."

He pointed out to her, with an air of pride, every landmark by the roadside. In future they were to have a new meaning they were to be shared with her. And he spoke of the times as child and youth, home from the seashore or college, he had driven over the same road. It wound to the left, behind the mills, threaded a village of neat wooden houses where the better class of operatives lived, reached the river again, and turned at last through a brick gateway, past a lodge in the dense shade of sheltering boughs, into a wooded drive that climbed, by gentle degrees, a slope. Human care for generations had given to the place a tradition. People had lived here and loved those trees his people. And could it be that she was to inherit all this, with him? Was her name really Chiltern?

The beating of her heart became a pain when in the distance through the spreading branches she caught a glimpse of the long, low outline of the house, a vision at once familiar and unreal. How often in the months gone by had she called up the memory of the photograph she had once seen, only to doubt the more that she should ever behold that house and these trees with him by her side! They drew up before the door, and a venerable, ruddy−faced butler stood gravely on the steps to welcome them. Hugh leaped out. He was still the schoolboy.

"Starling," he said, "this is Mrs. Chiltern."

Honora smiled tremulously.

"How do you do, Starling?" she said.

"Starling's an old friend, Honora. He's been here ever since I can remember."

The blue eyes of the old servant were fixed on her with a strange, searching expression. Was it compassion she

read in them, on this that should be the happiest of her days? In that instant, unaccountably, her heart went out to the old man; and something of what he had seen, and something of what was even now passing within him, came to her intuitively. It was as though, unexpectedly, she had found a friend and a friend who had had no previous intentions of friendship.

"I'm sure I wish you happiness, madame, and Mr. Hugh," he said in a voice not altogether firm.

"Happiness!" cried Hugh. "I've never known what it was before now, Starling."

The old man's eyes glistened.

"And you've come to stay, sir?"

"All my life, Starling," said Hugh.

They entered the hall. It was wide and cool, white panelled to the ceiling, with a dark oak floor. At the back of it was an eighteenth−century stairway, with a band of red carpet running up the steps, and a wrought−iron guard with a velvet−covered rail. Halfway up, the stairway divided at a landing, lighted by great triple windows of small panes.

"You may have breakfast in half an hour, Starling," said Chiltern, and led Honora up the stairs into the east wing, where he flung open one of the high mahogany doors on the south side.

"These are your rooms, Honora. I have had Keller do them all over for you, and I hope you'll like them. If you don't, we'll change them again."

Her answer was an exclamation of delight. There was a bedroom in pink, with brocaded satin on the walls, and an oriel window thrust out over the garden; a panelled boudoir at the corner of the house, with a marble mantel before which one of Marie Antoinette's duchesses had warmed her feet; and shelves lined with gold−lettered books. From its windows, across the flowering shrubbery and through the trees, she saw the gleaming waters of a lake, and the hills beyond. From this view she turned, and caught her breath, and threw her arms about her husband's neck. He was astonished to see that her eyes were filled with tears.

"Oh, Hugh," she cried, "it's too perfect! It almost makes me afraid."

"We will be very happy, dearest," he said, and as he kissed her he laughed at the fates.

"I hope so I pray so," she said, as she clung to him. "But don't laugh, I can't bear it."

He patted her cheek.

"What a strange little girl you are!" he said. "I suppose I shouldn't be mad about you if you weren't that way. Sometimes I wonder how many women I have married."

She smiled at him through her tears.

"Isn't that polygamy, Hugh?" she asked.

It was all like a breathless tale out of one of the wonder books of youth. So, at least, it seemed to Honora as she stood, refreshed with a new white linen gown, hesitating on the threshold of her door before descending. Some time the bell must ring, or the cock crow, or the fairy beckon with a wand, and she would have to go back. Back

where? She did not know she could not remember. Cinderella dreaming by the embers, perhaps.

He was awaiting her in the little breakfast room, its glass casements open to the garden with the wall and the round stone seat. The simmering urn, the white cloth, the shining silver, the big green melons that the hot summer sun had ripened for them alone, and Hugh's eyes as they rested on her such was her illusion. Nor was it quite dispelled when he lighted a pipe and they started to explore their Eden, wandering through chambers with low ceilings in the old part of the house, and larger, higher apartments in the portion that was called new. In the great darkened library, side by side against the Spanish leather on the walls, hung the portraits of his father and mother in heavy frames of gilt.

Her husband was pleased that she should remain so long before them. And for a while, as she stood lost in contemplation, he did not speak. Once she glanced at him, and then back at the stern face of the General, stern, yet kindly. The eyes, deep−set under bushy brows, like Hugh's, were full of fire; and yet the artist had made them human, too. A dark, reddish brown, close−trimmed mustache and beard hid the mouth and chin. Hugh had inherited the nose, but the father's forehead was wider and fuller. Hugh was at once a newer type, and an older. The face and figure of the General were characteristic of the mid−century American of the northern states, a mixture of boldness and caution and puritanism, who had won his battles in war and commerce by a certain native quality of mind.

"I never appreciated him," said Hugh at length, "until after he died long after. Until now, in fact. At times we were good friends, and then something he would say or do would infuriate me, and I would purposely make him angry. He had a time and a rule for everything, and I could not bear rules. Breakfast was on the minute, an hour in his study to attend to affairs about the place, so many hours in his office at the mills, in the president's room at the bank, vestry and charity meetings at regular intervals. No movement in all this country round about was ever set on foot without him. He was one to be finally reckoned with. And since his death, many proofs have come to me of the things he did for people of which the world was ignorant. I have found out at last that his way of life was, in the main, the right way. But I know now, Honora," he added soberly, slipping his hand within her arm, "I know now that without you I never could do all I intend to do."

"Oh, don't say that!" she cried. "Don't say that!"

"Why not?" he asked, smiling at her vehemence. "It is not a confession of weakness. I had the determination, it is true. I could I should have done something, but my deeds would have lacked the one thing needful to lift them above the commonplace at least for me. You are the inspiration. With you here beside me, I feel that I can take up this work with joy. Do you understand?"

She pressed his hand with her arm.

"Hugh," she said slowly, "I hope that I shall be a help, and not not a hindrance."

"A hindrance!" he exclaimed. "You don't know, you can't realize, what you are to me."

She was silent, and when she lifted her eyes it was to rest them on the portrait of his mother. And she seemed to read in the sweet, sad eyes a question a question not to be put into words. Chiltern, following her gaze, did not speak: for a space they looked at the portrait together, and in silence. . . .

From one end of the house to the other they went, Hugh reviving at the sight of familiar objects a hundred memories of his childhood; and she trying to imagine that childhood, so different from her own, passed in this wonderful place. In the glass cases of the gun room, among the shining, blue barrels which he had used in all parts of the world, was the little shotgun his father had had made for him when he was twelve years old. Hugh locked the door after them when they came out, and smiled as he put the key in his pocket.

"My destroying days are over," he declared.

Honora put on a linen hat and they took the gravelled path to the stables, where the horses, one by one, were brought out into the courtyard for their inspection. In anticipation of this hour there was a blood bay for Honora, which Chiltern had bought in New York. She gave a little cry of delight when she saw the horse shining in the sunlight, his nostrils in the air, his brown eyes clear, his tapering neck patterned with veins. And then there was the dairy, with the fawn−coloured cows and calves; and the hillside pastures that ran down to the river, and the farm lands where the stubbled grain was yellowing. They came back by the path that wound through the trees and shrubbery bordering the lake to the walled garden, ablaze in the mellow sunlight with reds and purples, salvias and zinnias, dahlias, gladioli, and asters.

Here he left her for a while, sitting dreamily on the stone bench. Mrs. Hugh Chiltern, of Grenoble! Over and over she repeated that name to herself, and it refused somehow to merge with her identity. Yet was she mistress of this fair domain; of that house which had sheltered the race for a century, and the lines of which her eye caressed with a loving reverence; and the Chiltern pearls even then lay hidden around her throat. Her thoughts went back, at this, to the gentle lady to whom they had belonged, and whose look began again to haunt her. Honora's superstition startled her. What did it mean, that look? She tried to recall where she had seen it before, and suddenly remembered that the eyes of the old butler had held something not unlike it. Compassionate − this was the only word that would describe it. No, it had not proclaimed her an intruder, though it may have been ready to do so the moment before her appearance; for there was a note of surprise in it surprise and compassion.

This was the lady in whose footsteps she was to walk, whose charities and household cares she was to assume! Tradition, order, observance, responsibility, authority it was difficult to imagine these as a logical part of the natural sequence of her life. She would begin to−day, if God would only grant her these things she had once contemned, and that seemed now so precious. Her life her real life would begin to−day. Why not? How hard she would strive to be worthy of this incomparable gift! It was hers, hers! She listened, but the only answer was the humming of the bees in the still September morning. Chiltern's voice aroused her. He was standing in the breakfast room talking to the old butler.

"You're sure there were no other letters, Starling, besides these bills?"

Honora became tense.

"No, sir," she heard the butler say, and she seemed to detect in his deferential voice the note of anxiety suppressed in the other's. "I'm most particular about letters, sir, as one who lived so many years with your father would be. All that came were put in your study, Mr. Hugh."

"It doesn't matter," answered Chiltern, carelessly, and stepped out into the garden. He caught sight of her, hesitated the fraction of a moment, and as he came forward again the cloud in his eyes vanished. And yet she was aware that he was regarding her curiously.

"What," he said gayly, "still here?"

"It is too beautiful!" she cried. "I could sit here forever."

She lifted her face trustfully, smilingly, to his, and he stooped down and kissed it. . . .

To give the jealous fates not the least chance to take offence, the higher life they were to lead began at once. And yet it seemed at times to Honora as though this higher life were the gift the fates would most begrudge: a gift reserved for others, the pretensions to which were a kind of knavery. Merriment, forgetfulness, music, the dance; the cup of pleasure and the feast of Babylon these might more readily have been vouchsafed; even deemed to

have been bargained for. But to take that which supposedly had been renounced virtue, sobriety, security, respect would this be endured? She went about it breathlessly, like a thief.

Never was there a more exemplary household. They rose at half−past seven, they breakfasted at a quarter after eight; at nine, young Mr. Manning, the farm superintendent, was in waiting, and Hugh spent two or more hours in his company, inspecting, correcting, planning; for two thousand acres of the original Chiltern estate still remained. Two thousand acres which, since the General's death, had been at sixes and sevens. The General's study, which was Hugh's now, was piled high with new and bulky books on cattle and cultivation of the soil. Government and state and private experts came and made tests and went away again; new machinery arrived, and Hugh passed hours in the sun, often with Honora by his side, installing it. General Chiltern had been president and founder of the Grenoble National Bank, and Hugh took up his duties as a director.

Honora sought, with an energy that had in it an element of desperation, to keep pace with her husband. For she was determined that he should have no interests in which she did not share. In those first days it was her dread that he might grow away from her, and instinct told her that now or never must the effort be made. She, too, studied farming; not from books, but from him. In their afternoon ride along the shady river road, which was the event of her day, she encouraged him to talk of his plans and problems, that he might thus early form the habit of bringing them to her. And the unsuspecting male in him responded, innocent of the simple subterfuge. After an exhaustive discourse on the elements lacking in the valley soil, to which she had listened in silent intensity, he would exclaim:

"By George, Honora, you're a continual surprise to me. I had no idea a woman would take an interest in these things, or grasp them the way you do."

Lordly commendations these, and she would receive them with a flush of gratitude.

Nor was it ever too hot, or she too busy with household cares, for her to follow him to the scene of his operations, whatever these might be: she would gladly stand for an hour listening to a consultation with the veterinary about an ailing cow. Her fear was lest some matter of like importance should escape her. She had private conversations with Mr. Manning, that she might surprise her husband by an unsuspected knowledge. Such were her ruses.

The housekeeper who had come up from New York was the subject of a conjugal conversation. "I am going to send her away, Hugh," Honora announced. "I don't believe your mother had one."

The housekeeper's departure was the beginning of Honora's real intimacy with Starling. Complicity, perhaps, would be a better word for the commencement of this relationship. First of all, there was an inspection of the family treasures: the table−linen, the silver, and the china Sèvres, Royal Worcester, and Minton, and the priceless dinner−set of Lowestoft which had belonged to Alexander Chiltern, reserved for great occasions only: occasions that Starling knew by heart; their dates, and the guests the Lowestoft had honoured. His air was ceremonial as he laid, reverently, the sample pieces on the table before her, but it seemed to Honora that he spoke as one who recalls departed glories, who held a conviction that the Lowestoft would never be used again.

Although by unalterable custom he submitted, at breakfast, the menus of the day to Hugh, the old butler came afterwards to Honora's boudoir during her struggle with the account books. Sometimes she would look up and surprise his eyes fixed upon her, and one day she found at her elbow a long list made out in a painstaking hand.

"What's this, Starling?" she asked.

"If you please, madame," he answered, "they're the current prices in the markets here."

She thanked him. Nor was his exquisite delicacy in laying stress upon the locality lost upon her. That he realized the magnitude for her of the task to which she had set herself; that he sympathized deeply with the spirit which had undertaken it, she was as sure as though he had said so. He helped her thus in a dozen unobtrusive ways, never once recognizing her ignorance; but he made her feel the more that that ignorance was a shameful thing not to be spoken of. Speculations upon him were irresistible. She was continually forgetting the nature of his situation, and he grew gradually to typify in her mind the Grenoble of the past. She knew his principles as well as though he had spoken them which he never did. For him, the world had become awry; he abhorred divorce, and that this modern abomination had touched the house of Chiltern was a calamity that had shaken the very foundations of his soul. In spite of this, he had remained. Why? Perhaps from habit, perhaps from love of the family and Hugh, perhaps to see! And having stayed, fascination had laid hold of him, of that she was sure, and his affections had incomprehensibly become involved. He was as one assisting at a high tragedy not unworthy of him, the outcome of which he never for an instant doubted. And he gave Honora the impression that he alone, inscrutable, could have pulled aside the curtain and revealed the end.

CHAPTER XIII. OF THE WORLD BEYOND THE GATES

HONORA paused in her toilet, and contemplated for a moment the white skirt that her maid presented.

"I think I'll wear the blue pongee to−day, Mathilde," she said.

The decision for the blue pongee was the culmination of a struggle begun with the opening of her eyes that morning. It was Sunday, and the time was at hand when she must face the world. Might it not be delayed a little while a week longer? For the remembrance of the staring eyes which had greeted her on her arrival at the station at Grenoble troubled her. It seemed to her a cruel thing that the house of God should hold such terrors for her: to−day she had a longing for it that she had never felt in her life before.

Chiltern was walking in the garden, waiting for her to breakfast with him, and her pose must have had in it an element of the self−conscious when she appeared, smilingly, at the door.

"Why, you're all dressed up," he said.

"It's Sunday, Hugh."

"So it is," he agreed, with what may have been a studied lightness − she could not tell.

"I'm going to church," she said bravely.

"I can't say much for old Stopford," declared her husband. "His sermons used to arouse all the original sin in me, when I had to listen to them."

She poured out his coffee.

"I suppose one has to take one's clergyman as one does the weather," she said. "We go to church for something else besides the sermon don't we?"

"I suppose so, if we go at all," he replied. "Old Stopford imposes a pretty heavy penalty." "Too heavy for you?" she asked, and smiled at him as she handed him the cup.

"Too heavy for me," he said, returning her smile. "To tell you the truth, Honora, I had an overdose of church in my youth, here and at school, and I've been trying to even up ever since."

"You'd like me to go, wouldn't you, Hugh?" she ventured, after a silence.

"Indeed I should," he answered, and again she wondered to what extent his cordiality was studied, or whether it were studied at all. "I'm very fond of that church, in spite of the fact that that I may be said to dissemble my fondness." She laughed with him, and he became serious. "I still contribute the family's share toward its support. My father was very proud of it, but it is really my mother's church. It was due to her that it was built."

Thus was the comedy played and Honora by no means sure that it was a comedy. Even her alert instinct had not been able to detect the acting, and the intervening hours were spent in speculating whether her fears had not been overdone. Nevertheless, under the eyes of Starling, at twenty minutes to eleven she stepped into the victoria with an outward courage, and drove down the shady avenue towards the gate. Sweet−toned bells were ringing as she reached the residence portion of the town, and subdued pedestrians in groups and couples made their way along the sidewalks. They stared at her; and she in turn, with heightened colour, stared at her coachman's back. After all, this first Sunday would be the most difficult.

The carriage turned into a street arched by old elms, and flanked by the houses of the most prosperous townspeople. Some of these were of the old−fashioned, classic type, and others new examples of a national architecture seeking to find itself, white and yellow colonial, rough−cast modifications of the Shakespearian period, and nondescript mixtures of cobblestones and shingles. Each was surrounded by trim lawns and shrubbery. The church itself was set back from the street. It was of bluish stone, and half covered with Virginia creeper.

At this point, had the opportunity for a secret retreat presented itself, Honora would have embraced it, for until now she had not realized the full extent of the ordeal. Had her arrival been heralded by sounding trumpets, the sensation it caused could not have been greater. In her Eden, the world had been forgotten; the hum of gossip beyond the gates had not reached her. But now, as the horses approached the curb, their restive feet clattering on the hard pavement, in the darkened interior of the church she saw faces turned, and entering worshippers pausing in the doorway. Something of what the event meant for Grenoble dawned upon her: something, not all; but all that she could bear.

If it be true that there is no courage equal to that which a great love begets in a woman, Honora's at that moment was sublime. Her cheeks tingled, and her knees weakened under her as she ran the gantlet to the church door, where she was met by a gentleman on whose face she read astonishment unalloyed: amazement, perhaps, is not too strong a word for the sensation it conveyed to her, and it occurred to her afterwards that there was an element in it of outrage. It was a countenance peculiarly adapted to such an expression yellow, smooth−shaven, heavy−jowled, with one drooping eye; and she needed not to be told that she had encountered, at the outset, the very pillar of pillars. The frock coat, the heavy watch chain, the square−toed boots, all combined to make a Presence.

An instinctive sense of drama amongst the onlookers seemed to create a hush, as though these had been the unwilling witnesses to an approaching collision and were awaiting the crash. The gentleman stood planted in the inner doorway, his drooping eye fixed on hers.

"I am Mrs. Chiltern," she faltered.

He hesitated the fraction of an instant, but he somehow managed to make it plain that the information was superfluous. He turned without a word and marched majestically up the aisle before her to the fourth pew from the front on the right. There he faced about and laid a protesting hand on the carved walnut, as though absolving himself in the sight of his God and his fellow−citizens. Honora fell on her knees.

She strove to calm herself by prayer: but the glances of a congregation focussed between her shoulder−blades seemed to burn her back, and the thought of the concentration of so many minds upon her distracted her own. She could think of no definite prayer. Was this God's tabernacle? or the market−place, and she at the tail of a cart? And was she not Hugh Chiltern's wife, entitled to his seat in the place of worship of his fathers? She rose from her knees, and her eyes fell on the softly glowing colours of a stained−glass window: In memoriam Alicia Reyburn Chiltern. Hugh's mother, the lady in whose seat she sat.

The organist, a sprightly young man, came in and began turning over his music, and the choir took their places, in the old−fashioned manner. Then came the clergyman. His beard was white, his face long and narrow and shrivelled, his forehead protruding, his eyes of the cold blue of a winter's sky. The service began, and Honora repeated the familiar prayers which she had learned by heart in childhood until her attention was arrested by the words she spoke: "We have offended against Thy holy laws." Had she? Would not God bless her marriage? It was not until then that she began to pray with an intensity that blotted out the world that He would not punish her if she had done wrong in His sight. Surely, if she lived henceforth in fear of Him, He would let her keep this priceless love which had come to her! And it was impossible that He should regard it as an inordinate and sinful affection since it had filled her life with light. As the wife of Hugh Chiltern she sought a blessing. Would God withhold it? He would not, she was sure; if they lived a sober and a righteous life. He would take that into account, for He was just.

Then she grew calmer, and it was not until after the doctrinal sermon which Hugh had predicted that her heart began to beat painfully once more, when the gentleman who had conducted her to her seat passed her the plate. He inspired her with an instinctive fear; and she tried to imagine, in contrast, the erect and soldierly figure of General Chiltern performing the same office. Would he have looked on her more kindly?

When the benediction was pronounced, she made her way out of the church with downcast eyes. The people parted at the door to let her pass, and she quickened her step, gained the carriage at last, and drove away seemingly leaving at her back a buzz of comment. Would she ever have the courage to do it again?

The old butler, as he flung open the doors at her approach, seemed to be scrutinizing her.

"Where's Mr. Chiltern, Starling?" she asked.

"He's gone for a ride, madame."

Hugh had gone for a ride!

She did not see him until lunch was announced, when he came to the table in his riding clothes. It may have been that he began to talk a little eagerly about the excursion he had made to an outlying farm and the conversation he had had with the farmer who leased it.

"His lease is out in April," said Chiltern, "and when I told him I thought I'd turn the land into the rest of the estate he tried to bribe me into a renewal."

"Bribe you?"

Chiltern laughed.

"Only in joke, of course. The man's a character, and he's something of a politician in these parts. He intimated that there would be a vacancy in this congressional district next year, that Grierson was going to resign, and that a man with a long purse who belonged to the soil might have a chance. I suppose he thinks I would buy it."

"And would you like to go to Congress, Hugh?"

"Well," he said, smiling, "a man never can tell when he may have to eat his words. I don't say I shouldn't in the distant future. It would have pleased the General. But if I go," he added with characteristic vigour, "it will be in spite of the politicians, not because of them. If I go I shan't go bound, and I should enjoy that."

And she was able to accord him the smile of encouragement he expected.

"I am sure you would," she replied. "I think you might have waited until this afternoon and taken me," she reproached him. "You know how I enjoy going with you to those places."

It was not until later in the meal that he anticipated, in an admirably accidental manner, the casual remark she had intended to make about church.

"Your predictions were fulfilled," she answered; "the sermon wasn't thrilling."

He glanced at her. And instead of avoiding his eyes, she smiled into them.

"Did you see the First Citizen of Grenoble?" he inquired.

"I am sure of it," she laughed. "if he's yellow, with a drooping eye and a presence; he was kind enough to conduct me to the pew."

"Yes," he exclaimed, "that's Israel Simpson you couldn't miss him. How I used to hate him when I was a boy! I haven't quite got over it yet. I used to outdo myself to make things uncomfortable for him when he came up here I think it was because he always seemed to be truckling. He was ridiculously servile and polite in those days. He's changed since," added Hugh, dryly. "He must quite have forgotten by this time that the General made him."

"Is is he so much?" said Honora.

Her husband laughed.

"Is it possible that you have seen him and still ask that?" said he. "He is Grenoble. Once the Chilterns were. He is the head of the honoured firm of Israel Simpson and Sons, the president of the Grenoble National Bank, the senior warden of the church, a director in the railway. Twice a year, in the columns of the New York newspapers dedicated to the prominent arrivals at the hotels, you may read the name of Israel Simpson of Grenoble. Three times has he been abroad, respectably accompanied by Maria, who invariably returns to read a paper on the cathedrals and art before the Woman's Club."

"Maria is his wife, I suppose."

"Yes. Didn't you run across Maria? She's quite as pronounced, in her way, as Israel. A very tower of virtue."

"I didn't meet anybody, Hugh," said Honora. "I'll I'll look for her next Sunday. I hurried out. It was a little embarrassing the first time," she added, "your family being so prominent in Grenoble."

Upon this framework, the prominence of his family, she built up during the coming week a new structure of hope. It was strange she had never thought before of this quite obvious explanation for the curiosity of Grenoble. Perhaps perhaps it was not prejudice, after all! or not all of it. The wife of the Chiltern heir would naturally inspire a considerable interest in any event, and Mrs. Hugh Chiltern in particular. And these people would shortly

understand, if they did not now understand, that Hugh had come back voluntarily and from a sense of duty to assume the burdens and responsibilities that so many of his generation and class had shirked. This would tell in their favour, surely. At this point in her meditations she consulted the mirror, to behold a modest, slim−waisted young woman becomingly arrayed in white linen, whose cheeks were aglow with health, whose eyes seemingly reflected the fire of a distant high vision. Not a Poppaea, certainly, nor a Delila. No, it was unbelievable that this, the very field itself of their future labours, should be denied them. Her heart, at the mere conjecture, turned to stone.

During the cruise of the Adhemar she had often watched, in the gathering darkness, those revolving lights on headland or shoal that spread now a bright band across the sea, and again left the waters desolate in the night. Thus, ceaselessly revolving from white hope to darker doubt, were her thoughts, until sometimes she feared to be alone with them, and surprised him by her presence in his busiest moments. For he was going ahead on the path they had marked out with a faith in which she could perceive no flaw. If faint and shadowy forms had already come between them, he gave no evidence of having as yet discerned these. There was the absence of news from his family, for instance, the Graingers, the Stranges, the Shorters, and the Pendletons, whom she had never seen; he had never spoken to her of this, and he seemed to hold it as of no account. Her instinct whispered that it had left its mark, a hidden mark. And while she knew that consideration for her prompted him to hold his peace, she told herself that she would have been happier had he spoken of it.

Always she was brought back to Grenoble when she saw him thus, manlike, with his gaze steadily fixed on the task. If New York itself withheld recognition, could Grenoble provincial and conservative Grenoble, preserving still the ideas of the last century for which his family had so unflinchingly stood be expected to accord it? New York! New York was many, many things, she knew. The great house could have been filled from weekend to week−end from New York; but not with Graingers and Pendletons and Stranges; not with those around the walls of whose fortresses the currents of modernity still swept impotently; not with those who, while not condemning pleasure, still acknowledged duty; not with those whose assured future was that for which she might have sold her soul itself. Social free lances, undoubtedly, and unattached men; those who lived in the world of fashion but were not squeamish Mrs. Kame, for example; and ladies like Mrs. Eustace Rindge, who had tried a second throw for happiness, such votaries of excitement would undoubtedly have been more than glad to avail themselves of the secluded hospitality of Grenoble for that which they would have been pleased to designate as "a lively time." Honora shuddered at the thought. And, as though the shudder had been prophetic, one morning the mail contained a letter from Mrs. Kame herself. Mercifully Hugh had not noticed it. Honora did not recognize the handwriting, but she slipped the envelope into her lap, fearful of what it might contain, and, when she gained the privacy of her rooms, read it with quickening breath. Mrs. Kame's touch was light and her imagination sympathetic; she was the most adaptable of the feminine portion of her nation, and since the demise of her husband she had lived, abroad and at home, among men and women of a world that does not dot its i's or cross its t's. Nevertheless, the letter filled Honora with a deep apprehension and a deeper resentment. Plainly and clearly stamped between its delicately worded lines was the claim of a comradeship born of Honora's recent act. She tore the paper into strips and threw it into the flames and opened the window to the cool air of the autumn morning. She had a feeling of contamination that was intolerable.

Mrs. Kame had proposed herself again the word "delicately " must be used for one of Honora's first house−parties. Only an acute perception could have read in the lady's praise of Hugh a masterly avoidance of that part of his career already registered on the social slate. Mrs. Kame had thought about them and their wonderful happiness in these autumn days at Grenoble; to intrude on that happiness yet awhile would be a sacrilege. Later, perhaps, they would relent and see something of their friends, and throw open again the gates of a beautiful place long closed to the world. And without the air of having picked the single instance, but of having chosen from many Mrs. Kame added that she had only lately seen Elsie Shorter, whose admiration for Honora was greater than ever. A sentiment, Honora reflected a little bitterly, that Mrs. Shorter herself had not taken the pains to convey. Consistency was not Elsie's jewel.

It must perhaps be added for the sake of enlightenment that since going to Newport Honora's view of the writer of this letter had changed. In other words, enlarging ideals had dwarfed her somewhat; it was strictly true that the lady was a boon companion of everybody. Her Catholicism had two limitations only: that she must be amused, and that she must not in what she deemed the vulgar sense be shocked.

Honora made several attempts at an answer before she succeeded in saying, simply, that Hugh was too absorbed in his work of reconstruction of the estate for them to have house−parties this autumn. And even this was a concession hard for her pride to swallow. She would have preferred not to reply at all, and this slightest of references to his work and hers seemed to degrade it. Before she folded the sheet she looked again at that word "reconstruction" and thought of eliminating it. It was too obviously allied to "redemption"; and she felt that Mrs. Kame could not understand redemption, and would ridicule it. Honora went downstairs and dropped her reply guiltily into the mail−bag. It was for Hugh's sake she was sending it, and from his eyes she was hiding it.

And, while we are dealing with letters, one, or part of one, from Honora's aunt, may perhaps be inserted here. It was an answer to one that Honora had written a few days after her installation at Grenoble, the contents of which need not be gone into: we, who know her, would neither laugh nor weep at reading it, and its purport may be more or less accurately surmised from her aunt's reply.

"As I wrote you at the time, my dear," so it ran "the shock which your sudden marriage with Mr. Chiltern caused us was great so great that I cannot express it in words. I realize that I am growing old, and perhaps the world is changing faster than I imagine. And I wrote you, too, that I would not be true to myself if I told you that what you have done was right in my eyes. I have asked myself whether my horror of divorce and remarriage may not in some degree be due to the happiness of my life with your uncle. I am, undoubtedly, an exceptionally fortunate woman; and as I look backwards I see that the struggles and trials which we have shared together were really blessings.

"Nevertheless, dear Honora, you are, as your uncle wrote you, our child, and nothing can alter that fact in our hearts. We can only pray with all our strength that you may find happiness and peace in your new life. I try to imagine, as I think of you and what has happened to you in the few years since you have left us how long they seem! I try to imagine some of the temptations that have assailed you in that world of which I know nothing. If I cannot, it is because God made us different. I know what you have suffered, and my heart aches for you.

"You say that experience has taught you much that you could not have learned in any other way. I do not doubt it. You tell me that your new life, just begun, will be a dutiful one. Let me repeat that it is my anxious prayer that you have not builded upon sand, that regrets may not come. I cannot say more. I cannot dissemble. Perhaps I have already said too much.

"Your loving "AUNT MARY."

An autumn wind was blowing, and Honora gazed out of the window at the steel−blue, ruffled waters of the lake. Unconsciously she repeated the words to herself:

"Builded upon sand!"

CHAPTER XIV. CONTAINING PHILOSOPHY FROM MR. GRAINGER

SWIFTLY came the autumn days, and swiftly went. A bewildering, ever changing, and glorious panorama presented itself, green hillsides struck first with flaming crimsons and yellows, and later mellowing into a wondrous blending of gentler, tenderer hues; lavender, and wine, and the faintest of rose colours where the bare beeches massed. Thus the slopes were spread as with priceless carpets for a festival. Sometimes Honora,

watching, beheld from her window the russet dawn on the eastern ridge, and the white mists crouching in strange, ghostly shapes above the lake and the rushing river: and she saw these same mists gather again, shivering, at nightfall. In the afternoon they threaded valleys, silent save for the talk between them and the stirring of the leaves under their horses' feet.

So the Indian summer passed that breathless season when even happiness has its premonitions and its pangs. The umber fields, all ploughed and harrowed, lay patiently awaiting the coming again of the quickening spring. Then fell the rain, the first, cold winter rain that shrouded the valley and beat down upon the defenceless, dismantled garden and made pools in the hollows of the stone seat: that flung itself against Honora's window as though begrudging her the warmth and comfort within. Sometimes she listened to it in the night.

She was watching. How intent was that vigil, how alert and sharpened her senses, a woman who has watched alone may answer. Now, she felt, was the crisis at hand: the moment when her future, and his, was to hang in the balance. The work on the farms, which had hitherto left Chiltern but little time for thought, had relaxed. In these wet days had he begun to brood a little? Did he show signs of a reversion to that other personality, the Chiltern she had not known, yet glimpses of whom she had had? She recalled the third time she had seen him, the morning at the Lilacs in Newport, that had left upon her the curious sense of having looked on a superimposed portrait. That Chiltern which she called her Viking, and which, with a woman's perversity, she had perhaps loved most of all, was but one expression of the other man of days gone by. The life of that man was a closed book she had never wished to open. Was he dead, or sleeping? And if sleeping, would he awake? How softly she tread!

And in these days, with what exquisite, yet tremulous skill and courage did she bring up the subject of that other labour they were to undertake together the life and letters of his father. In the early dusk, when they had returned from their long rides, she contrived to draw Chiltern into his study. The cheerfulness, the hopefulness, the delight with which she approached the task, the increasing enthusiasm she displayed for the character of the General as she read and sorted the letters and documents, and the traits of his she lovingly traced in Hugh, were not without their effect. It was thus she fanned, ceaselessly and with a smile, and with an art the rarest women possess, the drooping flame. And the flame responded.

How feverishly she worked, unknown to him, he never guessed; so carefully and unobtrusively planted her suggestions that they were born again in glory as his inspiration. The mist had lifted a little, and she beheld the next stage beyond. To reach that stage was to keep him intent on this work and after that, to publish! Ah, if he would only have patience, or if she could keep him distracted through this winter and their night, she might save him. Love such as hers can even summon genius to its aid, and she took fire herself at the thought of a book worthy of that love, of a book though signed by him that would redeem them, and bring a scoffing world to its knees in praise. She spent hours in the big library preparing for Chiltern's coming, with volumes in her lap and a note−book by her side.

One night, as they sat by the blazing logs in his study, which had been the General's, Chiltern arose impulsively, opened the big safe in the corner, and took out a leather−bound book and laid it on her lap. Honora stared at it: it was marked "Highlawns, Visitors' Book."

"It's curious I never thought of it before," he said, "but my father had a habit of jotting down notes in it on important occasions. It may be of some use to us, Honora."

She opened it at random and read: "July 5, 1893, Picnic at Psalter's Falls. Temperature 71 at 9 A.M. Bar. 30. Weather clear. Charles left for Washington, summons from President, in the midst of it. Agatha and Victor again look at the Farrar property. Hugh has a ducking. P.S. At dinner to−night Bessie announces her engagement to Cecil Grainger. Present: Sarah and George Grenfell, Agatha and Victor Strange, Gerald Shorter, Lord Kylie −"

Honora looked up. Hugh was at her shoulder, with his eyes on the page. "Psalter's Falls!" he exclaimed. "How well I remember that day! I was just home from my junior year at Harvard."

"Who was 'Charles'?" inquired Honora.

"Senator Pendleton Bessie's father. Just after I jumped into the mill−pond the telegram came for him to go to Washington, and I drove him home in my wet clothes. The old man had a terrible tongue, a whip−lash kind of humour, and he scored me for being a fool. But he rather liked me, on the whole. He told me if I'd only straighten out I could be anything, in reason."

"What made you jump in the mill−pond?" Honora asked, laughing.

"Bessie Grainger. She had a devil in her, too, in those days, but she always kept her head, and I didn't." He smiled. "I'm willing to admit that I was madly in love with her, and she treated me outrageously. We were standing on the bridge I remember it as though it were yesterday and the water was about eight feet deep, with a clear sand bottom. She took off a gold bracelet and bet me I wouldn't get it if she threw it in. That night, right in the middle of dinner, when there was a pause in the conversation, she told us she was engaged to Cecil Grainger. It turned out, by the way, to have been his bracelet I rescued. I could have wrung his neck, and I didn't speak to her for a month."

Honora repressed an impulse to comment on this incident. With his arm over her shoulder, he turned the pages idly, and the long lists of guests which bore witness to the former life and importance of Highlawns passed before her eyes. Distinguished foreigners, peers of England, churchmen, and men renowned in literature: famous American statesmen, scientists, and names that represented more than one generation of wealth and achievement all were here. There were his school and college friends, five and six at a time, and besides them those of young girls who were now women, some of whom Honora had met and known in New York or Newport.

Presently he closed the book abruptly and returned it to the safe. To her sharpened senses, the very act itself was significant. There were other and blank pages in it for future years; and under different circumstances he might have laid it in its time−honoured place, on the great table in the library. . . .

It was not until some weeks later that Honora was seated one afternoon in the study waiting for him to come in, and sorting over some of the letters that they had not yet examined, when she came across a new lot thrust carelessly at the bottom of the older pile. She undid the elastic. Tucked away in one of the envelopes she was surprised to find a letter of recent date October. She glanced at it, read involuntarily the first lines, and then, with a little cry, turned it over. It was from Cecil Grainger. She put it back into the envelope whence it came, and sat still.

After a while, she could not tell how long, she heard Hugh stamping the snow from his feet in the little entry beside the study. And in a few moments he entered, rubbing his hands and holding them out to the blaze.

"Hello, Honora," he said; "are you still at it? What's the matter a hitch?"

She reached mechanically into the envelope, took out the letter, and handed it to him.

"I found it just now, Hugh. I didn't read much of it I didn't mean to read any. It's from Mr. Grainger, and you must have overlooked it."

He took it.

"From Cecil?" he said, in an odd voice. "I wasn't aware that he had sent me anything recently."

As he read, she felt the anger rise within him, she saw it in his eyes fixed upon the sheet, and the sense of fear, of irreparable loss, that had come over her as she had sat alone awaiting him, deepened. And yet, long expected verdicts are sometimes received in a spirit of recklessness. He finished the letter, and flung it in her lap.

"Read it," he said.

"Oh, Hugh!" she protested tremulously. "Perhaps perhaps I'd better not." He laughed, and that frightened her the more. It was the laugh, she was sure, of the other man she had not known.

"I've always suspected that Cecil was a fool now I'm sure of it. Read it!" he repeated, in a note of command that went oddly with his next sentence; "You will find that it is only ridiculous."

This assurance of the comedy it contained, however, did not serve to fortify her misgivings. It was written from a club.

"DEAR HUGH: Herewith a few letters for the magnum opus which I have extracted from Aunt Agatha, Judge Gaines, and others, and to send you my humble congratulations. By George, my boy, you have dashed off with a prize, and no mistake. I've never made any secret, you know, of my admiration for Honora I hope I may call her so now. And I just thought I'd tell you you could count on me for a friend at court. Not that I'm any use now, old boy. I'll have to be frank with you I always was. Discreet silence, and all that sort of thing: as much as my head is worth to open my mouth. But I had an idea it would be an act of friendship to let you know how things stand. Let time and works speak, and Cecil will give the thing a posh at the proper moment. I understand from one of the intellectual journals I read that you have gone in for simple life and scientific farming. A deuced canny move. And for the love of heaven, old man, keep it up for a while, anyhow. I know it's difficult, but keep it up. I speak as a friend.

"They received your letters all right, announcing your marriage. You always enjoyed a row I wish you could have been on hand to see and hear this one. It was no place for a man of peace, and I spent two nights at the club. I've never made any secret, you know, of the fact that I think the Pendleton connection hide−bound: And you understand Bessie there's no good of my explaining her. You'd have thought divorce a brand−new invention of the devil, instead of a comparatively old institution. And if you don't mind my saying so, my boy, you took this fence a bit on the run, the way you do everything. The fact is, divorce is going out of fashion. Maybe it's because the Pendleton−Grenfell element have always set their patrician faces against it; maybe its been a bit overdone. Most people who have tried it have discovered that the fire is no better than the frying−pan both hot as soon as they warm up. Of course, old boy, there's nothing personal in this. Sit tight, and stick to the simple life that's your game as I see it. No news I've never known things to be so quiet. Jerry won over two thousand night before last he made it no trumps in his own hand four times running.

"Yours, "CECIL."

Honora returned this somewhat unique epistle to her husband, and he crushed it. There was an ill−repressed, terrifying savagery in the act, and her heart was torn between fear and pity for this lone message of good−will. Whatever its wording, such it was. A dark red flush had mounted his forehead to the roots of his short, curly hair.

"Well?" he said.

She was fighting for her presence of mind. Flashes of his temper she had known, but she had never seen the cruel, fiendish thing his anger. Not his anger, but the anger of the destroyer that she beheld waking now after its long sleep, and taking possession of him, and transforming him before her very eyes. She had been able to cope with the new man, but she felt numb and powerless before the resuscitated demon of the old.

"What do you expect me to say, Hugh?" she faltered, with a queer feeling that she was not addressing him.

"Anything you like," he replied. "Defend Cecil."

"Why should I defend him?" she said dully.

"Because you have no pride."

A few seconds elapsed before the full import and brutality of this insult reached her intelligence, and she cried out his name in a voice shrill with anguish. But he seemed to delight in the pain he had caused.

"You couldn't be expected, I suppose, to see that this letter is a d−d impertinence, filled with an outrageous flippancy, a deliberate affront, an implication that our marriage does not exist."

She sat stunned, knowing that the real pain would come later. That which slowly awoke in her now, as he paced the room, was a high sense of danger, and a persistent inability to regard the man who had insulted her as her husband. He was rather an enemy to them both, and he would overturn, if he could, the frail craft of their happiness in the storm. She cried out to Hugh as across the waters.

"No, I have no pride, Hugh, it is gone. I have thought of you only. The fear that I might separate you from your family, from your friends, and ruin your future has killed my pride. He Mr. Grainger meant to be kind. He is always like that it's his way of saying things. He wishes to show that he is friendly to you to me −"

"In spite of my relations," cried Chiltern, stopping in the middle of the room. "They cease to be my relations from this day. I disown them. I say it deliberately. So long as I live, not one of then shall come into this house. All my life they have begged me to settle down, to come up here and live the life my father did. Very well, now I've done it. And I wrote to them and told them that I intended to live henceforth like a gentleman and a decent citizen more than some of them do. No, I wash my hands of them. If they were to crawl up here from the gate on their knees, I'd turn them out."

Although he could not hear her, she continued to plead.

"Hugh, try to think of how how our marriage must have appeared to them. Not that I blame you for being angry. We only thought of one thing our love −" her voice broke at the word, "and our own happiness. We did not consider others. It is that which sometimes has made me afraid, that we believed ourselves above the law. And now that we have begun so well, don't spoil it, Hugh! Give them time, let them see by our works that we are in earnest, that we intend to live useful lives. I don't mean to beg them," she cried, at sight of his eyes. "Oh, I don't mean that. I don't mean to entreat them, or even to communicate with them. But they are your flesh and blood you must remember that. Let us prove that we are not like the others," she said, lifting her head, "and then it cannot matter to us what any one thinks. We shall have justified our act to ourselves."

But he was striding up and down the room again. It was as she feared her plea had fallen on unheeding ears. A sudden convulsive leaping of the inner fires sent him to his desk, and he seized some note−paper from the rack. Honora rose to her feet, and took a step towards him.

"Hugh what are you going to do?"

"Do!" he cried, swinging in his chair and facing her, "I'm going to do what any man with an ounce of self−respect would do under the circumstances. I'm going to do what I was a fool not to have done three months ago what I should have done if it hadn't been for you. If in their contemptible, pharisaical notions of morality they choose to forget what my mother and father were to them, they cease to exist for me. If it's the last act of my life I'm going

to tell them so."

She stood gazing at him, but she was as one of whom he took no account. He turned to the desk and began to write with a deliberation all the more terrible to her because of the white anger he felt. And still she stood. He pressed the button on his desk, and Starling responded.

"I want a man from the stable to be ready to take some letters to town in half an hour," he said.

It was not until then that she turned and slowly left the room. A mortal sickness seemed to invade her vitals, and she went to her own chamber and flung herself, face downward, on the lace covering of the bed: and the sobs that shook her were the totterings of the foundations of her universe. For a while, in the intensity of her anguish, all thought was excluded. Presently, however, when the body was spent, the mind began to practise its subtle and intolerable torture, and she was invaded by a sense of loneliness colder than the space between the worlds. Where was she to go, whither flee, now that his wrath was turned against her? On the strength of his love alone she had pinned her faith, discarded and scorned all other help. And at the first contact with that greater power which he had taught her so confidently to despise, that strength had broken!

Slowly, she gazed back over the path she had trod, where roses once had held up smiling heads. It was choked now by brambles that scratched her nakedness at every step. Ah, how easily she had been persuaded to enter it! "We have the right to happiness," he had said, and she had looked into his eyes and believed him. What was this strange, elusive happiness, that she had so pantingly pursued and never overtaken? that essence pure and unalloyed with baser things? Ecstasy, perhaps, she had found for was it delirium? Fear was the boon companion of these; or better, the pestilence that stalked behind them, ever ready to strike.

Then, as though some one had turned on a light a sickening, yet penetrating blue light she looked at Hugh Chiltern. She did not wish to look, but that which had turned on the light and bade her was stronger than she. She beheld, as it were, the elements of his being, the very sources of the ceaseless, restless energy that was driving him on. And scan as she would, no traces of the vaunted illimitable power that is called love could she discern. Love he possessed; that she had not doubted, and did not doubt, even now. But it had been given her to see that these springs had existed before love had come, and would flow, perchance, after it had departed. Now she understood his anger; it was like the anger of a fiercely rushing river striving to break a dam and invade the lands below with devastating floods. All these months the waters had been mounting. . . .

Turning at length from the consideration of this figure, she asked herself whether, if with her present knowledge she had her choice to make over again, she would have chosen differently. The answer was a startling negative. She loved him. Incomprehensible, unreasonable, and unreasoning sentiment! That she had received a wound, she knew; whether it were mortal, or whether it would heal and leave a scar, she could not say. One salient, awful fact she began gradually to realize, that if she sank back upon the pillows she was lost. Little it would profit her to save her body. She had no choice between her present precarious foothold and the abyss, and wounded as she was she would have to fight. There was no retreat.

She sat up, and presently got to her feet and went to the window and stared through the panes until she distinguished the blue whiteness of the fallen snow on her little balcony. The night, despite the clouds, had a certain luminous quality. Then she drew the curtains, searched for the switch, and flooded the room with a soft glow that beautiful room in which he had so proudly installed her four months before. She smoothed the bed, and walking to the mirror gazed intently at her face, and then she bathed it. Afterwards she opened her window again, admitting a flurry of snow, and stood for some minutes breathing in the sharp air.

Three quarters of an hour later she was dressed and descending the stairs, and as she entered the library dinner was announced. Let us spare Honora the account of that repast or rather a recital of the conversation that accompanied it. What she found to say under the eyes of the servants is of little value, although the fact itself

deserves to be commended as a high accomplishment; and while she talked, she studied the brooding mystery that he presented, and could make nothing of it. His mood was new. It was not sullenness, nor repressed rage; and his answers were brief, but he was not taciturn. It struck her that in spite of a concentration such as she had never in her life bestowed on any other subject, her knowledge of him of the Chiltern she had married was still wofully incomplete, and that in proportion to the lack of perfection of that knowledge her danger was great. Perhaps the Chiltern she had married was as yet in a formative state. Be this as it may, what she saw depicted on his face to−night corresponded to no former experience. They went back to the library. Coffee was brought and carried off, and Honora was standing before the fire. Suddenly he rose from his chair, crossed the room, and before she could draw away seized and crushed her in his arms without a word. She lay there, inert, bewildered as in the grip of an unknown force, until presently she was aware of the beating of his heart, and a glimmering of what he felt came to her. Nor was it an understandable thing, except to the woman who loved him. And yet and yet she feared it even in that instant of glory. . . .

When at last she dared to look up, he kissed away the tears from her cheeks.

"I love you," he said. "You must never doubt it do you understand?"

"Yes, Hugh."

"You must never doubt it," he repeated roughly.

His contrition was a strange thing if it were contrition. And love woman's love is sometimes the counsellor of wisdom. Her sole reproach was to return his kiss.

Presently she chose a book, and he read to her.

CHAPTER XV. THE PILLARS OF SOCIETY

ONE morning, as he gathered up his mail, Chiltern left lying on the breakfast table a printed circular, an appeal from the trustees of the Grenoble Hospital. As Honora read it she remembered that this institution had been the favourite charity of his mother; and that Mrs. Chiltern, at her death, had bequeathed an endowment which at the time had been ample. But Grenoble having grown since then, the deficit for this year was something under two thousand dollars, and in a lower corner was a request that contributions be sent to Mrs. Israel Simpson.

With the circular in her hand, Honora went thoughtfully up the stairs to her sitting−room. The month was February, the day overcast and muggy, and she stood for a while apparently watching the holes made in the snow by the steady drip from the cap of the garden wall. What she really saw was the face of Mrs. Israel Simpson, a face that had haunted her these many months. For Mrs. Simpson had gradually grown, in Honora's mind, to typify the hardness of heart of Grenoble. With Grenoble obdurate, what would become of the larger ambitions of Hugh Chiltern?

Mrs. Simpson was indeed a redoubtable lady, whose virtue shone with a particular high brightness on the Sabbath. Her lamp was brimming with oil against the Judgment day, and she was as one divinely appointed to be the chastener of the unrighteous. So, at least, Honora beheld her. Her attire was rich but not gaudy, and had the air of proclaiming the prosperity of Israel Simpson alone as its unimpeachable source: her nose was long, her lip slightly marked by a masculine and masterful emblem, and her eyes protruded in such a manner as to give the impression of watchfulness on all sides. It was this watchfulness that our heroine grew to regard as a salient characteristic. It never slept − even during Mr. Stopford's sermons. She was aware of it when she entered the church, and she was sure that it escorted her as far as the carriage on her departure. It seemed to oppress the congregation. And Honora had an idea that if it could have been withdrawn, her cruel proscription would have

ended. For at times she thought that she read in the eyes of some of those who made way for her, friendliness and even compassion.

It was but natural, perhaps, in the situation in which our heroine found herself, that she should have lost her sense of proportion to the extent of regarding this lady in the light of a remorseless dragon barring her only path to peace. And those who might have helped her if any there were feared the dragon as much as she. Mrs. Simpson undoubtedly would not have relished this characterization, and she is not to have the opportunity of presenting her side of the case. We are looking at it from Honora's view, and Honora beheld chimeras. The woman changed, for Honora, the very aspect of the house of God; it was she who appeared to preside there, or rather to rule by terror. And Honora, as she glanced at her during the lessons, often wondered if she realized the appalling extent of her cruelty. Was this woman, who begged so audibly to be delivered from pride, vainglory, and hypocrisy, in reality a Christian? Honora hated her, and yet she prayed that God would soften her heart. Was there no way in which she could be propitiated, appeased? For the sake of the thing desired, and which it was given this woman to withhold, she was willing to humble herself in the dust.

Honora laid the hospital circular on the desk beside her account book. She had an ample allowance from Hugh; but lying in a New York bank was what remained of the unexpected legacy she had received from her father, and it was from this that she presently drew a cheque for five hundred dollars, a little sacrifice that warmed her blood as she wrote. Not for the unfortunate in the hospital was she making it, but for him: and that she could do this from the little store that was her very own gave her a thrill of pride. She would never need it again. If he deserted her, it mattered little what became of her. If he deserted her!

She sat gazing out of the window over the snow, and a new question was in her heart. Was it as a husband that he loved her? Did their intercourse have that intangible quality of safety that belonged to married life? And was it not as a mistress rather than a wife that, in their isolation, she watched his moods so jealously? A mistress! Her lips parted, and she repeated the word aloud, for self−torture is human.

Her mind dwelt upon their intercourse. There were the days they spent together, and the evenings, working or reading. Ah, but had the time ever been when, in the depths of her being, she had felt the real security of a wife? When she had not always been dimly conscious of a desire to please him, of a struggle to keep him interested and contented? And there were the days when he rode alone, the nights when he read or wrote alone, when her joy was turned to misery; there were the alternating periods of passion and alienation. Alienation, perhaps, was too strong a word. Nevertheless, at such times, her feeling was one of desolation.

His heart, she knew, was bent upon success at Grenoble, and one of the books which they had recently read together was a masterly treatise, by an Englishman, on the life−work of an American statesman. The vast width of the country, from the Atlantic to the Pacific, was stirred with politics: a better era was coming, the pulse of the nation beating with renewed life; a stronger generation was arising to take the Republic into its own hands. A campaign was in progress in the State, and twice her husband had gone some distance to hear the man who embodied the new ideas, and had come back moody and restless, like a warrior condemned to step aside. Suppose his hopes were blighted what would happen? Would the spirit of reckless adventure seize him again? Would the wilds call him? or the city? She did not dare to think.

It was not until two mornings later that Hugh tossed her across the breakfast table a pink envelope with a wide flap and rough edges. Its sender had taken advantage of the law that permits one−cent stamps for local use.

"Who's your friend, Honora?" he asked.

She tried to look calmly at the envelope that contained her fate.

"It's probably a dressmaker's advertisement," she answered, and went on with the pretence of eating her breakfast.

"Or an invitation to dine with Mrs. Simpson," he suggested, laughingly, as he rose. "It's just the stationery she would choose."

Honora dropped her spoon in her egg−cup. It instantly became evident, however, that his remark was casual and not serious, for he gathered up his mail and departed. Her hand trembled a little as she opened the letter, and for a moment the large gold monogram of its sender danced before her eyes.

"Dear Madam, Permit me to thank you in the name of the Trustees of the Grenoble Hospital for your generous contribution, and believe me, Sincerely yours,

"MARIA W. SIMPSON"

The sheet fluttered to the floor.

When Sunday came, for the first time her courage failed her. She had heard the wind complaining in the night, and the day dawned wild and wet. She got so far as to put on a hat and veil and waterproof coat; Starling had opened the doors, and through the frame of the doorway, on the wet steps, she saw the footman in his long mackintosh, his umbrella raised to escort her to the carriage. Then she halted, irresolute. The impassive old butler stood on the sill, a silent witness, she knew, to the struggle going on within her. It seemed ridiculous indeed to play out the comedy with him, who could have recited the lines. And yet she turned to him.

"Starling, you may send the coachman back to the stable." "Very good, madam."

As she climbed the stairs she saw him gravely closing the doors. She paused on the landing, her sense of relief overborne by a greater sense of defeat. There was still time! She heard the wheels of the carriage on the circle yet she listened to them die away. Starling softly caught the latch, and glanced up. For an instant their looks crossed, and she hurried on with palpitating breast, reached her boudoir, and closed the door. The walls seemed to frown on her, and she remembered that the sitting−room in St. Louis had worn that same look when, as a child, she had feigned illness in order to miss a day at school. With a leaden heart she gazed out on the waste of melting snow, and then tried in vain to read a novel that a review had declared amusing. But a question always came between her and the pages: was this the turning point of that silent but terrible struggle, when she must acknowledge to herself that the world had been too strong for her? After a while her loneliness became unbearable. Chiltern was in the library.

"Home from church?" he inquired.

"I didn't go, Hugh."

He looked up in surprise.

"Why, I thought I saw you start," he said.

"It's such a dreary day, Hugh."

"But that has never prevented you before."

"Don't you think I'm entitled to one holiday?" she asked.

But it was by a supreme effort she kept back the tears. He looked at her attentively, and got up suddenly and put his hands upon her shoulders. She could not meet his eyes, and trembled under his touch.

"Honora," he said, "why don't you tell me the truth?"

"What do you mean, Hugh?"

"I have been wondering how long you'd stand it. I mean that these women, who call themselves Christians, have been brutal to you. They haven't so much as spoken to you in church, and not one of them has been to this house to call. Isn't that so?" "Don't let us judge them yet, Hugh," she begged, a little wildly, feeling again the gathering of another destroying storm in him that might now sweep the last vestige of hope away. And she seized the arguments as they came. "Some of them may be prejudiced, I know. But others others I am sure are kind, and they have had no reason to believe I should like to know them to work among them. I I could not go to see them first, I am glad to wait patiently until some accident brings me near them. And remember, Hugh, the atmosphere in which we both lived before we came here an atmosphere they regard as frivolous and pleasure−loving. People who are accustomed to it are not usually supposed to care to make friends in a village, or to bother their heads about the improvement of a community. Society is not what it was in your mother's day, who knew these people or their mothers, and took an interest in what they were doing. Perhaps they think me haughty." She tried to smile. "I have never had an opportunity to show them that I am not."

She paused, breathless, and saw that he was unconvinced.

"Do you believe that, Honora?" he demanded.

"I I want to believe it. And I am sure, that if it is not true now, it will become so, if we only wait."

He shook his head.

"Never," he said, and dropped his hands and walked over to the fire. She stood where he had left her.

"I understand," she heard him say, "I understand that you sent Mrs. Simpson five hundred dollar's for the hospital. Simpson told me so yesterday, at the bank."

"I had a little money of my own from my father and I was glad to do it, Hugh. That was your mother's charity."

Her self−control was taxed to the utmost by the fact that he was moved. She could not see his face, but his voice betrayed it.

"And Mrs. Simpson?" he asked, after a moment.

"Mrs. Simpson?"

"She thanked you?" "She acknowledged the cheque, as president. I was not giving it to her, but to the hospital."

"Let me see the letter."

"I I have destroyed it."

He brought his hands together forcibly, and swung about and faced her.

"Damn them!" he cried, "from this day I forbid you to have anything to do with them, do you hear. I forbid you! They're a set of confounded, self−righteous hypocrites. Give them time! In all conscience they have had time enough, and opportunity enough to know what our intentions are. How long do they expect us to fawn at their feet for a word of recognition? What have we done that we should be outlawed in this way by the very people who

may thank my family for their prosperity? Where would Israel Simpson be to−day if my father had not set him up in business? Without knowing anything of our lives they pretend to sit in judgment on us. Why? Because you have been divorced, and I married you. I'll make them pay for this!"

"No!" she begged, taking a step towards him. "You don't know what you're saying, Hugh. I implore you not to do anything. Wait a little while! Oh, it is worth trying!" So far the effort carried her, and no farther. Perhaps, at sight of the relentlessness in his eyes, hope left her, and she sank down on a chair and buried her face in her hands, her voice broken by sobs. "It is my fault, and I am justly punished. I have no right to you I was wicked, I was selfish to marry you. I have ruined your life."

He went to her, and lifted her up, but she was like a child whom passionate weeping has carried beyond the reach of words. He could say nothing to console her, plead as he might, assume the blame, and swear eternal fealty. One fearful, supreme fact possessed her, the wreck of Chiltern breaking against the rocks, driven there by her. . . .

That she eventually grew calm again deserves to be set down as a tribute to the organism of the human body. That she was able to breathe, to move, to talk, to go through the pretence of eating, was to her in the nature of a mild surprise. Life went on, but it seemed to Honora in the hours following this scene that it was life only. Of the ability to feel she was utterly bereft. Her calmness must have been appalling: her own indifference to what might happen now, if she could have realized it, even more so. And in the afternoon, wandering about the house, she found herself in the conservatory. It had been built on against the library, and sometimes, on stormy afternoons, she had tea there with Hugh in the red−cushioned chairs beside the trickling fountain, the flowers giving them an illusion of summer.

Under ordinary circumstances the sound of wheels on the gravel would have aroused her, for Hugh scarcely ever drove. And it was not until she glanced through the open doors into the library that she knew that a visitor had come to Highlawns. He stood beside the rack for the magazines and reviews, somewhat nervously fingering a heavy watch charm, his large silk hat bottom upward on the chair behind him. It was Mr. Israel Simpson. She could see him plainly, and she was by no means hidden from him by the leaves, and yet she did not move. He had come to see Hugh, she understood; and she was probably going to stay where she was and listen. It seemed of no use repeating to herself that this conversation would be of vital importance; for the mechanism that formerly had recorded these alarms and spread them, refused to work. She saw Chiltern enter, and she read on his face that he meant to destroy. It was no news to her. She had known it for a long, long time − in fact, ever since she had come to Grenoble. Her curiosity, strangely enough or so it seemed afterwards was centred on Mr. Simpson, as though he were an actor she had been very curious to see.

It was this man, and not her husband, whom she perceived from the first was master of the situation. His geniality was that of the commander of an overwhelming besieging force who could afford to be generous. She seemed to discern the cloudy ranks of the legions behind him, and they encircled the world. He was aware of these legions, and their presence completely annihilated the ancient habit of subserviency with which in former years he had been wont to enter this room and listen to the instructions of that formidable old lion, the General: so much was plain from the orchestra. He went forward with a cheerful, if ponderous bonhomie.

"Ah, Hugh," said he, "I got your message just in time. I was on the point of going over to see old Murdock. Seriously ill you know last time, I'm afraid," and Mr. Simpson shook his head. He held out his hand. Hugh did not appear to notice it.

"Sit down, Mr. Simpson," he said.

Mr. Simpson sat down. Chiltern took a stand before him.

"You asked me the other day whether I would take a certain amount of the stock and bonds of the Grenoble Light and Power Company, in which you are interested, and which is, I believe, to supply the town with electric light, the present source being inadequate."

"So I did," replied Mr. Simpson, urbanely, "and I believe the investment to be a good one. There is no better power in this part of the country than Psalter's Falls."

"I wished to inform you that I do not intend to go into the Light and Power Company," said Chiltern.

"I am sorry to hear it," Mr. Simpson declared. "In my opinion, if you searched the state for a more profitable or safer thing, you could not find it."

"I have no doubt the investment is all that could be desired, Mr. Simpson. I merely wished you to know, as soon as possible, that I did not intend to put my money into it. There are one or two other little matters which you have mentioned during the week. You pointed out that it would be an advantage to Grenoble to revive the county fair, and you asked me to subscribe five thousand dollars to the Fair Association."

This time Mr. Simpson remained silent.

"I have come to the conclusion, to−day, not to subscribe a cent. I also intend to notify the church treasurer that I will not any longer rent a pew, or take any further interest in the affairs of St. John's church. My wife was kind enough, I believe, to send five hundred dollars to the Grenoble hospital. That will be the last subscription from any member of my family. I will resign as a director of the Grenoble Bank to−morrow, and my stock will be put on the market. And finally I wished to tell you that henceforth I do not mean to aid in any way any enterprise in Grenoble."

During this announcement, which had been made with an ominous calmness, Mr. Simpson had gazed steadily at the brass andirons. He cleared his throat.

"My dear Hugh," said he, "what you have said pains me excessively excessively. I ahem fail to grasp it. As an old friend of your family of your father I take the liberty of begging you to reconsider your words."

Chiltern's eyes blazed.

"Since you have mentioned my father, Mr. Simpson," he exclaimed, "I may remind you that his son might reasonably have expected at your hands a different treatment than that you have accorded him. You have asked me to reconsider my decision, but I notice that you have failed to inquire into my reasons for making it. I came back here to Grenoble with every intention of devoting the best efforts of my life in aiding to build up the community, as my father had done. It was natural, perhaps, that I should expect a little tolerance, a little friendliness, a little recognition in return. My wife was prepared to help me. We did not ask much. But you have treated us like outcasts. Neither you nor Mrs. Simpson, from whom in all conscience I looked for consideration and friendship, have as much as spoken to Mrs. Chiltern in church. You have made it clear that, while you are willing to accept our contributions, you cared to have nothing to do with us whatever. If I have overstated the case, please correct me."

Mr. Simpson rose protestingly.

"My dear Hugh," he said. "This is very painful. I beg that you will spare me." "My name is Chiltern," answered Hugh, shortly. "Will you kindly explain, if you can, why the town of Grenoble has ignored us?"

Israel Simpson hesitated a moment. He seemed older when he looked at Chiltern again, and in his face commiseration and indignation were oddly intermingled. His hand sought his watch chain.

"Yes, I will tell you," he replied slowly, "although in all my life no crueller duty has fallen on me. It is because we in Grenoble are old−fashioned in our views of morality, and I thank God we are so. It is because you have married a divorced woman under circumstances that have shocked us. The Church to which I belong, and whose teachings I respect, does not recognize such a marriage. And you have, in my opinion, committed an offence against society. To recognize you by social intercourse would be to condone that offence, to open the door to practices that would lead, in a short time, to the decay of our people."

Israel Simpson turned, and pointed a shaking forefinger at the portrait of General Angus Chiltern.

"And I affirm here, fearlessly before you, that he, your father, would have been the last to recognize such a marriage."

Chiltern took a step forward, and his fingers tightened.

"You will oblige me by leaving my father's name out of this discussion," he said. But Israel Simpson did not recoil.

"If we learn anything by example in this world, Mr. Chiltern," he continued, "and it is my notion that we do, I am indebted to your father for more than my start in life. Through many years of intercourse with him, and contemplation of his character, I have gained more than riches. You have forced me to say this thing. I am sorry if I have pained you. But I should not be true to the principles to which he himself was consistent in life, and which he taught by example so many others, if I ventured to hope that social recognition in Grenoble would be accorded you, or to aid in any way such recognition. As long as I live I will oppose it. There are, apparently, larger places in the world and less humble people who will be glad to receive you. I can only hope, as an old friend and well−wisher of your family, that you may find happiness."

Israel Simpson fumbled for his hat, picked it up, and left the room. For a moment Chiltern stood like a man turned to stone, and then he pressed the button on the wall behind him.

CHAPTER XVI. IN WHICH A MIRROR IS HELD UP

SPRING came to Highlawns, Eden tinted with myriad tender greens. Yellow−greens, like the beech boughs over the old wall, and gentle blue−greens, like the turf; and the waters of the lake were blue and white in imitation of the cloud−flecked sky. It seemed to Honora, as she sat on the garden bench, that the yellow and crimson tulips could not open wide enough their cups to the sun.

In these days she looked at her idol, and for the first time believed it to be within her finite powers to measure him. She began by asking herself if it were really she who had ruined his life, and whether he would ultimately have redeemed himself if he had married a woman whom the world would have recognized. Thus did the first doubt invade her heart. It was of him she was thinking still, and always. But there was the doubt. If he could have stood this supreme test of isolation, of the world's laughter and scorn, although it would have made her own heavy burden of responsibility heavier, yet could she still have rejoiced. That he should crumble was the greatest of her punishments.

Was he crumbling? In these months she could not quite be sure, and she tried to shut her eyes when the little pieces fell off, to remind herself that she must make allowances for the severity of his disappointment. Spring was here, the spring to which he had so eagerly looked forward, and yet the listlessness with which he went about his

work was apparent. Sometimes he did not appear at breakfast, although Honora clung with desperation to the hour they had originally fixed: sometimes Mr. Manning waited for him until nearly ten o'clock, only to receive a curt dismissal. He went off for long rides, alone, and to the despair of the groom brought back the horses in a lather, with drooping heads and heaving sides; one of them he ruined. He declared there wasn't a horse in the stable fit to give him exercise.

Often he sat for hours in his study, brooding, inaccessible. She had the tennis−court rolled and marked, but the contests here were pitifully unequal; for the row of silver cups on his mantel, engraved with many dates, bore witness to his athletic prowess. She wrote for a book on solitaire, but after a while the sight of cards became distasteful. With a secret diligence she read the reviews, and sent for novels and memoirs which she scanned eagerly before they were begun with him. Once, when she went into his study on an errand, she stood for a minute gazing painfully at the cleared space on his desk where once had lain the papers and letters relative to the life of General Angus Chiltern.

There were intervals in which her hope flared, in which she tasted, fearfully and with bated breath, something that she had not thought to know again. It was characteristic of him that his penitence was never spoken: nor did he exhibit penitence. He seemed rather at such times merely to become normally himself, as one who changes personality, apparently oblivious to the moods and deeds of yesterday. And these occasions added perplexity to her troubles. She could not reproach him − which perhaps in any event she would have been too wise to do; but she could not, try as she would, bring herself to the point of a discussion of their situation. The risk, she felt, was too great; now, at least. There were instances that made her hope that the hour might come.

One fragrant morning Honora came down to find him awaiting her, and to perceive lying on her napkin certain distilled drops of the spring sunshine. In language less poetic, diamonds to be worn in the ears. The wheel of fashion, it appeared, had made a complete revolution since the early days of his mother's marriage. She gave a little exclamation, and her hand went to her heart.

"They are Brazilian stones," he explained, with a boyish pleasure that awoke memories and held her speechless. "I believe it's very difficult, if not impossible, to buy them now. My father got them after the war, and I had them remounted." And he pressed them against the pink lobes of her ears. "You look like the Queen of Sheba."

"How do you know?" she asked tremulously. "You never saw her."

"According to competent judges," he replied, "she was the most beautiful woman of her time. Go upstairs and put them on."

She shook her head. An inspiration had come to her.

"Wait," she cried. And that morning, when Hugh had gone out, she sent for Starling and startled him by commanding that the famous Lowestoft set be used at dinner. He stared at her, and the corners of his mouth twitched, and still he stood respectfully in the doorway.

"That is all, Starling."

"I beg pardon, madam. How how many will there be at the table?"

"Just Mr. Chiltern and I," she replied. But she did not look at him.

It was superstition, undoubtedly. She was well aware that Starling had not believed that the set would be used again. An extraordinary order, that might well have sent him away wondering; for the Lowestoft had been reserved for occasions. Ah, but this was to be an occasion; a festival! The whimsical fancy grew in her mind as

the day progressed, and she longed with an unaccustomed impatience for nightfall, and anticipation had a strange taste. Mathilde, with the sympathetic gift of her nation, shared the excitement of her mistress in this fête. The curtains in the pink bedroom were drawn, and on the bed, in all its splendour of lace and roses, was spread out the dinner−gown a chef−d'œuvre of Madame Brarière's as yet unworn. And no vulgar, worldly triumph was it to adorn.

Her heart was beating fast as she descended the stairway, bright spots of colour flaming in her cheeks and the diamonds sparkling in her ears. A prima donna might have guessed her feelings as she paused, a little breathless, on the wide landing under the windows. She heard a footstep. Hugh came out of the library and stood motionless, looking up at her. But even those who have felt the silence and the stir that prefaces the clamorous applause of the thousands could not know the thrill that swept her under his tribute. She came down the last flight of steps, slowly, and stopped in front of him.

"You are wonderful, Honora!" he said, and his voice was not quite under control. He took her hand, that trembled in his, and he seemed to be seeking to express something for which he could find no words. Thus may the King have looked upon Rosamond in her bower; upon a beauty created for the adornment of courts which he had sequestered for his eyes alone.

Honora, as though merely by the touch of his hand in hers, divined his thought.

"If you think me so, dear," she whispered happily, "it's all I ask." And they went in to dinner as to a ceremony. It was indeed a ceremony filled for her with some occult, sacred meaning that she could not put into words. A feast symbolical. Starling was sent to the wine−cellar to bring back a cobwebbed Madeira near a century old, brought out on rare occasions in the family. And Hugh, when his glass was filled, looked at his wife and raised it in silence to his lips.

She never forgot the scene. The red glow of light from the shaded candles on the table, and the corners of the dining room filled with gloom. The old butler, like a high priest, standing behind his master's chair. The long windows, with the curtains drawn in the deep, panelled arches; the carved white mantelpiece; the glint of silver on the sideboard, with its wine−cooler underneath, these spoke of generations of respectability and achievement. Would this absorbed isolation, this marvellous wild love of theirs, be the end of it all? Honora, as one detached, as a ghost in the corner, saw herself in the picture with startling clearness. When she looked up, she met her husband's eyes. Always she met them, and in them a questioning, almost startled look that was new.

"Is it the earrings?" she asked at last.

"I don't know," he answered. "I can't tell. They seem to have changed you, but perhaps they have brought out something in your face and eyes I have never seen before."

"And you like it, Hugh?"

"Yes, I like it," he replied, and added enigmatically, "but I don't understand it."

She was silent, and oddly satisfied, trusting to fate to send more mysteries.

Two days had not passed when that restlessness for which she watched so narrowly revived. He wandered aimlessly about the place, and flared up into such a sudden violent temper at one of the helpers in the fields that the man ran as for his life, and refused to set foot again on any of the Chiltern farms. In the afternoon he sent for Honora to ride with him, and scolded her for keeping him waiting. And he wore a spur, and pressed his horse so savagely that she cried out in remonstrance, although at such times she had grown to fear him.

"Oh, Hugh, how can you be so cruel!"

"The beast has no spirit," he said shortly. "I'll get one that has."

Their road wound through the western side of the estate towards misty rolling country, in the folds of which lay countless lakes, and at length they caught sight of an unpainted farm−house set amidst a white cloud of apple trees in bloom. On the doorstep, whittling, sat a bearded, unkempt farmer with a huge frame. In answer to Hugh's question he admitted that he had a horse for sale, stuck his knife in the step, rose, and went off towards the barn near by; and presently reappeared, leading by a halter a magnificent black. The animal stood jerking his head, blowing and pawing the ground while Chiltern examined him.

"He's been ridden?" he asked.

The man nodded.

Chiltern sprang to the ground and began to undo his saddle girths. A sudden fear seized Honora.

"Oh, Hugh, you're not going to ride him!" she exclaimed.

"Why not? How else am I going to find out anything about him?"

"He looks dangerous," she faltered.

"I'm tired of horses that haven't any life in them," he said, as he lifted off the saddle.

"I guess we'd better get him in the barn," said the farmer.

Honora went behind them to witness the operation, which was not devoid of excitement. The great beast plunged savagely when they tightened the girths, and closed his teeth obstinately against the bit; but the farmer held firmly to his nose and shut off his wind. They led him out from the barn floor.

"Your name Chiltern?" asked the farmer. "Yes," said Hugh, curtly.

"Thought so," said the farmer, and he held the horse's head.

Honora had a feeling of faintness.

"Hugh, do be careful!" she pleaded.

He paid no heed to her. His eyes, she noticed, had a certain feverish glitter of animation, of impatience, such as men of his type must wear when they go into battle. He seized the horse's mane, he put his foot in the stirrup; the astonished animal gave a snort and jerked the bridle from the farmer's hand. But Chiltern was in the saddle, with knees pressed tight.

There ensued a struggle that Honora will never forget. And although she never again saw that farm−house, its details and surroundings come back to her in vivid colours when she closes her eyes. The great horse in every conceivable pose, with veins standing out and knotty muscles twisting in his legs and neck and thighs. Once, when he dashed into the apple trees, she gave a cry; a branch snapped, and Chiltern emerged, still seated, with his hat gone and the blood trickling from a scratch on his forehead. She saw him strike with his spurs, and in a twinkling horse and rider had passed over the dilapidated remains of a fence and were flying down the hard clay road, disappearing into a dip. A reverberating sound, like a single stroke, told them that the bridge at the bottom

had been crossed.

In an agony of terror, Honora followed, her head on fire, her heart pounding faster than the hoof beats. But the animal she rode, though a good one, was no match for the great infuriated beast which she pursued. Presently she came to a wooded corner where the road forked thrice, and beyond, not without difficulty, brought her sweating mare to a stand. The quality of her fear changed from wild terror to cold dread. A hermit thrush, in the wood near by, broke the silence with a song inconceivably sweet. At last she went back to the farm−house, hoping against hope that Hugh might have returned by another road. But he was not there. The farmer was still nonchalantly whittling.

"Oh, how could you let any one get on a horse like that?" she cried.

"You're his wife, ain't you?" he asked.

Something in the man's manner seemed to compel her to answer, in spite of the form of the question.

"I am Mrs. Chiltern," she said.

He was looking at her with an expression that she found incomprehensible. His glance was penetrating, yet here again she seemed to read compassion. He continued to gaze at her, and presently, when he spoke, it was as though he were not addressing her at all.

"You put me in mind of a young girl I used to know," he said; "seems like a long time ago. You're pretty, and you're young, and ye didn't know what you were doin,' I'll warrant. Lost your head. He has a way of gittin' 'em always had."

Honora did not answer. She would have liked to have gone away, but that which was stronger than her held her. "She didn't live here," he explained, waving his hand deprecatingly towards the weather−beaten house. "We lived over near Morrisville in them days. And he don't remember me, your husband don't. I ain't surprised. I've got considerable older."

Honora was trembling from head to foot, and her hands were cold.

"I've got her picture in there, if ye'd like to look at it," he said, after a while.

"Oh, no!" she cried. "Oh, no!"

"Well, I don't know as I blame you." He sat dawn again and began to whittle. "Funny thing, chance," he remarked; "who'd a thought I should have owned that there hoss, and he should have come around here to ride it?"

She tried to speak, but she could not. The hideous imperturbability of the man's hatred sickened her. And her husband! The chips fell in silence until a noise on the road caused them to look up. Chiltern was coming back. She glanced again at the farmer, but his face was equally incapable, or equally unwilling, to express regret. Chiltern rode into the dooryard. The blood from the scratch on his forehead had crossed his temple and run in a jagged line down his cheek, his very hair (as she had sometimes seen it) was damp with perspiration, blacker, kinkier; his eyes hard, reckless, bloodshot. So, in the past, must he have emerged from dozens of such wilful, brutal contests with man and beast. He had beaten the sweat−stained horse (temporarily such was the impression Honora received), but she knew that he would like to have killed it for its opposition.

"Give me my hat, will you?" he cried to the farmer.

To her surprise the man obeyed. Chiltern leaped to the ground.

"What do you want for him?" he demanded.

"I'll take five hundred dollars."

"Bring him over in the morning," said Chiltern, curtly. . . .

They rode homeward in silence. Honora had not been able to raise her voice against the purchase, and she seemed powerless now to warn her husband of the man's enmity. She was thinking, rather, of the horror of the tragedy written on the farmer's face, to which he had given her the key: Hugh Chiltern, to whom she had intrusted her life and granted her all, had done this thing, ruthlessly, even as he had satisfied to−day his unbridled cravings in maltreating a horse! And she thought of that other woman, on whose picture she had refused to look. What was the essential difference between that woman and herself? He had wanted them both, he had taken them both for his pleasure, heedless of the pain he might cause to others and to them. For her, perhaps, the higher organism, had been reserved the higher torture. She did not know. The vision of the girl in the outer darkness reserved for castaways was terrible.

Up to this point she had, as it were, been looking into one mirror. Now another was suddenly raised behind her, and by its aid she beheld not a single, but countless, images of herself endlessly repeated. How many others besides this girl had there been? The question gave her the shudder of the contemplation of eternity. It was not the first time Honora had thought of his past, but until to−day it had lacked reality; until to−day she had clung to the belief that he had been misunderstood; until to−day she had considered those acts of his of the existence of which she was collectively aware under the generic term of wild oats. He had had too much money, and none had known how to control him. Now, through this concrete example of another's experience, she was given to understand that which she had strangely been unable to learn from her own. And she had fancied, in her folly, that she could control him! Unable as yet to grasp the full extent of her calamity, she rode on by his side, until she was aware at last that they had reached the door of the house at Highlawns.

"You look pale," he said as he lifted her off her horse. The demon in him, she perceived, was tired.

"Do I?"

"What's the matter?" "Nothing," she answered.

He laughed.

"It's confoundedly silly to get frightened that way," he declared. "The beast only wants riding."

Three mornings later she was seated in the garden with a frame of fancy work. Sometimes she put it down. The weather was overcast, langourous, and there was a feeling of rain in the air. Chiltern came in through the gate, and looked at her.

"I'm going to New York on the noon train," he said.

"To New York?"

"Yes. Why not?"

"There's no reason why you shouldn't if you wish to," she replied, picking up her frame.

"Anything I can get you?" he asked.

"No, thank you."

"You've been in such a deuced queer mood the last few days I can't make you out, Honora."

"You ought to have learned something about women by this time," she said.

"It seems to me," he announced, "that we need a little livening up."

CHAPTER XVII. THE RENEWAL OF AN ANCIENT HOSPITALITY

THERE were six letters from him, written from a club, representing the seven days of his absence. He made no secret of the fact that his visit to the metropolis was in the nature of a relaxation and a change of scene, but the letters themselves contained surprisingly little information as to how he was employing his holiday. He had encountered many old friends, supposedly all of the male sex: among them most welcome of surprises to him! Mr. George Pembroke, a boon companion at Harvard. And this mention of boon companionship brought up to Honora a sufficiently vivid idea of Mr. Pembroke's characteristics. The extent of her knowledge of this gentleman consisted in the facts that he was a bachelor, a member of a prominent Philadelphia family, and that time hung heavy on his hands.

One morning she received a telegram to the effect that her husband would be home that night, bringing three people with him. He sent his love, but neglected to state the names and sexes of the prospective guests. And she was still in a quandary as to what arrangements to make when Starling appeared in answer to her ring.

"You will send the omnibus to the five o'clock train," she said. "There will be three extra places at dinner, and tea when Mr. Chiltern arrives."

Although she strove to speak indifferently, she was sure from the way the old man looked at her that her voice had not been quite steady. Of late her curious feeling about him had increased in intensity; and many times, during this week she had spent alone, she had thought that his eyes had followed her with sympathy. She did not resent this. Her world having now contracted to that wide house, there was a comfort in knowing that there was one in it to whom she could turn in need. For she felt that she could turn to Starling; he alone, apparently, had measured the full depth of her trouble; nay, had silently predicted it from the beginning. And to−day, as he stood before her, she had an almost irresistible impulse to speak. Just a word a human word would have been such a help to her! And how ridiculous the social law that kept the old man standing there, impassive, respectful, when this existed between them! Her tragedy was his tragedy; not in the same proportion, perhaps; nevertheless, he had the air of one who would die of it.

And she? Would she die? What would become of her? When she thought of the long days and months and years that stretched ahead of her, she felt that her soul would not be able to survive the process of steady degradation to which it was sure to be subjected. For she was a prisoner: the uttermost parts of the earth offered no refuge. To−day, she knew, was to see the formal inauguration of that process. She had known torture, but it had been swift, obliterating, excruciating. And hereafter it was to be slow, one turn at a time of the screws, squeezing by infinitesimal degrees the life out of her soul. And in the end most fearful thought of all in the end, painless. Painless! She buried her head in her arms on the little desk, shaken by sobs. . . .

How she fought that day to compose herself, fought and prayed! Prayed wildly to a God whose help, nevertheless, she felt she had forfeited, who was visiting her with just anger. At half−past four she heard the carriage on the far driveway, going to the station, and she went down and walked across the lawn to the pond, and around it;

anything to keep moving. She hurried back to the house dust in time to reach the hall as the omnibus backed up. And the first person she saw descend, after Hugh, was Mrs. Kame.

"Here we are, Honora," she cried. "I hope you're glad to see us, and that you'll forgive our coming so informally. You must blame Hugh. We've brought Adèle." The second lady was, indeed, none other than Mrs. Eustace Rindge, formerly Mrs. Dicky Farnham. And she is worth even at this belated stage in our chronicle an attempted sketch, or at least an attempted impression. She was fair, and slim as a schoolgirl; not very tall, not exactly petite; at first sight she might have been taken for a particularly immature débutante, and her dress was youthful and rather mannish. Her years, at this period of her career, were in truth but two and twenty, yet she had contrived, in the comparatively brief time since she had reached the supposed age of discretion, to marry two men and build two houses, and incidentally to see a considerable portion of what is known as the world. The suspicion that she was not as innocent as a dove came to one, on closer inspection, as a shock: her eyes were tired, though not from loss of sleep; and her manner how shall it be described to those whose happy lot in life has never been to have made the acquaintance of Mrs. Rindge's humbler sisters who have acquired more coarsely, it is true the same camaraderie? She was one of those for whom, seemingly, sex does not exist. Her air of good−fellowship with men was eloquent of a precise knowledge of what she might expect from them, and she was prepared to do her own policing, not from any deep moral convictions. She belonged, logically, to that world which is disposed to take the law into its own hands, and she was the possessor of five millions of dollars.

"I came along," she said to Honora, as she gave her hand−bag to a footman. "I hope you don't mind. Abby and I were shopping and we ran into Hugh and Georgie yesterday at Sherry's, and we've been together ever since. Not quite that but almost. Hugh begged us to come up, and there didn't seem to be any reason why we shouldn't, so we telephoned down to Banbury for our trunks and maids, and we've played bridge all the way. By the way, Georgie, where's my pocket−book?"

Mr. Pembroke handed it over, and was introduced by Hugh. He looked at Honora, and his glance somehow betokened that he was in the habit of looking only once. He had apparently made up his mind about her before he saw her. But he looked again, evidently finding her at variance with a preconceived idea, and this time she flushed a little under his stare, and she got the impression that Mr. Pembroke was a man from whom few secrets of a certain kind were hid. She felt that he had seized, at a second glance, a situation that she had succeeded in hiding from the women. He was surprised, but cynically so. He was the sort of person who had probably possessed at Harvard the knowledge of the world of a Tammany politician; he had long ago written his book such as it was and closed it: or, rather, he had worked out his system at a precocious age, and it had lasted him ever since. He had decided that undergraduate life, freed from undergraduate restrictions, was a good thing. And he did not, even in these days, object to breaking something valuable occasionally.

His physical attributes are more difficult to describe, so closely were they allied to those which, for want of a better word, must be called mental. He was neither tall nor short, he was well fed, but hard, his shoulders too broad, his head a little large. If he should have happened to bump against one, the result would have been a bruise − not for him. His eyes were blue, his light hair short, and there was a slight baldness beginning; his face was red−tanned. There was not the slightest doubt that he could be effectively rude, and often was; but it was evident, for some reason, that he meant to be gracious (for Mr. Pembroke) to Honora. Perhaps this was the result of the second glance. One of his name had not lacked, indeed, for instructions in gentility. It must not be thought that she was in a condition to care much about what Mr. Pembroke thought or did, and yet she felt instinctively that he had changed his greeting between that first and second glance.

"I hope you'll forgive my coming in this way," he said. "I'm an old friend of Hugh's."

"I'm very glad to have Hugh's friends," she answered.

He looked at her again.

"Is tea ready?" inquired Mrs. Kame. "I'm famished." And, as they walked through the house to the garden, where the table was set beside the stone seat: "I don't see how you ever can leave this place, Honora. I've always wanted to come here, but it's even more beautiful than I thought."

"It's very beautiful," said Honora.

"I'll have a whiskey and soda, if I may," announced Mrs. Rindge. "Open one, Georgie."

"The third to−day," said Mr. Pembroke, sententiously, as he obeyed.

"I don't care. I don't see what business it is of yours."

"Except to open them," he replied.

"You'd have made a fortune as a barkeeper," she observed, dispassionately, as she watched the process.

"He's made fortunes for a good many," said Chiltern.

"Not without some expert assistance I could mention," Mr. Pembroke retorted.

At this somewhat pointed reference to his ancient habits, Chiltern laughed.

"You've each had three to−day yourselves," said Mrs. Rindge, in whose bosom Mr. Pembroke's remark evidently rankled, "without counting those you had before you left the club."

Afterwards Mrs. Kame expressed a desire to walk about a little, a proposal received with disfavour by all but Honora, who as hostess responded.

"I feel perfectly delightful," declared Mrs. Rindge. "What's the use of moving about?" And she sank back in the cushions of her chair. This observation was greeted with unrestrained merriment by Mr. Pembroke and Hugh. Honora, sick at heart, led Mrs. Kame across the garden and through the gate in the wall. It was a perfect evening of early June, the great lawn a vivid green in the slanting light. All day the cheerful music of the horse−mowers had been heard, and the air was fragrant with the odour of grass freshly out. The long shadows of the maples and beeches

stretched towards the placid surface of the lake, dimpled here and there by a fish's swirl: the spiræas were laden as with freshly fallen snow, a lone Judas−tree was decked in pink. The steep pastures beyond the water were touched with gold, while to the northward, on the distant hills, tender blue lights gathered lovingly around the copses. Mrs. Kame sighed.

"What a terrible thing it is," she said, "that we are never satisfied! It's the men who ruin all this for us, I believe, and prevent our enjoying it. Look at Adèle."

Honora had indeed looked at her.

"I found out the other day what is the matter with her. She's madly in love with Dicky."

"With with her former husband?"

"Yes, with poor little innocent Dicky Farnham, who's probably still congratulating himself, like a canary bird that's got out of a cage. Somehow Dicky's always reminded me of a canary; perhaps it's his name. Isn't it odd that

she should be in love with him?"

"I think," replied Honora, slowly, "that it's a tragedy."

"It is a tragedy," Mrs. Kame hastily agreed. "To me, this case is one of the most incomprehensible aspects of the tender passion. Adèle's idea of existence is a steeple−chase with nothing but water−jumps, Dicky's to loiter around in a gypsy van, and sit in the sun. During his brief matrimonial experience with her, he nearly died for want of breath or rather the life was nearly shaken out of him. And yet she wants Dicky again. She'd run away with him to−morrow if he should come within hailing distance of her."

"And her husband?" asked Honora.

"Eustace? Did you ever see him? That accounts for your question. He only left France long enough to come over here and make love to her, and he swears he'll never leave it again. If she divorces him, he'll have to have alimony."

At last Honora was able to gain her own room, but even seclusion, though preferable to the companionship of her guests, was almost intolerable. The tragedy of Mrs. Rindge had served if such a thing could be to enhance her own; a sudden spectacle of a woman in a more advanced stage of desperation. Would she, Honora, ever become like that? Up to the present she felt that suffering had refined her, and a great love had burned away all that was false. But now now that her god had turned to clay, what would happen? Desperation seemed possible, notwithstanding the awfulness of the example. No, she would never come to that! And she repeated it over and over to herself as she dressed, as though to strengthen her will.

During her conversation with Mrs. Kame she had more than once suspected, in spite of her efforts, that the lady had read her state of mind. For Mrs. Kame's omissions were eloquent to the discerning: Chiltern's relatives had been mentioned with a casualness intended to imply that no breach existed, and the fiction that Honora could at any moment take up her former life delicately sustained. Mrs. Kame had adaptably chosen the attitude, after a glance around her, that Honora preferred Highlawns to the world: a choice of which she let it be known that she approved, while deploring that a frivolous character put such a life out of the question for herself. She made her point without over−emphasis. On the other hand, Honora had read Mrs. Kame. No very careful perusal was needed to convince her that the lady was unmoral, and that in characteristics she resembled the chameleon. But she read deeper. She perceived that Mrs. Kame was convinced that she, Honora, would adjust herself to the new conditions after a struggle; and that while she had a certain sympathy in the struggle, Mrs. Kame was of opinion that the sooner it was over with the better. All women were born to be disillusionized. Such was the key, at any rate, to the lady's conduct that evening at dinner, when she capped the anecdotes of Mr. Pembroke and Mrs. Rindge and even of Chiltern with others not less risquée but more fastidiously and ingeniously suggestive. The reader may be spared their recital.

Since the meeting in the restaurant the day before, which had resulted in Hugh's happy inspiration that the festival begun should be continued indefinitely at Highlawns, a kind of freemasonry had sprung up between the four. Honora found herself, mercifully, outside the circle: for such was the lively character of the banter that a considerable adroitness was necessary to obtain, between the talk and laughter, the ear of the company. And so full were they of the reminiscences which had been crowded into the thirty hours or so they had spent together, that her comparative silence remained unnoticed. To cite an example, Mr. Pembroke was continually being addressed as the Third Vice−president, an allusion that Mrs. Rindge eventually explained.

"You ought to have been with us coming up on the train," she cried to Honora; "I thought surely we'd be put off. We were playing bridge in the little room at the end of the car when the conductor came for our tickets. Georgie had 'em in his pocket, but he told the man to go away, that he was the third vice−president of the road, and we were his friends. The conductor asked him if he were Mr. Wheeler, or some such name, and Georgie said he was

surprised he didn't know him. Well, the man stood there in the door, and Georgie picked up his hand and made it hearts or was it diamonds, Georgie?"

"Spades," said that gentleman, promptly.

"At any rate," Mrs. Rindge continued, "we all began to play, although we were ready to blow up with laughter, and after a while Georgie looked around and said, 'What, are you there yet?' My dear, you ought to have seen the conductor's face! He said it was his duty to establish Georgie's identity, or something like that, and Georgie told him to get off at the next station and buy Waring's Magazine was that it, Georgie?"

"How the deuce should I know?"

"Well, some such magazine. Georgie said he'd find an article in it on the Railroad Kings and Princes of America, and that his picture, Georgie's, was among the very first!" At this juncture in her narrative Mrs. Rindge shrieked with laughter, in which she was joined by Mrs. Kame and Hugh; and she pointed a forefinger across the table at Mr. Pembroke, who went on solemnly eating his dinner.

"Georgie gave him ten cents with which to buy the magazine," she added a little hysterically. "Well, there was a frightful row, and a lot of men came down to that end of the car, and we had to shut the door. The conductor said the most outrageous things, and Georgie pretended to be very indignant, too, and gave him the tickets under protest. He told Georgie he ought to be in an asylum for the criminally insane, and Georgie advised him to get a photograph album of the high officials of the railroad. The conductor said Georgie's picture was probably in the rogue's gallery. And we lost two packs of cards out of the window."

Such had been the more innocent if eccentric diversions with which they had whiled away the time. When dinner was ended, a renewal of the bridge game was proposed, for it had transpired at the dinner−table that Mrs. Rindge and Hugh had been partners all day, as a result of which there was a considerable balance in their favour. This balance Mr. Pembroke was palpably anxious to wipe out, or at least to reduce. But Mrs. Kame insisted that Honora should cut in, and the others supported her.

"We tried our best to get a man for you," said Mrs. Rindge to Honora. "Didn't we, Abby? But in the little time we had, it was impossible. The only man we saw was Ned Carrington, and Hugh said he didn't think you'd want him."

"Hugh showed a rare perception," said Honora.

Be it recorded that she smiled. One course had been clear to her from the first, although she found it infinitely difficult to follow; she was determined, cost what it might, to carry through her part of the affair with dignity, but without stiffness. This is not the place to dwell upon the tax to her strength.

"Come on, Honora," said Hugh, "cut in." His tone was of what may be termed a rough good nature. She had not seen him alone since his return, but he had seemed distinctly desirous that she should enjoy the festivities he had provided. And not to yield would have been to betray herself.

The game, with its intervals of hilarity, was inaugurated in the library, and by midnight it showed no signs of abating. At this hour the original four occupied the table for the second time, and endurance has its limits. The atmosphere of Liberty Hall that prevailed made Honora's retirement easier.

"I'm sure you won't mind if I go to bed," she said. "I've been so used to the routine of of the chickens." She smiled. "And I've spent the day in the open air."

"Certainly, my dear," said Mrs. Kame; "I know exactly how one feels in the country. I'm sure it's dreadfully late. We'll have one more rubber, and then stop."

"Oh, don't stop," replied Honora; "please play as long as you like."

They didn't stop at least after one more rubber. Honora, as she lay in the darkness, looking through the open square of her window at the silver stars, heard their voices and their laughter floating up at intervals from below, and the little clock on her mantel had struck the hour of three when the scraping of chairs announced the breaking up of the party. And even after that an unconscionable period elapsed, beguiled, undoubtedly, by anecdotes; spells of silence when she thought they had gone ending in more laughter. Finally there was a crash of breaking glass, a climax of uproarious mirth, and all was still. . . .

She could not have slept much, but the birds were singing when she finally awoke, the sunlight pouring into her window. And the hands of her clock pointed to half−past seven when she rang her bell. It was a relief to breakfast alone, or at least to sip her coffee in solitude. And the dew was still on the grass as she crossed the wide lawn and made her way around the lake to the path that entered the woods at its farther end. She was not tired, yet she would have liked to have lain down under the green panoply of the forest, where the wild flowers shyly raised sweet faces to be kissed, and lose herself in the forgetfulness of an eternal sleep; never to go back again to an Eden contaminated. But when she lingered the melody of a thrush pierced her through and through. At last she turned and reluctantly retraced her steps, as one whose hour of reprieve has expired.

If Mrs. Rindge had a girlish air when fully arrayed for the day, she looked younger and more angular still in that article of attire known as a dressing−gown. And her eyes, Honora remarked, were peculiarly bright: glittering, perhaps, would better express the impression they gave; as though one got a glimpse through them of an inward consuming fire. Her laughter rang shrill and clear as Honora entered the hall by the rear door, and the big clock proclaimed that the hour was half−past eleven. Hugh and Mr. Pembroke were standing at the foot of the stairs, gazing upward. And Honora, following their glances, beheld the two ladies, in the negligée referred to above, with their elbows on the railing of the upper hall and their faces between their hands, engaged in a lively exchange of compliments with the gentlemen. Mrs. Kame looked sleepy.

"Such a night!" she said, suppressing a yawn. "My dear, you did well to go to bed."

"And to cap it all," cried Mrs. Rindge, "Georgie fell over backwards in one of those beautiful Adam chairs, and there's literally nothing left of it. If an ocean steamer had hit it, or a freight train, it couldn't have been more thoroughly demolished."

"You pushed me," declared Mr. Pembroke.

"Did I, Hugh? I barely touched him."

"You knocked him into a cocked hat," said Hugh. "And if you'd been in that kimono, you could have done it even easier."

"Georgie broke the whole whiskey service, or whatever it is," Mrs. Rindge went on, addressing Honora again. "He fell into it."

"He's all right this morning," observed Mrs. Kame, critically. "I think I'll take to swallowing swords and glass and things in public. I can do it so well," said Mr. Pembroke.

"I hope you got what you like for breakfast," said Honora to the ladies.

"Hurry up and come down, Adèle," said Hugh, "if you want to look over the horses before lunch."

"It's Georgie's fault," replied Mrs. Rindge; "he's been standing in the door of my sitting−room for a whole half hour talking nonsense."

A little later they all set out for the stables. These buildings at Highlawns, framed by great trees, were old−fashioned and picturesque, surrounding three sides of a court, with a yellow brick wall on the fourth. The roof of the main building was capped by a lantern, the home of countless pigeons. Mrs. Rindge was in a habit, and one by one the saddle horses were led out, chiefly for her inspection; and she seemed to Honora to become another woman as she looked them over with a critical eye and discussed them with Hugh and O'Grady, the stud−groom, and talked about pedigrees and strains. For she was renowned in this department of sport on many fields, both for recklessness and skill.

"Where did you get that brute, Hugh?" she asked presently.

Honora, who had been talking to Pembroke, looked around with a start. And at the sight of the great black horse, bought on that unforgettable day, she turned suddenly faint.

"Over here in the country about ten miles," Chiltern was saying. "I heard of him, but I didn't expect anything until I went to look at him last week."

"What do you call him?" asked Mrs. Rindge.

"I haven't named him."

"I'll give you a name."

Chiltern looked at her. "What is it?" he said.

"Oblivion," she replied.

"By George, Adèle," he exclaimed, "you have a way of hitting it off!"

"Will you let me ride him this afternoon?" she asked. "I'm a a candidate for oblivion." She laughed a little and her eyes shone feverishly.

"No you don't," he said. "I'm giving you the grey. He's got enough in him for any woman even for you. And besides, I don't think the black ever felt a side saddle, or any other kind, until last week."

"I've got another habit," she said eagerly. "I'd rather ride him astride. I'll match you to see who has him."

Chiltern laughed.

"No you don't," he repeated. "I'll ride him to−day, and consider it to−morrow."

"I I think I'll go back to the house," said Honora to Pembroke. "It's rather hot herein the sun."

"I'm not very keen about sunshine, either," he declared.

At lunch she was unable to talk; to sustain, at least, a conversation. That word oblivion, which Mrs. Rindge had so aptly applied to the horse, was constantly on her lips, and it would not have surprised her if she had spoken it. She

felt as though a heavy weight lay on her breast, and to relieve its intolerable pressure drew in her breath deeply. She was wild with fear. The details of the great room fixed themselves indelibly in her brain; the subdued light, the polished table laden with silver and glass, the roses, and the purple hot−house grapes. All this seemed in some way to be an ironic prelude to disaster. Hugh, pausing in his badinage with Mrs. Rindge, looked at her.

"Cheer up, Honora," he said.

"I'm afraid this first house−party is too much for her," said Mrs. Kame.

Honora made some protest that seemed to satisfy them, tried to rally herself, and succeeded sufficiently to pass muster. After lunch they repaired again to the bridge table, and at four Hugh went upstairs to change into his riding clothes. Five minutes longer she controlled herself, and then made some paltry excuse, indifferent now as to what they said or thought, and followed him. She knocked at his dressing−room door and entered. He was drawing on his boots. "Hello, Honora," he said. Honora turned to his man, and dismissed him.

"I wish to speak to Mr. Chiltern alone."

Chiltern paused in his tugging at the straps, and looked up at her.

"What's the matter with you to−day, Honora?" he asked. "You looked like the chief mourner at a funeral all through lunch."

He was a little on edge, that she knew. He gave another tug at the boot, and while she was still hesitating, he began again.

"I ought to apologize, I know, for bringing these people up without notice, but I didn't suppose you'd object when you understood how naturally it all came about. I thought a little livening up, as I said, wouldn't hurt us. We've had a quiet winter, to put it mildly." He laughed a little. "I didn't have a chance to see you until this morning, and when I went to your room they told me you'd gone out."

"Hugh," she said, laying her hand on his shoulder. "It isn't the guests. If you want people, and they amuse you, I'm I'm glad to have them. And if I've seemed to be cold to them, I'm sorry. I tried my best I mean I did not intend to be cold. I'll sit up all night with them, if you like. And I didn't come to reproach you, Hugh. I'll never do that I've got no right to."

She passed her hand over her eyes. If she had any wrongs, if she had suffered any pain, the fear that obsessed her obliterated all. In spite of her disillusionment, in spite of her newly acquired ability to see him as he was, enough love remained to scatter, when summoned, her pride to the winds.

Having got on both boots, he stood up.

"What's the trouble, then?" he asked. And he took an instant's hold of her chin a habit he had and smiled at her.

He little knew how sublime, in its unconscious effrontery, his question was! She tried to compose herself, that she might be able to present comprehensively to his finite masculine mind the ache of to−day.

"Hugh, it's that black horse." She could not bring herself to pronounce the name Mrs. Rindge had christened him.

"What about him?" he said, putting on his waistcoat.

"Don't ride him!" she pleaded. "I I'm afraid of him I've been afraid of him ever since that day. . . . It may be a foolish feeling, I know. Sometimes the feelings that hurt women most are foolish. If I tell you that if you ride him you will torture me, I'm sure you'll grant what I ask. It's such a little thing and it means so much so much agony to me. I'd do anything for you give up anything in the world at your slightest wish. Don't ride him!"

"This is a ridiculous fancy of yours, Honora. The horse is all right. I've ridden dozens of worse ones."

"Oh, I'm sure he isn't," she cried; "call it fancy, call it instinct, call it anything you like but I feel it, Hugh. That woman Mrs. Rindge knows something about horses, and she said he was a brute."

"Yes," he interrupted, with a short laugh, "and she wants to ride him."

"Hugh, she's reckless. I I've been watching her since she came here, and I'm sure she's reckless with with a purpose."

"You're morbid," he said. "She's one of the best sportswomen in the country that's the reason she wanted to ride the horse. Look here, Honora, I'd accede to any reasonable request. But what do you expect me to do?" he demanded; "go down and say I'm afraid to ride him? or that my wife doesn't want me to? I'd never hear the end of it. And the first thing Adèle would do would be to jump on him herself a little wisp of a woman that looks as if she couldn't hold a Shetland pony! Can't you see that what you ask is impossible?"

He started for the door to terminate a conversation which had already begun to irritate him. For his anger, in these days, was very near the surface. She made one more desperate appeal.

"Hugh the man who sold him he knew the horse was dangerous. I'm sure he did, from something he said to me while you were gone."

"These country people are all idiots and cowards," declared Chiltern. "I've known 'em a good while, and they haven't got the spirit of mongrel dogs. I was a fool to think that I could do anything for them. They're kind and neighbourly, aren't they?" he exclaimed. "If that old rascal flattered himself he deceived me, he was mistaken. He'd have been mightily pleased if the beast had broken my neck."

"Hugh −!"

"I can't, Honora. That's all there is to it, I can't. Now don't cut up about nothing. I'm sorry, but I've got to go. Adèle's waiting."

He came back, kissed her hurriedly, turned and opened the door. She followed him into the hallway, knowing that she had failed, knowing that she never could have succeeded. There she halted and watched him go down the stairs, and stood with her hands tightly pressed together: voices reached her, a hurrah from George Pembroke, and the pounding of hoofs on the driveway. It had seemed such a little thing to ask!

But she did not dwell upon this, now, when fear was gnawing her: how she had humbled her pride for days and weeks and months for him, and how he had refused her paltry request lest he should be laughed at. Her reflections then were not on his waning love. She was filled with the terror of losing him of losing all that remained to her in the world. Presently she began to walk slowly towards the stairs, descended them, and looked around her. The hall, at least, had not changed. She listened, and a bee hummed in through the open doorway. A sudden longing for companionship possessed her no matter whose; and she walked hurriedly, as though she were followed, through the empty rooms until she came upon George Pembroke stretched at full length on the leather−covered lounge in the library. He opened his eyes, and got up with alacrity.

"Please don't move," she said.

He looked at her. Although his was not what may be called a sympathetic temperament, he was not without a certain knowledge of women; superficial, perhaps. But most men of his type have seen them in despair; and since he was not related to this particular despair, what finer feelings he had were the more easily aroused. It must have been clear to her then that she had lost the power to dissemble, all the clearer because of Mr. Pembroke's cheerfulness.

"I wasn't going to sleep," he assured her. "Circumstantial evidence is against me, I know. Where's Abby? reading French literature?"

"I haven't seen her," replied Honora.

"She usually goes to bed with a play at this hour. It's a horrid habit going to bed, I mean. Don't you think? Would you mind showing me about a little?"

"Do you really wish to?" asked Honora, incredulously.

"I haven't been here since my senior year," said Mr. Pembroke. "If the old General were alive, he could probably tell you something of that visit he wrote to my father about it. I always liked the place, although the General was something of a drawback. Fine old man, with no memory."

"I should have thought him to have had a good memory," she said.

"I have always been led to believe that he was once sent away from college in his youth, for his health," he explained significantly. "No man has a good memory who can't remember that. Perhaps the battle of Gettysburg wiped it out."

Thus, in his own easy−going fashion, Mr. Pembroke sought to distract her. She put on a hat, and they walked about, the various scenes recalling incidents of holidays he had spent at Highlawns. And after a while Honora was thankful that chance had sent her in this hour to him rather than to Mrs. Kame. For the sight, that morning, of this lady in her dressing−gown over the stairway, had seemingly set the seal on a growing distaste. Her feeling had not been the same about Mrs. Rindge: Mrs. Kame's actions savoured of deliberate choice, of an inherent and calculating wickedness.

Had the distraction of others besides himself been the chief business of Mr. Pembroke's life, he could not have succeeded better that afternoon. He must be given this credit: his motives remain problematical; at length he even drew laughter from her. The afternoon wore on, they returned to the garden for tea, and a peaceful stillness continued to reign about them, the very sky smiling placidly at her fears. Not by assuring her that Hugh was an unusual horseman, that he had passed through many dangers beside which this was a bagatelle, could the student of the feminine by her side have done half so well. And it may have been that his success encouraged him as he saw emerging, as the result of his handiwork, an unexpectedly attractive if still somewhat serious woman from the gloom that had enveloped her. That she should still have her distrait moments was but natural.

He talked to her largely about Hugh, of whom he appeared sincerely fond. The qualities which attracted Mr. Pembroke in his own sex were somewhat peculiar, and seemingly consisted largely in a readiness to drop the business at hand, whatever it might be, at the suggestion of a friend to do something else; the "something else," of course, to be the conception of an ingenious mind. And it was while he was in the midst of an anecdote proving the existence of this quality in his friend that he felt a sudden clutch on his arm. They listened. Faintly, very faintly, could be heard the sound of hoof beats; rapid, though distant.

"Do you hear?" she whispered, and still held his arm.

"It's just like them to race back," said Pembroke, with admirable nonchalance.

"But they wouldn't come back at this time it's too early. Hugh always takes long rides. They started for Hubbard's it's twelve miles."

"Adèle changes her mind every minute of the day," he said.

"Listen!" she cried, and her clutch tightened. The hoof beats grew louder. "It's only one it's only one horse!"

Before he could answer, she was already halfway up the garden path towards the house. He followed her as she ran panting through the breakfast room, the dining room, and drawing−room, and when they reached the hall, Starling, the butler, and two footmen were going out at the door. A voice Mrs. Kame's cried out, "What is it?" over the stairs, but they paid no heed. As they reached the steps they beheld the slight figure of Mrs. Rindge on a flying horse coming towards them up the driveway. Her black straw hat had slipped to the back of her neck, her hair was awry, her childish face white as paper. Honora put her hand to her heart. There was no need to tell her the news she had known these many hours.

Mrs. Rindge's horse came over the round grass−plot of the circle and planted his fore feet in the turf as she pulled him up. She lurched forward. It was Starling who lifted her off George Pembroke stood by Honora.

"My God, Adèle," he exclaimed, "why don't you speak?"

She was staring at Honora.

"I can't!" she cried. "I can't tell you it's too terrible! The horse −" she seemed to choke.

It was Honora who went up to her with a calmness that awed them.

"Tell me," she said, "is he dead?"

Mrs. Rindge nodded, and broke into hysterical sobbing.

"And I wanted to ride him myself," she sobbed, as they led her up the steps.

In less than an hour they brought him home and laid him in the room in which he had slept from boyhood, and shut the door. Honora looked into his face. It was calm at last, and his body strangely at rest. The passions which had tortured it and driven it hither and thither through a wayward life had fled: the power gone that would brook no guiding hand, that had known no master. It was not until then that she fell upon him, weeping. . . .

CHAPTER XVIII. IN WHICH MR. ERWIN SEES PARIS

AS she glanced around the sitting−room of her apartment in Paris one September morning she found it difficult, in some respects, to realize that she had lived in it for more than five years. After Chiltern's death she had sought a refuge, and she had found it here: a refuge in which she meant if her intention maybe so definitely stated to pass the remainder of her days.

As a refuge it had become dear to her. When first she had entered it she had looked about her numbly, thankful for walls and roof, thankful for its remoteness from the haunts of the prying: as a shipwrecked castaway regards,

at the first light, the cave into which he has stumbled into the darkness gratefully. And gradually, castaway that she felt herself to be, she had adorned it lovingly, as one above whose horizon the sails of hope were not to rise; filled it with friends not chosen in a day, whose faithful ministrations were not to cease. Her books, but only those worthy to be bound and read again; the pictures she had bought when she had grown to know what pictures were; the music she had come to love for its eternal qualities these were her companions.

The apartment was in the old quarter across the Seine, and she had found it by chance. The ancient family of which this hotel had once been the home would scarce have recognized, if they had returned the part of it Honora occupied. The room in which she mostly lived was above the corner of the quiet street, and might have been more aptly called a sitting−room than a salon. Its panels were the most delicate of blue−gray, fantastically designed and outlined by ribbings of blue. Some of them contained her pictures. The chairs, the sofas, the little tabourets, were upholstered in yellow, their wood matching the panels. Above the carved mantel of yellowing marble was a quaintly shaped mirror extending to the high ceiling, and flanked on either side by sconces. The carpet was a golden brown, the hangings in the tall windows yellow. And in the morning the sun came in, not boisterously, but as a well−bred and cheerful guest. An amiable proprietor had permitted her also to add a wrought−iron balcony as an adjunct to this room, and sometimes she sat there on the warmer days reading under the seclusion of an awning, or gazing at the mysterious façades of the houses opposite, or at infrequent cabs or pedestrians below.

An archway led out of the sitting−room into a smaller room, once the boudoir of a marquise, now Honora's library. This was in blue and gold, and she had so far modified the design of the decorator as to replace the mirrors of the cases with glass; she liked to see her books. Beyond the library was a dining room in grey, with dark red hangings; it overlooked the forgotten garden of the hotel.

One item alone of news from the outer world, vital to her, had drifted to her retreat. Newspapers filled her with dread, but it was from a newspaper, during the first year of her retirement, that she had learned of the death of Howard Spence. A complication of maladies was mentioned, but the true underlying cause was implied in the article, and this had shocked but not surprised her. A ferment was in progress in her own country, the affairs of the Orange Trust Company being investigated, and its president under indictment at the hour of his demise. Her feelings at the time, and for months after, were complex. She had been moved to deep pity, for in spite of what he had told her of his business transactions, it was impossible for her to think of him as a criminal. That he had been the tool of others, she knew, but it remained a question in her mind how clearly he had perceived the immorality of his course, and of theirs. He had not been given to casuistry, and he had been brought up in a school the motto of which he had once succinctly stated: the survival of the fittest. He had not been, alas, one of those to survive.

Honora had found it impossible to unravel the tangled skein of their relationship, and to assign a definite amount of blame to each. She did not shirk hers, and was willing to accept a full measure. That she had done wrong in marrying him, and again in leaving him to marry another man, she acknowledged freely. Wrong as she knew this to have been, severely though she had been punished for it, she could not bring herself to an adequate penitence. She tried to remember him as he had been at Silverdale, and in the first months of their marriage, and not as he had afterwards become. There was no question in her mind, now that it was given her to see things more clearly, that she might have tried harder, much harder, to make their marriage a success. He might, indeed, have done more to protect and cherish her. It was a man's part to guard a woman against the evils with which she had been surrounded. On the other hand, she could not escape the fact, nor did she attempt to escape it, that she had had the more light of the two: and that, though the task were formidable, she might have fought to retain that light and infuse him with it.

That she did not hold herself guiltless is the important point. Many of her hours were spent in retrospection. She was, in a sense, as one dead, yet retaining her faculties; and these became infinitely keen now that she was deprived of the power to use them as guides through life. She felt that the power had come too late, like a legacy when one is old. And she contemplated the Honora of other days of the flesh, as though she were now the spirit departed from that body; sorrowfully, poignantly regretful of the earthly motives, of the tarnished ideals by which

it had been animated and led to destruction.

Even Hugh Chiltern had left her no illusions. She thought of him at times with much tenderness; whether she still loved him or not she could not say. She came to the conclusion that all capacity for intense feeling had been burned out of her. And she found that she could permit her mind to rest upon no period of her sojourn at Grenoble without a sense of horror; there had been no hour when she had seemed secure from haunting terror, no day that had not added its mite to the gathering evidence of an ultimate retribution. And it was like a nightmare to summon again this spectacle of the man going to pieces under her eyes. The whole incident in her life as time wore on assumed an aspect bizarre, incredible, as the follies of a night of madness appear in the saner light of morning. Her great love had bereft her of her senses, for had the least grain of sanity remained to her she might have known that the thing they attempted was impossible of accomplishment.

Her feeling now, after four years, might be described as relief. To employ again the figure of the castaway, she often wondered why she of all others had been rescued from the tortures of slow drowning and thrown up on an island. What had she done above the others to deserve preservation? It was inevitable that she should on occasions picture to herself the years with him that would have stretched ahead, even as the vision of them had come to her that morning when, in obedience to his telegram, she had told Starling to prepare for guests. Her escape had indeed been miraculous!

Although they had passed through a ceremony, the conviction had never taken root in her that she had been married to Chiltern. The tie that had united her to him had not been sacred, though it had been no less binding; more so, in fact. That tie would have become a shackle. Her perception of this, after his death, had led her to instruct her attorney to send back to his relatives all but a small income from his estate, enough for her to live on during her lifetime. There had been some trouble about this matter; Mrs. Grainger, in particular, had surprised her in making objections, and had finally written a letter which Honora received with a feeling akin to gratitude. Whether her own action had softened this lady's feelings, she never understood; she had cherished the letter for its unexpectedly charitable expressions. Chiltern's family had at last agreed to accept the estate on the condition that the income mentioned should be tripled. And to this Honora had consented. Money had less value than ever in her eyes.

She lived here in Paris in what may be called a certain peace, made no demands upon the world, and had no expectations from it. She was now in half mourning, and intended to remain so. Her isolation was of her own choice, if a stronger expression be not used. She was by no means an enforced outcast. And she was even aware that a certain sympathy for her had grown up amongst her former friends which had spread to the colony of her compatriots in Paris; in whose numbers there were some, by no means unrecognized, who had defied the conventions more than she. Hugh Chiltern's reputation, and the general knowledge of his career, had no doubt aided to increase this sympathy, but the dignity of her conduct since his death was at the foundation of it. Sometimes, on her walks and drives, she saw people bowing to her, and recognized friends or acquaintances of what seemed to her like a former existence.

Such had been her life in Paris until a certain day in early September, a month before this chapter opens. It was afternoon, and she was sitting in the balcony cutting a volume of memoirs when she heard the rattle of a cab on the cobbles below, and peered curiously over the edge of the railing. Although still half a block away, the national characteristics of the passenger were sufficiently apparent. He was an American of that she was sure. And many Americans did not stray into that quarter. The length of his legs, for one thing, betrayed him: he found the seat of the fiacre too low, and had crossed one knee over the other. Other and less easily definable attributes he did not lack. And as he leaned against the faded blue cushions regarding with interest the buildings be passed, he seemed, like an ambassador, to convert the cab in which he rode into United States territory. Then she saw that it was Peter Erwin.

She drew back her head from the balcony rail, and tried to sit still and to think, but she was trembling as one stricken with a chill. The cab stopped; and presently, after an interval, his card was handed her. She rose, and stood for a moment with her hand against the wall before she went into the salon. None of the questions she had asked herself were answered. Was she glad to see him? and what would be his attitude towards her? When she beheld him standing before her she had strength only to pronounce his name.

He came forward quickly and took her hand and looked down into her face. She regarded him tremulously, instinctively guessing the vital importance of this moment for him; and she knew then that he had been looking forward to it in mingled hope and dread, as one who gazes seaward after a night of tempest for the ship he has seen at dusk in the offing. What had the tempest done to her? Such was his question. And her heart leaped as she saw the light growing in his eyes, for it meant much to her that he should see that she was not utterly dismantled. She felt his own hand tremble as he relinquished hers. He was greatly moved; his voice, too, betrayed it.

"You see I have found you," he said.

"Yes," she answered; "− why did you come?"

"Why have I always come to you, when it was possible?" he asked.

"No one ever had such a friend, Peter. Of that I am sure."

"I wanted to see Paris," he said, "before I grew too decrepit to enjoy it."

She smiled, and turned away.

"Have you seen much of it?"

"Enough to wish to see more."

"When did you arrive?"

"Some time in the night," he said, "from Cherbourg. And I'm staying at a very grand hotel, which might be anywhere. A man I crossed with on the steamer took me there. I think I'd move to one of the quieter ones, the French ones, if I were a little surer of my pronunciation and the subjunctive mood." "You don't mean to say you've been studying French!"

He coloured a little, and laughed.

"You think it ridiculous at my time of life? I suppose you're right. You should have seen me trying to understand the cabmen. The way these people talk reminds me more of a Gatling gun than anything I can think of. It certainly isn't human."

"Perhaps you have come over as ambassador," she suggested. "When I saw you in the cab, even before I recognized you, I thought of a bit of our soil broken off and drifted over here."

Her voice did not quite sustain the lighter note the emotion his visit was causing her was too great. He brought with him into her retreat not so much a flood of memories as of sensations. He was a man whose image time with difficulty obliterates, whose presence was a shining thing: so she had grown to value it in proportion as she had had less of it. She did inevitably recall the last time she had seen him, in the little Western city, and how he had overwhelmed her, invaded her with doubts and aroused the spirit which had possessed her to fight fiercely for its foothold. And to−day his coming might be likened to the entrance of a great physician into the room of a distant

and lonely patient whom amidst wide ministrations he has not forgotten. She saw now that he had been right. She had always seen it, clearly indeed when he had been beside her, but the spirit within her had been too strong, until now. Now, when it had plundered her soul of treasures once so little valued it had fled. Such were her thoughts.

The great of heart undoubtedly possess this highest quality of the physician, if the statement may thus be put backhandedly, and Peter Erwin instinctively understood the essential of what was going on within her. He appeared to take a delight in the fancy she had suggested, that he had brought a portion of the newer world to France.

"Not a piece of the Atlantic coast, certainly," he replied. "One of the muddy islands, perhaps, of the Mississippi."
"All the more representative," she said. "You seem to have taken possession of Paris, Peter not Paris of you. You have annexed the seat of the Capets, and brought democracy at last into the Faubourg."

"Without a Reign of Terror," he added quizzically.

"If you are not ambassador, what are you?" she asked. "I have expected at any moment to read in the Figaro that you were President of the United States."

"I am the American tourist," he declared, "with Baedeker for my Bible, who desires to be shown everything. And I have already discovered that the legend of the fabulous wealth of the Indies is still in force here. There are many who are willing to believe that in spite of my modest appearance maybe because of it I have sailed over in a galleon filled with gold. Already I have been approached from every side by confidential gentlemen who announced that they spoke English one of them said 'American' who have offered to show me many things, and who have betrayed enough interest in me to inquire whether I were married or single."

Honora laughed. They were seated in the balcony by this time, and he had the volume of memoirs on his knee, fingering it idly.

"What did you say to them?" she asked.

"I told them I was the proud father of ten children," he replied. "That seemed to stagger them, but only for a moment. They offered to take us all to the Louvre."

"Peter, you are ridiculous! But, in spite of your nationality, you don't look exactly gullible."

"That is a relief," he said. "I had begun to think I ought to leave my address and my watch with the Consul General. . . ."

Of such a nature was the first insidious rupture of that routine she had grown to look upon as changeless for the years to come, of the life she had chosen for its very immutable quality. Even its pangs of loneliness had acquired a certain sweet taste. Partly from a fear of a world that had hurt her, partly from fear of herself, she had made her burrow deep, that heat and cold, the changing seasons, and love and hate might be things far removed. She had sought to remove comparisons, too, from the limits of her vision; to cherish and keep alive, indeed, such regrets as she had, but to make no new ones.

Often had she thought of Peter Erwin, and it is not too much to say that he had insensibly grown into an ideal. He had come to represent to her the great thing she had missed in life, missed by feverish searching in the wrong places, digging for gold where the ground had glittered. And, if the choice had been given her, she would have preferred his spiritual to his bodily companionship for a while, at least. Some day, when she should feel sure that desire had ceased to throb, when she should have acquired an unshakable and absolute resignation, she would see

him. It is not too much to say, if her feeling be not misconstrued and stretched far beyond her own conception of it, that he was her one remaining interest in the world. She had scanned the letters of her aunt and uncle for knowledge of his doings, and had felt her curiosity justified by a certain proprietorship that she did not define. Faith in humankind, or the lack of it, usually makes itself felt through one's comparative contemporaries. That her uncle was a good man, for instance, had no such effect upon Honora as the fact that Peter was a good man. And that he had held a true course had gradually become a very vital thing to her, perhaps the most vital thing; and she could have imagined no greater personal calamity now than to have seen him inconsistent. For there are such men, and most people have known them. They are the men who, unconsciously, keep life sweet.

Yet she was sorry he had invaded her hiding−place. She had not yet achieved peace, and much of the weary task would have to be done over after he was gone.

In the meantime she drifted with astounding ease into another existence. For it was she, and not the confidential gentlemen, who showed Peter Paris: not the careless, pleasure−loving Paris of the restaurants, but of the Cluny and the Carnavalet. The Louvre even was not neglected, and as they entered it first she recalled with still unaccustomed laughter his reply to the proffered services of the guide. Indeed, there was much laughter in their excursions: his native humour sprang from the same well that held his seriousness. She was amazed at his ability to strip a sham and leave it grotesquely naked; shams the risible aspect of which she had never observed in spite of the familiarity four years had given her. Some of his own countrymen and countrywomen afforded him the greatest amusement in their efforts to carry off acquired European "personalities," combinations of assumed indifference and effrontery, and an accent the like of which was never heard before. But he was neither bitter nor crude in his criticisms. He made her laugh, but he never made her ashamed. His chief faculty seemed to be to give her the power to behold, with astonishing clearness, objects and truths which had lain before her eyes, and yet hidden. And she had not thought to acquire any more truths.

The depth of his pleasure in the things he saw was likewise a revelation to her. She was by no means a bad guide to the Louvre and the Luxembourg, but the light in her which had come slowly flooded him with radiance at the sight of a statue or a picture. He would stop with an exclamation and stand gazing, self−forgetful, for incredible periods, and she would watch him, filled with a curious sense of the limitations of an appreciation she had thought complete. Where during his busy life had he got this thing which others had sought in many voyages in vain?

Other excursions they made, and sometimes these absorbed a day. It was a wonderful month, that Parisian September, which Honora, when she allowed herself to think, felt that she had no right to. A month filled to the brim with colour: the stone façades of the houses, which in certain lights were what the French so aptly call bleuâtre; the dense green foliage of the horse−chestnut trees, the fantastic iron grills, the Arc de Triomphe in the centre of its circle at sunset, the wide shaded avenues radiating from it, the bewildering Champs Elyseés, the blue waters of the Seine and the graceful bridges spanning it, Notre Dame against the sky. Their walks took them, too, into quainter, forgotten regions where history was grim and half−effaced, and they speculated on the France of other days.

They went farther afield, and it was given them to walk together down green vistas cut for kings, to linger on terraces with the river far below them, and the roofs of Paris in the hazy distance; that Paris, sullen so long, the mutterings of which the kings who had sat there must have heard with dread; that Paris which had finally risen in its wrath and taken the pleasure−houses and the parks for itself.

Once they went out to Chantilly, the cameo−like château that stands mirrored in its waters, and wandered through the alleys there. Honora had left her parasol on the parapet, and as they returned Peter went to get it, while she awaited him at a little distance. A group was chatting gayly on the lawn, and one of them, a middle−aged, well−dressed man hailed him with an air of fellowship, and Peter stopped for a moment's talk.

"We were speaking of ambassadors the other day," he said when he joined her; "that was our own, Minturn."

"We were speaking of them nearly a month ago," she said.

"A month ago! I can't believe it!" he exclaimed.

"What did he say to you?" Honora inquired presently.

"He was abusing me for not letting him know I was in Paris."

"Peter, you ought to have let him know!"

"I didn't come over here to see the ambassador," answered Peter, gayly.

She talked less than usual on their drive homeward, but he did not seem to notice the fact. Dusk was already lurking in the courtyards and byways of the quiet quarter when the porter let them in, and the stone stairway of the old hotel was almost in darkness. The sitting−room, with its yellow hangings snugly drawn and its pervading but soft light, was a grateful change. And while she was gone to remove her veil and hat, Peter looked around it. It was redolent of her. A high vase of remarkable beauty, filled with white roses, stood on the guéridon. He went forward and touched it, and closed his eyes as though in pain. When he opened them he saw her standing in the archway.

She had taken off her coat, and was in a simple white muslin gown, with a black belt a costume that had become habitual. Her age was thirty. The tragedy and the gravity of her life during these later years had touched her with something that before was lacking. In the street, in the galleries, people had turned to look at her; not with impudent stares. She caught attention, aroused imagination. Once, the year before, she had had a strange experience with a well−known painter, who, in an impulsive note, had admitted following her home and bribing the concierge. He craved a few sittings. Her expression now, as she looked at Peter, was graver than usual.

"You must not come to−morrow," she said.

"I thought we were going to Versailles again," he replied in surprise. "I have made the arrangements."

I have changed my mind. I'm not going."

"You want to postpone it?" he asked.

She took a chair beside the little blaze in the fireplace.

"Sit down, Peter. I wish to say something to you. I have been wishing to do so for some time."

"Do you object if I stand a moment?" he said. "I feel so much more comfortable standing, especially when I am going to be scolded."

"Yes," she admitted, "I am going to scold you. Your conscience has warned you."

"On the contrary," he declared, "it has never been quieter. If I have offended, it is through ignorance."

"It is through charity, as usual," she said in a low voice. "If your conscience be quiet, mine is not. It is in myself that I am disappointed I have been very selfish. I have usurped you. I have known it all along, and I have done very wrong in not relinquishing you before."

"Who would have shown me Paris?" he exclaimed.

"No," she continued, "you would not have been alone. If I had needed proof of that fact, I had it to−day −" "Oh, Minturn," he interrupted; "think of me hanging about an Embassy and trying not to spill tea!" And he smiled at the image that presented.

Her own smile was fleeting.

"You would never do that, I know," she said gravely. "You are still too modest, Peter, but the time has gone by when I can be easily deceived. You have a great reputation among men of affairs, an unique one. In spite of the fact that you are distinctly American, you have a wide interest in what is going on in the world. And you have an opportunity here to meet people of note, people really worth while from every point of view. You have no right to neglect it."

He was silent a moment, looking down at her. She was leaning forward, her eyes fixed on the fire, her hands clasped between her knees.

"Do you think I care for that?" he asked.

"You ought to care," she said, without looking up. "And it is my duty to try to make you care."

"Honora, why do you think I came over here?" he said.

"To see Paris," she answered. "I have your own word for it. To to continue your education. It never seems to stop."

"Did you really believe that?"

"Of course I believed it. What could be more natural? And you have never had a holiday like this."

"No," he agreed. "I admit that."

"I don't know how much longer you are going to stay," she said. "You have not been abroad before, and there are other places you ought to go."

"I'll get you to make out an itinerary."

"Peter, can't you see that I'm serious? I have decided to take matters in my own hands. The rest of the time you are here, you may come to see me twice a week. I shall instruct the concierge."

He turned and grasped the mantel shelf with both hands, and touched the log with the toe of his boot.

"What I told you about seeing Paris may be called polite fiction," he said. "I came over here to see you. I 521

HE TURNED SLOWLY AND LOOKED AT THE SHADOWS IN HER FACE

522 have been afraid to say it until to−day, and I am afraid to say it now."

She sat very still. The log flared up again, and he turned slowly and looked at the shadows in her face.

"You you have always been good to me," she answered. "I have never deserved it I have never understood it. If it is any satisfaction for you to know that what I have saved of myself I owe to you, I tell you so freely."

"That," he said, "is something for which God forbid that I should take credit. What you are is due to the development of a germ within you, a development in which I have always had faith. I came here to see you, I came here because I love you, because I have always loved you, Honora."

"Oh, no, not that!" she cried; "not that!"

"Why not?" he asked. "It is something I cannot help, something beyond my power to prevent if I would. But I would not. I am proud of it, and I should be lost without it. I have had it always. I have come over to beg you to marry me."

"It's impossible! Can't you see it's impossible?"

"You don't love me?" he said. Into those few words was thrown all the suffering of his silent years.

"I don't know what I feel for you," she answered in an agonized voice, her fingers tightening over the backs of her white hands. "If reverence be love if trust be love, infinite and absolute trust if gratitude be love if emptiness after you are gone be a sign of it yes, I love you. If the power to see clearly only through you, to interpret myself only by your aid be love, I acknowledge it. I tell you so freely, as of your right to know. And the germ of which you spoke is you. You have grown until you have taken possession of of what is left of me. If I had only been able to see clearly from the first, Peter, I should be another woman to−day, a whole woman, a wise woman. Oh, I have thought of it much. The secret of life was there at my side from the time I was able to pronounce your name, and I couldn't see it. You had it. You stayed. You took duty where you found it, and it has made you great. Oh, I don't mean to speak in a worldly sense. When I say that, it is to express the highest human quality of which I can think and feel. But I can't marry you. You must see it."

"I cannot see it," he replied, when he had somewhat gained control of himself.

"Because I should be wronging you."

"How?" he asked.

"In the first place, I should be ruining your career."

"If I had a career," he said, smiling gently, "you couldn't ruin it. You both overestimate and underestimate the world's opinion, Honora. As my wife, it will not treat you cruelly. And as for my career, as you call it, it has merely consisted in doing as best I could the work that has come to me. I have tried to serve well those who have employed me, and if my services be of value to them, and to those who may need me in the future, they are not going to reject me. If I have any worth in the world, you will but add to it. Without you I am incomplete."

She looked up at him wonderingly.

Yes, you are great," she said. "You pity me, you think of my loneliness."

"It is true I cannot bear to picture you here," he exclaimed. "The thought tortures me, but it is because I love you, because I wish to take and shield you. I am not a man to marry a woman without love. It seems to me that you should know me well enough to believe that, Honora. There never has been any other woman in my life, and there never can be. I have given you proof of it, God knows."

"I am not what I was," she said, " I am not what I was. I have been dragged down."

He bent and lifted her hand from her knee, and raised it to his lips, a homage from him that gave her an exquisite pain.

"If you had been dragged down," he answered simply, "my love would have been killed. I know something of the horrors you have been through, as though I had suffered them myself. They might have dragged down another woman, Honora. But they have strangely ennobled you."

She drew her hand away.

"No," she said, "I do not deserve happiness. It cannot be my destiny."

"Destiny," he repeated. "Destiny is a thing not understandable by finite minds. It is not necessarily continued tragedy and waste, of that I am certain. Only a little thought is required, it seems to me, to assure us that we cannot be the judges of our own punishment on this earth. And of another world we know nothing. It cannot be any one's destiny to throw away a life while still something may be made of it. You would be throwing your life away here. That no other woman is possible, or ever can be possible, for me should be a consideration with you, Honora. What I ask of you is a sacrifice will you make me happy?"

Her eyes filled with tears.

"Oh, Peter, do you care so much as that? If if I could be sure that I were doing it for you! If in spite of of all that has happened to me, I could be doing something for you −!"

He stooped and kissed her.

"You can if you will," he said.