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by Gouverneur Morris

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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE SPREAD EAGLE AND OTHER STORIES ***

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THE
SPREAD EAGLE

AND OTHER STORIES

BY

GOUVERNEUR MORRIS

AUTHOR OF "THE FOOTPRINT, AND OTHER STORIES," ETC.

1910

TO ELSIE, PATSIE, AND KATE

_I had thought to sit in the ruler's chair,
But three pretty girls are sitting there--
Elsie, Patsie, and Kate.
I had thought to lord it with eyes of gray,
I had thought to be master, and have_ my _way;
But six blue eyes vote_: nay, nay, nay!
_Elsie, Patsie, and Kate.

Of Petticoats three I am sore afraid,
(Though Kate's is more like a candle-shade),
Elsie, Patsie, and Kate.
And I must confess (with shame) to you
That time there was when Petticoats two
Were enough to govern me through and through,
Elsie, Patsie, and Kate.

Oh Patsie, third of a bullying crew,
And Elsie, and Kate, be it known to you--
To Elsie, Patsie, and Kate,
That Elsie_ alone _was strong enough
To smother a motion, or call a bluff,
Or any small pitiful atom thereof--
Elsie, Patsie, and Kate.

So, though I've renounced that ruler's part
To which I was born (as is writ in my heart),
Elsie, Patsie, and Kate,
Though I do what I'm told (yes, you_ know _I do)
And am made to write stories (and sell them, too).
Still--I wish to God I had more like you,
Elsie, Patsie, and Kate_.

BAR HARBOR, _August_, 1910.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

Certain persons have told me (for nothing) that "White Muscats of Alexandria" resembles a tale in the Arabian Nights. And so it does. Most damningly. And this is printed in the hope of saving other persons postage.

CONTENTS

_The Spread Eagle
Targets
The Boot
The Despoiler
One More Martyr
"Ma'am?"
Mr. Holiday
White Muscats of Alexandria
Without a Lawyer
The "Monitor" and the "Merrimac"
The McTavish
The Parrot
On the Spot; or, The Idler's House-Party_

THE SPREAD EAGLE

In his extreme youth the adulation of all with whom he came in contact was not a cross to Fitzhugh Williams. It was the fear of expatriation that darkened his soul. From the age of five to the age of fourteen he was dragged about Europe by the hair of his head. I use his own subsequent expression. His father wanted him to be a good American; his mother wanted him to be a polite American, And to be polite, in her mind, was to be at home in French and German, to speak English (or American) with the accent of no particular locality, to know famous pictures when you saw them, and, if little, to be bosom friends with little dukes and duchesses and counts of the Empire, to play in the gravel gardens of St. Germain, to know French history, and to have for exercise the mild English variations of American games--cricket instead of base-ball; instead of football, Rugby, or, in winter, lugeing above Montreux. To luge upon a sled you sit like a timid, sheltered girl, and hold the ropes in your hand as if you were playing horse, and descend inclines; whereas, as Fitzhugh Williams well knew, in America rich boys and poor take their hills head first, lying upon the democratic turn.

It wasn't always Switzerland in winter. Now and again it was Nice or Cannes. And there you were taught by a canny Scot to hit a golf ball cunningly from a pinch of sand. But you blushed with shame the while, for in America at that time golf had not yet become a manly game, the maker young of men as good as dead, the talk of cabinets But there was

lawn tennis also, which you might play without losing caste "at home," Fitzhugh Williams never used that term but with the one meaning. He would say, for instance, to the little Duchess of Popinjay--or one just as good--having kissed her to make up for having pushed her into her ancestral pond, "Now I am going to the house," meaning Perth House, that Mrs. Williams had taken for the season. But if he had said, "Now I am going home," the little Duchess would have known that he was going to sail away in a great ship to a strange, topsy-turvy land known in her set as "the States," a kind of deep well from which people hoist gold in buckets, surrounded by Indians. Home did not mean even his father's house. Let Fitzhugh Williams but catch sight of the long, white shore of Long Island, or the Brooklyn Bridge, or the amazing Liberty, and the word fluttered up from his heart even if he spoke it not. Ay, let him but see the Fire Island light-ship alone upon the deep, and up leaped the word, or the sensation, which was the same thing.

One Fourth of July they were in Paris (you go to Paris for tea-gowns to wear grouse-shooting in Scotland), and when his valet, scraping and bowing, informed Fitzhugh Williams, aged nine, that it was time to get up, and tub, and go forth in a white sailor suit, and be of the world worldly, Fitzhugh declined. A greater personage was summoned--Aloys, "the maid of madame," a ravishing creature--to whom you and I, good Americans though we are, could have refused nothing. But Fitzhugh would not come out of his feather-bed. And when madame herself came, looking like a princess even at that early hour, he only pulled the bedclothes a little higher with an air of finality.

"Are you sick, Fitzhugh?"

"No, mamma."

"Why won't you get up?"

His mother at least was entitled to an explanation.

"I won't get up," said he, "because I'm an American."

"But, my dear, it's the glorious Fourth. All good Americans are up."

"All good Americans," said Fitzhugh, "are at home letting off fire-crackers."

"Still," said his mother, "I think I'd get up if I were you. It's lovely out. Not hot."

"I won't get up," said Fitzhugh, "because it's the Fourth, because I'm an American, and because I have nothing but English clothes to put on."

His mother, who was the best sort in the world, though obstinate about bringing-up, and much the prettiest woman, sat down on the bed and laughed till the tears came to her eyes. Fitzhugh laughed, too. His mind being made up, it was pleasanter to laugh than to sulk.

"But," said his mother, "what's the difference? Your pajamas are English, too."

Fitzhugh's beautiful brown eyes sparkled with mischief.

"What!" exclaimed his mother. "You wretched boy, do you mean to tell me that you haven't your pajamas on?"

Fitzhugh giggled, having worsted his mother in argument, and pushed down the bedclothes a few inches, disclosing the neck and shoulders of that satiny American suit in which he had been born.

Mrs. Williams surrendered at once.

"My dear," she exclaimed, "if you feel so strongly about it I will send your man out at once to buy you some French things. They were our allies, you know."

"Thank you, mamma," said Fitz, "and if you'll give me the pad and pencil on the table I'll write to granny."

Thus compromise was met with compromise, as is right. Fitz wrote a very short letter to granny, and drew a very long picture of crossing the Delaware, with Nathan Hale being hanged from a gallows on the bank; and Mrs. Williams sent Benton for clothes, and wrote out a cable to her husband, a daily cable being the one thing that he who loved others to have a good time was wont to exact "Dear Jim," ran the cable, at I forget what the rates were then per word, "I wish you were here. It's bright and beautiful; not too hot. Fitz would not get up and put on English clothes, being too patriotic. You will run over soon if you can, won't you, if only for a minute," etc., etc.

I know one thing of which the reader has not as yet got an inkling, The Williamses were rich. They were rich, passing knowledge, passing belief. Sums of which you and I dream in moments of supreme excitement would not have paid one of Mrs. Williams's cable bills; would not have supported Granny Williams's hot-houses and Angora cat farm through a late spring frost. James Williams and his father before him were as magnets where money was concerned. And it is a fact of family history that once James, returning from a walk in the mud, found a dime sticking to the heel of his right boot.

Fitzhugh was the heir of all this, and that was why it was necessary for him to be superior in other ways as well. But Europeanize him as she would, he remained the son of his fathers. French history was drummed in through his ears by learned tutors, and could be made for the next few days to come out of his mouth. But he absorbed American history through the back of his head, even when there was none about to be absorbed, and that came out often, I am afraid, when people didn't especially want it to. Neither could any amount of aristocratic training and association turn the blood in his veins blue. If one had taken the trouble to look at a specimen of it under a microscope I believe one would have discovered a resemblance between the corpuscles thereof and

the eagles that are the tails of coins; and the color of it was red--bright red. And this was proven, that time when little Lord Percy Pumps ran at Fitz, head down like a Barbadoes nigger, and butted him in the nose. The Honorable Fifi Grey, about whom the quarrel arose, was witness to the color of that which flowed from the aforementioned nose; and witness also to the fact that during the ensuing cataclysm no blood whatever, neither blue nor red, came from Lord Percy Pumps--nothing but howls. But, alas! we may not now call upon the Honorable Fifi Grey for testimony. She is no longer the Honorable Fifi. Quite the reverse. I had her pointed out to me last summer (she is Lady Khorset now), and my informant wriggled with pleasure and said, "Now, there _is_ somebody."

"You mean that slim hedge-fence in lavender?" I asked.

"By jove, yes!" said he. "That's Lady Khorset, the wickedest woman in London, with the possible exception of Lady Virginia Pure--the Bicyclyste, you know."

I did know. Had I not that very morning seen in a Piccadilly window a photograph of almost all of her?

Fortunately for Fitzhugh Williams's health and sanity, little children are pretty much the same all the world over, dwelling in the noble democracy of mumps, measles, and whooping-cough. Little newsboys, tiny grandees, infinitesimal sons of coachmen, picayune archdukes, honorableines, marquissettes, they are all pretty much alike under their skins. And so are their sisters. Naturally your free-born American child despises a nation that does not fight with its fists. But he changes his mind when some lusty French child of his own size has given him a good beating in fair fight. And the English games have their beauties (I dare say), and we do know that they can fight--or can make the Irish and the Scots fight for them, which is just as good. And it isn't race and blue blood that keeps little Lady Clara Vere de Vere's stockings from coming down. It's garters. And _they_ don't always do it. Point the finger of scorn at little Archibald Jamison Purdue Fitzwilliams Updyke Wrennfeather, who will be Duke of Chepstow one day; for only last night his lordship's noble mother rubbed his hollow chest with goose grease and tied a red flannel round his neck, and this morning his gerfalcon nose is running, as the British would have run at Waterloo had not "would-to-God-Blücher-would-come" come up.

Peace, little bootblack; others bite their nails. See yonder night garment laid out for the heir of a kingdom. It is of Canton flannel, a plain, homely thing, in one piece, buttoning ignominiously down the back, and having no apertures for the august hands and feet to come through. In vain the little king-to-be may mumble the Canton flannel with his mouth. He cannot bite his royal nails; and, hush! in the next crib a princess asleep. Why that cruel, tight cap down over her ears? It's because she _will_ double them forward and lie on them, so that if something isn't done about it they will stick straight out.

So Fitzhugh Williams was brought up among and by children, fashionable children, if you like. Snobs, many of them, but children all the same.

Some good, some bad, some rough, some gentle, some loving and faithful with whom he is friends to this day, some loving and not faithful. The dangers that he ran were not from the foreign children with whom he played, fought, loved, and dreamed dreams; but from foreign customs, foreign ways of doing things, foreign comfort, foreign take-the-world-easiness, and all. For they do live well abroad; they do have amusing things to do. They eat well, drink well, smoke well, are better waited on than we are and have more time. So Fitzhugh was in danger of these things which have hurt the Americanism of more than one American to the death, but he ran the dangerous gauntlet and came out at the other end unscathed--into the open.

He could rattle off French and German like a native; he could imitate an Englishman's intonation to perfection; and yet he came to manhood with his own honest Ohio accent untouched. And where had he learned it? Not in Ohio, surely. He had been about as much in Ohio as I have in the moon. It was in his red blood, I suppose, to speak as the men of his family spoke--less so, for his vocabulary was bigger, but plainly, straightly, honestly, and with some regard for the way in which words are spelled. So speak the men who are the backbone of liberty, each with the honest accent that he is born to. Don't you suppose that Washington himself held forth in the molten, golden tones of Virginia? Do you think Adams said bought and caught? He said bot and cot. Did Lincoln use the broad A at Gettysburg? I think that in the words he there spoke the A's were narrow as heaven's gate. I think some of them struck against the base of his nose before they came out to strengthen the hearts of men, to rejoice God, and to thunder forever down the ages.

It is, of course, more elegant to speak as we New Yorkers do. Everybody knows that. And I should advise all men to cultivate the accent and intonation--all men who are at leisure to perfect themselves. But honesty compels me to state that there has never been a truly great American who spoke any speech but his own--except that superlatively great Philadelphian, Benjamin Franklin--of Boston. He didn't talk Philadelphianese. And you may cotton to that!

II

We must go back to the Fourth of July. When Benton returned with the French clothes Fitzhugh Williams rose from his downy couch and bathed in cold water. He was even an eager bather in France, rejoicing in the feeling of superiority and stoicism which accompanied the pang and pain of it. But in England, where everybody bathed--or at any rate had water in their rooms and splashed and said ah! ah! and oh! oh!--he regarded the morning bath as commonplace, and had often to be bribed into it.

He now had Benton in to rub his back dry, and to hand him his clothes in sequence; it being his mother's notion that to be truly polite a man must be helpless in these matters and dependent. And when he had on his undershirt and his outer shirt and his stockings, he sat down to his

breakfast of chocolate and rolls and Rillet de Tours, which the butler had just brought; and afterward brushed his teeth, finished dressing, and ordered Benton to call a fiacre. But finding his mother's victoria at the door he dismissed the hack, and talked stable matters with Cunningham, the coachman, and Fontenoy, the tiger, until his mother came--one of these lovely, trailing visions that are rare even in Paris, though common enough, I dare say, in paradise.

They drove first of all to Gaston Renette's gallery, where Fitz celebrated the glorious Fourth with a real duelling pistol and real bullets, aiming at a life-size sheet-iron man, who, like a correct, courteous, and courageous opponent, never moved. And all the way to the gallery and all the way back there was here and there an American flag, as is customary in Paris on the Fourth. And to these Fitz, standing up in the victoria, dipped and waved his hat. While he was shooting, his mother took a "little turn" and then came back to fetch him; a stout man in a blue blouse accompanying him to the curb, tossing his hands heavenward, rolling up his eyes, and explaining to madame what a "genius at the shoot was the little mister," and had averaged upon the "mister of iron" one "fatal blow" in every five. Madame "invited" the stout man to a five-franc piece for himself and she smiled, and he smiled, and bowed off backward directly into a passing pedestrian, who cried out upon the "sacred name of a rooster." And everybody laughed, including Cunningham, whose face from much shaving looked as if a laugh must crack it; and so the glorious Fourth was begun.

But the next event upon the programme was less provocative of pure joy in the heart of Fitz.

"You don't remember the Burtons, do you, Fitz?" asked his mother.

"No," said he.

"Well," she said, "Mrs. Burton was a school-mate of mine, Elizabeth Proctor, and I've just learned that she is at the d'Orient with her daughter. The father died, you know--"

"I know _now_" interrupted Fitz with a grin.

He liked to correct his mother's English habit of "you-knowing" people who didn't know.

"And I really think I must call and try to do something for them."

"The d'Orient," said Fitz, "is where they have the elevator that you work yourself. Billy Molineux and I got caught in it between the third and fourth floors."

"Well," said his mother, "would you mind very much if we drove to the d'Orient now and called on the Burtons?"

Fitz said that he would mind _very_ much, but as he made no more reasonable objection Mrs. Williams gave the order to Cunningham, and not

long after they stopped before the d'Orient in the Rue Daunou, and Fontenoy flashed in with Mrs. and Master Williams's cards, and came out after an interval and stationed himself stiffly near the step of the victoria. This meant that Mrs. Burton was at home, as we say, or, "at herself," as the French have it. If he had leaped nimbly to his seat beside Cunningham on the box it would have meant that Mrs. Burton was not "at herself."

So once more Mrs. Williams became a lovely, trailing figure out of the seventh heaven, and Fitz, stoical but bored, followed her into the court-yard of the hotel. Here were little iron tables and chairs, four symmetrical flower-beds containing white gravel, four palm-trees in tubs, their leaves much speckled with coal smuts; a French family at breakfast (the stout father had unbuttoned his white waistcoat); and in a corner by herself an American child sitting upon one of the puff-seated iron chairs, one leg under her, one leg, long, thin, and black, swinging free, and across her lap a copy of a fashion paper.

On perceiving Mrs. Williams the child at once came forward, and dropped the most charming little courtesy imaginable.

"How do you do?" she said. "Poor, dear mamma isn't a bit well. But I said that she would see you, Mrs. Williams. She said yesterday that she wanted so much to see you."

In the event Mrs. Williams went up three flights in the elevator that you worked yourself; only on this occasion the proprietor, hastily slipping into his frock-coat and high hat (you could see him at it through the office window), worked it for her. And Fitz remained with the gloomy prospect of being entertained by little Miss Burton.

She was younger than Fitz by two years and older by ten--a serene, knowing, beautiful child. When Fitz proposed that they sit in the victoria, as softer than the iron chairs, she called him a funny boy, but she assented. And as they went she tossed aside her fashion paper, remarking, "_You_ wouldn't care for that."

When they had settled down into the soft, leather cushions of the victoria she sighed luxuriously and said:

"This is nice! I wish--" and broke off short.

"What?" asked Fitz.

"Oh," she said, "that the horses would start, and take us all over Paris and back, and everybody would see us go by, and envy us. But mamma and I," she said, "are devoted to fiacres--not smart, are they?"

"I don't mind," said Fitz, "if they go where I tell 'em to, and don't set up a row over the pourboire."

"Still," said she, "it must be nice to have carriages and things. We used to have. Only I can hardly remember. Mamma says I have a dreadfully

short memory."

"How long have you been abroad?" Fitz asked.

"Dear me," she said, "ever so long. I don't remember."

"Won't it be fun," said Fitz, "to go home?"

"America?" She hesitated. "Mamma says it's all so crude and rude. I forget."

"Don't you remember America!" exclaimed Fitz, much horrified.

"Not clearly," she admitted.

"I guess you never saw Cleveland, Ohio, then," said Fitz, "'n' Euclid Avenue, 'n' Wade Park, 'n' the cannons in the square, 'n' the breakwater, 'n' never eat Silverthorn's potatoes at Rocky River, 'n' never went to a picnic at Tinker's Creek, 'n' never saw Little Mountain 'n' the viaduct."

"You are quite right," said little Miss Burton, "I never did."

"When I grow up," said Fitz in a glow of enthusiasm, "I'm going to live in America 'n' have a tower on my house with a flagpole, 'n' a cannon to let off every sunset and sunrise."

"I shouldn't like that," said she, "if I were sleeping in the house at the time."

"I shouldn't be sleeping," said Fitz; "I'd be up early every morning to let the cannon off."

"I remember Newport a little," she said. "I'd live there if I were you. Newport is very smart for America, mamma says. We're going to Newport when I grow up. I'm sure it will be nicer if you are there."

Fitz thought this very likely, but was too modest to say so.

"If I ever go to Newport," he said, "it will be as captain of a cup defender."

"I heard your mother call you Fitz," said little Miss Burton. "Is that your name, or do you have them?"

"F-i-t-z-h-u-g-h," said Fitz, "is my name."

"Any middle name?"

"No."

"That's smarter," said she. "I haven't either."

"What _is_ your name?" asked Fitz, trying to feign interest.

"Evelyn," said she, "but my intimate friends call me Eve."

"Huh!" said Fitz grossly, "Eve ate the apple first."

"Yes," sighed Eve, "and gave Adam the core. Nowadays, I heard mamma say to Count Grassi, it's the other way 'round."

"My father says," said Fitz, "that Eve ought to of been spanked."

Certain memories reddened Eve; but the natural curiosity to compare experiences got the better of her maiden reticence upon so delicate a subject. She lowered her voice.

"Do you yell?" she asked. "I do. It frightens them if you yell."

"I was never spanked" said Fitz. "When I'm naughty mamma writes to papa, and he writes to me, and says he's sorry to hear that I haven't yet learned to be a gentleman, and a man of the world, and an American. That's worse than being spanked."

"Oh, dear!" said Eve, "I don't mind what people say; that's just water on a duck's back; but what they do is with slippers--"

"And," cried Fitz, elated with his own humor, "it isn't on the duck's--back."

"Are you yourself to-day," asked Miss Eve, her eyes filling, "or are you just unusually horrid?"

"Here--I say--don't blub," said Fitz, in real alarm. And, knowing the power of money to soothe, he pulled a twenty-franc gold piece from his pocket and himself opened and closed one of her tiny hands upon it.

The child's easy tears dried at once.

"Really--truly?--ought I?" she exclaimed.

"You bet!" said Fitz, all his beautiful foreign culture to the fore.

"You just keep that and surprise yourself with a present next time you want one."

"Maybe mamma won't like me to," she doubted. And then, with devilish wisdom, "I think mamma will scold me first--and let me forget to give it back afterward. Thank you, Fitz. I could kiss you!"

"Fire away," said Fitz sullenly. He was used to little girls, and liked to kiss them, but he did not like them to kiss him. She didn't, however.

She caught his hand with the one of hers that was not clutching the gold piece, and squeezed it quickly and let it go. Something in this must have touched and made appeal to the manly heart. For Fitz said, averting

his beautiful eyes:

"You're a funny little pill, aren't you?"

The tiger sprang to the victoria step from loafing in front of a jeweller's window, and stiffened into a statue of himself. Madame was coming.

"Take Evelyn to the lift, Fitz," said she. But first she kissed Evelyn, and said that she was going to send for her soon, for a spree with Fitz.

They passed through the court-yard, Fitz carrying his hat like a gentleman and a man of the world, and into the dark passage that led to the famous elevator.

"Your mother's smart," said Eve.

"Can't you think of anything but how smart people are?"

"When I'm grown up," she said, "and am smart myself I'll think of other things, I dare say."

"Can you work the lift yourself? Hadn't I better take you up?"

"Oh, no," she said, and held out her hand.

They shook, she firmly, he with the flabby, diffident clasp of childhood and old age.

"You're a funny kid," said Fitz.

"You're rather a dear," said Eve.

She entered the elevator, closed the door, and disappeared upward, at the pace of a very footsore and weary snail.

Mrs. Burton was much cheered by Mrs. Williams's visit, as who that struggles is not by the notice of the rich and the mighty?

"My dear," she said, when Eve entered, "she is so charming, so natural; she has promised to give a tea for me, and to present me to some of her friends. I hope you like the boy--Fitz--Fritz--whatever his name is. It would be so nice if you were to be friends."

"He is nice," said Eve, "ever so nice--but so dull."

"What did you talk about?" asked Mrs. Burton,

"Really," said Eve, aged seven, "I forget."

Mrs. Burton had made a failure of her own life.

She had married a man who subsequently had been so foolish as to lose his money--or most of it.

Eve, who had ever a short memory, does not remember the catastrophe. She was three at the time of it. She was in the nursery when the blow fell, and presently her mother came in looking very distracted and wild, and caught the little girl's face between her hands, and looked into it, and turned it this way and that, and passed the little girl's beautiful brown hair through her fingers, and then began to speak violently.

"You sha'n't be shabby," she said. "I will make a great beauty of you. You've got the beauty. You shall ride in your carriage, even if I work my hands to the bone. They've bowled me over. But I'm not dead yet. Elizabeth Burton shall have her day. You wait. I'll make the world dance for you." Then she went into violent hysterics.

There was a little money left. Mrs. Burton took Evelyn to Europe, and began to teach her the long litany of success:

Money is God;
We praise thee, etc.,

a very long, somewhat truthful, and truly degraded litany. She taught her that it isn't handsome is as handsome does, but the boots and shoes, after all. She taught her that a girl must dress beautifully to be beautiful, that she must learn all the world's ways and secrets, and at the same time appear in speech and manner like a child of Nature, like a newly opened rose. And she taught her to love her country like this:

"America, my dear, is the one place where a girl can marry enough money to live somewhere else. Or, if her husband is tied to his affairs, it is the one place where she can get the most for his money--not as we get the most for ours, for we couldn't live two minutes on our income in America--but where the most people will bow the lowest to her because she is rich; where she will be the most courted and the most envied."

The two mammas worked along similar lines, but for different reasons. Mrs. Burton strove to make Eve ornamental so that she might acquire millions; Mrs. Williams strove to Anglicize and Europeanize her son so that he might ornament those which were already his. Those little spread eagles, the corpuscles in his blood, folded their wings a trifle as he grew older, and weren't always so ready to scream and boast; but they remained eagles, and no amount of Eton and Oxford could turn them into little unicorns or lions. You may wonder why Fitz's father, a strong, sane man, permitted such attempts at denationalization upon his son and heir. Fitz so wondered--once. So wrote. And was answered thus:

... If you're any good it will all come out in the wash. If you aren't

any good it doesn't matter whether your mother makes an Englishman out of you or a Mandarin. When you come of age you'll be your own man; that's been the bargain between your mother and me. That will be the time for you to decide whether to be governed or to help govern. I am not afraid for you. I never have been.

So Mrs. Williams was not successful on the whole in her attempts to make a cosmopolitan of Fitz. And that was just enough, because the attempts were those of an amateur. She had lived a furiously active life of pleasure; she had made an unassailable place for herself in the best European society, as at home. She had not even become estranged from her husband. They were always crossing the ocean to see each other, "if only for a minute or two," as she used to say, and when Fitz was at school she spent much of her time in America; and Fitz's short vacations were wild sprees with his father and mother, come over for the purpose. Mr. Williams would take an immense country house for a few weeks, with shooting and riding and all sorts of games thrown in, and have Fitz's friends by the dozen. But, like as not, Mr. Williams would leave in the middle of it, as fast as trains and steamers could carry him, home to his affairs. And even the little English boys missed him sorely, since he was much kinder to them, as a rule, than their own fathers were, and had always too many sovereigns in his pocket for his own comfort.

But Mrs. Burton's attempts to make a charming cosmopolitan of Eve met with the greater success that they deserved. They were the efforts of a professional, one who had staked life or death, so to speak, on the result. Where Mrs. Williams amused herself and achieved small victories, Mrs. Burton fought and achieved great conquests. She saved money out of her thin income, money for the great days to come when Eve was to be presented to society at Newport; and she slaved and toiled grimly and with far-seeing genius. Eve's speaking voice was, perhaps, Mrs. Burton's and her own greatest triumph. It was Ellen Terry's youngest, freshest voice over again, but with the naivest little ghost of a French accent; and she didn't seem so much to project a phrase at you by the locutory muscles as to smile it to you.

Mrs. Burton had, of course, her moments of despair about Eve. But these were mostly confined to that despairing period when most girls are nothing but arms and wrists and gawkiness and shyness; when their clear, bright complexions turn muddy, and they want to enter convents. Eve at this period in her life was unusually trying and nondescript. She announced that if she ever married it would be for love alone, but that she did not intend to marry. She would train to be a cholera nurse or a bubonic plague nurse--anything, in short, that was most calculated to drive poor Mrs. Burton frantic. And she grew the longest, thinnest pair of legs and arms in Europe; and her hair seemed to lose its wonderful lustre; and her skin, upon which Mrs. Burton had banked so much, became colorless and opaque and a little blotched around the chin. And she was so nervous and overgrown that she would throw you a whole fit of hysterics during piano lessons; and she prayed so long night and morning that her bony knees developed callouses; and when she didn't have a cold in her head she was getting over one or catching another.

During this period in Eve's life the children met for the second time. It was in Vienna. This time Mrs. Burton, as having been longer in residence, called upon Mrs. Williams, taking Eve with her, after hesitation. Poor Eve! The graceful, gracious courtesy of her babyhood was now a performance of which a stork must have felt ashamed; she pitched into a table (while trying to make herself small) and sent a pitcher of lemonade crashing to the ground. And then burst into tears that threatened to become laughter mixed with howls.

At this moment Fitz, having been sent for to "do the polite," entered. He shook hands at once with Mrs. Burton, whom he had never seen before, and turned to see how Eve, whom he vaguely remembered, was coming on. And there she was--nothing left of his vague memory but the immense eyes. Even these were not clear and bright, but red in the whites and disordered with tears. For the rest (Fitz made the mental comparison himself) she reminded him of a silly baby camel that he had seen in the zoo, that had six inches of body, six feet of legs, and the most bashful expression imaginable.

Mrs. Burton, you may be sure, did not lose the start that Fitz gave before he went forward and shook hands with Eve. But she misinterpreted it. She said to herself (all the while saying other things aloud to Mrs. Williams): "If he had only seen her a year ago, even a boy of his age would have been struck by her, and would have remembered her. But now! Now, he'll never forget her. And I don't blame him. She's so ugly that he was frightened."

But that was not why Fitz had started. The poor, gawky, long-legged, tearful, frightened, overgrown, wretched girl had not struck him as ugly; she had struck him as the most pathetic and to-be-pitied object that he had ever seen. I do not account for this. I state it. Had she been pretty and self-possessed he would have left the room presently on some excuse, but now he stayed--not attracted, but troubled and sorry and eager to put her at her ease. So he would have turned aside to help a gutter cat that had been run over and hurt, though he would have passed the proudest, fluffiest Angora in Christendom with no more than a glance. He began to talk to her in his plainest, straightest, honestest Ohioan. It always came out strongest when he was most moved. His mother's sharp ears heard the A's, how they narrowed in his mouth, and smote every now and then with a homely tang against the base of his nose. "Just like his father," she thought, "when some one's in trouble." And she had a sudden twinge of nostalgia.

Fitz lured Eve to a far corner and showed her a set of wonderful carved chess-men that he had bought that morning; and photographs of his friends at Eton, and of the school, and of some of the masters. He talked very earnestly and elaborately about these dull matters, and passed by the opportunities which her first embarrassed replies offered for the repartee of youth. And he who was most impatient of restraint and simple occupations talked and behaved like a dull, simple, kindly old gentleman. His method may not have left Eve with a dazzling impression of him; she could not know that he was not himself, but all at once a deliberate artist seeking to soothe and to make easy.

Eve did not enjoy that call; she enjoyed nothing in those days but prayer and despair; but she got to the end of it without any more tears and crashes. And she said to her mother afterward that young Williams seemed a nice boy--but so dull. Well, they were quits. She had seemed dull enough to Fitz. A sick cat may touch your heart, but does not furnish you with lively companionship. Fitz was heartily glad when the Burtons had gone. He had worked very hard to make things possible for that absurd baby camel.

"You may call her an absurd baby camel," said his mother, "but it's my opinion that she is going to be a very great beauty."

"_She!"_ exclaimed Fitz, thinking that the ugliness of Eve might have unhinged his mother's beauty-loving mind.

"Oh," said his mother, "she's at an age now--poor child! But don't you remember how the bones of her face--"

"I am trying to forget," said Fitz with a tremendous shudder for the occasion.

IV

Fitz did not take a degree at Oxford. He left in the middle of his last term, leaving many friends behind. He stood well, and had been in no especial difficulty of mischief, and why he left was a mystery. The truth of the matter is that he had been planning for ten years to leave Oxford in the very middle of his last term. For upon that date fell his twenty-first birthday, when he was to be his own man. He spent a few hours in his mother's house in London. And, of course, she tried to make him go back and finish, and was very much upset, for her. But Fitz was obdurate.

"If it were Yale, or Princeton, or Harvard, or Berkeley, or Squedunk," he said, "I would stick it out. But a degree from Oxford isn't worth six weeks of home."

"But aren't you going to wait till I can go with you?"

"If you'll go with me to-night you shall have my state-room, and I'll sleep on the coal. But if you can't go till to-morrow, mother mine, I will not wait. I have cabled my father," said he, "to meet me at quarantine."

"Your poor, busy father," she said, "will hardly feel like running on from Cleveland to meet a boy who is coming home without a degree."

"My father," said Fitz, "will be at quarantine. He will come out in a tug. And he will arrange to take me off and put me ashore before the

others. If the ship is anywhere near on schedule my father and I will be in time to see a ball game at the Polo Grounds."

Something in the young man's honest face and voice aroused an answering enthusiasm in his mother's heart.

"Oh, Fitz," she said, "if I could possibly manage it I would go with you. Tell your father that I am sailing next week. I won't cable. Perhaps he'll be surprised and pleased."

"I _know_ he will," said Fitz, and he folded his mother in his arms and rumbled her hair on one side and then on the other.

* * * * *

Those who beheld, and who, because of the wealth of the principal personages, took notice of the meeting between Fitz and his father, say that Fitz touched his father's cheek with his lips as naturally and unaffectedly as if he had been three years old, that a handshake between the two men accompanied this salute, and that Williams senior was heard to remark that it had looked like rain early in the morning, but that now it didn't, and that he had a couple of seats for the ball game. What he really said was inside, neither audible nor visible upon his smooth-shaven, care-wrinkled face. It was an outcry of the heart, so joyous as to resemble grief.

There was a young and pretty widow on that ship who had made much of Fitz on the way out and had pretended that she understood him. She thought that she had made an impression, and that, whatever happened, he would not forget her. But when he rushed up, his face all joyous, to say good-by, her heart sank. And she told her friends afterward that there was a certain irresistible, orphan-like appeal about that young Williams, and that she had felt like a mother toward him. But this was not till very much later. At first she used to shut herself up in her room and cry her eyes out.

They lunched at an uptown hotel and afterward, smoking big cigars, they drove to a hatter's and bought straw hats, being very critical of each other's fit and choice.

Then they hurried up to the Polo Grounds, and when it began to get exciting in the fifth inning, Fitz felt his father pressing something into his hand. Without taking his eyes from Wagsniff, who was at the bat, Fitz put that something into his mouth and began to chew. The two brothers--for that is the high relationship achieved sometimes in America, and in America alone, between father and son--thrust their new straw hats upon the backs of their round heads, humped themselves forward, and rested with their elbows on their knees and watched--no, that is your foreigner's attitude toward a contest--they _played_ the game.

I cannot leave them thus without telling the reader that they survived the almost fatal ninth, when, with the score 3-2 against, two out and a

man on first, Wagsniff came once more to the bat and, swinging cunningly at the very first ball pitched to him by the famous Mr. Blatherston, lifted it over the centrefielder's head and trotted around the bases and, grinning like a Hallowe'en pumpkin, came romping home.

At dinner that night Williams senior said suddenly:

"Fitz, what you do want to do?"

A stranger would have thought that Fitz was being asked to choose between a theatre and a roof-garden, but Fitz knew that an entirely different question was involved in those casually spoken words. He was being asked off-hand to state off-hand what he was going to do with his young life. But he had his answer waiting.

"I want to see the world," he said.

Williams senior, as a rule, thought things out in his own mind and did not press for explanations. But on the present occasion he asked:

"As how?"

Fitz smiled very youthfully and winningly.

"I've seen some of it," he said, "right side up. Now I want to have a look upside-down. If I go into something of yours--as myself--I don't get a show. I'm marked. The other clerks would swipe to me, and the heads would credit me with brains before I showed whether I had any or not. I want you to get me a job in Wall Street--under any other name than my own--except Percy"--they both laughed--"your first name and mamma's maiden name would do--James Holden. And nobody here knows me by sight, I've been abroad so much; and it seems to me I'd get an honest point of view and find out if I was any good or not, and if I could get myself liked for myself or not."

"Well," said his father; "well, that's an idea, anyhow."

"I've had valets and carriages and luxuries all my life," said Fitz. "I think I like them. But I don't _know_--do I? I've never tried the other thing. I'm sure I don't want to be an underpaid clerk always. But I am sure I want to try it on for a while."

"I was planning," said his father, "to take a car and run about the country with you and show you all the different enterprises that I'm interested in. I thought you'd make a choice, find something you liked, and go into it for a starter. If you're any good you can go pretty far with me pulling for you. You don't like that idea?"

"Not for now," said Fitz. "I like mine better."

"Do you want to live on what you earn?"

"If I can stand it."

"You'll be started with ten dollars a week, say. Can you do it?"

"What did grandpa start on?" asked Fitz.

"His board, two suits of clothes, and twenty-four dollars a year," said William senior with a proud ring in his voice.

"And you?"

"I began at the bottom, too. That was the old-fashioned idea. Father was rich then. But he wanted me to show that I was some good."

"Did grandpa pull for you, or did you have to find yourself?"

"Well," said the father diffidently, "I had a natural taste for business. But," and he smiled at his son, "I shouldn't live on what you earn, if I were you. You needn't spend much, but have a good time out of hours. You'll find yourself working side by side with other sons of rich men. And you can bet your bottom dollar they don't live on what they can earn. Unless you make a display of downright wealth you'll be judged on your merits. That's what you're driving at, isn't it?"

So they compromised on that point; and the next morning they went downtown and called upon Mr. Merriman, the great banker. He and Williams had been in many deals together, and on one historic occasion had supported prices and loaned so much ready money on easy terms as to avert a panic.

"John," said Williams senior, "my son Fitz."

"Well, sir," said Merriman, only his eyes smiling, "you don't look like a foreigner."

"I'm not," said Fitz stoutly.

"In that case," said Merriman, "what can I do for you?"

"I want to be called James Holden," said Fitz, "and to have a job in your office."

Merriman listened to the reasons with interest and amusement. Then he turned to Williams senior. "May I drive him?" he asked grimly.

"If you can," said Fitz's father. And he laughed.

Finally, it was arranged that, in his own way, Fitz was to see the world.

Fitz's experiment in finding himself and getting himself liked for himself alone was a great failure. He had not been in Mr. Merriman's employ two hours before he found that he disliked long sums in addition, and had made friends with Wilson Carrol, who worked next to him. Indeed, Fitz made friends with everybody in the office inside of two weeks, and was responsible for a great deal of whispering and hanging out of back windows for a puff of smoke. Nobody but Mr. Merriman knew who he was, where he came from, or what his prospects were. Everybody liked him--for himself. Rich or poor, it must have been the same. His idea that character, if he had it, would tell in the long run proved erroneous. It told right away.

Wilson Carrol and half a dozen other clerks in the office were the sons of rich men, put to work because of the old-fashioned idea that everybody ought to work, and at the same time pampered, according to the modern idea, with comfortable allowances over and beyond their pay. With one or other of these young men for companion, and presently for friend, Fitz began to lead the agreeable summer life of New York's well-to-do youth. He allowed himself enough money to keep his end up, but did not allow himself any especial extravagances or luxuries. He played his part well, appearing less well off than Carrol, and more so than young Prout, with whom he got into much mischief in the office. Whatever these young gentlemen had to spend they were always hard up. Fitz did likewise. If you dined gloriously at Sherry's and had a box at the play you made up for it the next night by a chop at Smith's and a cooling ride in a ferry-boat, say to Staten Island and back. Saturday you got off early and went to Long Island or Westchester for tennis and a swim, and lived till Monday in a luxurious house belonging to a fellow-clerk's father, or were put up at the nearest country club.

Downtown that summer there was nothing exciting going on. The market stood still upon very small transactions, and there was no real work for any one but the book-keepers. The more Fitz saw of the science of addition the less he thought of it, but he did what he had to do (no more) and drew his pay every Saturday with pride. Once, there being a convenient legal holiday to fatten the week-end, he went to Newport with Carrol and got himself so much liked by all the Carrol family that he received and accepted an invitation to spend his long holiday with them. He and Carrol had arranged with the powers to take their two weeks off at the same time--from the fifteenth to the end of August. And during business hours they kept their heads pretty close together and did much plotting and planning in whispers.

But Mrs. Carrol herself was to have a finger in that vacation. The presence in her house of two presentable young men was an excellent excuse for paying off dinner debts and giving a lawn party and a ball. Even at Newport there are never enough men to go round, and with two whole ones for a basis much may be done. The very night of their arrival they "ran into" a dinner-party, as Carrol expressed it. It was a large dinner; and the young men, having got to skylarking over their dressing (contrary to Mrs. Carrol's explicit orders) descended to a drawing-room already full of people. Carrol knew them all, even the famous new

beauty; but Fitz--or James Holden, rather--had, except for the Carrols, but a nodding acquaintance with one or two of the men. He felt shy, and blushed very becomingly while trying to explain to Mrs. Carrol how he and Wilson happened to be so unfortunate as to be late.

"Well," she said, "I'm not going to punish you this time. You are to take Miss Burton in."

"Which is Miss Burton?" asked Fitz, on whose memory at the moment the name made no impression.

"Do you see seven or eight men in the corner," she said, "who look as if they were surrounding a punch-bowl?"

"Miss Burton is the punch-bowl?" he asked.

"All those men want to take her in," said Mrs. Carrol, "and you're going to make them all very jealous."

Dinner was announced, and Mrs. Carrol, with Fitz in tow, swept down upon the group of men. It parted reluctantly and disclosed, lolling happily in a deep chair, the most beautiful girl in the world. She came to her feet in the quickest, prettiest way imaginable, and spoke to Mrs. Carrol in the young Ellen Terry voice, with its little ghost of a French accent. Fitz did not hear what she said or what Mrs. Carrol answered. He only knew that his heart was thumping against his ribs, and that a moment later he was being introduced as Mr. Holden, and that Eve did not know him from Adam.

Presently she laid the tips of her fingers on his arm, and they were going in to dinner.

"I think Mrs. Carrol's a dear," said Fitz, "to give me you to take in and to sit next to. I always wanted people to like me, but now all the men hate me. I can feel it in the small of my back, and I like it. Do you know how you feel in spring--the day the first crocuses come out? That's the way it makes me feel."

She turned her great, smiling eyes upon him and laughed. The laugh died away. His young, merry face had a grim, resolved look. So his father looked at critical times.

"I thought you were joking--rather feebly," she said.

"I don't know," said he, "that I shall ever joke again."

"You make your mind up very quickly," she said.

"The men of my family all do," he said. "But it isn't my mind that's made up."

Something of the girl's stately and exquisite poise forsook her. Her eyes wore a hunted look for a moment. She even felt obliged to laugh to

cover her confusion.

"It's my heart," said Fitz. "I saw you--and that is all there is to it."

"Aren't you in something of a hurry?" she asked, her eyes twinkling. She had felt for a moment like a soldier surprised without weapons. But now, once more, she felt herself armed _cap à pie_.

"I've got to be," said Fitz. "I'm a bank clerk on a two weeks' vacation, of which the first day is gone."

She was sorry that he was a bank clerk; it had a poor and meagre sound. It was not for him that she had been trained. She had been made to slave for herself, and was to make a "continental" marriage with the highest bidder. Eve's heart had been pretty well schooled out of her, and yet, before dinner came to an end, she found herself wishing that among the high bidders might be one very young, like the man at her side, with eyes as honest, and who, to express admiration, beat about no bushes.

Later, when they said good-by, Fitz said:

"It would be good for me to see you to-morrow."

And she said:

"Would it be good for _me_?" and laughed.

"Yes," he said firmly, "it would."

"Why?" she asked.

"To-morrow at four," said Fitz, "I shall come for you and take you around the Cliff Walk and tell you."

She made no promise. But the next day, when Fitz called at the cottage which Mrs. Burton, by scraping and saving these many years, had managed to take for the season, Eve was at home--and she was alone.

VI

Newport, as a whole, was busy preparing for the national lawn-tennis championship. There was a prince to be pampered and entertained, and every night, from the door of some great house or other, a strip of red carpet protruded, covered by an awning, and the coming and going of smart carriages on Bellevue Avenue seemed double that of the week before. But the affair between James Holden--who was nobody knew who, and came from nobody knew exactly where--and Newport's reigning beauty held the real centre of the stage.

Beautiful though Eve was, natural and unaffected though she seemed,

people had but to glance at Mrs. Burton's old, hard, humorless, at once anxious and triumphant face to know that the girl, willing or not, was a victim prepared for sacrifice. Confessedly poor, obviously extravagant and luxury-loving, even the rich men who wanted to marry her knew that Eve must consider purses more than hearts. And they held themselves cynically off and allowed what was known as "Holden's pipe-dream" to run its course. It amused those who wanted Eve, those who thought they did, and all those who loved a spectacle. "He will go back to his desk presently," said the cynics, "and that will be the end of that." The hero of the pipe-dream thought this at times himself. Well, if it turned out that way Eve was not worth having. He believed that she had a heart, that if her heart were touched she would fling her interests to the winds and obey its dictates.

What Eve thought during the first few days of Holden's pipe-dream is not clearly known. She must have been greatly taken with him, or she would not have allowed him to interfere with her plans for personal advancement and aggrandizement, to make a monopoly of her society, and to run his head so violently into a stone wall. After the first few days, when she realized that she liked to be with him better than with any one she had ever known, she probably thought--or to that effect--"I'll just pretend a little--and have it to remember." But she found herself lying awake at night, wishing that he was rich; and later, not even wishing, just lying awake and suffering. She had made up her mind some time since to accept Darius O'Connell before the end of the season. He had a prodigious fortune, good habits, and a kind Irish way with him. And she still told herself that it must be O'Connell, and she lay awake and thought about Fitz and suffered.

Mrs. Burton alone hadn't a kind thought or word for him. Her face hardened at the mere mention of his name, and sometimes, when she saw a certain expression that came oftener and oftener into Eve's face, that callous which served her for a heart turned harder than Nature had made it, and she saw all her schemes and all her long labors demolished like a house of cards. Even if Eve flung Fitz aside like an old glove, as inevitably she must, still Mrs. Burton's schemes would wear a tinge of failure. The girl had shown that the heart was not entirely educated out of her, and was frightening her mother. Even if things went no further, here was partial failure. She had intended to make an inevitably rising force of Eve, and here at the very outset were lassitude and a glance aside at false gods.

Fitz was stubbornly resolved to win Eve on his merits or not to win her at all. He had but to tell her his real name, or his father's, to turn the balance of the hesitation and doubt; but that, he told himself, would never, never do. She must turn aside from her training, love him for himself, and believe, if only for a few hours, that she had thrown herself away upon poverty and mediocrity, and be happy in it; or else she must pass him by, and sweep on up the broad, cold stairway of her own and her mother's ambitions.

But Fitz wanted her so much that he felt he must die if he lost her. And sometimes he was tempted to tell her of his millions and take her for

better or worse. But he would never know then if she cared for him or not; he would never know then if she had a real heart and was worth the having. So he resisted, and his young face had, at times, a grim, careworn look; and between hope and fear his spirits fell away and he felt tired and old. People thought of him as an absurd boy in the most desperate throes of puppy love, and certain ones felt grateful to Eve Burton for showing them so pretty a bit of sport. Even those very agreeable people, the Carrols, were disgusted with Fitz, as are all good people when a guest of the house makes a solemn goose of himself. But Fitz was not in the least ridiculous to himself, which was important; and he was not ridiculous to Eve, which was more important still.

Then, one morning, the whole affair began to look serious even to a scoffing and cynical world. Darius O'Connell was missed at the Casino and in the Reading-room; the evening papers announced that he had sailed for Europe. And Miss Burton, far from appearing anxious or unhappy about this, had never looked so beautiful or so serene. Some said that O'Connell had made up his mind that the game was not worth the candle; others, that he had proposed and had been "sent packing." Among these latter was Mrs. Burton herself, and it will never be known what words of abuse she poured upon Eve. If Mrs. Burton deserved punishment she was receiving all that she deserved. Sick-headaches, despair, a vain, empty life with its last hopes melting away. Eve--her Eve--her beautiful daughter had a heart! That was the sum of Mrs. Burton's punishment. For a while she resisted her fate and fought against it, and then collapsed, bitter, broken, and old.

But what looked even more serious than O'Connell's removing himself was the fact that during the match which was to decide the lawn-tennis championship Eve and her bank clerk did not appear in the Casino grounds. Here were met all the happy people, in society and all the unhappy people--even Mrs. Burton's ashen face was noted among those present--but the reigning belle and her young man were not in the seats that they had occupied during the preceding days of the tournament; and people pointed out those empty seats to each other, and smiled and lifted their eyebrows; and young Tombs, who had been making furious love to one of the Blackwell twins--for the third tournament in five years--sighed and whispered to her: "Dolly, did you ever in your life see two empty seats sitting so close to each other?"

Meanwhile, Fitz and the beauty were strolling along the Cliff Walk in the bright sunshine, with the cool Atlantic breeze in their faces, between lawns and gardens on the one side and dancing blue waves upon the other. Fitz looked pale and careworn. But Eve looked ecstatic. This was because poor Fitz, on the one hand, was still in the misery of doubt and uncertainty, and because Eve, on the other, had suddenly made up her mind and knew almost exactly what was going to happen.

The Cliff Walk belongs to the public, and here and there meanders irritatingly over some very exclusive millionaire's front lawn. A few such, unable to endure the sight of strangers, have caused this walk, where it crosses their properties, to be sunk so that from the windows

of their houses neither the walk itself nor persons walking upon it can be seen.

Fitz and the beauty were approaching one of these "ha-ha's" into which the path dipped steeply and from which it rose steeply upon the farther side. On the left was a blank wall of granite blocks, on the right only a few thousand miles of blind ocean. It may have been a distant view of this particular "ha-ha" that had made up Eve's mind for her, for she had a strong dramatic sense. Or it may have been that her heart alone had made up her mind, and that the secluded depths of the "ha-ha" had nothing to do with the matter.

"Jim," she said as they began to descend into the place, "life's only a moment out of eternity, isn't it?"

"Only a moment, Eve," he said, "a little longer for some than for others."

"If it's only a moment," she said as they reached the bottom of the decline, and could only be seen by the blind granite wall and the blind ocean, "I think it ought to be complete."

"Why, Eve!" he said, his voice breaking and choking. "Honestly?... My Eve!... Mine!... Look at me.... Is it true?... Are you sure?... Why, she's sure!... My darling's sure ... all sure."

* * * * *

Later he said: "And you don't care about money, and you've got the biggest, sweetest heart in all the world. And it's mine, and mine's yours."

"I can't seem to see anything in any direction," she said, "beyond you."

* * * * *

Later they had to separate, only to meet again at a dinner. Before they went in they had a word together in a corner.

"I told you," said Fitz, "that my father would understand, and you said he wouldn't. But he did; his answer came while I was dressing. I telegraphed: 'I have seen the world,' and the answer was: 'Put a fence around it.'"

She smiled with delight.

"Eve," he said, "everybody knows that you've taken me. It's in our faces, I suppose. And they are saying that you are a goose to throw yourself away on a bank clerk."

"Do you think I care?" she said.

"I know you don't," he said, "but I can't help thanking you for holding

your head so high and looking so happy and so proud."

"Wouldn't you be proud," she said, "to have been brought up to think that you had no heart, and then to find that, in spite of everything, you had one that could jump and thump, and love and long, and make poverty look like paradise?"

"I know what you mean, a little," he said. "Your mother tried to make you into an Article; my mother tried to make an Englishman of me. And instead, you turned into an angel, and I was never anything but a spread eagle."

"Do you know," she said, "I can't help feeling a little sorry for poor mamma."

"Then," said he, "put your left hand behind your back." She felt him slide a heavy ring upon her engagement finger. "Show her that, and tell her that it isn't glass."

Eve couldn't keep from just one covert glance at her ring. The sight of it almost took her breath away.

Dinner was announced.

"I am frightened," she said; "have I given myself to a djinn?"

"My Eve doesn't know whom she's given herself to," he whispered.

"I don't believe I do," she said.

"You don't," said he.

An immense pride in his father's wealth and his own suddenly surged in Fitz. He could give her all those things that she had renounced for his sake, and more, too. But he did not tell her at that time.

The great ruby on the slim hand flashed its message about the festive board. Some of the best-bred ladies in the land threatened to become pop-eyed from looking at it.

Mrs. Blackwell, mother of the twins, whispered to Montgomery Stairs:

"That Holden boy seems to have more to him than I had fancied."

But young Tombs whispered to Dolly Blackwell, to whom he had just become engaged for the third (and last) time in five years: "She isn't thinking about the ring.... Look at her.... She's listening to music."

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Montgomery Stairs (who is not altogether reliable) claims to have seen Mrs. Burton within five minutes of her learning who her son-in-law-to-be really was. For, of course, this came out presently and made a profound

sensation. He claims to have seen--from a convenient eyrie--Mrs. Burton rush out into the little garden behind her cottage; he claims that all of a sudden she leaped into the air and turned a double somersault, and that immediately after she ran up and down the paths on her hands; that then she stood upon her head for nearly five minutes; and that finally she flung herself down and rolled over and over in a bed of heliotrope.

But then, as is well known, Montgomery Stairs, in the good American phrase, was one of those who "also ran."

Darius O'Connell sent a cable to Eve from Paris (from Maxim's, I am afraid, late at night). He said: "Heartiest congratulations and best wishes. You can fool some of the best people some of the time, but, thank God, you can't fool all of the best people all of the time." Eve and Fitz never knew just what he meant.

They spent part of their honeymoon in Cleveland, and every afternoon Eve sat between Fitz and his father, leaning forward, her elbows on her knees, and was taught painstakingly, as the crowning gift of those two simple hearts, to play the game.

There must be one word more. There are people to this day who say that Eve knew from the beginning who "James Holden" was, and that she played her cards accordingly. In view of this I fling all caution to the wind, and in spite of the cold fear that is upon me of being sued for libel, I tell these ladies--_people_, I mean--that they lie in their teeth.

TARGETS

"On the contrary," said Gardiner, "lightning very often strikes twice in the same place, and often three times. The so-called all-wise Providence is still in the experimental stage. My grandmother, for instance, presented my grandfather with fifteen children: seven live sons and eight dead daughters. That's when the lightning had fun with itself. And when the epidemic of ophthalmia broke out in the Straits Settlements, what class of people do you suppose developed the highest percentage of total loss of sight in one or both eyes?--why the inmates of the big asylum for the deaf and dumb in Singapore: twenty per cent of those poor stricken souls went stone blind. Then what do you think the lightning did? Set the blooming asylum on fire and burned it to the ground. And then, I dare say, the elements retired to some region of waste, off in space somewhere, and sat down and thundered with laughter. But it wasn't through with the deaf and dumb, and blind, and roofless even then. It was decided by government, which is the next most irresponsible instrument to lightning, to transfer the late inmates of the asylum to a remantled barrack in the salubrious Ceylon hills; and they were put aboard a ram-shackle, single-screw steamer named the Nerissa. She was wrecked--"

"Coast of Java--in '80, wasn't it?" said Pedder, who has read nothing

but dictionaries and books of black-and-white facts and statistics in the course of a long life otherwise entirely devoted to misdirected efforts to defeat Colonel Bogey at golf.

"It was," said Gardiner, "and the lightning was very busy striking. It drowned off every member of the crew who had any sense of decency; and of the deaf and dumb passengers selected to be washed ashore a pair who were also blind. Those saved came to land at a jungly stretch of coast, dented by a slow-running creek. The crew called the place Quickstep Inlet because of the panicky and inhuman haste in which they left it."

"Why inhuman?" asked Ludlow.

"Because," said Gardiner, "they only gave about one look at their two comrades in misfortune who were deaf, and dumb, and blind, and decided that it was impracticable to attempt to take them along. I suppose they were right. I suppose it would have been the devil's own job. The really nasty part was that the crew made a secret of it, and when some of them, having passed through the Scylla and Charybdis of fright and fever, and foul water, and wild beasts, reached a settlement they didn't say a word about the two unfortunates who had been deliberately abandoned."

"How was it found out then?" Pedder asked.

"Years and years afterward by the ravings in liquor of one of the crew, and by certain things that I'd like to tell you if you'd be interested."

"Go on," said Ludlow.

"The important thing," said Gardiner, "is that the pair were deserted--not why they were deserted, or how it was found out that they had been. And one thing--speaking of lightning and Providence--is very important. If the pair hadn't been blind, if the asylum hadn't been burned, if the Nerissa hadn't been wrecked, and if the crew hadn't deserted them--they would never in this world have had an opportunity to lift to their lips the cup of human happiness and drink it off.

"The man did not know that he had been deserted. He vaguely understood that there had been a shipwreck and that he had been washed ashore--alone, he thought. When he got hungry he began to crawl round and round with his hands in front of his face feeling for something to eat, trying and approving of one handful of leaves and spitting out another. But thirst began to torment him, and then, all of a sudden, he went souse into the creek that there emptied into the sea. That way of life went on for several days. And all the while, the woman, just as she had come ashore, was keeping life going similarly--crawling about, always near the creek, crossing the beach at low tide to the mud flats and rooting among the mollusks, and stuffing herself with any kind of sea-growth that tasted good enough. The two were probably often within a few feet of each other; and they might have lived out their lives that way without either of them ever having the least idea that he or she was not the only human being in that part of the world. But something--pure

accident or some subtle instinct--brought them together. The man was out crawling with one hand before his face--so was the woman. Their hands met, and clinched. They remained thus, and trembling, for a long time. From that time until the day of their death, years and years later, they never for so much as one moment lost contact with each other.

"Daily they crawled or walked with infinite slowness, hand in hand, or the arm of one about the waist of the other--neither knowing the look, the age, the religion or even the color of the other. But I know, from the only person fitted to judge, that they loved each other tremendously and spotlessly--these two poor souls alone in that continuous, soundless, sightless, expressionless night. I know because their baby, when he grew up, and got away from that place, and learned white man's talk--told me.

"He left Quickstep Inlet when he was about fifteen years old, naked as the day he was born; ignorant of everything--who he was or what he was, or that the world contained anything similar to him. It was some restless spirit of exploration that smoulders I suppose, in every human heart, that compelled him to leave the few hundred acres of shore and wood that were familiar to him. He carried with him upon his bold journey a roll of bark, resembling birch-bark, upon which he had scratched with a sharp shell the most meaningless-looking lines, curves, spirals and gyrations that you can imagine. He will have that roll in his possession now, I expect, for even when I knew him--when he was twenty years old, and could talk English pretty nimbly, he could hardly bear to be separated from it--or, if he let you take one of the sheets in your hands, he would watch you as a dog watches the person that is about to give him his dinner. But he ran very little risk of having it stolen. Nobody wanted it.

"He must have been a gentle savage, with all sorts of decent inherited instincts, for when I knew him he had already taken kindly to civilization. At first, of course, they had a bad time with him; they couldn't talk to him, and when, quite naturally and nonchalantly he would start in to do the most outrageous things, they had to teach him better, literally by force. If Pedder weren't such an old stickler for propriety, I could go more into detail. You needn't look offended, Ped, you know you are very easily shocked, and that you make it unpleasant for everybody. He was taken on by the English consul at Teerak, who was a good fellow, and clothed, and taught to speak English, and, as a beginning, to work in the garden. Indoor work seemed to have almost the effect of nauseating him; and houses and closed doors threw him at first into frenzies of fear, and always made him miserable. It was apparent in his face, but more in his way of putting up his fists when in doubt, that he wasn't Dutch nor German nor French. He was probably English, they thought, but he might have been American, and so they had an orthodox christening and named him Jonathan Bull. Of course, after he got the trick of speech, they found out, by putting two and two together, just about who and what he was; and that he was of English parentage. But, of course, they had to let the name stand.

"The first thing, he told me, that ever came to him in the way of a

thought was that he was different from his parents--that they couldn't see, nor hear, nor make a noise as he could. He could remember sitting comfortably in the mud at low tide and being convulsed with laughter at his mother's efforts to find a fat mussel that was within a few inches of her hand. He said that within a small radius his parents had made paths, by constant peregrinations in search of food, that had become so familiar to them that they could move hither and thither, hand in hand, with considerable precision and alacrity. It was one of his earliest mischievous instincts to place obstacles in those paths, and take a humorous view of the consequent tumbles.

"The only intercourse that he could have with his parents was, of course, by sense of touch. And he told me that, whenever they could catch him, they would kiss him and fondle him. But he didn't like to be caressed, especially in the daytime. It was different at night when one became nervous and afraid; then he used to let himself be caught; and he said that he used to hold hands with his mother until he went to sleep and that when he awoke it was to find that the clasp still held. It was a long time before he realized that what to him were whimsical pranks, were in the nature of tragedies to his parents. If he put a stumbling-block in one of their paths, it upset the whole fabric of their daily life, made them feel, I suppose, that they were losing such faculties as they possessed: memory and the sense of touch--and they would be obliged either to walk with infinite slowness, or actually to crawl. And it was long before he realized that things which were perfectly simple and easy for him, were frightfully difficult for them; and he said that his first recollection of a tender and gentle feeling was once when--heaven only knows how--his parents found a nest with eggs in it--and brought these eggs to him. He realized then something of what a prize these eggs must have seemed to them--for he had often scrambled into trees and glutted himself with eggs, whereas, so far as he could recollect, his parents had never had any at all. He began from that time on to collect choice tidbits for _them_; and wondered why he had not done so before. And they rewarded him with caresses and kisses; I suppose his real reward was his own virtue. Anyway, though very gradually at first, instinct taught him to be a good son to them.

"The lessons that he learned of life were, first of all, from his parents, who were always near at hand for study; second, from birds and animals, there being a pool not far up the creek where even tigers sometimes came to drink; from occasional monkeys; but mostly, of course, by intuition and introspection.

"He noticed that birds and animals all had the use of sight and hearing, and were able to make sounds; and his own forest-trained senses soon perceived different meanings, and even shades of meaning in certain of these sounds. The larger animals were not, of course, constantly under observation, and from tigers, for instance, he learned only the main principles of tiger-talk--a kind of singsong snuffling purr that means 'get out of the way'; the cringing whine that means the tiger is very sorry for himself; and two or three of the full-throated roars: the one expressing rage, the one expressing fear, and the one expressing pained astonishment. But into the vocabularies of birds he penetrated

very deeply.

"One day, when I had got to know Jonathan rather well, he surprised me by saying, 'the minute I got the idea, I talked all day long, but it was years before I thought of writing down what I said, instead of plain trying to remember. At first, when I'd say something that I wanted to remember, I'd have to coax my head into remembering the place where I had said it, near which tree, or which stone on the beach, what had happened to make me think of saying it, and then, more often than not, I could repeat it word for word,' Then he showed me the sheets of bark with the scratches and scrawls and gyrations on them. 'It isn't spelled writing,' he explained, 'or what they call picture writing. I don't believe it has enough general principles for me to be able to explain it as a system, though it has a sort of system to it. If it's like anything, I think it must be like the way they write down music. It would be, wouldn't it? Because beasts don't talk with words, they talk with sounds, and I copycatted my language from beasts and birds,'

"I asked him what the writing on the bark was all about. He said, and he blushed, as every young author, and most old ones, should, that the writing was just more or less nothing--all about different kinds of things. So I pointed specifically to the top of one sheet, and said, 'begin there and tell me what that's about.' 'If I began there,' he said, 'I'd have to go backward; that's the finish of--oh!' he literally threw himself on my mercy with the most ingenuous blushing face. 'Oh,' he said, 'I suppose you'd call them poems.' I, of course, had my doubts of that; but I kept countenance, and said, 'well, what's that one about?' He looked puzzled for a moment, and then he smiled. 'Why,' he said, 'I suppose it's about me, about the way I felt one day, I suppose; but if I tried to say it into English it would just sound damn foolish; but, perhaps, you'd sooner hear it in my own language. It's better, because, after all, you can't turn sounds into words, can you?' 'Go ahead,' I said.

"His hands, holding the sheet of bark shook a little with embarrassment, and he was very red in the face; and before he could begin--I suppose you would call it reading--he had to wet his lips two or three times. I expected, of course, to hear the usual grunts and minor guttural sounds of the usual very primitive dialect. But Jonathan's own particular patent language was not that sort of thing at all. He began with the faintest, and most distinct rustling of leaves--I can't imagine how he made the sound at all. It seemed to come from somewhere between the back of his throat and his lips, and to have nothing to do with his tongue or vocal cords. It lasted for, perhaps, half a minute; dying out, fainter and fainter and finer and finer into complete silence. Then, from the distant point where the rustling had last been heard, there came the softest little throaty whistle, three times repeated; then, for two good minutes without seeming to draw breath, the young man burst into peal after peal of the sweetest, clearest, highest, swiftest whistling that you can possibly imagine. I don't know how he did it--he didn't even purse or move his lips--they were barely parted, in a kind of plaintive, sad little smile--and the notes came out; that was all. Of course I can't tell you what the thing meant word for word or sound for

sound; but, in general, it said youth, youth and spring: and I tell you it had those compositions of Mendelssohn, and Grieg, and Sinding lashed to the mast. Well, the leaves rustled again, a little lower in the scale, I think, but wouldn't swear to it, and the first little soft throaty whistle was twice repeated--and there was a little, tiny whisper of a human moan. And that was the end of that poem.

"I made him read to me from his bark sheets until he was tired out. And the next day I was at him again early, and the next. Suppose you were living in a jumping-off place, bored to death, and blowing yourself every fifth or sixth day to a brand new crop of prickly heat; and wanted to go away, and couldn't because you had to sit around until a fat Dutchman made up his mind about a concession; and suppose the only book in the place was on the uses of and manufacture and by-products of the royal palm, written in a beastly language called Tamil, which you only knew enough of to ask for tea and toast at four o'clock in the morning, and were usually understood to mean soda biscuits and a dish of buffalo milk. And suppose that then you came across the complete works of Shakespeare--and that you had never read them--or the Odyssey and that you had never read that--or, better, suppose that there was a Steinway piano in your sitting-room, and that one day the boy who worked the punka for you dropped the rope and sat down at the piano and played Beethoven from beginning to end--as Rubenstein would have played him--and suppose you had never heard a note of Beethoven before. It was like that--listening to the works of Jonathan Bull."

Gardiner paused, as if considering very carefully what he should say.

"No!" he said presently, "I'm not overdoing it. My judgment of Jonathan Bull is no longer a sudden enthusiasm, as the natural effort of a man to make his own discoveries seem more important to his friends than they deserve. He is one of the giants. Think of it: he had made, on an impulse of out and out creation, the most expressive of all languages, so far as mere sound goes; and as if that were not enough, he had gone ahead and composed in that language incomparable lyrics. The meanings were in the sounds. You couldn't mistake them. Have you ever heard a tiger roar--full steam ahead? There was one piece that began suddenly with a kind of terrible, obsessing, strong purring that shook the walls of the room and that went into a series of the most terrible tiger roars and ended with the nightmare screams of a child. I have never been so frightened in my life. And there was a snake song, a soft, wavy, piano, pianissimo effect, all malignant stealth and horror, and running through it were the guileless and insistently hungry twitterings of baby birds in the nest. But there were comical pieces, too, in which ludicrous adventures befell unsophisticated monkeys; and there was a whole series of spring-fever songs--some of them just rotten and nervous, and some of them sad and yearning--and some of them--I don't know just how to put it--well, some of them you might say were not exactly fit to print. One thing he read me--it was very short--consisted of hoarse, inarticulate, broken groans--I couldn't make out what it meant at all. And I was very curious to know, because it seemed to move Jonathan himself much more than anything else of his.

"You know,' he explained to me, 'my father and mother couldn't make any sound at all--oh, yes--they could clap their hands together and make a sound that way--but I mean with their voices--they hadn't any voices--sometimes their lips smacked and made a noise over eating, or kissing; but they couldn't make sounds in their throats. Well, when my mother died--just think, she couldn't make my father understand that she was sick; and I couldn't. I tried every way. He didn't know that she was leaving him--I'm glad you can't see that poor blind face of her's, turned to father's blind face and trying to tell him good-by--I see it, almost all the time,' he said. 'You know they were always touching--I can't remember a single second in all those years when they weren't at least holding hands. She went in the night. My father was asleep with one arm over and about her. As she got colder and colder it waked him. And he understood. Then he began to make those dumb, helpless groans, like that piece I just read you--the nearest he got to speaking. He sat on the ground and held her in his arms all the rest of the night, and all the next day, and the next night--I couldn't make him let go, and every little while he went into those dreadful, dumb groanings. You don't get brought up in the jungle without knowing death when you see it, and what dead things do. The second night, about midnight, the news of my mother's death began to get about; and horrible, hunchbacked beasts that I had never seen or dreamed of before began to slink about among the trees, and peer out, and snuffle, and complain--and suddenly laugh just like men. And I was so frightened of them, and of the night anyway, that every now and then I'd go into a regular screaming fit, and that would drive them away and keep them quiet for a time, but pretty soon I'd hear their cautious steps, way off, drawing closer and closer, and then the things would begin to snuffle, and complain, and laugh again--they had disgusting, black dogfaces, and one came very close, and I could see the water running out of its mouth. But when dawn began to break they drew farther and farther away, until you could only hear them--now and then.

"My father looked very white and ill, as was natural enough; but his face now had a peaceful, contented expression. I didn't understand at first that he, in his turn, was dying. But it wasn't of a broken heart, as you might suppose, or anything like that; he had gnawed his left wrist until he got the arteries open; and he was bleeding to death.

"Once a big dead fish was washed up on the beach--it was when I was quite a little boy--but I remembered how, after a day or two, even my parents had no trouble in finding it, and I remembered how my father had scooped a hole in the sand and buried it. So I scooped a great deep hole in the sand, very deep until water began to trickle into it. And I had sense enough, when it came to filling up the hole, to put in lots of big stones, the biggest I could roll in. And I'm strong. I stayed on--for about six months, getting lonelier and lonelier--and then spring came. I think that was really what started me. I still go almost crazy every spring--anyway I got to this place, and found people."

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"What's he doing now?" asked Pedder.

"He's trying," said Gardiner, "to do it in English. Of course it seems impossible that he should succeed. But then it was absolutely impossible for Shakespeare to do what he did with the English language, wasn't it? And yet he did it."

"But--" said Pedder.

"Ped," said Gardiner, "we don't control the lightnings; and you never can tell where they are going to strike next--or when."

Ludlow flushed a little, and did not look at his friends.

"Wouldn't it be wonderful," he said, "to be loved and to be in love the way his father and mother were. Maybe they were the ones that really heard and saw, and--sang. We admire the lily, but we owe her to the loves of the blind rain for the deaf and the dumb earth...."

Nobody spoke for some moments. It had been the only allusion that Ludlow had made in years and years to that which had left him a lonely and a cynical man.

"I wonder," Pedder mused, "how it ever occurred to a blind, deaf mute that severing his wrist with his teeth would induce death?"

Gardiner shrugged his shoulders.

"It is always interesting," he said, "to know just which part of a story--if any--is thought worthy of consideration by a given individual."

THE BOOT

Mary Rex was more particularly my nurse, for my sister Ellen, a thoughtful, dependable child of eight, was her own mistress in most matters.

This was in the days when we got our servants from neighborhood families; before the Swedish and Irish invasion had made servants of us in turn. Mary was the youngest of an ancestored county family. Her great-grandfather had fought in the Revolution, as you might know by the great flint-lock musket over the Rexes' fireplace. A brother of his had formed part of a British square at Waterloo; and if Mary's own father had not lost his right hand at Gettysburg he would never have let his children go out to service. Poor soul, he bore the whole of his afflictions, those to his body and those to his pride, with a dignity not often seen in these degenerate days. He was by trade a blacksmith, and it was for that reason, I suppose, that Providence, who loves a little joke, elected for amputation his right hand rather than one or both of his feet. Since, even in these degenerate days, many a footless

blacksmith makes an honest living.

Mary was a smart, comely, upstanding young woman. Even my father, a dismal sceptic anent human frailty, said that he would freely trust her around the farthest corner in Christendom. And I gathered from the talk of my elders and betters that Mary was very pretty. People said it was a real joy to see a creature so young, so smiling, so pink and white, so graciously happy--in those degenerate days. I myself can see now that she must have been very pretty indeed. Her eyes, for instance, so blue in the blue, so white in the white, can't have changed at all--unless, perhaps, the shadows deep within the blue are deeper than they were when she was a girl. But even to-day you would have to travel far to see another middle-aged woman so smooth of forehead, so cleanly-cut of feature, so generally comely.

But if there was one thing in the world that I had formed no conclusions upon at the age of six it was female loveliness. To cuddle against a gentle mother when bogies were about had nothing whatsoever to do with that gentle mother's personal appearance. To strike valiantly at Mary's face when the hot water and the scrubbing-brush were going had nothing to do with the prettiness thereof. Nor did I consider my sister the less presentable by a black eye given and taken in the game of Little John and Robin Hood upon a log in the Baychester woods. And indeed I have been told, and believe it to be a fact, that the beauty before whom swelled my very earliest tides of affection was a pug-nosed, snaggle-toothed, freckled-faced tomboy, who if she had been but a jot uglier might have been exhibited to advantage in a dime museum. Peace, old agitations, peace!

Everybody knew the Rexes, as in any part of the world, for many years stable, everybody knows everybody else. In Westchester, before great strips of woodland and water became Pelham Bay Park, before the Swedes came, and the Irish, and the Italians, and the Germans--in other words, before land boomed--there had always been an amiable and uninjunctionable stability. Families had lived, for well or ill, in the same houses for years and years. So long had the portraits hung in the rich men's houses that if you moved them it was to disclose a brightly-fresh rectangle upon the wall behind. The box in the poor man's yard had been tended by the poor man's great-grand female relatives. Ours was a vicinage of memory and proper pride. We would no more have thought of inquiring into the morals of this public house or that than of expunging the sun from the heavens. They had always been there.

There was a man who left his wife and little children to fight against King George. He could think of but one thing to protect them against vagrant soldiers of either side, and that was to carve upon certain boards (which he nailed to the trees here and there along the boundaries of his farm):

BEWARR OF THE BOOLE DOGGES

When I was a child one of these signs still remained--at the left, just beyond Pelham Bridge. And people used to laugh and point at the great

trees and say that because of the sign the British had never dared to trespass and cut down the timber. Now the man had never owned a Boole Dogge, nor had any of his descendants. I doubt if there was ever one on the premises, unless latterly, perhaps, there has been a French bulldog or so let out of a passing automobile to enjoy a few moments of unconventional liberty. But the bluff had always held good. As my mother used to say: "I know--but then there _may_ be a bulldog now." And that farm was always out of bounds. I relate this for two reasons--to show how stable and conservative a neighborhood was ours, and because on that very farm, and chosen for the very reason which I have related, stood the hollow oak which is to play its majestic part in this modest narrative.

The apple orchards of the Boole Dogge Farm ran southerly to a hickory wood, the hickory wood to an oak wood, the oak wood to thick scrub of all sorts, the scrub to the sedge, and the sedge to the salt mud at low tide, and at high to the bassy waters themselves of inmost Pelham Bay. On the right was the long, black trestle of the Harlem River Branch Railroad, on the left the long-curved ironwork of Pelham Bridge. And the farm, promontoried with its woods and thick cover between these boundaries and more woods to the north, was an overgrown, run-down, desolate, lonely, deserted old place. Had it not been for the old sign that said "Bewarr," it must have been a great playground for children--for their picnics, and their hide-and-seeks, and their games at Indians. But the ferocious animals imagined by the old Revolutionary were as efficacious against trespassers as a cordon of police. And I remember to this day, I can feel still, the very-thrill of that wild surmise with which I followed Mary and my sister over the stone wall and into those forbidden and forbidding acres for the first time. But that comes later.

It was my sister who told me that Mary was engaged to be married. But I had noticed for some days how the neighbors went out of their way to accost her upon our walks; to banter her kindly, to shake hands with her, to wag their heads and look chin-chucks even if they gave none. Her face wore a beautiful mantling red for hours at a time. And instead of being made more sedate by her responsible and settling prospects she shed the half of her years, which were not many, and became the most delightful romp, a furious runner of races, swiftest of pursuers at tag, most subtle and sudden of hidens and poppers out, and full to the arch, scarlet brim of loud, clear laughter.

It was late spring now, lilacs in all the dooryards, all the houses being cleaned inside out, and they were to be married in the fall. They had picked the little house on the outskirts of Skinnertown not far from the Tory oak, in which they were to live. And often we made it the end of an excursion, and played at games devised by Mary to improve the appearance of the little yard. We gathered up in emulation old, broken china and bottles, and made them into a heap at the back; we cleared the yard of brush and dead wood, and pulled up weeds by the hundred-weight, and set out a wild rose or two and more valuable, if less lovely, plants that people gave Mary out of real gardens.

Will Braddish, a painter by trade, met us one day with brushes and a great bucket of white paint, and, while he and Mary sat upon the doorstep talking in low tones or directing in high, Ellen and I made shift to paint the little picket-fence until it was white as new snow. At odd times Braddish himself painted the little house (it was all of old-fashioned, long shingles) inside and out, and a friend of his got up on the roof with mortar and a trowel, and pointed-up the brick chimney; and my father and Mr. Sturtevant contributed a load of beautiful, sleek, rich pasture sod and the labor to lay it; so that by midsummer the little domain was the spickest, spannest little dream of a home in the whole county. The young couple bought furniture, and received gifts of furniture, prints, an A1 range, a tiny, shiny, desirable thing; and the whole world and all things in it smiled them in the face. Braddish, as you will have guessed, was a prosperous young man. He was popular, too, and of good habits. People said only against him that he was impulsive and had sudden fits of the devil's own temper, but that he recovered from these in a twinkling and before anything came of them. And even the merest child could see that he thought the world of Mary. I have seen him show her little attentions such as my sister retailed me of personages in fairy stories and chivalric histories. Once when there was a puddle to cross he made a causeway of his coat, like another Raleigh, and Mary crossed upon it, like one in a trance of tender happiness, oblivious of the fact that she might easily have gone around and saved the coat. His skin and his eyes were almost as clear as Mary's own, and he had a bold, dashing, independent way with him.

But it wasn't often that Braddish could get free of his manifold occupations: his painting contracts and his political engagements. He was by way of growing very influential in local politics, and people predicted an unstintedly successful life for him. He was considered unusually clever and able. His manners were superior to his station, and he had done a deal of heterogeneous reading. But, of course, whenever it was possible he was with Mary and helped her out with looking after Ellen and me. My mother, who was very timid about tramps, looked upon these occasions as in the nature of real blessings. There was nowhere in the countryside that we children might not safely venture with Will Braddish strolling behind. He loved children--he really did, a rare, rare thing--and he was big, and courageous, and strong, and quick. He was very tactful, too, on these excursions and talked a good part of the time for the three of us, instead of for Mary alone. Nice, honest talk it was, too, with just enough robbers, and highwaymen, and lions, and Indians to give it spice. But all the adventures through which he passed us were open and honest. How the noble heroes did get on in life, and how the wicked villains did catch it!

I remember once we were returning home past the Boole Dogge Farm, and Braddish, wiping his brow, for it was cruelly hot, seated himself as bold as could be on the boundary wall. The conversation had been upon robbers, and how they always, always got caught.

"It doesn't matter," Braddish said, "where they hide. Take this old farm. It's the best hiding-place in this end of the county--woods, and marshes, and old wells, and bushes, and hollows--"

We asked him in much awe if he had ever actually set foot on the place.

"Yes, indeed," he said; "when I was a boy I knew every inch of it; I was always hunting and trapping, and looking for arrowheads. And that was the best country. Once I spent a night in the woods yonder. The bridge was open to let a tugboat through and got stuck so they couldn't shut it, and there was no way back to Westchester except over the railroad trestle, and my father had said that I could go anywhere I pleased except on that trestle. And so here I was caught, and it came on to blither and blow, and I found an oak tree, all hollow like a little house, and I crept in and fell asleep and never woke till daylight. My father said next time I could come home by the trestle, or he'd know the reason why."

"But," said I, "weren't you afraid the bulldogs would get you?"

"Now, if they'd said bull-terriers," he said, "I might have had my doubts, but a bulldog's no more dangerous than a toadfish. He's like my old grandma. What teeth he has don't meet. And besides," he said, "there weren't any bulldogs on that farm. And I don't believe there ever were. Now, I'm not sure, sonny," he said, "but you climb up here--"

I climbed upon the wall, and he held me so that I should not fall.

"Do you see," said he, "way down yonder over the tops of the trees a dead limb sticking up?"

I saw it finally.

"Well," he said, "I'd stake something that that's a part of the old hollow oak. Shall we go and see?"

But Mary told him that the farm was out of bounds. And he thought a moment, and then swung his legs over the wall.

"I won't be two minutes," he said. "I'd like to see if I'm right--it's fifteen years ago--" And he strode off across the forbidden farm to the woods. When he came back he said that he had been right, and that nothing had changed much. He tossed me a flint arrowhead that he had picked up--he was always finding things, and we went on again.

When we got to the middle of Pelham Bridge we all stopped and leaned against the railing and looked down into the swift, swirling current. Braddish tore an old envelop into little pieces and dropped them overboard by pairs, so that we might see which would beat the other to a certain point.

But the shadows began to grow long now and presently Braddish had to leave us to attend a meeting in Westchester, and I remember how he turned and waved, just before the Boulevard dips to the causeway, and how Mary recollected something that she had meant to say and ran after him a little way calling, and he did not hear. And she came back

laughing, and red in the face, and breathing quick.

Two days later my father, who had started for the early train, came driving back to the house as if he had missed it. But he said, no, and his face was very grave--he had heard a piece of news that greatly concerned Mary, and he had come back to tell her. He went into the study with my mother, and presently they sent for Mary and she went in to them.

A few minutes later, through the closed door, Ellen and I heard a sudden, wailing cry.

Poor Braddish, it seems, in one of his ungovernable tempers had shot a man to death, and fled away no one knew whither.

II

The man killed was named Hagan. He was a red-faced, hard-drinking brute, not without sharp wits and a following--or better, a heeling. There had been bad blood between him and Braddish for some time over political differences of opinion and advancement. But into these Hagan had carried a circumstantial, if degenerate, imagination that had grown into and worried Braddish's peace of mind like a cancer. Details of the actual killing were kept from us children. But I gathered, since the only witnesses of the shooting were heelers of Hagan's, that it could in no wise be construed into an out-and-out act of self-defence, and so far as the law lay things looked bad for Braddish.

That he had not walked into the sheriff's office to give himself up made it look as if he himself felt the unjustifiability of his act, and it was predicted that when he was finally captured it would be to serve a life sentence at the very least. The friends of the late Hagan would hear of nothing less than hanging. It was a great pity (this was my father's attitude): Hagan was a bad lot and a good riddance; Braddish was an excellent young man, except for a bit of a temper, and here the law proposed to revenge the bad man upon the other forever and ever. And it was right and proper for the law so to do, more's the pity. But it was not Braddish that would be hit hardest, said my father, and here came in the inscrutable hand of Providence--it was Mary.

After the first outburst of feeling she had accepted her fate with a stanch reserve and went on with her duties much as usual. One ear was always close to the ground, you might say, to hear the first rumor of Braddish, either his capture or his whereabouts, that she might fly to him and comfort him, but the rest of her faculties remained in devoted attendance on my sister and me. Only there showed in them now and then a kind of tigerish passionateness, as when I fell off the sea-wall among the boulders and howled so dismally. She leaped down after and caught me to her in the wildest distress, and even when I stopped howling could not seem to put me down. Indeed, she held me so tight that if any of my

bones had been cracked by the tumble she must have finished by breaking them. The pathos of her efforts to romp with us as in happier days was lost upon me, I am happy to say. Nor did I, recalling to her what Braddish had said of robbers being inevitably caught, realize that I was stabbing her most cruelly. For she was, or tried to be, firm in the belief that Braddish would succeed where all others had failed. She had asked my father what would happen if Braddish got clean out of the United States, and he, hoping, I suppose, to be of indirect use to the young couple for whom he was heartily sorry, made her out a list of countries, so far as he knew them, wherein there was no extradition. My father hoped, I fondly believe, that she would get the list to Braddish for his guidance, conjecturing rightly that if Braddish made his whereabouts known to anybody it would be to Mary. But as to that, ten days passed before Mary knew a jot more of it than another. And I must believe that it came to her then entirely by inspiration.

We were passing the Boole Dogge Farm, my sister and I, intent upon seeing which of us could take the most hops without putting the held-up foot to the ground, when suddenly Mary, who had been strolling along laughing at us, stopped short in her tracks and turned, and stood looking over the green treetops to where the gaunt, dead limb of the hollow oak thrust sharply up from among them. But we had hopped on for quite a piece before we noticed that she no longer went alongside. So we stopped that game and ran back to her. What was it? Had she seen a rabbit? She laughed and looked very wistful. She was just thinking, children, that she would like to see the hollow tree where Will had passed the night. She was not excited--I can swear to that. She guessed nothing as yet. Her desire was really to the tree--as she might have coveted one of Will's baby shoes, or anything that had been his. She had already, poor girl, begun to draw, here and there, upon the past for sustenance.

First, she charged Ellen and me to wait for her in the road. But we rebelled. We swore (most falsely) that we were afeared. Since the teeth of bulldogs no longer met, we desired passionately to explore the forbidden farm, and had, indeed, extracted a free commission from my father so to do, but my mother had procrastinated and put us off. We laid these facts before Mary, and she said, very well, if our father had said we might go on the farm, go we might. He would, could and must make it right with our mother. And so, Mary leading, we climbed the wall.

Bulldogs' teeth or no bulldogs' teeth, my ancient fear of the place descended upon me, and had a rabbit leaped or a cat scuttled among the bushes I must have been palsied. The going across to the woods was waist high with weeds and brambles, damp and rank under foot. Whole squadrons of mosquitoes arose and hung about us in clouds, with a humming sound as of sawmills far away. But this was long before you took your malaria of mosquitoes, and we minded them no more than little children mind them to-day. Indeed, I can keep peacefully still even now to watch a mosquito batten and fatten upon my hand, to see his ravenous, pale abdomen swell to a vast smug redness--that physiological, or psychological, moment for which you wait ere you burst him.

The forbidden farm had, of course, its thousand novelties. I saw prickly pears in blossom upon a ledge of rock; a great lunar-moth resting drowsily, almost drunkenly, in the parasol shade of a wild-carrot blossom; here was the half of a wagon wheel, the wood rotted away, and there in the tangle an ancient cistern mouth of brick, the cistern filled to the brim with alluring rubbish. My sister sprang with a gurgle of delight to catch a garter snake, which eluded her; and a last year's brier, tough and humorously inclined, seized upon Mary by the skirts and legs, so that it was a matter of five minutes and piercing screams of merriment to cast her loose again. But soon we drew out of the hot sunshine into the old orchard with its paltry display of deformed, green, runt apples, and its magnificent columns and canopies of poison ivy--that most beautiful and least amiable of our indigenous plants; and then we got among scale-bark hickories, and there was one that had been fluted from top to bottom by a stroke of lightning; and here the little red squirrels were most unusually abundant and indignant; and there was a catbird that miauled exactly like a cat; and there was a spring among the roots of one great tree, and a broken teacup half buried in the sand at the bottom.

We left the hickories and entered among the oaks, and here was the greatest to-do imaginable to find the one that was hollow. Ellen went to the left, I to the right, and Mary down the middle. Whenever I came to an unusually big tree I tiptoed around the trunk, goggle-eyed, expecting the vasty hollow to open before me. And I am sure that Ellen, whom I had presently lost sight of, behaved in the same way. Mary also had disappeared, and feeling lonely all of a sudden I called to her. She answered a moment later in a strange voice. I thought that she must have fallen and hurt herself; but when I found her she was cheerful and smiling. She was standing with her back to a snug hollow in the vast stem of the very oak we had been looking for.

"This is it," she said, and turned and pointed to the hollow. "Where's Ellen?"

"Here, Ellen," I called, "here--_we've_ found it!"

Then Ellen came scampering through the wood; and first I climbed into the hollow and curled up to see what sort of a night I might have of it, and then I climbed out and Ellen climbed in--and then both in at once, and we kept house for a while and gave a couple of dinners and tea parties. And then quarreled about the probable size of Friar Tuck, and Ellen drew the line at further imaginings and left me alone in the hollow.

This extended all the way up the main trunk and all but out through the top. Here and there it pierced through the outer bark, so that slants of pale light served to carry the eye up and up until it became lost in inky blackness. Now and then dust and little showers of dry rot descended softly upon the upturned face; and if you put your ear close to the wood you could hear, as through the receiver of a telephone, things that were going on among the upper branches; as when the breeze puffed up and they sighed and creaked together. I could hear a squirrel

scampering and a woodpecker at work--or so I guessed, though it sounded more like a watch ticking. I made several essays to climb up the hollow, but the knotholes and crevices, and odds and ends of support, were too far removed from each other for the length of my limbs, and, furthermore, my efforts seemed to shake the whole tree and bring down whole smarting showers of dust and dry rot and even good-sized fragments. I got up a few feet, lost my hold, and fell into the soft, punky nest at the bottom.

"Can't you climb up?" said Ellen, who had recovered her temper by now. "Because somebody has climbed up and stuck an ol' shoe out of a knothole way up."

I climbed out of the hollow and followed her point. Sure enough--thirty feet or so from the ground the toe of a much-used leather boot stuck out through a knothole.

Mary refused to take an interest in the boot. It was high time we went home. She herself had a headache. Our mother would be angry with her for taking us on the forbidden farm. She was sorry she had done so. No, she wasn't angry. We were good children; she loved us. Wouldn't we come?

"I'll tell you," said she, and her face, which looked sick and pale, colored, "if you'll come now, and hurry, we'll just have time to stop on the bridge and have some races."

And sure enough, when we got to the bridge Mary produced a stained sheet of paper, and tore it quickly into little bits of pieces (we were pressed for time) and launched pair after pair of sea-going racers upon the swirling tide.

When the last pair were gone upon their merry career she drew a long breath, and seemed as one relieved of a weight.

"Perhaps," she said, "you needn't tell your mother where you've been--unless she asks you. Do you think that would be wrong?"

I had never known Mary to suggest deceit of any kind.

"If you think it would get you into trouble," said my sister, aged eight, very stiffly, "why, of course, we won't say anything."

Mary was troubled. Finally she drew a deep breath and flung out her hands.

"Of course, it would be wrong not to tell," she said. "You must tell her."

But by good fortune we met my father first and told him.

"And papa," said Ellen, she had been swung to his shoulder and there rode like a princess upon a genii, "what do you think, way up the trunk there was an old shoe sticking out of a knothole, and we all thought

that somebody must have climbed up inside and put it there. But brother couldn't climb up because he's too little, and Mary wouldn't try, and we thought maybe Sunday you'd go with us and see if you could climb up."

I don't know why my father happened to take the line that he did; he may have seen something in Mary's face that we children would not be likely to see. He laughed first, and told us a story.

It was about some children that he had once known, who had seen a boot sticking out of a tree, just as we had done, and how a frightful old witch had come along, and told them that if they went away for a year and a day and didn't say a word about the boot to any one, and then went back, they would by that time have grown sufficiently to climb up and get the boot, and that they would find it full of gold pieces. But if, during the year and the day, they so much as mentioned the boot to any one but their father, they would find it full of the most dreadful black and yellow spiders which would chase them all the way to Jericho, and bite their fat calves every few steps.

"This," said he, "may be that kind of a boot. Now promise not to talk about it for a year and a day--not even to me--and at the end of that time, why we'll all go and see what's in it. No," he said, "you mustn't go to look at it every now and then--that would spoil the charm. Let me see. This is the twenty-eighth--a year and a day--hum." And he made his calculations. Then he said: "By the way, Mary, don't you and the children ever get hungry between meals? If you were to take bread and meat, and make up sandwiches to take on your excursions, they'd never be missed. I'd see to it," he said, "that they weren't missed. Growing children, you know." And he strode on, Ellen riding on his shoulder like a princess on her genii.

III

Ellen and I were very firm to have nothing to do with the boot in the oak tree; and we had two picnics in the hollow and played for hours in the adjoining woods without once looking up. Mary had become very strict with us about scattering papers and eggshells at our out-of-door spreads; and whatever fragments of food were left over she would make into a neat package and hide away under a stone; but in other matters she became less and less precise: as, for instance, she left Ellen's best doll somewhere in the neighborhood of the hollow oak, and had to go all the way back for it in the dusk; and another time (we had also been to the store at Bartow for yeast) she left her purse that had two months' wages in it and more, but wasn't lucky enough to find that.

It was considered remarkable on all hands that Braddish had not yet been caught. Hagan's heelers, who swung many votes, had grown very sharp with the authorities, and no efforts were spared to locate the criminal (he was usually referred to as the "murderer") and round him up. Almost daily, for a time, we were constantly meeting parties of strange men,

strolling innocently about the country at large or private estates as if they were looking things over with a view to purchase. And now and then we met pairs of huntsmen, though there was no game in season, very citified, with brand-new shotguns, and knickerbockers, and English deer-stalker caps. And these were accompanied by dogs, neither well suited nor broken to the business of finding birds and holding them. There was one pair of sportsmen whose makeshift was a dropsical coach dog, very much spotted. And, I must be forgiven for telling the truth, one was followed, *_ventre a terre_*, by a dachshund. My father, a very grave man with his jest, said that these were famous detectives, so accoutred as not to excite comment. And their mere presence in it was enough to assure the least rational that Braddish must by now have fled the country. "Their business," he said, "is to close the stable door, if they can find it, and meanwhile to spend the money of the many in the roadhouses of the few."

But I have sometimes thought that the pseudo-sportsmen were used to give Braddish a foolhardy sense of security, so that other secret-service men, less open in method and less comic in aspect, might work unobserved. Indeed, it turned out that an under-gardener employed by Mrs. Kirkbride, our neighbor, about this time, a shambling, peaceful, half-witted goat of a man, was one such; and a perfect red-Indian upon a trail. It was Mary who spotted him. He hung about our kitchen door a good deal; and tried to make friends with her and sympathize with her. But he showed himself a jot too eager, and then a jot too peppery when she did not fall into his nets. Mary told my father, and my father told Mrs. Kirkbride. Mrs. Kirkbride had had a very satisfactory job at painting done for her by Braddish; and although a law-abiding woman, she did not propose personally to assist the law--even by holding her tongue. So she approached the under-gardener, at a time when the head-gardener and the coachman were in hearing, and she said, plenty loud enough to be heard: "Well, officer, have you found a clew yet? Have you pumped my coachman? He was friends with Braddish," and so on, so that she destroyed that man's utility for that place and time. But others were more fortunate. And all of a sudden the country was convulsed with excitement at hearing that Braddish had been seen on the Bartow Road at night, and had been fired at, but had made good his escape into the Boole Dogge Farm.

Bloodhounds were at once sent for. I remember that my father stayed up from town that thrilling morning, and walked up and down in front of the house looking up at the sky. I now know that he was conjuring it to rain with all his power of pity--prayer maybe--though I think, like most commuters, he was weak on prayer. Anyhow, rain it did. The sky had been overcast for two days, drawing slowly at the great beds of moisture in the northeast, and that morning, accompanied by high winds, the first drops fell and became presently a deluging northeaster, very cold for midsummer.

As chance would have it, there had been a false scent down on Throgg's Neck, upon which the nearest accessible bloodhounds had been employed. So that there was a delay in locating them, and fetching them to the Boole Dogge Farm. We went over to the Boulevard--my father, Ellen, and

I--all under umbrellas, to see them go by. They were a sorry pair of animals, and very weary with having been out all night, in all sorts of country, upon feet more accustomed to the smooth asphalt of a kennel. But there was a crowd of men with them, some in uniform, one I remember in a great coat, who rode upon one of the old-fashioned, high bicycles, and there was a show of clubs and bludgeons, and one man wore openly upon his hip a rusty, blued revolver, and on the whole the little procession had a look of determination and of power to injure that was rather terrible. I have sometimes thought that if I had been my father I would not have taken Ellen and me to see them go by. But why not? I would not have missed it for kingdoms.

By the time the pursuit had reached the Boole Dogge Farm so much rain had fallen as to render the bloodhounds' noses of no account. Still the police were not deterred from beating that neck of land with great thoroughness and energy. But it proved to be the old story of the needle in the haystack. Either they could not find the needle or there was no needle to be found. Of course, they discovered the spring with the broken cup, and the hollow oak, and made sure that it was here that Braddish slept at night, and they found other traces of his recent habitation--an ingenious snare with a catbird in it, still warm; the deep, inadvertent track of a foot in a spot of bog; but of the man himself neither sight nor sound.

In the afternoon, the rain having held up for a while, my father walked over to the farm to see how the hunt was progressing. This, I think, was for Mary's sake, who had been all the morning in so terrible a state of agitation that it seemed as if she must have news for better or worse, or die of suspense. My father was not away longer than necessary. He returned as he had gone, wearing a cheerful, incisive look very characteristic of him, and whistling short snatches of tunes.

He said that the beaters were still at work; but that they were wet to the skin and the heart was out of them. Yes. They would keep an eye on the place, but they were pretty well convinced that the bird had flown. If, however, the bird had not flown, said my father, he should be quick about it. We were on the front porch to meet my father, and I remember he paused and looked out over the bay for some time. It was roughish with occasional white caps, and had a dreary, stormy look. Our rowboat, moored to a landing stage or float, just off our place, was straining and tugging at her rope.

"That boat will blow loose," said my father, "if she isn't pulled up. But I'm not going to do it. I'm wet enough as it is."

"Would you like me to try, sir?" Mary called.

"What's the use?" said my father. "You'll only spoil your clothes. And, besides, the boat's old and rotten. She's not worth two dollars for kindling wood. I rather hope she does blow away, so as to provide me with a much-needed excuse to buy a better one. The oars, I see, are in her. Never mind, they're too heavy. I never liked them."

Then he put his arm around Ellen.

"By the way, Teenchy," said he, "your old boot is still sticking out of the oak tree."

"Oh, papa," cried Ellen, "you said we mustn't talk about it--or it would be full of spiders."

"I said you mustn't talk about it," said he. "So don't. Anyhow"--and he included Mary in his playful smile--"it's still there--so make the most of that."

He turned to go into the house, and then:

"Oh, by the way, Mary," said he, "you have not asked for your wages recently, and I think you are owed for three months. If you will come to the study in a little while I will give them to you." He was always somewhat quizzical. "Would you rather have cash or a check?"

Personally I didn't know the difference, and, at the time, I admired Mary exceedingly for being able to make a choice. She chose cash.

But till some years later I thought she must have repented this decision, for not long after she went into a kind of mild hysterics, and cried a good deal, and said something about "such kindness--this--side Heaven." And was heard to make certain comparisons between the thoughtfulness and pitifulness of a certain commuter and the Christ.

But these recollections are a little vague in my head as to actual number of tears shed, cries uttered and words spoken. But I do know for an incontestable fact that during the night, just as my father had prophesied, our rowboat was blown loose by the northeast gale, and has not been seen from that day to this. And I know that when I woke up in the morning and called to Mary she was not in her bed, and I found in mine, under the pillow, a ridiculous old-fashioned brooch, that I had ever loved to play with, and that had been Mary's mother's.

My father was very angry about Mary's going.

"Good Lord!" he said; "we can't pretend to conceal it!" But then he looked out over Pelham Bay, and it had swollen and waxed wrathful during the night, and was as a small ocean--with great waves and billows that came roaring over docks and sea-walls. And then his temper abated and he said: "Of course she would--any woman would--sense or no sense."

And, indeed, the more I know of women, which is to say, and I thank God for it, the less I know of them, the convinced am I that my father was right.

In other words, if a woman's man has nine chances in ten of drowning by himself she will go with him so as to make it ten chances, and a certainty of her being there whatever happens. And so, naturally, man cannot tolerate the thought of woman getting the right, based on

intelligence, to vote.

IV

Twenty-five years later I paid Mary and Braddish a pleasant Saturday-to-Monday visit in what foreign country it is not necessary to state. The tiny Skinnertown house of their earlier ambition, with its little yard, had now been succeeded by a great, roomy, rambling habitation, surrounded by thousands of acres sprinkled with flocks of fat, grazing sheep. It was a grand, rolling upland of a country that they had fled to; cool, summer weather all the year round, and no mosquitoes. Hospitable smoke curled from a dozen chimneys; shepherds galloped up on wiry horses and away again; scarlet passion-vines poured over roofs and verandas like cataracts of glory; and there was incessant laughter and chatter of children at play.

Of their final flight from the Boole Dogge Farm in my father's boat, across the bay to Long Island in the teeth of the northeaster, I now first heard the details; and of their subsequent hiding among swamps and woods; and how, when it had seemed that they must be captured and Braddish go to jail forever and ever, Mary thought that she could face the separation more cheerfully if she was his wife. And so one rainy night they knocked upon the door of a clergyman, and told him their story. They were starving, it seems, and it was necessary to look about for mercy. And, as luck would have it, the clergyman, an old man, had officiated at the wedding of Mary's parents; and he had had some trouble in his day with the law about a boundary fence, and was down on the law. And he fed them and married them, and said that he would square matters with his conscience--if he could. And he kept them in his attic for two days, which was their honeymoon--and then--a night of dogs and lanterns and shouting--he smuggled them off to the swamps again, and presided over their hiding until an opportunity came to get them aboard a tramp ship--and that was all there was to it, except that they had prospered and been happy ever since.

I asked Mary about my father's part in it. But she gave him a clean bill.

"He put two and two together," she said, "and he dropped a hint or two--and he paid me all my back wages in American money, and he made me a handsome present in English gold, but he never talked things over, never mentioned Will's name even."

"It was the toe of my boot," said Will, "sticking out of the tree that made him guess where I was. You see, I'd climbed up in the hollow to hide, and to keep there without moving I had to stick my foot out through a knothole. I was up there all the day they tried to get the bloodhounds after me, with my boot sticking out. And they were beating around that tree for hours, but nobody looked up."

"I've always wondered," said I, "why, they didn't send a man up inside the tree."

"I've always thought," said Will, "that nobody liked to propose it for fear he'd be elected to do it himself. But maybe it didn't enter anybody's head. Anyhow, all's well that ends well."

"Mary," I said, "do you remember how my father told Ellen and me to go back in a year and a day, and look in the boot?"

She nodded.

"Well," I said, "we went--hand in hand--and there was still a boot sticking out. And I climbed up, after several failures, and got it. It wasn't full of gold, but it did have two gold pieces in it. One each."

"What a memory your father had," said Mary: "he never forgot anything."

Later I was talking with Will alone, and I asked him why he had run away in the first place.

"Why," he said, "I had no chance with the law. The only outsiders who saw the shooting were friends of Hagan's; there was bad blood between us. They'd sworn to do for me. And they would. I shot Hagan with his own gun. He pulled it on me, and I turned it into him, by the greatest piece of quickness and good luck that ever I had. And somehow--somehow--I couldn't see myself swinging for that, or going to prison for life. And I saw my chance and took it. I told the whole thing to the minister that married us; he believed me, and so would any one that knew me then--except Hagan's friends, and whatever they believed they'd have sworn the opposite. Do you think your father thought I was a bloody murderer? Look here," he said, "I don't know just how to put it--it was twenty-five years ago, all that--Mary'll tell you, if you ask her, that she's been absolutely happy every minute of all that time--even when we were hiding in swamps and starving. Now that side of it wouldn't have entered the law's head, would it?" He smiled very peacefully. "Out here, of course," he said, "it's very different. Almost everybody here has gotten away from something or other. And mostly we've done well, and are happy and self-respecting. It's a big world," he looked out affectionately over his rolling, upland acres, "and a funny world. Did Mary tell you that I've just been re-elected sheriff?"

THE DESPOILER

Forrest paused when his explorations had brought him to the edge of the beechwood, all dappled with golden lights and umber shadows, and stood for a time brooding upon those intimate lawns and flowery gardens that seemed, as it were, but roofless extensions of the wide, open house.

It is probable that his brooding had in it an estimate of the cost of

these things. It was thus that he had looked upon the blooded horses in the river-fields and the belted cattle in the meadows. It was thus that his grave eyes passed beyond the gardens and moved from corner to corner of the house, from sill to cornice, relating the porticos and interminable row of French windows to dollars and cents. He had, of course, been of one mind, and now he was of two; but that octagonal slug of California minting, by which he resolved his doubts, fell heads, and he stepped with an acquiescent reluctance from the dappled shadows into the full sunlight of the gardens and moved slowly, with a kind of awkward and cadaverous grandeur, toward the house. He paused by the sundial to break a yellow rose from the vine out of which its fluted supporting column emerged. So standing, and regarding the rose slowly twirled in his fingers, he made a dark contrast to the brightly-colored gardens. His black cape hung in unbroken lines from his gaunt shoulders to his knees, and his face had the modeling and the gentle gloom of Dante's.

The rose fell from his hand, and he moved onward through the garden and entered the house as nonchalantly as if it had been his own. He found himself in a cool dining-room, with a great chimney-piece and beaded white paneling. The table was laid for seven, and Forrest's intuitive good taste caused his eyes to rest with more than passing interest upon the stately loving-cup, full of roses, that served for a centre-piece. But from its rosy garlands caught up in the mouths of demon-heads he turned suddenly to the portrait over the chimney-piece. It was darker and more sedate than the pictures to which Forrest was accustomed, but in effect no darker or more sedate than himself. The gentleman of the portrait, a somewhat pouchy-cheeked, hook-nosed Revolutionary, in whose wooden and chalky hand was a rolled document, seemed to return Forrest's glance with a kind of bored courtesy.

"That is probably the Signer," thought Forrest, and he went closer. "A great buck in your time," he approved.

The butler entered the dining-room from the pantry, and, though a man accustomed to emergencies, was considerably nonplussed at the sight of the stranger. That the stranger was a bona fide stranger, James, who had served the Ballins for thirty years, knew; but what manner of stranger, and whether a rogue or a man upon legitimate business, James could not so much as guess.

"I beg your pardon, sir," he said, "were you looking for some one?"

"Yes," said Forrest, perfectly at his ease, "and no."

"Shall I tell Mr. Ballin that you are here, sir?"

"I shall find him for myself, thank you," said Forrest, and he moved toward an open door that seemed to lead into the hall.

"By the way," he said, "there will be an extra at luncheon."

Very stately in his long, black cape, and with his pensive Dantesque

face, Forrest continued on his slow progress to the open door and went out of the dining-room. He crossed the hall with half an eye to its quiet tones and bowls of roses, and entered a room of bright chintz with a pattern of cornflowers, and full of sunlight. It was a very spacious room, and lively--a proper link between the gardens and the house; and here were many photographs in silver frames of smart men and women; and the Sunday papers with their colored supplements were strewn in disorder upon the floor. And it seemed to Forrest, so comfortable and intimate did it look, as if that room had been a part of his own life. Upon the blotter of a writing-table sprawled a check-book bound in yellow leather. And when Forrest saw that, he smiled. It came as a surprise that the teeth in that careworn face should be white and even. And in those rare and charming moments of his smiling he looked like a young man who has made many engagements with life which he proposes to fulfil, instead of like a man for whom the curious years reserve but one sensation more.

But Forrest did not remain any appreciable time in the cheerful living-room. A desire to explain and have it all over with was upon him; and he passed, rapidly now, from room to room, until in a far corner of the house he entered a writing-room furnished in severe simplicity with dark and dully-shining rosewood. This room was of an older fashion than any he had yet entered, and he guessed that it had been the Signer's workshop and had been preserved by his descendants without change. A pair of flintlock pistols, glinting silver, lay upon the desk; quill pens stood in a silver cup full of shot; a cramped map, drawn and colored by hand and yellow with age, hung above the mantel and purported, in bold printing with flourishes, to be The Proposed Route for the Erie Canal. Portraits of General Greene and Thomas Jefferson, by Stuart, also hung upon the walls. And there stood upon an octagonal table a bowl of roses.

There was a gentleman in the embrasure of a window, smoking a cigar and looking out. But at the sound of Forrest's step he turned an alert, close-cropped, gray head and stepped out of the embrasure.

"Mr. Ballin?" said Forrest.

"I am Mr. Ballin." His eyes perused the stranger with astonishing speed and deftness, without seeming to do so.

"It was the toss of a coin that decided me to come," said Forrest. "I have asked your butler to lay a place for me at luncheon."

So much assumption on the part of a stranger has a cheeky look in the printing. Yet Forrest's tone and manner far more resembled those of old friendship and intimacy than impertinence.

"Have I," said Ballin, smiling a little doubtfully, "ever had the pleasure of meeting you before? I have a poor memory for faces. But it seems to me that I should not have forgotten yours."

"You never saw me but the one time," said Forrest. "That was many years

ago, and you would not remember. You were a--little wild that night. You sat against me at a game of faro. But even if you had been yourself--I have changed very much. I was at that time, as you were, little more than a boy."

"Good Lord!" said Ballin, "were you a part of that hectic flush that to myself I only refer to as 'Sacramento'?"

"You do not look as if it had turned you into a drinking man," said Forrest.

"It didn't," said Ballin, and without seeing any reason for confiding in the stranger he proceeded to do so. "It was nip and tuck for a time," he said, "and then money came to me, and this old place and responsibilities, and I became, more from force of circumstances than from any inner impulse, a decentish citizen."

"The money made everything smooth, did it?" said Forrest. "I wonder."

"You wonder--what?" said Ballin.

"If it could--money alone. I have had it at times--not as you have had it--but in large, ready sums. Yet I think it made very little difference."

"What have you been doing since--Sacramento?" asked Ballin.

"Up to a month ago," said Forrest, "I kept on dealing--in different parts of the world--in San Francisco, in London--Cairo--Calcutta. And then the matter which brings me here was brought to my attention."

"Yes?" said Ballin, a little more coolly.

"When you were in Sacramento," Forrest went on quietly and evenly as if stating an acknowledged fact, "you did not expect to come into all this. Then your cousin, Ranger Ballin, and his son went down in the City of Pittsburgh; and all this"--he made a sudden, sweeping gesture with one of his long, well-kept hands--"came to you."

"Yes?" Ballin's voice still interrogated coolly.

Forrest broke into that naïve, boyish smile of his.

"My dear sir," said he, "I saw a play last winter in which the question is asked, 'Do you believe in Fairies?' I ask you, 'Do you believe in Gypsies?'"

"In what way?" Ballin asked, and he, too, smiled.

"Ranger Ballin," said Forrest, "had another son who was spirited away in childhood by the gypsies. That will explain this visit, which on the face of it is an impertinence. It will explain why I have entered this house without knocking, and have invited myself to luncheon. You see,

sir, all this"--and again he made the sudden, sweeping gesture--"is mine."

It speaks for Forrest's effect that, although reason told Ballin to doubt this cataclysmic statement, instinct convinced him that it was true. Yet what its truth might mean to him did not so convincingly appear. That he might be ousted from all that he looked on as his own did not yet occur to him, even vaguely.

"Then we are cousins," he said simply, and held out his hand. But Forrest did not take it at once.

"Do you understand what cousinship with me means to you?" he said.

"Why," said Ballin, "if you _are_ my cousin"--he tried to imply the doubt that he by no means felt--"there is surely enough for us both."

"Enough to make up for the years when there has been nothing?" Forrest smiled.

"It is a matter for lawyers to discuss, then," said Ballin quietly.

"Personally, I do not doubt that you believe yourself to be my cousin's son. But there is room, surely, in others for many doubts."

"Not in others," said Forrest, "who have been taught to know that two and two are four."

"Have you documentary proof of this astonishing statement?" said Ballin.

"Surely," said Forrest. And he drew from an inner pocket a bundle of documents bound with a tape. Ballin ran a perturbed but deft eye through them, while Forrest stood motionless, more like a shadow than a man. Then, presently, Ballin looked up with a stanch, honorable look.

"I pick no flaws here cousin," he said. "I--I congratulate you."

"Cousin," said Forrest, "it has been my business in life to see others take their medicine. But I have never seen so great a pill swallowed so calmly. Will you offer me your hand now?"

Ballin offered his hand grimly.

Then he tied the documents back into their tape and offered the bundle to Forrest.

"I am a careless man," said Forrest; "I might lose them. May I ask you to look after them for me?"

"Would you leave me alone with them?" asked Ballin.

"Of course," said Forrest.

Ballin opened an old-fashioned safe in the paneling and locked it upon

the despoiling documents. Yet his heart, in spite of its dread and bitterness, was warmed by the trustfulness of the despoiler.

"And now what?" he said.

"And now," said Forrest, "remember for a little while only that I am, let us say, an old friend of your youth. Forget for the present, if you can, who else I am, and what my recrudescence must mean to you. It is not a happiness"--he faltered with his winning smile--"to give pain."

II

"Your father," said Forrest, "says that I may have his seat at the head of the table. You see, Miss Dorothy, in the world in which I have lived there were no families. And I have the strongest desire to experiment in some of those things which I have missed.... Ballin," he exclaimed, "how lovely your daughters are!"

The young Earl of Moray glanced up mischievously.

"Do you think, sir," he drawled, "that I have made the best selection under the circumstances? Sometimes I think I ought to have made up to Ellen instead of Dorothy."

"What's the matter with _us_?" said Alice, and she laid her hand upon Evelyn's.

"Oh, you little rotters!" exclaimed the earl, whom they sometimes teased to the point of agony. "No man in his senses would look at _you_."

"Right-O!" said young Stephen Ballin, who made the eighth at table. "They're like germs," he explained to Forrest--"very troublesome to deal with."

"It's because we're twins," said Evelyn. "Everybody who isn't twins is down on them."

"It's because they are always beautiful and good," said Alice. "Why don't you stand up for us, father?"

It was noticed that Mr. Ballin was not looking well; that the chicken _mousse_ upon his plate was untouched, and that he fooled with his bread, breaking it, crumbling it, and rolling it into pellets. He pulled himself together and smiled upon his beloved twins.

Forrest had turned to the Earl of Moray.

"Was it your ancestor," he said, "who 'was a bra' gallant, and who raid at the gluve'?"

"I am confident of it," said the young Englishman.

"By all accounts," said Forrest, "he would have been a good hand with a derringer. Have you that gift for games?"

"I'm a very good golfer." said the earl, "but I thought a derringer was a kind of dish that babies ate gruel out of." He blushed becomingly.

"As ever," said Alice, "insular and ignorant."

"You prickly baby!" exclaimed the earl. "What is a derringer, Mr. Forrest?"

Forrest, having succeeded in drawing the attention of his immediate and prospective family from the ill looks of Mr. Ballin, proposed to keep his advantage.

"I will show you," he said. "Are my hands empty?"

"Quite so," said the earl.

"Keep your eyes on them," said Forrest, "so. Now, we will suppose that you have good reason to believe that I have stolen your horse. Call me a horse thief."

"Sir," said the earl, entering into the spirit of the game, "you are a horse thief!"

There appeared in Forrest's right hand, which had seemed empty, which had seemed not to move or to perform in any celeritous and magic manner, a very small, stubby, nickel pistol, with a caliber much too great for it, and down whose rifled muzzle the earl found himself gazing. The earl was startled. But he said, "I was mistaken, sir; you are not a horse thief." As mysteriously as it had come, the wicked little derringer disappeared. Forrest's hands remained innocently in plain view of all.

"Oh," said Alice, "if you had only pulled the trigger!"

Evelyn giggled.

"Frankly, Mr. Forrest," said the earl, "aren't the twins loathsome? But tell me, can you shoot that thing as magically as you play tricks with it?"

"It's not a target gun," said Forrest. "It's for instantaneous work at close range. One could probably hit a tossed coin with it, but one must have more weight and inches to the barrel and less explosion for fine practice."

"What would you call fine practice?" asked Stephen.

"Oh," said Forrest, "a given leg of a fly at twenty paces, or to snip a wart from a man's hand at twenty-five."

Mr. Ballin rose.

"I'm not feeling well," he said simply; "when the young people have finished with you, Forrest, you will find me in the Signer's room." He left the table and the room, very pale and shaky, for by this time the full meaning of Forrest's incontestable claim had clarified in his brain. He saw himself as if struck down by sudden poverty--of too long leisure and too advanced Forrest finished as abruptly as he had begun and rose from the piano. But for a few charged moments even the twins were silent.

"He used to sing that song," said Forrest, "so that the cold chills went galloping the length of a man's spine. He was as like you to look at," he turned to the earl, "as one star is like another. I cannot tell you how it has moved me to meet you. We were in a place called Grub Gulch, placer-mining--half a dozen of us. I came down with the scarlet fever. The others bolted, all but Charlie Stuart. He stayed. But by the time I was up, thanks to him, he was down--thanks to me. He died of it." Forrest finished very gravely.

"Good Lord!" said the earl.

"_He_ might ha' been a king," said Forrest. And he swallowed the lump that rose in his throat, and turned away so that his face could not be seen by them.

But, presently, he flashed about with his winning smile.

"What, would all you rich young people do if you hadn't a sou in the world?"

"Good Lord!" said Stephen, "everything I know how to do decently costs money."

"I feel sure," said Alice, her arm about Evelyn's waist, "that our beauty and goodness would see us through."

"I," said Ellen, "would quietly curl up and die."

"I," said Dorothy, "would sell my earl to the highest bidder."

"I shouldn't bring tuppence," said the earl.

"But you," said Forrest to the earl, "what would you do if you were stone-broke?"

"I would marry Dorothy to-morrow," said the earl, "instead of waiting until September. Fortunately, I have a certain amount of assets that the law won't allow me to get rid of."

"I wish you could," said Forrest.

"Why?" The earl wrinkled his eyebrows.

"I would like to see what you would do." He laid his hand lightly upon the young Englishman's shoulder. "You don't mind? I am an old man," he said, "but I cannot tell you--what meeting you has meant to me. I want you to come with me now, for a few minutes, to Mr. Ballin. Will you?"

III

"Mr. Ballin," said Forrest, his hand still on the earl's shoulder, "I want you to tell this young man what only you and I know."

Ballin looked up from his chair with the look of a sick man.

"It's this, Charlie," he said in a voice that came with difficulty. "It's a mistake to suppose that I am a rich man. Everything in this world that I honestly thought belonged to me belongs to Mr. Forrest."

The earl read truth in the ashen, careworn face of his love's father.

"But surely," he said anxiously, "Dorothy is still yours--to give."

Forrest's dark and brooding countenance became as if suddenly brightly lighted.

"My boy--my boy!" he cried, and he folded the wriggling and embarrassed Stuart in his long, gaunt arms.

I think an angel bringing glad tidings might have looked as Forrest did when, releasing the Earl of Moray, he turned upon the impulse and began to pour out words to Ballin.

"When I found out who I was," he said, "and realized for how long--oh, my Lord! how long--others had been enjoying what was mine, and that I had rubbed myself bare and bleeding against all the rough places of life, will you understand what a rage and bitterness against you all possessed me? And I came--oh, on wings--to trample, and to dispossess, and to sneer, and to send you packing.... But first the peace of the woods and the meadows, and the beech wood and the gardens, and the quiet hills and the little brooks staggered me. And then you--the way you took it, cousin!--all pale and wretched as you were; you were so calm, and you admitted the claim at once--and bore up.... Then I began to repent of the bitterness in which I had come.... And I left the papers in your keeping.... I thought--for I have known mostly evil--that, perhaps, you would destroy them.... It never entered your head.... You are clean white--and so are your girls and your boy.... I did not expect to find white people in possession. Why should I?... But I said, 'Surely the Englishman isn't white--he is after the money.' But right away I began to have that feeling, too, smoothed out of me.... And now, when he finds that instead of Dorothy being an heiress she is a pauper, he says, 'But

surely, Dorothy is still yours to give!

"I was a fool to come. Yet I am glad."

Neither Ballin nor the earl spoke.

"Could I have this room to myself for a little while?" asked Forrest.

"Of course," said Ballin; "it is yours."

Forrest bowed; the corners of his mouth turned a little upward.

"Will you come back in an hour--you, alone, cousin?"

Ballin nodded quietly.

"Come along, Charlie," he said, and together they left the room. But when Ballin returned alone, an hour later, the room was empty. Upon the Signer's writing-desk was a package addressed collectively to "The Ballins," and in one corner was written, "Blood will tell."

The package, on being opened, proved to contain nothing more substantial than ashes. And by the donor thereof there was never given any further sign.

ONE MORE MARTYR

A little one-act play, sufficiently dramatic, is revived from time to time among the Latin races for long runs. The play is of simplified, classic construction. But the principal part is variously interpreted by different actors. The minor characters, a priest and an officer, have no great latitude for individuality, while the work of the chorus comes as near mathematics as anything human can. The play is a passion play. No actor has ever played the principal part more than once. And the play differs from other plays in this, also, that there are not even traditional lines for the principal character to speak. He may say whatever comes into his head. He may say nothing. He may play his part with reticence or melodramatically. It does not matter. His is what actors call a fat part; it cannot be spoiled. And at the climax and curtain he may sink slowly to the ground or fall upon his back or upon his face. It does not matter. Once, before falling, a man leaped so violently upward and forward as to break the ropes with which his legs and arms were bound. Those who saw this performance cannot speak of it to this day without a shudder.

Under the management of General Weyler in Cuba this little play enjoyed, perhaps, its longest continuous run. Curiously enough, there were absolutely no profits to be divided at the end. But, then, think of the expense of production! Why, to enable the General to stage that play for so many nights--I mean sunrises--required the employment of several

hundred thousand men and actually bankrupted a nation. In this world one must pay like the devil for one's fancies. Think what Weyler paid: all the money that his country could beg or borrow; then his own reputation as a soldier, as a statesman, and as a man; ending with a series of monstrous mortgages on his own soul. For which, when it is finally sold at auction, there will not be bid so much as one breath of garlic.

When Juan D'Acosta's mother heard that her younger son Manuel had been taken prisoner by the Spaniards and was to be shot the following morning at sunrise she sat for an hour motionless, staring at the floor. Juan, as is, or was, well known, had died gloriously, a cigarette between his lips, after inestimable, if secret, services to Cuba. Nor had his execution been entirely a martyrdom. He was shot for a spy. He was a spy, and a very daring, clever, and self-effacing one. He had been caught within the Spanish lines with incriminating papers upon his person. And before they could secure him he had had the eternal satisfaction of ripping open two Spaniards with his knife so that they died. He was executed without a trial. His mother went out with others of his relatives to see him die. The memory of his dying had remained with her to comfort her for the fact of it. She had seen him, calm, and in her eyes very beautiful, standing in strong relief with his back to a white wall, a cigarette between his lips. There had not been the slightest bravado in his perfect self-possession. It had been that of a gentleman, which he was not by birth, and a man of the world; quiet, retiring and attentive. He had looked so courteous, so kind-hearted, so pure! He had spoken--on either side of his cigarette--for some moments to the priest, apologizing through him to God for whatever spots there may have been upon his soul. Then his eyes had sought his mother's among the spectators and remained steadfastly upon them, smiling, until the exactions of his part demanded that he face more to the front and look into the muzzles of the Mausers. The fire of his cigarette having burned too close to his lips for comfort, and his hands being tied, he spat the butt out of his mouth and allowed the last taste of smoke which he was to enjoy on earth to curl slowly off through his nostrils. Then, for it was evident that the edge of the sun would show presently above the rim of the world, he had drawn a breath or two of the fresh morning air and had spoken his last words in a clear, controlled voice.

"Whenever one of us dies," he had said, "it strengthens the cause of liberty instead of weakening it. I am so sure of this that I would like to come to life after being shot, so that I might be taken and shot again and again and again. You, my friends, are about to fire _for_ Cuba, not against her. Therefore, I thank you. I think that is all. Christ receive me."

The impact of the volley had flattened him backward against the wall with shocking violence, but he had remained on his feet for an appreciable interval of time and had then sunk slowly to his knees and had fallen quietly forward upon his face.

So her older boy had died, honoring himself and his country, after serving his country only. The memory of his life, deeds and dying was a comfort to her. And when she learned that Manuel, too, was to be shot,

and sat staring at the floor, it was not entirely of Manuel that she was thinking. She did not love Manuel as she had loved Juan. He had not been a comfort to her in any way. He had been a sneaking, cowardly child; he had grown into a vicious and cowardly young man. He was a patriot because he was afraid not to be; he had enlisted in the Cuban army because he was afraid not to. He had even participated in skirmishes, sweating with fear and discharging his rifle with his eyes closed. But he had been clever enough to conceal his white feathers, and he could talk in a modest, purposeful way, just like a genuine hero. He was to be shot, not because he was himself, but because he was Juan's brother. The Spaniards feared the whole family as a man fears a hornet's nest in the eaves and, because one hornet has stung him, wages exterminating war upon all hornets. In Manuel's case, however, there was a trial, short and unpleasant. The man was on his knees half the time, blubbering, abjuring, perspiring, and begging for mercy; swearing on his honor to betray his country wherever and whenever possible; to fight against her, to spy within her defenses and plans--anything, everything!

His judges were not impressed. They believed him to be acting. He was one of the D'Acostas; Juan's brother, Ferdinand's son--a hornet. Not the same type of hornet, but for that very reason, perhaps, the more to be feared. "When he finds," said the colonel who presided, "that he is to be shot beyond peradventure he will turn stoic like the others, you'll see. Even now he is probably laughing at us for being moved by his blubberings and entreaties. He wants to get away from us at any price. That's all. He wants a chance to sting us again. And that chance he will not get."

Oddly enough, the coward did turn stoic the moment he was formally condemned. But it was physical exhaustion as much as anything else; a sudden numbing of the senses, a kind of hideous hypnotism upon him by the idea of death. It lasted the better part of an hour. Then, alone in his cell, he hurled himself against the walls, screaming, or cowered upon the stone floor, pooling it with tears, sobbing horribly with his whole body, going now and again into convulsions of nausea. These actions were attributed by his guard to demoniacal rage, but not to fear. He thus fought blindly against the unfightable until about four in the afternoon, when exhaustion once more put a quietus upon him. It was then that his mother, having taken counsel at last with her patriot soul, visited him.

She had succeeded, not without difficulty, in gaining permission. It was not every mother who could manage a last interview with a condemned son. But she had bribed the colonel. She had given him in silver the savings of a lifetime.

The old woman sat down by her son and took his hand in hers. Then the door of the cell was closed upon them and locked. Manuel turned and collapsed against his mother's breast.

"It's all right, Manuel," she said in her quiet, cheerful voice. "I've seen the colonel."

Manuel looked up quickly, a glint of hope in his rodent eyes.

"What do you mean?" he said. His voice was hoarse. His mother bit her lips, for the hoarseness told her that her son had been screaming with fear. In that moment she almost hated him. But she controlled herself. She looked at him sidewise.

"The colonel tells me that you have offered to serve Spain if he will give you your life?"

This was a shrewd guess. She waited for Manuel's answer, not even hoping that it would be in the negative. She knew him through and through.

"Well," he choked, "it wouldn't do."

"That's where you are wrong, my son," she said. "The colonel, on the contrary, believes he can make use of you. He is going to let you go free."

Manuel could not believe his ears, it seemed. He kept croaking "What?" in his hoarse voice, his face brightening with each reiteration.

"But," she went on, "he does not wish this to be known to the Cubans. You see, if they knew that you had been allowed to go free it would counteract your usefulness, wouldn't it?"

"Yes--but--"

"Listen to me. Everything is to proceed as ordered and according to army regulations except one thing. The rifles which are to be fired at you will be loaded with blank cartridges. When the squad fires you must fall as if--as if you were dead. Then you will be put in a coffin and brought to me for burial. Then you will come to life. That is all."

She smiled into her son's face with a great gladness and patted his hands.

"Afterward," she said, "you will grow a beard and generally disguise yourself. It is thus that the colonel thinks he can best make use of your knowledge and cleverness. And, of course, at the first opportunity you will give the colonel the slip and once more take your place in the patriot army."

"Of course," said Manuel; "I never meant to do what I pretended I would."

"Of course not!" said his mother.

"But--"

"But what?"

"I don't see the necessity of having a mock execution. It's not nice to

have a lot of blank cartridges go off in your face."

"Nice!" The old woman sprang to her feet. She shook her finger in his face. "Nice! Haven't you any shred of courage in your great, hulking body? I don't believe you'll even face blank cartridges like a man--I believe you'll scream and blubber and be a shame to us all. You disgust me!" She spat on the floor. "Here I come to tell you that you are to be spared, and you're afraid to death of the means by which you are to go free. Why, I'd stand up to blank cartridges all day without turning a hair--or to bullets, for that matter--at two hundred metres, where I knew none of those Spanish idiots could hit me except by accident. I wouldn't expect you to play the man at a real execution or at anything real, but surely you can pull yourself together enough to play the man at a mock execution. What a chance! You can leave a reputation as great as your brother's--greater, even; you could crack jokes and burst out laughing just when they go to fire--"

Then, as suddenly as she had flown into a passion, she burst into tears and flung her arms about her boy and clung to him and mothered him until in the depths of his surly, craven heart he was touched and strengthened.

"Don't be afraid for me, mother," he said. "I do not like even the blank cartridges, God forgive me; but I shall not shame you."

She kissed him again and again and laughed and cried. And when the guard opened the door and said that the time was up she patted her boy upon the cheeks and shoulders and smiled bravely into his face. Then she left him.

The execution of Manuel D'Acosta was not less inspiring to the patriotic heart than that of his brother Juan. And who knows but that it may have been as difficult an act of control for the former to face the blank cartridges as for the latter to stand up to those loaded with ball? Like Juan, Manuel stood against the wall with a cigarette between his lips. Like Juan, he sought out his mother's face among the spectators and smiled at her bravely. He did not stand so modestly, so gentlemanly as Juan had done, but with a touch of bravado, an occasional half-swaggering swing from the hips, an upward tilt of the chin.

"I told you he would turn stoic," the colonel whispered to one of the officers who had taken part in the trial. "I know these Cubans."

It was all very edifying. Like Juan, Manuel spat out his cigarette when it had burned too short. But, unlike Juan, he made no dying speech. He felt that he was still too hoarse to be effective. Instead, at the command, "Aim!" he burst out laughing, as if in derision of the well-known lack of markmanship which prevailed among the Spaniards.

He was nearly torn in two.

Those who lifted him into his coffin noticed that the expression upon his face was one of blank astonishment, as if the beyond had contained

an immeasurable surprise for him.

His mother took a certain comfort from the manner of his dying, but it was the memory of her other boy that really enabled her to live out her life without going mad.

"MA'AM?"

In most affairs, except those which related to his matrimonial ventures, Marcus Antonius Saterlee was a patient man. On three occasions "an ardent temperament and the heart of a dove," as he himself had expressed it, had corralled a wife in worship and tenderness within his house. The first had been the love of his childhood; the wooing of the second had lasted but six weeks; that of the third but three. He rejoiced in the fact that he had been a good husband to three good women. He lamented that all were dead. Now and then he squirmed his bull head around on his bull body, and glanced across the aisle at the showy woman who was daintily picking a chicken wing. He himself was not toying with beefsteak, boiled eggs, mashed potatoes, cauliflower, lima, and string beans. He was eating them. Each time he looked at the lady he muttered something to his heart of a dove:

"Flighty. Too slight. Stuck on herself. Pin-head," etc.

With his food Saterlee was not patient. He dispensed with mastication. Neither was he patient of other people's matrimonial ventures. And, in particular, that contemplated and threatened by his son and heir was moving him across three hundred miles of inundated country as fast as a train could carry him. His son had written:

"DEAREST DAD--I've found Dorothy again. She's at Carcasonne. They thought her lungs were bad, but they aren't. We're going to be married a week from to-day--next Friday--at nine A.M. This marriage is going to take place, Daddy dear. You can't prevent it. I write this so's to be on the square. I'm inviting you to the wedding. I'll be hurt if you don't show up. What if Dorothy's mother is an actress and has been divorced twice? You've been a marrying man yourself, Dad. Dorothy is all darling from head to foot. But I love you, too, Daddy, and if you can't see it my way, why, God bless and keep you just the same."

JIM.

I can't deny that Marcus Antonius Saterlee was touched by his son's epistle. But he was not moved out of reason.

"The girl's mother," he said to himself, "is a painted, divorced jade." And he thought with pleasure of the faith, patience, and rectitude of the three gentle companions whom he had successively married and buried. "There was never any divorce in the Saterlee blood," he had prided himself. "Man or woman, we stick by our choice till he or she" (he was

usually precise) "turns up his or her toes. Not till then do we think of anybody else. But then we do, because it is not good to live alone, especially in a small community in Southern California."

He glanced once more at the showy lady across the aisle. She had finished her chicken wing, and was dipping her fingers in a finger-bowl, thus displaying to sparkling advantage a number of handsome rings.

"My boy's girl's mother a painted actress," he muttered as he looked. "Not if I know it." And then he muttered: "_You'd_ look like an actress if you was painted."

Though the words can not have been distinguished, the sounds were audible.

"Sir?" said the lady, stiffly but courteously.

"Nothing, Ma'am," muttered Mark Anthony, much abashed. "I'm surprised to see so much water in this arid corner of the world, where I have often suffered for want of it. I must have been talking to myself to that effect. I hope you will excuse me."

The lady looked out of the window--not hers, but Saterlee's.

"It does look," she said, "as if the waters had divorced themselves from the bed of ocean."

She delivered this in a quick but telling voice. Saterlee was shocked at the comparison.

"I suppose," she continued, "we may attribute those constant and tedious delays to which we have been subjected all day to the premature melting of snow in the fastnesses of the Sierras?"

This phrase did not shock Saterlee. He was amazed by the power of memory which it proved. For three hours earlier he had read a close paraphrase of it in a copy of the *Tomb City Picayune* which he had bought at that city.

The train ran slower and slower, and out on to a shallow embankment.

"Do you think we shall ever get anywhere?" queried the lady.

"Not when we expect to, Ma'am," said Saterlee. He began to scrub his strong mouth with his napkin, lest he should return to the smoker with stains of boiled eggs upon him.

The train gave a jolt. And then, very quietly, the dining-car rolled over on its side down the embankment. There was a subdued smashing of china and glass. A clergyman at one of the rear tables quietly remarked, "Washout," and Saterlee, who had not forgotten the days when he had learned to fall from a bucking bronco, relaxed his great muscles and swore roundly, sonorously, and at great length. The car came to rest at

the bottom of the embankment, less on its side than on its top. For a moment--or so it seemed--all was perfectly quiet. Then (at one and the same moment) a lady in the extreme front of the diner was heard exclaiming faintly: "You're pinching me," and out of the tail of his eye Saterlee saw the showy lady across the aisle descending upon him through the air. She was accompanied by the hook and leg table upon which she had made her delicate meal, and all its appurtenances, including ice-water and a wide open jar of very thin mustard.

"Thank you," she murmured, as her impact drove most of the breath out of Saterlee's bull body. "How strong you are!"

"When you are rested, Ma'am," said he, with extreme punctiliousness, "I think we may leave the car by climbing over the sides of the seats on this side. Perhaps you can manage to let me pass you in case the door is jammed. I could open it."

He preceded her over and over the sides of the seats, opened the car door, which was not jammed, and helped her to the ground. And then, his heart of a parent having wakened to the situation, he forgot her and forsook her. He pulled a time-table from his pocket; he consulted a mile-post, which had had the good sense to stop opposite the end of the car from which he had alighted. It was forty miles to Carcassonne--and only two to Grub City--a lovely city of the plain, consisting of one corrugated-iron saloon. He remembered to have seen it--with its great misleading sign, upon which were emblazoned the noble words: "Life-Saving Station."

"Grub City--hire buggy--drive Carcassonne," he muttered, and without a glance at the train which had betrayed him, or at the lady who had fallen upon him, so to speak, out of the skies, he moved forward with great strides, leaped a puddle, regained the embankment, and hastened along the ties, skipping every other one.

II

Progress is wonderful in the Far West. Since he had last seen it only a year had passed, and yet the lovely city of Grub had doubled its size. It now consisted of two saloons: the old "Life-Saving Station" and the new "Like Father Used to Take." The proprietor of the new saloon was the old saloon-keeper's son-in-law, and these, with their flourishing and, no doubt, amiable families, were socially gathered on the shady side of the Life-Saving Station. The shade was much the same sort that is furnished by trees in more favored localities, and the population of Grub City was enjoying itself. The rival wives, mother and daughter, ample, rosy women, were busy stitching baby clothes. Children already arrived were playing with a soap-box and choice pebbles and a tin mug at keeping saloon. A sunburned-haired, flaming maiden of sixteen was at work upon a dress of white muslin, and a young man of eighteen, brother by his looks to the younger saloon-keeper, heartily feasted a pair of

honest blue eyes upon her plump hands as they came and went with the needle. It looked as if another year might see a third saloon in Grub City.

Saterlee approached the group, some of whose elders had been watching and discussing his approach.

"Do any of you own a boat?" he asked.

"Train D-railed?" queried the proprietor of the Life-Saving Station, "or was you just out for a walk?"

The family and family-in-law laughed appreciatively.

"The train put to sea in a washout," said Saterlee, "and all the passengers were drowned."

"Where you want to git?" asked the proprietor.

"Carcassonne," said Saterlee. "Not the junction--the resort."

"Well," said the proprietor, "there's just one horse and just one trap in Grub City, and they ain't for hire."

Again the united families laughed appreciatively. It was evident that a prophet is not always without honor in his own land.

"We've no use for them," said the great man, with the noble abandoning gesture of a Spanish grandee about to present a horse to a man travelling by canoe. And he added: "So they're for sale. Now what do you think they'd be worth to you?"

All the honest blue eyes, and there were no other colors, widened upon Saterlee.

"Fifty dollars," he said, as one accustomed to business.

It was then that a panting, female voice was raised behind him. "Sixty dollars!"

His showy acquaintance of the dining-car had followed him along the ties as fast as she could, and was just come up.

"I thought you two was a trust," commented the proprietor's wife, pausing with her needle in the air. "But it seems you ain't even a community of interests."

"Seventy dollars," said Saterlee quietly.

The lady advanced to his side, counting the change in her purse.

"Seventy-six dollars and eighty-five cents," she said.

"Eighty dollars," said Saterlee.

"Oh!" cried the lady, "seventy-six eighty-five is every cent I've got with me--and you're no gentleman to bid higher."

"Eighty," repeated Saterlee.

"Eighty dollars," said the son-in-law, "for a horse and buggy that a man's never seen is too good to be true."

"They are yours, sir," said the father-in-law, and he turned to his daughter's husband. "Is that horse in your cellar or in mine?" he asked. "I ain't set eyes on her since February."

The son-in-law, sent to fetch the horse, first paused at the cellar door of the Life-Saving Station, then, with a shake of the head and an "I remember _now_" expression, he approached and entered the subterrene of his own house and business, and disappeared, saying: "Whoa, there! Steady you!"

Saterlee turned quietly to the angry and tearful vision whom he had so callously outbid.

"Ma'am," he said, "if we come to my stop first or thereabouts, the buggy is yours to go on with. If we reach yours first, it's mine."

"Oh!" she exclaimed, her face brightening, "how good you are. But you'll let me go halves on the purchase money."

"If I appeared rude just now," he said, "it was to save a lady's pocket. Now then, you've wet them high-heeled shoes. Wherever you're going, it's a long drive. Let's go inside and dry our feet while they're hitching up. Which is your house?"

The proprietor of the Life-Saving Station indicated that building with his thumb, and told his daughter of the white muslin dress to kindle a fire in the stove. She slid her future wedding finery into a large paper bag, and entered the saloon by the "Family Entrance," ardently followed by her future husband.

The proprietor, Saterlee, and the showy lady followed more slowly, discussing roads.

"Now," said Saterlee, "if you're going further than Carcassonne Junction, I'll get off there. And either I'll walk to the hotel or hire another trap."

"Why!" exclaimed the lady, "are you bound for Carcassonne House? So am I."

"In that case," said Saterlee elegantly, "we'll go the whole hog together."

"Quite so," said the lady primly.

"You'd ought to make Carcassonne House by midnight," said the proprietor.

"Put your feet up on that there stove."

"Heavens!" exclaimed the lady. "And if we don't make it by midnight?"

"We will by one or two o'clock."

The lady became very grave.

"Of course," she said, "it can't be helped. But it would be ever so much nicer if we could get in before midnight."

"I take your point, Ma'am," said Saterlee. "Before midnight is just a buggy ride--after midnight means being out all night together. I feel for you, Ma'am, but I'm dinged if I see how we can help ourselves. It's five now." He counted on his fingers: "six--seven--eight--nine--ten--'leven--twelve--seven hours--seven into forty--five and five-sevenths.... Ma'am," he said, "I can promise nothing. It's all up to the horse."

"Of course," said the lady, "it doesn't really matter. But," and she spoke a little bitterly, "several times in my life my actions and my motives have been open to misconstruction, and they have been misconstrued. I have suffered, sir, much."

"Well, Ma'am," said Saterlee, "my reputation as a married man and a father of many children is mixed up in this, too. If we are in late--or out late rather--and there's any talk--I guess I can quiet some of it. I rather guess I can."

He rose to his feet, a vast, round, deep man, glowing with health and energy.

"I once quieted a bull, Ma'am," said he, "by the horns. I would a held him till help came if one of the horns hadn't come off, and he ran away."

The proprietor entered the conversation with an insinuating wedge of a voice.

"I don't like to mind other folks' business," he said, "but if the lady is fretting about bein' out all night with a total stranger, I feel it my dooty to remark that in Grub City there is a justice of the peace." He bowed and made a gesture which either indicated his whole person, or that smug and bulging portion of it to which the gesture was more directly applied.

Saterlee and the lady did not look at each other and laugh. They were painfully embarrassed.

"Nothing like a sound splice," suggested the Justice, still hopeful of

being helpful. "Failing that, you've a long row to hoe, and I suggest a life saver for the gent and a nip o' the same for the lady. I'd like you to see the bar," he added. "Mine is the show place of this here city--mirrors--peacock feathers--Ariadne in the nood--cash register--and everything hunky-dunk."

"We'll go you," said Saterlee. "At any rate, I will."

"Oh, I must see, too," said the lady, and both were relieved at the turn which the conversation had taken.

The proprietor removed the cheese-cloth fly protector from the two-by-three mirror over the bar, slipped a white jacket over his blue shirt, and rubbed his hands together invitingly, as if washing them.

"What's your pleasure, gents?" said he.

As the lady approached the bar she stumbled. Saterlee caught her by the elbow.

"That rail down there," he said, "ain't to trip over. It's to rest your foot on. So." He showed her. With the first sign of humor that she had shown, the lady suddenly and very capitally mimicked his attitude. And in a tough voice (really an excellent piece of acting): "What's yours, kid?" she said. And then blushed to the eyes, and was very much ashamed of herself. But Saterlee and the bartender were delighted. They roared with laughter.

"Next thing," said the bartender, "she'll pull a gun and shoot up the place."

Saterlee said: "Rye."

"I want to be in it," said the lady. "Can you make me something that looks like a drink, and isn't?"

"Scotch," said the proprietor without hesitation.

"No--no," she said, "Water and coloring matter."

She was fitted finally with a pony of water containing a few drops of Spanish Red and an olive.

The three touched glasses and wished each other luck all around. Saterlee paid eighty dollars and some change across the bar. But the proprietor pushed back the change.

"The drinks," he said grandly, "was on the house."

The united families bade them farewell, and Saterlee brought down the whip sharply upon the bony flank of the old horse which he had bought. But not for a whole minute did the sensation caused by the whip appear to travel to the ancient mare's brain. Not till reaching a deep puddle did she seem suddenly aware of the fact that she had been whipped. Then, however, she rushed through the puddle, covering Saterlee and the lady with mud, and having reached the other side, fell once more into a halting walk.

The lady was tightly wedged between Saterlee and the side of the buggy. Every now and then Saterlee made a tremendous effort to make himself narrower, but it was no use.

"If you begin to get numb," he said, "tell me, and I'll get out and walk a spell.... How clear the air is! Seems as if you could stretch out your hand and touch the mountains. Do you see that shadow half way up--on the left--about three feet off? Carcassonne House is somewhere in that shadow. And it's forty miles away."

Once more the road ran under a shallow of water. And once more the old mare remembered that she had been whipped, and made a rush for it. Fresh mud was added to that which had already dried upon them by the dry miracle of the air.

"She'd ought to have been a motor-boat," said Saterlee, the mud which had entered his mouth gritting unpleasantly between his teeth. "Last year there was _one_ spring hole _somewhere_ in these parts--this year it's all lakes and rivers--never was such rains before in the memory of man. Wonder what Gila River's doing?"

"What is Gila River?" she asked.

"It's a sand gully," he said, "that winds down from the mountains, and out across the plain, like a sure enough river. Only there's no water in it, only a damp spot here and there. But I was thinking that maybe it'll be going some now. We ought to strike it before dark."

The mare rushed through another puddle.

The lady laughed. "Please don't bother to hold her," she said; "I don't mind--now."

"I guess your dress ain't really hurt," commented Saterlee. "I remember my old woman--Anna--had a brown silk that got a mud bath, and came through all right."

"This is an old rag, anyway," said the showy lady, who was still showy in spite of a wart-like knot of dried mud on the end of her nose. And she glanced at her spattered but graceful and expensive white linen and hand-embroidered dress.

"Well, I can see one thing," said Saterlee, "that you've made up your

mind to go through this experience like a good sport. I wish I didn't have to take up so much room."

"Never mind," she said, "I like to think that I could go to sleep without danger of falling out."

"That's so--that's so," said Saterlee. "Maybe it's just as well we're something of a tight fit."

"I have always mistrusted thin men," said the lady, and she hastily added: "Not that you're _fat_"

"My bones are covered," said Saterlee; "I admit it."

"Yes," she said, "but with big muscles and sinews."

"I am not weak," said Saterlee; "I admit it."

"What air this is," exclaimed the lady; "what delicious air. No wonder it cures people with lung trouble. Still, I'm glad mine are sound."

"I'm glad to hear you say that, Ma'am," said Saterlee. "When you said you were bound for Carcassonne House, I thought to myself, 'Mebbe she's got it,' and I felt mighty sorry."

"Do I look like a consumptive?" she asked.

"Bless me--no," said he. "But you're not stout, and, considering where you said you was going, you mustn't blame me for putting two and two together and getting the wrong answer."

"I don't blame you at all," she said, but a little stiffly. "It was perfectly natural. No," she said, "my daughter is at Carcassonne House. She had a very heavy cold--and other troubles--and _two_ doctors agreed that her lungs were threatened. Well, perhaps they were. I sent her to Carcassonne House on the doctors' recommendation. And it seems that she's just as sound as I am."

"What a relief to you, Ma'am," said Saterlee hastily.

"Yes," she said, but without enthusiasm, "a great relief."

He screwed his massive head around on his massive neck, not without difficulty, and looked at her. His voice sounded hurt.

"You don't seem very glad, Ma'am," he said.

Her answer, on a totally different topic, surprised him.

"Do you believe in blood?" she said. "Do you believe that blood will--_must_ tell?"

"Ma'am," he said, "if I can draw my check for twenty-five thousand

dollars it's because I was born believing that blood will tell. It's because I've acted on it all my life. And it's the truth, and I've made a fortune out of it.... Cattle," he added in explanation.

"I don't know what you think of women," she said, "who talk of their affairs to strangers. But my heart is so full of mine. I did so hope to reach Carcassonne early this evening. It don't seem to me as if I could stand hours and hours behind that horse without talking to some one. Do you mind if I talk to you?" she appealed. "Somehow you're so big and steady-minded--you don't seem like a stranger."

"Ma'am," said Saterlee, the most chivalrous courtesy in his voice, for hers had sounded truly distressed, "fire away!"

"It's about my daughter," she said. "She has made up her mind to marry a young man whom I scarcely know. But about him and his antecedents I know this: that his father has buried three wives."

The blood rushed into Saterlee's face and nearly strangled him. But the lady, who was leaning forward, elbows on knees and face between hands, did not perceive this convulsion of nature.

"If blood counts for anything," said she, "the son has perhaps the same brutish instincts. A nice prospect for my girl--to suffer--to die--and to be superseded. The man's second wife was in her grave but three weeks when he had taken a third. I am told he is a great, rough, bullying man. No wonder the poor souls died. The son is a tremendous great fellow, too. Oh! blood will tell every time," she exclaimed. "M. A. Saterlee, the cattle man--do you know him?"

"Yep!" Saterlee managed, with an effort that would have moved a ton.

"I am going to appeal to her," said the lady. "I have been a good mother to her. I have suffered for her. And she must--she shall--listen to me."

"If I can help in any way," said Saterlee, somewhat grimly, "you can count on me.... Not," he said a little later, "that I'm in entire sympathy with your views, Ma'am.... Now, if you'd said this man Saterlee had divorced three wives...."

The lady started. And in her turn suffered from a torrential rush of blood to the face. Saterlee perceived it through her spread fingers, and was pleased.

"If you had said that this man," he went on, "had tired of his first wife and had divorced her, or been divorced by her, because his desire was to another woman, then I would go your antipathy for him, Ma'am. But I understand he buried a wife, and took another, and so on. There is a difference. Because God Almighty Himself says in one of His books that man was not meant to live alone. Mebbe, Ma'am, the agony of losing a faithful and tender companion is what sets a man--some men--to looking for a successor. Mebbe the more a man loved his dead wife the quicker is he driven to find a living woman that he can love. But for people who

can't cling together until death--and death alone part 'em--for such people, Ma'am, I don't give a ding."

"And you are wrong," said the lady, who, although nettled by the applicability of his remarks to her own case, had recovered her composure. "Let us say that a good woman marries a man, and that he dies--not the _death_--but dies to her. Tires of her, carries his love to another, and all that. Isn't he as dead, even if she loved him, as if he had really died? He is dead to her--buried--men don't come back. Well, maybe the more she loved that man the quicker she is to get the service read over him--that's divorce--and find another whom she can trust and love. Suppose that happens to her twice. The cases would seem identical, sir, I think. Except that I could understand divorcing a man who had become intolerable to me; but I could never, never fancy myself marrying again--if my husband, in the course of nature, had died still loving me, still faithful to me. So you see the cases are not identical. And that only remarriage after divorce is defensible."

"I take your point," said Saterlee. She had spoken warmly and vehemently, with an honest ring in her voice. "I have never thought of it along those lines. See that furrow across the road--that's where a snake has crossed. But I may as well tell you, Ma'am, that I myself have buried more than one wife. And yet when I size myself up to myself I don't seem a regular hell-hound."

"If we are to be on an honest footing," said the lady, "I must tell you that I have divorced more than one husband, and yet when I size myself up, as you call it, I do not seem to myself a lost woman. It's true that I act for my living--"

"I know," he interrupted, "you are Mrs. Kimbal. But I thought I knew more about you than I seem to. I'm Saterlee. And my business at Carcasonne House is the same as yours."

She was silent for a moment. And then:

"Well," she said, "here we are. And that's lucky in a way. We both seem to want the same thing--that is, to keep our children from marrying each other. We can talk the matter over and decide how to do it."

"We can talk it over anyway, as you say," said Saterlee. "But--" and he fished in his pocket and brought out his son's letter and gave it to her. She read it in the waning light.

"But," he repeated gently, "that don't read like a letter that a brute of a son would write to a brute of a father; now, does it?"

She did not answer. But she opened her purse and took out a carefully and minutely folded sheet of note-paper.

"That's my Dolly's letter to me," she said, "and it doesn't sound like--" her voice broke. He took the letter from her and read it.

"No, it doesn't," he said. And he said it roughly, because nothing brought rough speech out of the man so surely as tears--when they were in his own eyes.

"Well," said Mrs. Kimbal with a sigh, "let's talk."

"No," said Saterlee, "let's think."

IV

They could hear from far ahead a sound as of roaring waters.

"That," said Saterlee dryly, "will be Gila River. Mebbe we'll have to think about getting across that first. It's a river now, by the sound of it, if it never was before."

"Fortunately it's not dark yet," said Mrs. Kimbal.

"The last time I had trouble with a river," said Saterlee, "was when my first wife died. That was the American River in flood. I had to cross it to get a doctor. We'd gone prospectin'--just the old woman and me--more for a lark than profit."

"Yes?" said Mrs. Kimbal sympathetically.

"She took sick in an hour," he went on. "From what I've heard since, I guess it was appendicitis. Anyway, I rode off for help, hell for leather, and when I come to the river the whole thing was roaring and foaming like a waterfall. My horse, and he was a good one, couldn't make it. But I did. And when I come to it on the return trip with the doctor, he gave one look and folded his arms. 'Mark,' he said, 'I'm no boaster, but my life is not without value. I think it's my duty not to attempt this crossing.' 'Jim,' I said, 'if you don't your soul will be scotched. Don't you know it? Folks'll point at you as the doctor that didn't dare.' 'It's not the daring, Mark,' he says, 'it's wanting to be sure that I make the right choice.' I says: 'She was in terrible pain, Jim. Many a time she's done you a good turn; some you know of, some you don't.' That fetched him. He caught up his bridle and drove his spurs into his horse, and was swept down-stream like a leaf. I rode along the bank to help if I could. But he got across on a long diagonal--horse and all. I waved to him to go on and not mind about me. And he rode off at the gallop. But I was too heavy, I guess. I lost my second horse in that flood, and had to foot it into camp. I was too late. Pain had made her unconscious, and she was dead. But before givin' in she'd wrote me a letter." He broke off short. "And there's Gila River," he said.

"I hoped you were going to tell me what your poor wife said in her letter," said Mrs. Kimbal.

"Oh, Ma'am," he said, hesitated, cleared his throat, and became routed

and confused.

"If you'd rather not--" said Mrs. Kimbal.

"It isn't that," he said. "It would seem like bragging."

"Surely not," she said.

Saterlee, with his eyes on the broad, brown flood which they were approaching, repeated like a lesson:

"Mark--I'm dying. I want it to do good, not harm. Jenny always thought the world of you. You'll be lonely when I'm gone. I don't want you to be lonely. You gave me peace on earth. And you can't be happy unless you've got a woman to pet and pamper. That's your nature--"

He paused.

"That was all," he said, and wiped his forehead with the palm of his hand. "It just stopped there."

"I'm glad you told me," said Mrs. Kimbal gently. "It will be a lesson to me not to spring to conclusions, and not to make up my mind about things I'm not familiar with."

When they came to where the road disappeared under the swift unbroken brown of Gila River, the old horse paused of her own accord, and, turning her bony and scarred head a half revolution, stared almost rudely at the occupants of the buggy.

"It all depends," said Saterlee, "how deep the water runs over the road, and whether we can keep to the road. You see, it comes out higher up than it goes in. Can you swim, Ma'am?"

Mrs. Kimbal admitted that, in clothes made to the purpose, and in very shallow water, she was not without proficiency.

"Would you rather we turned back?" he asked.

"I feel sure you'll get me over," said she.

"Then," said Saterlee, "let's put the hood down. In case we do capsize, we don't want to get caught under it."

Saterlee on his side, and Mrs. Kimbal, not without exclamations of annoyance, on hers, broke the toggle-joints that held the dilapidated hood in place, and thrust it backward and down. At once the air seemed to circulate with greater freshness.

For some moments Saterlee considered the river, up-stream, down-stream, and across, knitting his brows to see better, for the light was failing by leaps and bounds. Then, in an embarrassed voice:

"I've _got_ to do it," he said. "It's only right."

"What?" said Mrs. Kimbal.

"I feel sure," he said, "that under the circumstances you'll make every allowance, Ma'am."

Without further hesitation--in fact, with almost desperate haste, as if wishing to dispose of a disagreeable duty--he ripped open the buttons of his waistcoat and removed it at the same time with his coat, as if the two had been but one garment. He tossed them into the bottom of the buggy in a disorderly heap. But Mrs. Kimbal rescued them, separated them, folded them neatly, and stowed them under the seat.

Saterlee made no comment. He was thinking of the state of a shirt that he had had on since early morning, and was wondering how, with his elbows pressed very tightly to his sides, he could possibly manage to unlace his boots. He made one or two tentative efforts. But Mrs. Kimbal seemed to divine the cause of his embarrassment.

"_Please_," she said, "don't mind anything--on my account."

He reached desperately, and regardlessly, for his boots, unlaced them, and took them off.

"Why," exclaimed Mrs. Kimbal, "_both_ your heels need darning!"

Saterlee had tied his boots together, and was fastening them around his neck by the remainder of the laces.

"I haven't anybody to do my darning now," he said. "My girls are all at school, except two that's married. So--" He finished his knot, took the reins in his left hand and the whip in his right.

At first the old mare would not budge. Switching was of no avail. Saterlee brought down the whip upon her with a sound like that of small cannon. She sighed and walked gingerly into the river.

The water rose slowly (or the river bottom shelved very gradually), and they were half-way across before it had reached the hubs of the wheels. But the mare appeared to be in deeper. She refused to advance, and once more turned and stared with a kind of wistful rudeness. Then she saw the whip, before it fell, made a desperate plunge, and floundered forward into deep water--but without the buggy.

One rotten shaft had broken clean off, both rotten traces, and the reins, upon which hitherto there had been no warning pull, were jerked from Saterlee's loose fingers. The old mare reached the further shore presently, swimming and scrambling upon a descending diagonal, stalked sedately up the bank, and then stood still, only turning her head to look at the buggy stranded in mid-stream. The sight appeared to arouse whatever of youthful mischief remained in the feeble old heart. She seemed to gather herself for a tremendous effort, then snorted once, and

kicked thrice--three feeble kicks of perhaps six inches in the perpendicular.

Mrs. Kimbal exploded into laughter.

"Wouldn't you know she was a woman?" she said.

But Saterlee was climbing out of the buggy.

"Now," said he, "if you'll just tie my coat round your neck by the sleeves--let the vest go hang--and then you'll have to let me carry you."

Mrs. Kimbal did as she was told. But the buggy, relieved at last of all weight, slid off sideways with the current, turned turtle, and was carried swiftly down-stream. Saterlee staggering, for the footing was uncertain, and holding Mrs. Kimbal high in his arms, started for shore. The water rose above his waist, and kept rising. He halted, bracing himself against the current.

"Ma'am," he said in a discouraged voice, "it's no use. I've just got to let you get wet. We've got to swim to make it."

"All right," she said cheerfully.

"Some folks," he said, "likes to go overboard sudden; some likes to go in by degrees."

"Between the two for me," said Mrs. Kimbal. "Not suddenly, but firmly and without hesitation."

She gave a little shivery gasp.

"It's not really cold," she said. "How strong the current pulls. Will you have to swim and tow me?"

"Yes," he said.

"Then wait," she said. "Don't let me be carried away."

He steadied her while she drew the hat-pins from her hat and dropped it as carelessly on the water as if that had been her dressing-table. Then she took down her hair. It was in two great brown, shining braids. The ends disappeared in the water, listing down-stream.

Shorn of her hat and her elaborate hair-dressing, the lady was no longer showy, and Saterlee, out of the tail of an admiring eye, began to see real beauties about her that had hitherto eluded him. Whatever other good qualities and virtues she may have tossed overboard during a stormy and unhappy life, she had still her nerve with her. So Saterlee told himself.

"It will be easier, won't it," she said, "if you have my hair to hold

by? I think I can manage to keep on my back."

"May I, Ma'am?" said Saterlee.

She laughed at his embarrassment. And half-thrust the two great braids into the keeping of his strong left hand.

A moment later Saterlee could no longer keep his footing.

"Now, Ma'am," he said, "just let yourself go."

And he swam to shallow water, not without great labor, towing Mrs. Kimbal by the hair. But here he picked her up in his arms, this time with no word spoken, and carried her ashore. Some moments passed.

"Well," she said, laughing, "aren't you going to put me down?"

"Oh!" said he, terribly confused, "I forgot. I was just casting an eye around for that horse. She's gone."

"Never mind--we'll walk."

"It'll be heavy going, wet as you are," said he.

"I'll soon be dry in this air," she said.

Saterlee managed to pull his boots on over his wet socks, and Mrs. Kimbal, having given him his wet coat from her neck, stooped and wrung as much water as she could from her clothes.

It was now nearly dark, but they found the road and went on.

"What time is it?" she asked.

"My watch was in my vest," said Saterlee.

"How far to Carcasonne House?"

"'Bout thirty miles."

She did not speak again for some time.

"Well," she said, a little hardness in her voice, "you'll hardly be in time to steer your boy away from my girl."

"No," said he, "I won't. An' you'll hardly be in time to steer your girl away from my boy."

"Oh," she said, "you misconceive me entirely, Mr. Saterlee. As far as I'm concerned, my only regret _now_ is that I shan't be in time to dance at the wedding."

"Ma'am?" he said, and there was something husky in his voice.

About midnight they saw a light, and, forsaking what they believed in hopeful moments to be the road, they made for it across country. Across open spaces of sand, into gullies and out of gullies, through stinging patches of yucca and prickly pear, through breast-high chaparral, meshed, knotted, and matted, like a clumsy weaving together of very tough ropes, some with thorns, and all with sharp points and elbows.

They had long since dispensed with all conversation except what bore on their situation. Earlier in the night the darkness and the stars had wormed a story of divorce out of Mrs. Kimbal, and Saterlee had found himself longing to have the man at hand and by the throat.

And she had prattled of her many failures on the stage and, latterly, of her more successful ventures, and of a baby boy that she had had, and how that while she was off playing "on the road" her husband had come in drunk and had given the baby the wrong medicine. And it was about then that she had left off conversing.

For in joy it is hard enough to find the way in the dark, while for those in sorrow it is not often that it can be found at all.

The light proved to be a lantern upon the little porch of a ramshackle shanty. An old man with immense horn-rimmed spectacles was reading by it out of a tattered magazine. When the couple came close, the old man looked up from his reading, and blessed his soul several times.

"It do beat the Dutch!" he exclaimed in whining nasal tones, "if here ain't two more."

"Two more what?" said Saterlee.

"It's the floods, I reckon," whined the old man. "There's three on the kitchen floor and there's two ladies in my bed. That's why I'm sittin' up. There wa'n't no bed for a man in his own house. But I found this here old copy of the _Medical Revoo_, 'n' I'm puttin' in the time with erysipelis."

"But," said Saterlee, "you must find some place for this lady to rest. She is worn out with walking and hunger."

"Stop!" whined the old man, smiting his thigh, "if there ain't that there mattress in the loft! And I clean forgot, and told the boys that I hadn't nothin' better than a rug or two 'n the kitchen floor."

"A mattress!" exclaimed Saterlee. "Splendid! I guess you can sleep some on anything near as good as a mattress. Can't you, ma'am?"

"Indeed I could!" she said. "But you have been through as much as I have--more. I won't take it."

The old man's whine interrupted.

"Ain't you two married?" he said.

"Nop," said Saterlee shortly.

"Now ain't that ridiculous?" meditated the old man; "I thought you was all along." His eyes brightened behind the spectacles. "It ain't for me to interfere _in_ course," he said, "but hereabouts I'm a Justice of the Peace." Neither spoke.

"I could rouse up the boys in the kitchen for witnesses," he insinuated.

Saterlee turned suddenly to Mrs. Kimbal, but his voice was very humble.

"Ma'am?" he suggested.

MR. HOLIDAY

Mr. Holiday stepped upon the rear platform of his car, the Mishawaka, exactly two seconds before the express, with a series of faint, well-oiled jolts, began to crawl forward and issue from beneath the glass roof of the Grand Central into the damp, pelting snow. Mr. Holiday called the porter and told him for the good of his soul that fifty years ago travelling had not been the easy matter that it was to-day. This off his mind, he pulled an _Evening Post_ from his pocket and dismissed the porter by beginning to read. He still wore his overcoat and high silk hat. These he would not remove until time had proved that the temperature of his car was properly regulated.

He became restless after a while and hurried to the forward compartment of the Mishawaka to see if all his trunks had been put on. He counted them over several times, and each time he came to the black trunk he sniffed and wrinkled up his nose indignantly. The black trunk was filled with the most ridiculous and expensive rubbish that he had ever been called upon to purchase. When his married daughters and his wife had learned, by "prying," that he was going to New York on business, they had gathered about him with lists as long as his arm, and they had badgered him and pestered him until he had flown into a passion and snatched the lists and thrown them on the floor. But at that the ladies had looked such indignant, heart-broken daggers at him that, very ungraciously, it is true, and with language that made their sensibilities hop like peas in a pan, he had felt obliged to relent. He had gathered up the lists and stuffed them into his pocket, and had turned away with one bitter and awful phrase.

"Waste not, want not!" he had said.

He now glared and sniffed at the black trunk, and called for the porter.

"Do you know what's in that trunk?" he said in a pettish, indignant voice. "It's full of Christmas presents for my grandchildren. It's got crocodiles in it and lions and Billy Possums and music-boxes and dolls and yachts and steam-engines and spiders and monkeys and doll's furniture and china. It cost me seven hundred and forty-two dollars and nine cents to fill that trunk. Do you know where I wish it was?"

The porter did not know.

"I wish it was in Jericho!" said Mr. Holiday.

He fingered the brass knob of the door that led forward to the regular coaches, turned it presently, and closed it behind him.

His progress through the train resembled that of a mongoose turned loose in new quarters. Nothing escaped his prying scrutiny or love of petty information. If he came to a smoking compartment, he would thrust aside the curtain and peer in. If it contained not more than three persons, he would then enter, seat himself, and proceed to ask them personal questions. It was curious that people so seldom resented being questioned by Mr. Holiday; perhaps his evident sincerity in seeking for information accounted for this; perhaps the fact that he was famous, and that nearly everybody in the country knew him by sight. Perhaps it is impossible for a little gentleman of eighty, very smartly dressed, with a carnation in his buttonhole, to be impertinent. And then he took such immense and childish pleasure in the answers that he got, and sometimes wrote them down in his note-book, with comments, as:

"Got into conversation with a lady with a flat face. She gave me her age as forty-two. I should have said nearer sixty.

"Man of fifty tells me has had wart on nose for twenty-five years; has had it removed by electrolysis twice, but it persists. Tell him that I have never had a wart."

Etc., etc.

He asked people their ages, whence they came, where they were going; what they did for a living; if they drank; if they smoked; if their parents were alive; what their beefsteak cost them a pound; what kind of underwear they wore; what church they attended; if they shaved themselves; if married; if single; the number of their children; why they did not have more children; how many trunks they had in the baggage-car; whether they had seen to it that their trunks were put on board, etc. Very young men sometimes gave him joking and sportive answers; but it did not take him long to catch such drifts, and he usually managed to crush their sponsors thoroughly. For he had the great white dignity of years upon his head; and the dignity of two or three hundred million dollars at his back.

During his peregrinations he came to a closed door which tempted him strangely. It was probably the door of a private state-room; it might be the door of a dust closet. He meditated, with his finger upon the knob. "I'll just open it slowly," he thought, "and if I make a mistake I'll say I thought it was a smoking compartment."

As the door opened a smell of roses came out. Huddled into the seat that rides forward was a beautiful girl, very much dishevelled and weeping bitterly, with her head upon one of those coarse white pillows which the Pullman Company provides. Her roses lay upon the seat opposite. She was so self-centred in her misery that she was not aware that the door had been opened, a head thrust in and withdrawn, and the door closed. But she was sure that a still, small voice had suddenly spoken in her mind, and said: "Brace up." Presently she stopped crying, as became one who had been made the subject of a manifestation, and began to put her hair in order at the narrow mirror between the two windows. Meanwhile, though Mr. Holiday was making himself scarce, as the saying is, he was consumed with interest to know why the beautiful girl was weeping. _And he meant to find out_.

But in the meantime another case provoked his interest. A handsome woman of thirty-five occupied Section 7 in Car 6. She was dressed in close-fitting black, with a touch of white at her throat and wrists.

Mr. Holiday had seen her from the extreme end of the car, and by the time he was opposite to where she sat it became necessary for him to have an answer to the questions that had presented themselves about her. Without any awkward preliminaries, he bent over and said:

"I've been wondering, ma'am, if you are dressed in black for your father or your husband."

She looked up, recognized the famous eccentric, and smiled.

"Won't you sit down, Mr. Holiday?" she said, and made room for him.

"I wear black," she said, when he had seated himself, "not because I am in mourning for anybody, but because I think it's becoming to me. You see, I have very light-colored hair."

"Does all that hair grow on your head?" Mr. Holiday asked, simply and without offence.

"Every bit of it," she said.

"I have a splendid head of hair, too," he commented. "But there's a young man in the car back of this who'll be twenty-two years of age in February, and he's got more dandruff than hair. Where are you going?"

"Cleveland."

"Is that your home?"

"No. I'm a bird of passage."

"What is your name?"

"I am Miss Hampton," she said, and she hoped that he might have heard of her. But he hadn't. And she explained herself. "I'm to play at the Euclid Theatre Christmas night."

"An actor?" he said.

"Well," she admitted, "some say so, and some won't hear of it."

"How much money do you earn?"

"Two hundred dollars a week."

Mr. Holiday wrote that in his note-book.

"I've got some little nieces and nephews in New York," she volunteered.

"Don't you think it's hard to be a genuine aunt and to have to spend Christmas alone in a strange place?"

"Not for two hundred dollars a week," said Mr. Holiday unsympathetically. "You ought to thank your stars and garters."

Presently, after patting her on the back with two fingers, he rose, bowed, and passed on down the aisle. On the right, in the end section, was a very old couple, with snow-white hair, and a great deal of old-fashioned luggage. Mr. Holiday greeted them cordially, and asked their ages. The old gentleman was seventy-six and proud of it; the old lady was seventy. Mr. Holiday informed them that he was eighty, but that they were probably the next oldest people on the train. Anyway, he would find out and let them know. They smiled good-naturedly, and the old lady cuddled a little against the old gentleman, for it was cold in that car. Mr. Holiday turned abruptly.

"I forgot to ask you where you are going?" he said.

They told him that they were going to spend Christmas with their daughter and son-in-law and the new baby in Cleveland. It was a long journey. But the season made them feel young and strong. Did Mr. Holiday think there was any danger of being delayed by the snow? It was coming down very fast. They could not remember ever to have been in a sleeping-car when it was snowing so hard outside. Mr. Holiday said that he would ask the conductor about the snow, and let them know.

In the smoking compartment of the next car forward sat a very young man, all alone. He looked at once sulky and frightened. He wasn't smoking, but was drumming on the window sill with his finger nails. He had a gardenia in his button-hole, and was dressed evidently in his very best suit--a handsome dark gray, over a malaga-grape-colored waistcoat. In his necktie was a diamond horseshoe pin.

"Young man," said Mr. Holiday, seating himself, "what makes you look so cross?"

The young man started to say, "None of your business," but perceived in time the eager face and snow-white hair of his questioner, and checked himself.

"Why," he said tolerantly, "do I look as savage as all that?"

"It isn't money troubles," said Mr. Holiday, "or you would have pawned that diamond pin."

"Wouldn't you be cross," said the young man, "if you had to look forward to sitting up all night in a cold smoking compartment?"

"Can't you get a berth?"

"I had a drawing-room," said the young man, "but at the last minute I had to give it up to a lady."

Mr. Holiday's eyes twinkled with benign interest. He had connected the gardenia in the young man's coat with the roses of the girl who was weeping.

"I know," he said, "drawing-room, Car 5. She was crying, but I told her to brace up, and I guess she's stopped."

The young man jumped to his feet.

"Oh!" he said.

Mr. Holiday chuckled.

"I was right," he said. "I've been right seven times out of the ten for twenty-five years. I've kept a record."

Upon an impulse the young man checked his headlong inclination to rush to the girl who was weeping.

"If you are right as often as that," he said, "for God's sake tell me what to do."

"Certainly," said Mr. Holiday, "and it won't cost you a cent. What's the matter?"

"_She_" said the young man with an accent, for there was but the one, "came to the station to see me off. She gave me this." He touched the gardenia gently. "I gave her some roses. Just as the train started to pull out I dared her to come with me ... she came!"

"Tut--tut!" said Mr. Holiday.

"What are we to do?" cried the young man.

"Go back and sit with her," said Mr. Holiday, "and leave the door wide open. I'm going through the train now to see who's on board; so don't worry. Leave it all to me."

The last car forward before you came to the baggage-car and the express car was a common day coach. It was draughty. It had been used as a smoker in a period not so very remote. A dog must have passed an uncomfortable night in it.

Near the rear door sat a man in a new derby hat and a new black coat. Further forward on the same side three children had stuffed themselves into one seat. The middle child, a well-grown girl of thirteen or fourteen, seemed by her superior height to shelter the little tots at her side. Only the blue imitation sailor caps of these appeared above the top of the seat; and the top of each cap, including that worn by the older girl, had a centrepiece of white about the size of a gentleman's visiting card. Mr. Holiday promised himself the pleasure of investigating these later. In the meanwhile his interest was excited by the ears of the man in the new derby. They were not large, but they had an appearance of sticking out further than was necessary; and Mr. Holiday was about to ask their owner the reason why, when he noticed for himself that it was because the owner's hair had been cut so very, very short. Indeed, he had little gray eighth-inch bristles instead of hair. Mr. Holiday wondered why. He seated himself behind the man, and leaned forward. The man stirred uneasily.

"I should think you'd be afraid of catching cold in this draughty car with your hair cut so short," said Mr. Holiday.

"I am," said the man tersely.

"Why did you let them cut it so short then?"

"Let them!" grunted the man, with ineffable scorn. "Let them! You'd have let them!"

"I would not," retorted Mr. Holiday crisply. "My wife cuts my hair for me, just the way I tell her to."

The man turned a careworn, unhappy face.

"My wife used to cut mine," he said. "But then I--I got into the habit of having it done for me.... Ever been to Ohio Penitentiary, mister? ... That's the finest tonsorial parlor in America--anything from a shave to the electric treatment."

"Ohio Penitentiary is a jail for felons," said Mr. Holiday severely.

"Quite so," said the man, "as I was telling you."

His voice had a plaintive, subdued note of defiance in it. It was that of a person who is tired of lying and beating about the bush.

"When did you get out?" asked Mr. Holiday simply.

"Eight days ago," said the man, "and when I get good and sick of looking for jobs and getting turned down--I guess I'll go back."

"First they make you work," said Mr. Holiday with a pleased chuckle, "and then they won't let you work. That's the law. But you take my advice--you fool 'em!"

"I never fooled anybody," said the man, and he ripped a holy name from the depths of his downheartedness.

Mr. Holiday had extracted his note-book, and under cover of the seat-back was preparing to take notes and make comments.

"What did you use to do for a living--before?" he asked.

"I was teller in a bank."

"And what happened?"

"Then," said the man, "the missus had twins, followed by typhoid fever." His admissions came with hopeless frankness. "And I couldn't pay for all that luxury. So I stole."

"What bank were you teller in?"

"The Painsville Bank--Painsville. I'm going to them now to--to see if they won't let up. The wife says that's the thing to do--go right to the boil of trouble and prick it."

"What did your wife do while you were away?" asked Mr. Holiday delicately.

"She did odd jobs, and brought the twins up healthy."

"I remember the Painsville business," said Mr. Holiday, "because I own stock in that bank. You only took about two hundred dollars."

"That was all I needed," said the man. "It saved the missus and the kids--so what's the odds?"

"But don't you intend to pay it back?"

"Not if the world won't let me earn any money. I tried for jobs all to-day, and yesterday, and the day before. I told my story straight. The missus wrote that was the thing to do. But I guess she's wrong for once. What would you do if you were a banker and I came to you and said: 'I'm just out of jail, where I went for stealing; but I mean to be honest. Won't you give me work?'"

Mr. Holiday wondered what he would do. He was beginning to like the

ex-convict's frankness.

"Do you know who I am?" he asked.

"Everybody knows you by sight, Mr. Holiday."

"Then you know," said the little old gentleman, "that I've sent plenty of people to jail in my time--plenty of them."

"I've heard that said," said the man.

"But," said Mr. Holiday sharply, "nobody ever tells stories about the wrongdoers I have forgiven. Your case never came to me. I believe I would have shown mercy."

He closed his note-book and rose.

"Keep telling your story straight, my man, and asking for work."

He paused, as if waiting a reply; but the man only grunted, and he passed forward to the children. First he examined the visiting-card effects on the tops of their hats, and noticed that these were paper labels sewed down, and bearing the names and destinations of the little passengers. Freddie, Alice, and Euphemia Caldwell, reading from left to right, were consigned in the care of the conductor to Silas Caldwell, Painsville, Ohio.

Alice had her arms around Freddie and Euphemia, and her pretty head was bent first to one and then to the other. Mr. Holiday seated himself gently behind the trio, and listened for some time. He learned that "mother" was in the hospital, and "father" had to be with her, and that the children were going to "Uncle Silas" until sent for. And Uncle Silas was a very "grouchy" man, and one must mind one's P's and Q's, and never be naughty, or Uncle Silas would have the law of one. But she, Alice, would take care of them.

"Going to spend Christmas with Uncle, are you?" piped Mr. Holiday suddenly; "that's right!"

The little tots, very much interested and startled, faced about, but Alice looked like a little reproving angel.

"Oh!" she said, climbing out of the seat, "I must speak with you first,"

Mr. Holiday was actually surprised; but he went aside with the child, where the tots could not hear.

Absolutely without consciousness of doing so, Alice patted and rearranged the old gentleman's carnation, and talked to him in a gentle, reproving tone.

"I've done everything I could," she said, "to keep the idea of Christmas

away from them. They didn't know when it came until you spoke. But now they know, and I don't know what I shall do ... our uncle," she explained, "doesn't celebrate Christmas; he made father understand that before he agreed to take us until mother got well. So father and I agreed we'd keep putting Christmas off until mother was well and we were all together again. But now they'll want their Christmas--and _I_ can't give it to them."

"Well, well," said Mr. Holiday cheerfully. "I _have_ put my foot in it. And I suppose Freddie and Euphemia will carry on and raise Cain when they find there's no Santy Claus in Painsville?"

"Don't you fret, Alice," said Mr. Holiday. "When I get people in trouble I get 'em out. Your Uncle Silas is a friend of mine--he has to be. I'm going to send him a telegram." He smiled, and chucked her under the chin. "I'm not much on Christmas myself," he said, "but an obligation's an obligation." He shook hands with her, nodded in a friendly way to the ex-convict, and passed out of the car on his return journey, consulting his note-book as he went.

First he revisited the old couple, and told them that next to himself they were in fact the oldest persons on the train, and that they need not worry about the snow because he had asked the conductor about it, and the conductor had said that it was all right. Then he started to revisit Miss Hampton, but was turned from his purpose by a new face in the car. The new face rose, thin and white, on a long thin neck from a clerical collar, and its owner was busy with a pad and a pencil.

"Writing a sermon?" asked Mr. Holiday.

The clergyman looked up and smiled.

"No, sir," he said. "I'm doing a sum in addition, and making heavy work of it."

"I'll do it for you," said Mr. Holiday eagerly. He was a lightning adder, and not in the least averse to showing off. The clergyman, still smiling, yielded up the pad.

"I'm trying to make it come to two thousand dollars," he said, "and I can't."

"That's because," said Mr. Holiday, returning the pad after one swift glance up and down the columns, "it only comes to thirteen hundred and twenty-five dollars. You had the answer correct."

"It's for repairs to the church," said the clergyman dismally. "The contractor calls for two thousand; and I'm just about ready to give up."

"Well," said Mr. Holiday, "I'm going to get my dinner now, and maybe later I can give you some idea how to raise the balance. I've raised a good deal of money in my time." He chuckled.

"I know that, Mr. Holiday," said the clergyman, "and I should be glad of any--suggestion that you might care to make."

Mr. Holiday seated himself facing Miss Hampton. She smiled, and nodded, and laid aside the book she had been reading. Mr. Holiday's eyes twinkled.

"I'm going to turn you out of this section," he said.

"Why?" She smiled.

"Because there's a young friend of mine wants it," he said.

"Now, _really!_" said Miss Hampton, still smiling.

"You're going to carry your duds to the drawing-room, Car 5," he said. Then, the twinkle in his eyes becoming exceedingly gossipy and sportive, he told her about the young people who had eloped without exactly meaning to. Miss Hampton was delighted.

She and Mr. Holiday hurried to the drawing-room in Car 5, of which the door had been left wide open, according to Mr. Holiday's orders. The young people looked very happy and unhappy all at once, and as soon as Mr. Holiday had begun to state their situation to them without mincing, they assumed a tremendous pair of blushes, which they were not able to efface for a long time.

"And now," he finished, glaring at the uncomfortable young man, "you bring your duds and put them in Miss Hampton's section. And then you gather up Miss Hampton's duds and bring 'em in here." And he turned and shook his finger at the girl. "Mind you," he said, "don't you ever run away again without a chaperon. They don't grow on every bush."

Somehow, Mr. Holiday had overlooked the other drawing-room (B) in Car 5. Now he came suddenly upon it, and peered in, for the door was ajar. But he drew back with a sharp jerk as if he had seen a rattlesnake. All the kindness went out of the old gentleman's face, and between anger and hatred he turned white.

"Jolyff!" he muttered. And, all the elasticity gone from his gait, he stumbled back to his own car, revolving and muttering unchristian thoughts. For he and Jolyff had been meeting all their lives, it seemed, in court and out; sometimes with the right on one side, sometimes on the other. Each had cost the other a thousand wicked threats and a mint of money.

Mr. Holiday's wanderings through the train had aroused all the kindlier feelings in his nature. He was going home to his wife and family: expensive and foolish as it seemed, he had the trunk full of toys for the grandchildren and the great-grandchildren, and he was glad of it. He had put things right for two prepossessing young people who had made a wrong start; he had been gallant to an actress; he had determined to help the clergyman out with his repair fund; to find work for a convict,

and to see to it that three children should have a pleasant visit with an uncle who was really crotchety, disagreeable, and mean.

But now he did not care about pleasant things any more. He could think of nothing but Jolyff; of nothing but old sores that rankled; of great deals that had gone wrong, through his enemy. And in that spirit he picked at his Christmas Eve dinner, and went to bed.

It seemed to Mr. Holiday every time he woke, which was often, that the train had just started to move, after standing still for a long time, and that the porter had never before allowed his car to grow so cold. He turned the current into the reading light at the head of his bed and consulted his watch.

Two o'clock. He got to wondering at exactly what hour all those hundreds of years ago Christ had been born. Had it been as cold as this in the old barn? Whew!

No, Bethlehem was in the semi-tropics or thereabout, but the common car in which the three children were passing the night was not. This thought came to Mr. Holiday without invitation, and, like all unwelcome guests, made a long stay. So persistent, indeed, was the thought, meeting his mind at every turn and dogging its footsteps, that he forgot all about Jolyff and all about everything else. Finally he rang for the porter, but had no answer. He rang again and again. Then the train jolted slowly to a standstill, and Mr. Holiday got up and dressed, and went forward once more through the narrow aisles of thick curtains to the common car. But the passengers in that car had amalgamated. Alice and the convict, blue with cold, were in the same seat, and Alice was hugging Freddie, who slept fitfully, to her breast, and the convict was hugging Euphemia, who cried gently and softly like a cold and hungry kitten, to his. The convict had taken off his overcoat and wrapped it as well as he could about all the children.

Mr. Holiday tapped the convict on the shoulder. "Merry Christmas!" he said cynically. The convict started and turned. "Bring these babies back to my car," said Mr. Holiday, "and help me put 'em to bed." "That's a good deed, Mr. Holiday," said the convict. He started to put on his overcoat. The undressing and putting to bed had not waked Freddie.

Euphemia had stopped crying. And Alice, when the two men had helped her with her dress, which buttoned down the back, had suddenly flung her arms first around one and then around the other, and given each a kiss good night.

The convict buttoned his coat and turned up his collar.

"Good-night, sir," he said, "and thank you."

Mr. Holiday waved the thanks aside and pointed to a door of shining mahogany.

"There's a bed for you, too," he said gently.

The convict hesitated.

Then--it may have been owing to the sudden starting of the train--he lurched against the door, and with a sound that was mighty like a sob thrust it open and slammed it shut behind him.

Mr. Holiday smiled and went back to his own bed. This time he slept soundly.

At seven o'clock the porter called him, according to orders. The train was standing still.

"Merry Christmas, Mistah Holiday, sah!" grinned the porter. "Seven o'clock, sah!"

"Merry Christmas," said Mr. Holiday. "Why are we stopping?"

"We's snowed in," grinned the porter.

"Snowed in!" exclaimed Mr. Holiday. "Where?"

"'Tween Albany and Buffalo, sah. Dey ain't any name to de place. Dey ain't any place."

"There are three children," said Mr. Holiday, "in the stateroom next to this and a gentleman in the other stateroom. You call 'em in about an hour and ask 'em what they'll take for breakfast. Bring me some coffee, and ask the conductor how late we're going to be."

With his coffee Mr. Holiday learned that the train might be twenty-four hours late in getting to Cleveland. The conductor supposed that ploughs were at work along the track; but the blizzard was still raging.

That he would be separated from his wife on Christmas Day for the first time in their married life did not amuse Mr. Holiday; and although too much of the grandchildren and great-grandchildren bored him to extinction, still he felt that any festive day on which they were not all with him was a festive day gone very wrong indeed. But it was not as a sop to his own feelings of disappointment that he decided to celebrate Christmas in the train. It was a mixture of good-nature and, I am afraid, of malice. He said to himself:

"I shall invite all the passengers to one-o'clock dinner and a Christmas tree afterward with games and punch. I shall invite the conductor and the brakeman; the porters shall come to serve dinner. I shall invite the engineer and the fireman and the express-man. I shall invite everybody except Jolyff."

The old gentleman sucked in his lips tightly and dwelt upon this thought with satisfaction. Jolyff loved a party; Jolyff loved to drink healths, and clap people on the back, and make little speeches, and exert himself generally to amuse less gifted persons and make them feel

at home. And it was pleasant to think of him as sitting alone while a fine celebration was banging and roaring in the very next car--a celebration to which even an ex-convict had been invited.

First, Mr. Holiday summoned Miss Hampton and the girl who had run away to be his aides-de-camp. They decided that the party was really for the benefit of Freddie, Alice, and Euphemia, so these were packed off at once to the common car to be as far as possible from the scene of preparations. Then, with Mr. Holiday's porter, and his cook, and the ex-convict as men of all work, commenced the task of ordering the car for a crowd and decorating it, and improvising a Christmas tree. Miss Hampton set to work with a wooden bucket, sugar, rum, brandy, eggs, milk, and heaven knows what not, to brew a punch. Every now and then Mr. Holiday appeared, to see how she was getting on, and to taste the concoction, and to pay her pretty, old-fashioned compliments. The girl who had run away was helping the porter to lay the table and trying to write invitations to the passengers at the same time, Mr. Holiday having furnished her from his note-book with all of their names. Now and then there were hurried consultations as to what would be a suitable gift for a given person. The "next oldest" people in the train were to receive a pair of the silver candlesticks from the table. The train hands were to receive money, and suddenly Mr. Holiday discovered that he had only a few dollars in cash with him. He sought out the clergyman.

"Merry Christmas!" he said.

"Merry Christmas!" said the clergyman.

"Have you," said Mr. Holiday, "any of your rebuilding fund with you?"

"Why, yes," said the clergyman, smiling, "some two hundred dollars, and I cannot deny that it is agony to me to carry about so large a sum."

Mr. Holiday simply held out his hand, palm up.

"Why--what--" began the clergyman in embarrassment.

"I will give you my check for that sum," said Mr. Holiday, "and something over for your fund. I hope you will dine with me, in my car, at one o'clock."

He hurried away with the two hundred dollars. It was his intention to sample Miss Hampton's punch again; but he turned from this on a sudden impulse and sought out the young man who had been run away with. With this attractive person he talked very earnestly for half an hour, and asked him an infinite number of questions; just the kind of questions that he had asked the young men who had aspired to the hands of his own daughters. And these must have been satisfactorily answered, because at the end of the interview Mr. Holiday patted the young man on the back and said that he would see him later.

Next he came face to face with Mr. Jolyff, and the two old gentlemen stared at each other coldly, but without any sign of recognition.

Once--ever so many years ago--they had been intimate friends. Mr. Holiday had never had any other friend of whom he had been so fond. He tried now to recall what their first difference had been, and because he could not he thought he must be growing infirm. And he began to think of his approaching party with less pleasure. He had let himself in for a good deal of bother, he thought.

But this time Miss Hampton made him take a whole teaspoonful of punch, and told him what a dear he was, and what a good time everybody was going to have, and that she would do anything in the world for him; she would even recite "The Night Before Christmas" for his company, if he asked her. And then they did a great deal of whispering, and finally Mr. Holiday said:

"But suppose they balk?"

"Nonsense," said Miss Hampton; "would you and I balk if we were in their places?"

The pretty actress and the old gentleman laughed and bowed to each other, and exchanged the most arch looks imaginable. And then Miss Hampton exclaimed:

"Good Lord--it's twelve-thirty."

Then there came to them a sudden dreadful smell of burning feathers. They dashed into the observation end of the car and found the ex-convict smothering an incipient conflagration of the Christmas tree, which was made of dusters, with his hands.

The girl who had run away was despatching the porter with the last batch of invitations. The ex-convict showed them his burned hands.

"You go and feel the champagne," said Mr. Holiday, "that'll cool'em."

Mr. Holiday himself went to fetch the children. In his pockets were the envelopes containing money for the train hands, the envelope containing a check for the two hundred dollars that he had borrowed from the clergyman, and enough over to complete the rebuilding fund which the clergyman had tried so hard to collect. And there was an envelope for the ex-convict--not with money in it, but with an I.O.U.

"_I.O.U. A Good Job_", Mr. Holiday had written on a card and signed his name. And he had taken out of his satchel and transferred to his waistcoat pocket a pair of wonderful black pearls that he sometimes wore at important dinners. And he was going to give one of these to Miss Hampton and one to the girl who had run away. And then there were all the wonderful toys and things for Alice, and Freddie, and Euphemia, and he was going to present them with the black trunk, too, so that they could take their gifts off the train when it eventually got to Painsville. And Mr. Holiday had thought of everybody, and had prepared a little speech to speak to his guests; and for two of his guests he had arranged one of the greatest surprises that can be sprung on two guests;

and he ought to have been perfectly happy. But he wasn't.

When he passed the door of Mr. Jolyff's drawing-room he noted that it was tightly closed. And it ought to have pleased him to see how his enemy had taken his exclusion from the party to heart, and had shut himself away from any sign or sound of it. But, although he smiled cynically, he wasn't altogether pleased. And presently he made a wry mouth, as if he were taking something unpleasant; and he began to hustle Freddie and Euphemia so as to get away from that closed door as quickly as possible.

The girl who had run away was talking with Mr. Holiday when suddenly she began to grow conscious and uncomfortable. She gave one swift look about her, and saw that all the passengers, and all the train hands, and porters, and the express-man were looking at her and smiling, and she saw that they had ranged themselves against the sides of the car and were making themselves as small as possible. Then she saw the young man looking at her with a wonderful, nervous, radiant look. And then she saw that the clergyman was standing all by himself, in a space that the crowd had just managed to leave open for him, and that he had on his surplice, and that he was marking a place in his prayer-book with one finger. Then she understood.

Instinctively she caught Mr. Holiday's arm and clung to it, and Mr. Holiday, smiling, patted her hand and began to draw her gently toward the young man and the clergyman. It looked for a moment as if she were going to hang back, and protest, and make a scene. But just when everybody was beginning to fear the worst, and to look frightfully nervous and uncomfortable, a wonderful and beautiful expression came into her face, and her eyes lighted, and seemed to grow larger and darker all at the same time. And if there were any present who had regarded the impromptu wedding as something of a joke, these now had their minds changed for them in the quickest kind of a jiffy. And if there were any present who doubted of the beauty and dignity of love, these had their minds changed for them, too. And they knew that they were witnesses, not to a silly elopement, but to the great occasion in the lives of two very young people who were absolutely sure of their love for each other, and who would cherish each other in sickness and peril, in good times and bad, in merry times and in heart-breaking times, until death did them part.

And then suddenly, just when the clergyman was about to begin, just when Miss Hampton had succeeded in righting herself from smothering a sob, Mr. Holiday, whose face, had you but noticed it, had been growing longer and longer, and drearier and drearier, gave a half-strangled cry:

"Wait!"

Wholly oblivious to everything and everybody but what was in his mind at the moment, he dropped the bride's hand as if it had been a red-hot horseshoe and started to bolt from the car. But, strangely enough, the old face that had grown so long and dreary was now wreathed in smiles, and he was heard to mutter as he went:

"Just a minute, while I get Jolyff!"

* * * * *

Mr. Jolyff and Mr. Holiday lifted their glasses. And Mr. Holiday said, so that all could hear:

"I drink to my old friends and to my new friends. And I drink to the lesson of Christmas. For Christmas," said he, and he smiled in a wonderful way, "teaches us that in all the world there is absolutely nothing that we cannot forgive...."

The two very old gentlemen clinked their glasses together, and, looking each other affectionately in the eyes, might have been heard to mutter, somewhat brokenly, each the other's Christian name.

WHITE MUSCATS OF ALEXANDRIA

My wife, said the Pole, was a long time recovering from the birth of our second child. She was a normal and healthy woman, but Nature has a way in these matters of introducing the unnatural; science, too, mistook the ABCs of the case for the XYZs; and our rooms were for many, many weary weeks like a cage in which the bird has ceased to sing. I did what I could. She was not without books, magazines, and delicacies; but I had to attend to my business; so that time hung about her much like a millstone, and she would say: "All's well with me, Michael, but I am bored--bored--bored."

Our baby was put out to nurse and our older boy, Casimir, who was seven, began, for lack of his mother's care, to come and go as he pleased. The assurance and cheek of street boys began to develop in him. He startled me by his knowledge and his naïveté. But at the same time he was a natural innocent--a little dreamer. In the matters of street life that arise among children he had, as a rule, the worst of it. He was a born believer of all that might be told him. Such children develop into artists or ne'er-do-wells. It was too soon to worry about him. But I was easiest in mind when I saw that he was fashioning anatomies with mud or drawing with chalk upon the sidewalk. "Wait a little," I would say to my wife, "and he will be old enough to go to school."

The happiest times were when it was dark and I had closed the store and could sit by my wife's bed with Casimir on my knee. Then we would talk over pleasant experiences, or I would tell them, who were both American-born, stories of Poland, of fairies, and sieges; or hum for them the tunes to which I had danced in my early youth. But oftenest my wife and I talked, for the child's benefit, of the wonderful city in whose slums we lived--upper central New York with its sables and its palaces. During our courtship and honeymoon we had made many excursions into those quarters of the city and the memory of them was dear. But if

I remembered well and with happiness, my wife remembered photographically and with a kind of hectic eagerness in which, I fear, may have been bedded the roots of dissatisfaction. Details of wealth and luxury, and manners that had escaped me, even at the time, were as facile to her as terms of endearment to a lover. "And, oh--do you remember," she would say, "the ruby that the Fifth Avenue bride had at her throat, and how for many, many blocks we thought we could still hear the organ going? That was fun, Michael, wasn't it, when we stood in front of Sherry's and counted how many real sables went in and how many fakes, and noticed that the fake sables were as proudly carried as the real?"

One night she would not eat her supper. "Oh, Michael," she said, "I'm so bored with the same old soup--soup--soup, and the same old porridge--porridge--porridge, and I hate oranges, and apples, and please don't spend any more money on silly, silly, silly me."

"But you must eat," I said. "What would you like? Think of something. Think of something that tempts your appetite. You seem better to-night--almost well. Your cheeks are like cherries and you keep stirring restlessly as if you wanted to get up instead of lying still--still like a woman that has been drowned, all but her great, dear eyes.... Now, make some decision, and were it ambrosia I will get it for you if it is to be had in the city.... Else what are savings-banks for, and thrift, and a knowledge of furs?"

She answered me indirectly.

"Do you remember, Michael," she said, "the butcher shops uptown, the groceries, and the fruit stores, where the commonest articles, the chops, the preserved strawberries, the apples were perfect and beautiful, like works of art? In one window there was a great olive branch in a glass jar--do you remember? And in that fruit store near the Grand Central--do you remember?--we stood in the damp snow and looked in at great clean spaces flooded with white light--and there were baskets of strawberries--right there in January--and wonderful golden and red fruits that we did not know the names of, and many of the fruits peeped out from the bright-green leaves among which they had actually grown--"

"I remember the two prize bunches of grapes," I said.

And my wife said:

"I was coming to those ... they must have been eighteen inches long, every grape great and perfect. I remember you said that such grapes looked immortal. It was impossible to believe they could ever rot--there was a kind of joyous frostiness--we went in and asked a little man what kind of grapes they were, and he answered like a phonograph, without looking or showing politeness: 'Black Hamburgs and White Muscats of Alexandria'--your old Sienkiewicz never said anything as beautiful as that, 'White Muscats of Alexandria--'"

"Dear little heart," I said. "Childkin, is it the memory of those white

grapes that tempts your appetite?"

"Oh, Michael," she exclaimed, clasping her hands over those disappointed breasts into which the milk had not come in sufficiency.

"Oh, Michael--they were two dollars and a half a pound--"

"Heart of my heart," I said, "Stag Eyes, it is now late, and there are no such grapes to be had in our part of the city--only the tasteless white grapes that are packed with sawdust into barrels--but in the morning I will go uptown and you shall have your White Muscats of Alexandria."

She put her arms about my neck with a sudden spasm of fervor, and drew my head, that was already gray, down to hers. I remember that in that moment I thought not of passion but of old age, parting, and the grave.

* * * * *

But she would not eat the grapes in my presence. There was to be an orgy, she said, a bacchanalian affair--she was going to place the grapes where she could look at them, and look at them until she could stand the sight no more, when she would fall on them like a wolf on the fold and devour them. She talked morbidly of the grapes--almost neurotically. But, though her fancies did not please my sense of fitness, I only laughed at her, or smiled--for she had been ill a long time.

"But, at least, eat one now," I said, "so that I may see you enjoy it."

"Not even one," she said. "The bunch must be perfect for me to look at until--until I can resist no more. Hang them there, on the foot of the bed by the crook of the stem--is it strong enough to hold them? and then--aren't you going to be very late to your business? And, Michael, I feel better--I do. I shouldn't wonder if you found me up and dressed when you come back."

In your telling American phrase, "there was nothing doing" in my business that morning. It was one of those peaceful, sunny days in January, not cold and no wind stirring. The cheap furs displayed in the window of my shop attracted no attention from the young women of the neighborhood. The young are shallow-minded, especially the women. If a warm day falls in winter they do not stop to think that the next may be cold. Only hats interest them all the year round, and men.

So I got out one of my Cicero books and, placing my chair in a pool of sunshine in the front of the shop, I began to read, for the hundredth time, his comfortable generalities upon old age. But it seemed to me, for the first time, that he was all wrong--that old age is only dreadful, only a shade better than death itself. And this, I suppose, was because I, myself, during those long months of my wife's illness, had turned the corner. The sudden passions of youth had retreated like dragons into their dens. It took more, now, than the worse end of a bargain or the touch of my wife's lips to bring them flaming forth. On our wedding day we had been of an age. Now, after nine years, my heart

had changed from a lover's into a father's, while she remained, as it were, a bride. There remained to me, perhaps, many useful years of business, of managing and of saving--enjoyable years. But life--life as I count life--I had lived out. One moment must pass as the next. There could be no more halting--no more moments of bliss so exquisite as to resemble pain. I had reached that point in life when it is the sun alone that matters, and no more the moon.

A shadow fell upon my pool of sunshine and, looking up, I perceived a handsome, flashy young man of the clever, almost Satanic type that is so common below Fourteenth Street; and he stood looking cynically over the cheap furs in my window and working his thin jaws. Then I saw him take, with his right hand, from a bunch that he carried in his left, a great white grape and thrust it into his mouth. They were my grapes, those which I had gone uptown to fetch for my wife. By the fact that there were none such to be had in our neighborhood I might have known them. But the sure proof was a peculiar crook in the stem which I had noticed when I had hung them for my wife at the foot of her bed.

I rose and went quietly out of the shop.

"Happy to show you anything," I said, smiling.

"Don't need anything in the fur line to-day," said he; "much obliged."

"What fine grapes those are," I commented.

"Um," said he, "they call 'em white muskets of Alexander"; and he grimaced.

"Where are such to be had?" I asked.

"Well," he said, "I got these just round the corner; but _you'd_ have to visit some uptown fruit emporium and pay the price."

"So you bought the last bunch?"

"Bought nothin'," he said, and he smiled in a knowing and leering way.

"They were given to me," he said, "by a married woman. I happened to drop in and she happened to have sent her husband uptown to fetch these grapes for her because she's playing sick and works him in more ways than one--but she said the grapes sickened her conscience, and she made me take 'em away."

"So she has a conscience?" I said.

"They all have," said the young man. "Have one?"

I took one of the grapes with a hand that shook, and ate it, and felt the red blood in my veins turn into acid.

There happened to be a man in the neighborhood who had been nibbling

after my business for some time. I went to him now and made him a cheap sale for cash. This I deposited with my savings, keeping out a hundred dollars for myself, and put the whole in trust for my wife and children. Then I went away and, after many hardships, established myself in a new place. And, as is often the case with men who have nothing whatsoever to live for and who are sad, I prospered. God was ever presenting me with opportunities and the better ends of bargains.

When fifteen years had passed I returned once more to New York. I had reached a time of life when the possibility of death must be as steadily reckoned with as the processes of digestion. And I wished, before I lay down in the narrow house, to revisit the scenes of my former happiness. I took the same furnished lodging to which we had gone after our wedding. I lay all night, but did not sleep, in our nuptial bed. Alone, but rather in reverence and reverie than sadness, I made all those little excursions upon which we had been so happy during the days of our honey-moon. I made a point of feeding the animals in the park, of dining at Claremont--I even stood for a long time before the fruit shop that is near the Grand Central. But I was too old to feel much. So it seemed.

One day I sat on the steps of the lodging-house in the sun. I had been for a long walk and I was very tired, very sick of my mortal coil, very sure that I did not care if the end were to be sleep or life everlasting. Then came, slowly around the corner of the shabby street and toward me, a hansom cab. Its occupant, an alert, very young, eager man, kept glancing here and there as if he were looking for something or some one; for the old East Side street had still its old look, as if all the inhabitants of its houses had rushed out to watch an eclipse of the sun or the approach of a procession--and were patiently and idly awaiting the event.

The children, and even many of the older people, mocked at the young man in the hansom and flung him good-natured insults. But he knew the language of the East Side and returned better than he received. My old heart warmed a little to his young, brightly colored face, his quick, flashing eyes, and his ready repartees. And it seemed to me a pity that, like all the pleasant moments I had known, he, too, must pass and be over.

But his great eyes flashed suddenly upon my face and rested; then he signalled to the driver to stop and, springing out, a big sketch-book under his arm, came toward me with long, frank strides.

"I know it's cheeky as the devil," he began in a quick, cheerful voice, while he had yet some distance to come, "but I can't help it. I've been looking for you for weeks, and--"

"What is it that I can do for you?" I asked pleasantly.

"You can give me your head." He said it with an appealing and delighted smile. "I'm a sort of artist--" he explained.

"Show me," I said, and held out my hands for the sketch-book.

"Nothing but notes in it," he said, but I looked, not swiftly, through all the pages and--for we Poles have an instinct in such matters--saw that the work was good.

"Do you wish to draw me, _Master?_" I said.

He perceived that I meant the term, and he looked troubled and pleased.

"Will you sit for me?" he asked. "I will--"

But I shook my head to keep him from mentioning money.

"Very cheerfully," I said. "It is easy for the old to sit--especially when, by the mere act of sitting, it is possible for them to become immortal. I have a room two flights up--where you will not be disturbed."

"Splendid!" he said. "You are splendid! Everything's splendid!"

When he had placed me as he wished, I asked him why my head suited him more than another's.

"How do I know?" he said. "Instinct--you seem a cheerful man and yet I have never seen a head and face that stood so clearly for--for--please take me as I am, I don't ever mean to offend--steadiness in sorrow.... I am planning a picture in which there is to be an ol--a man of your age who looks as--as late October would look if it had a face...."

Then he began to sketch me, and, as he worked, he chattered about this and that.

"Funny thing," he said, "I had a knife when I started and it's disappeared."

"Things have that habit," I said.

"Yes," said he, "things and people, and often people disappear as suddenly and completely as things--chin quarter of an inch lower--just so--thank you forever--"

"And what experience have you had with people disappearing?" I asked. "And you so young and masterful."

"I?" he said. "Why, a very near and dear experience. When I was quite a little boy my own father went to his place of business and was never heard of again from that day to this. But he must have done it on purpose, because it was found that he had put all his affairs into the most regular and explicit order--"

I felt a little shiver, as if I had taken cold.

"And, do you know," here the young man dawdled with his pencil and

presently ceased working for the moment, "I've always felt as if I had had a hand in it--though I was only seven. I'd done something so naughty and wrong that I looked forward all day to my father's home-coming as a sinner looks forward to going to hell. My father had never punished me. But he would this time, I knew--and I was terribly afraid and--sometimes I have thought that, perhaps, I prayed to God that my father might never come home. I'm not sure I prayed that--but I have a sneaking suspicion that I did. Anyway, he never came, and, Great Grief! what a time there was. My mother nearly went insane--"

"What had you done?" I asked, forcing a smile, "to merit such terrible punishment?"

The young man blushed.

"Why," he said, "my mother had been quite sick for a long time, and, to tempt her appetite, my father had journeyed 'way uptown and at vast expense bought her a bunch of wonderful white hot-house grapes. I remember she wouldn't eat them at first--just wanted to look at them--and my father hung them for her over the foot of the bed. Well, soon after he'd gone to business she fell asleep, leaving the grapes untouched. They tempted me, and I fell. I wanted to show off, I suppose, before my young friends in the street--there was a girl, Minnie Hopflekopf, I think her name was, who'd passed me up for an Italian butcher's son. I wanted to show her. I'm sure I didn't mean to eat the things. I'm sure I meant to return with them and hang them back at the foot of the bed."

"Please go on," I managed to say. "This is such a very human page--I'm really excited to know what happened."

"Well, one of those flashy Bowery dudes came loafing along and said: 'Hi, Johnny, let's have a look at the grapes,' I let him take them, in my pride and innocence, and he wouldn't give them back. He only laughed and began to eat them before my eyes. I begged for them, and wept, and told him how my mother was sick and my father had gone 'way uptown to get the grapes for her because there were none such to be had in our neighborhood. And, please, he must give them back because they were White Muscats of Alexandria, very precious, and my father would kill me. But the young man only laughed until I began to make a real uproar. Then he said sharply to shut up, called me a young thief, and said if I said another word he'd turn me over to the police. Then he flung me a fifty-cent piece and went away, munching the grapes. And," the young man finished, "the fifty-cent piece was lead."

Then he looked up from his sketch and, seeing the expression of my face, gave a little cry of delight.

"Great Grief, man!" he cried, "stay as you are--only hold that expression for two minutes!"

But I have held it from that day to this.

WITHOUT A LAWYER

However bright the court's light may have appeared to the court, the place in which it was shining smelt damnably of oil. It was three o'clock in the afternoon, but already the Alaskan night had descended. The court sat in a barn, warmed from without by the heavily drifted snow and from within by the tiny flames of lanterns and the breathing of men, horses, and cows. Here and there in the outskirts of the circle of light could be seen the long face of a horse or the horned head of a cow. There was a steady sound of munching. The scene was not unlike many paintings of the stable in Bethlehem on the night of the Nativity. And here, too, justice was being born in a dark age. There had been too many sudden deaths, too many jumped claims, too much drinking, too much shooting, too many strong men, too few weak men, until finally--for time, during the long winter, hung upon the neck like a millstone--the gorges of the more decent had risen. Hence the judge, hence the jury, hence the prisoner, dragged from his outlying cabin on a charge of murder. As there were no lawyers in the community, the prisoner held his own brief. Though not a Frenchman, he had been sarcastically nicknamed, because of his small size and shrinking expression, Lou Garou.

The judge rapped for order upon the head of a flour-barrel behind which he sat. "Lou Garou," he said, "you are accused of having shot down Ruddy Boyd in cold blood, after having called him to the door of his cabin for that purpose on the twenty-ninth of last month. Guilty or not guilty?"

"Sure," said Lou Garou timidly, and nodding his head. "I shot him."

"Why?" asked the judge.

For answer Lou Garou shrugged his shoulders and pointed to the chief witness, a woman who had wound her head in a dark veil so that her face could not be seen. "Make her take that veil off," said he in a shrill voice, "and you'll see why I shot him."

The woman rose without embarrassment and removed her veil. But, unless in the prisoner's eyes, she was not beautiful.

"Thank you, madam," said the judge, after an embarrassed pause. "Ahem!" And he addressed the prisoner. "Your answer has its romantic value, Lou Garou, but the court is unable to attach to it any ethical significance whatsoever. Did you shoot Ruddy Boyd because of this lady's appearance in general, or because of her left eye in particular, which I note has been blackened as if by a blow?"

"Oh, I did that," said Lou Garou naïvely.

"Sit down!" thundered the judge. The foreman of the jury, a South Carolinian by birth, had risen, revolver in hand, with the evident

intention of executing the prisoner on the spot. "You have sworn to abide by the finding of the court," continued the judge angrily. "If you don't put up that gun I'll blow your damned head off."

The juror, who was not without a sense of the ridiculous, smiled and sat down.

"You have pleaded guilty," resumed the judge sternly, "to the charge of murder. You have given a reason. You have either said too much or too little. If you are unable further to justify your cold-blooded and intemperate act, you shall hang."

"What do you want me to say?" whined Lou Garou.

"I want you to tell the court," said the judge, "why you shot Ruddy Boyd. If it is possible for you to justify that act I want you to do it. The court, representing, as it does, the justice of the land, has a leaning, a bias, toward mercy. Stand up and tell us your story from the beginning."

The prisoner once more indicated the woman. "About then," he said, "I had nothin' but Jenny--and twenty dollars gold that I had loaned to Ruddy Boyd. Hans"--he pointed to a stout German sitting on the Carolinian's left--"wouldn't give me any more credit at the store." He whined and sniffled. "I'm not blaming you one mite, Hans," he said, "but I had to have flour and bacon, and all I had was twenty dollars gold that Ruddy owed me. So I says, 'Jenny, I'll step over to Ruddy's shack and ask him for that money.' She says, 'Think you'd better?' and I says, 'Sure.' So she puts me up a snack of lunch, and I takes my rifle and starts. Ruddy was in his ditch (having shovelled out the snow), and I says, 'Ruddy, how about that twenty?' You all know what a nice hearty way Ruddy had with him--outside. He slaps his thigh, and laughs, and looks astonished, and then he says: 'My Gawd, Lou, if I hadn't clean forgot! Now ain't that funny?' So I laughs, too, and says, 'It do seem kind of funny, and how about it?' 'Now, Lou,' says he, 'you've come on me sudden, and caught me awkward. I ain't got a dime's worth of change. But tell you what: I'll give you a check.'

"I says, 'On what bank?'

"He says, 'Oh, Hans over at the store--_he_ knows me--'"

All eyes were turned on the German. Lou Garou continued:

"Ruddy says: 'Hans dassen't not cash it. He's scared of me, the pot-bellied old fool.'"

The stout German blinked behind his horn spectacles. He feared neither God nor man, but he was very patient. He made no remark.

"If Hans won't,' says Ruddy, 'Stewart sure will!'"

The foreman of the jury rose like a spring slowly uncoiling. He looked

like a snake ready to strike. "May I inquire," he drawled, "what reason the late lamented gave for supposing that I would honor his wuffless paper?"

Lou Garou sniffled with embarrassment and looked appealingly at the judge.

"Tell him," ordered the latter.

"Mind, then," said Lou Garou, "it was him said it, not me."

"What was said?" glinted the foreman.

"Something," said Lou Garou in a small still voice like that which is said to appertain to conscience, "something about him having give you a terrible lickin' once, that you'd never got over. He says, 'If Stewart won't cash it, tell him I'll step over and kick the stuffin' out of him.'"

The juror on the left end of the front row stood up.

"Did he say anything about me?" he asked.

"Nothin' particular, Jimmy," said Lou Garou. "He only said somethin' general, like 'them bally-washed hawgs over to the Central Store,' I think it was."

"The court," said the judge stiffly, "knows the deceased to have been a worthless braggart. Proceed with your story."

"Long and short of it was," said Lou Garou, "we arranged that Ruddy himself was to get the check cashed and bring me the money the next Thursday. He swears on his honor he won't keep me waitin' no longer. So I steps off and eats my lunch, and goes home and tells Jenny how it was.

"Hope you get it,' says she. 'I know _him._'

"It so happened," continued Lou Garou, "Thursday come, and no Ruddy. No Ruddy, Friday. Saturday I see the weather was bankin' up black for snow, so I says: 'Jenny, it's credit or bust. I'll step up to the store and talk to Hans.' So Jenny puts me up a snack of lunch, and I goes to see Hans. Hans," said Lou Garou, addressing that juror directly, "did I or didn't I come to see you that Saturday?"

Hans nodded.

"Did you or didn't you let me have some flour and bacon on tick?"

"I did nod," said Hans.

Lou Garou turned once more to the judge. "So I goes home," he said, "and finds my chairs broke, and my table upside down, and the dishes broke, and Jenny gone."

There was a mild sensation in the court.

"I casts about for signs, and pretty soon I finds a wisp of red hair, roots an' all, I says, 'Ruddy's hair,' I says. 'He's bin and gone.'

"So I takes my gun and starts for Ruddy's, over the mountain. It's hours shorter than by the valley, for them that has good legs.

"I was goin' down the other side of the mountain when it seems to me I hears voices. I bears to the left, and looks down the mountain, and yonder I sees a man and a woman on the valley path to Ruddy's. The man he wants the woman to go on. The woman she wants to go back. I can hear their voices loud and mad, but not their words. Pretty soon Ruddy he takes Jenny by the arm and twists it--very slow--tighter and tighter. She sinks to the ground. He goes on twistin'. Pretty soon she indicates that she has enough. He helps her up with a kick, and they goes on."

The foreman of the jury rose. "Your honor," he said, "it is an obvious case of *raptae puellae*. In my opinion the prisoner was more than justified in shooting the man Ruddy Boyd like a dog."

"Sit down," said the judge.

Lou Garou, somewhat excited by painful recollections, went on in a stronger voice. "I puts up my hind sight to three hundred yards and draws a bead on Ruddy, between the shoulders. Then I lowers my piece and uncocks her. 'Stop a bit,' I says. 'How about that twenty?'

It's gettin' dark, and I follows them to Ruddy's. I hides my gun in a bush and knocks on the door. Ruddy comes out showin' his big teeth and laughin.' He closes the door behind him.

'Come for that twenty, Lou?' says he.

'Sure,' says I.

He thinks a minute, then he laughs and turns and flings open the door. 'Come in,' he says.

I goes in.

'Hallo!' says he, like he was awful surprised. 'Here's a friend of yours, Lou. Well, I never!'

I sees Jenny sittin' in a corner, tied hand and foot. I says, 'Hallo, Jenny'; she says, 'Hallo, Lou.' Then I turns to Ruddy. 'How about that twenty?' I says.

'Well, I'm damned!' he says. 'All he thinks about is his twenty. Well, here you are.'

He goes down into his pocket and fetches up a slug, and I pockets it.

'There,' says he; 'you've got yours, and I've got mine.'

I don't find nothin' much to say, so I says, 'Well, good-night all, I'll be goin'.'

Then Jenny speaks up. 'Ain't you goin' to do nothin'?' she says.

"Why, Jenny,' says I 'what can _I_ do?'

"All right for you,' she says. 'Turn me loose, Ruddy; no need to keep me tied after that.'

"So I says 'Good-night' again and goes. Ruddy comes to the door and watches me. I looks back once and waves my hand, but he don't make no sign. I says to myself, 'I can see him because of the light at his back, but he can't see me.' So I makes for my gun, finds her, turns, and there's Ruddy still standin' at the door lookin' after me into the dark. It was a pot shot. Then I goes back, and steps over Ruddy into the shack and unties Jenny.

"Lou,' she says, 'I thought I knowed you inside out. But you fooled _me_!'

"By reason of the late hour we stops that night in Ruddy's shack, and that's all."

The prisoner, after shuffling his feet uncertainly, sat down.

"Madam," said the judge, "may I ask you to rise?"

The woman stood up; not unhandsome in a hard, bold way, except for her black eye.

"Madam," said the judge, "is what the prisoner has told us, in so far as it concerns you, true?"

"Every word of it."

"The man Ruddy Boyd used violence to make you go with him?"

"He twisted my arm and cramped my little finger till I couldn't bear the pain."

"You are, I take it, the prisoner's wife?"

The color mounted slowly into the woman's cheeks. She hesitated, choked upon her words. The prisoner sprang to his feet.

"Your honor," he cried, "in a question of life or death like this Jenny and me we speaks the truth, and nothin' but the truth. She's _not_ my wife. But I'm goin' to marry her, and make an honest woman of her--at the foot of the gallows, if you decide that way. No, sir; she was Ruddy

Boyd's wife."

There was a dead silence, broken by the sounds of the horses and cows munching their fodder. The foreman of the jury uncoiled slowly.

"Your honor," he drawled, "I can find it in my heart to pass over the exact married status of the lady, but I cannot find it in my heart to pass over without explanation the black eye which the prisoner confesses to have given her."

Lou Garou turned upon the foreman like a rat at bay. "That night in the shack," he cried, "I dreams that Ruddy comes to life. Jenny she hears me moanin' in my sleep, and she sits up and bends over to see what's the matter. I think it's Ruddy bendin' over to choke me, and I hits out!"

"That's true, every word of it!" cried the woman. "He hit me in his sleep. And when he found out what he'd done he cried over me, and he kissed the place and made it well!" Her voice broke and ran off into a sob.

The jury acquitted the prisoner without leaving their seats. One by one they shook hands with him, and with the woman.

"I propose," said the foreman, "that by a unanimous vote we change this court-house into a house of worship. It will not be a legal marriage precisely, but it will answer until we can get hold of a minister after the spring break up."

The motion was carried.

The last man to congratulate the happy pair was the German Hans. "Wheneffer," he said, "you need a parrel of flour or something, you comes to me py my store."

THE MONITOR AND THE "MERRIMAC"

THE STORY OF A PANIC

I

Two long-faced young men and one old man with a long face sat upon the veranda of the Country Club of Westchester, and looked, now into the depths of pewter mugs containing mint and ice among other things, and now across Pelham Bay to the narrow pass of water between Fort Schuyler and Willets Point. Through this pass the evening fleet of Sound steamers had already torn with freight and passengers for New Haven, Newport, Fall River, and Portland; and had already disappeared behind City Island Point, and in such close order that it had looked as if the Peck, which led, had been towing the others. The first waves from the

paddle-wheels of the great ships had crossed the three miles of intervening bay, and were slapping at the base of the seawall that supported the country club pigeon grounds and lawn-tennis terraces, when another vessel came slowly and haughtily into view from between the forts. She was as black as the king of England's brougham, and as smart; her two masts and her great single funnel were stepped with the most insolent rake imaginable. Here and there where the light of the setting sun smote upon polished brass she shone as with pools of fire.

"There she is," said Powers. He had been sitting in his shirt sleeves, but now he rose and put on his coat as if the sight of the huge and proud yacht had chilled him. Brett, with a petulant slap, killed a swollen mosquito against his black silk ankle bone. The old man, Callender, put his hand to his forehead as if trying to remember something; and the yacht, steaming slower and slower, and yet, as it seemed, with more and more grandeur and pride of place--as if she knew that she gave to the whole bayscape, and the pale Long Island shore against which she moved in strong relief, an irrefutable note of dignity--presently stopped and anchored, midway between the forts and City Island Point; then she began to swing with the tide, until she faced New York City, from which she had just come.

Callender took his hand from his forehead. He had remembered.

"Young gentlemen," he said, "that yacht of Merriman's has been reminding me every afternoon for a month of something, and I've just thought what. You remember one day the Merrimac came down the James, very slowly, and sunk the Cumberland, and damaged and frightened the Union fleet into fits, just the way Merriman has been going down to Wall Street every morning and frightening us into fits? Well, instead of finishing the work then and there, she suddenly quit and steamed off up the river in the same insolent, don't-give-a-hoot way that Merriman comes up from Wall Street every afternoon. Of course, when the Merrimac came down to finish destroying the fleet the next day, the Monitor had arrived during the night and gave her fits, and they called the whole thing off. Anyhow, it's that going-home-to-sleep-on-it expression of the Merrimac's that I've been seeing in the Sappho."

"You were on the Monitor, weren't you?" asked Powers cheerfully.

The old man did not answer, but he was quite willing that Powers and Brett, and the whole world for that matter, should think that he had been. Powers and Brett, though in no cheerful mood, exchanged winks.

"I don't see why history shouldn't repeat itself," said Powers.

"You don't!" said Brett. "Why, because there isn't any Monitor waiting for Merriman off Wall Street."

"And just like the Civil War," said Callender, "this trouble in the street is a rich man's quarrel and a poor man's war. Just because old Merriman is gunning for Waters, you, and I, and the rest of us are about to go up the spout."

Callender was a jaunty old man, tall, of commanding presence and smart clothes. His white mustache was the epitome of close-cropped neatness. When he lost money at poker his brown eyes held exactly the same twinkle as when he won, and it was current among the young men that he had played greatly in his day--great games for great stakes. Sometimes he had made heavy winnings, sometimes he had faced ruin; sometimes his family went to Newport for the summer and entertained; sometimes they went to a hotel somewhere in some mountains or other, where they didn't even have a parlor to themselves. But this summer they were living on in the town house, keeping just enough rooms open, and a few servants who had weathered former panics, and who were willing to eat dry bread in bad times for the sake of the plentiful golden butter that they knew was to be expected when the country believed in its own prosperity and future. Just now the country believed that it was going to the dogs. And Mr. Merriman, the banker, had chosen the opportunity to go gunning for Mr. Waters, the railroad man. The quarrel between the great men was personal; and so because of a couple of nasty tempers people were being ruined daily, honest stocks were selling far below their intrinsic value, United States Steel had been obliged to cut wages, there was a strike on in the Pennsylvania coal fields, and the Callenders, as I have said, were not even going to the cheapest mountain top for the summer. Brett alone was glad of this, because it meant that little Miss Callender would occasionally come out to the country club for a game of tennis and a swim, and, although she had refused to marry him on twenty distinct occasions, he was not a young man to be easily put from his purpose. Nor did little Miss Callender propose to be relinquished by him just yet; and she threw into each refusal just the proper amount of gentleness and startled-fawn expression to insure another proposal within a month.

Brett, looking upon Callender as his probable father-in-law, turned to the old gentleman and said, with guileful innocence:

"Isn't there anything you can do, sir, to hold Merriman off? Powers and I are in the market a little, but our customers are in heavy, and the way things are going we've got to break whether we like it or not."

Ordinarily Callender would have pretended that he could have checkmated Merriman if he had wanted to--for in some things he was a child, and it humored him to pretend, and to intimate, and to look wise; but on the present occasion, and much to Powers's and Brett's consternation, he began to speak to them gravely, and confidentially, and a little pitifully. They had never before seen him other than jaunty and debonair, whether his family were at Newport or in the mountains.

"It's all very well for you boys," he said; "you have youth and resiliency on your side. No matter what happens to you now, in money or in love, you can come again. But we old fellows, buying and selling with one foot in the grave, with families accustomed to luxury dependent on us"--he paused and tugged at his neatly ordered necktie as if to free his throat for the passage of more air--"some of us old fellows," he said, "if we go now can never come again--never."

He rose abruptly and walked into the house without a word more; but Brett, after hesitating a moment, followed him. Mr. Callender had stopped in front of the "Delinquent List." Seeing Brett at his elbow, he pointed with a well-groomed finger to his own name at the beginning of the C's.

"If I died to-night," he said, neither gravely nor jocosely, but as if rather interested to know whether he would or would not, "the club would have a hard time to collect that sixteen dollars."

"Are you serious, sir?" Brett asked.

"If to-morrow is a repetition of to-day," said Mr. Callender, "you will see the name of Callender & Co. in the evening papers." His lips trembled slightly under his close-cropped mustache.

"Then," said Brett, "this is a good opportunity to ask you, sir, if you have any objection to me as a candidate for your youngest daughter."

Mr. Callender raised his eyebrows. So small a thing as contemplated matrimony did not disturb him under the circumstances.

"My boy," he said, "I take it you are in earnest. I don't object to you. I am sure nobody does."

"Oh, yes," said Brett; "_she_ does."

He had succeeded in making Mr. Callender laugh.

"But," Brett went on, "I'd like your permission to go on trying."

"You have it," said her father. "Will you and Powers dine with me?"

"No," said Brett. "Speaking as candidate to be your son-in-law, you cannot afford to give us dinner; and in the same way I cannot afford to buy dinner for you and Powers. So Powers will have to be host and pay for everything. I shall explain it to him.... But look here, sir, are you really up against it?"

To Brett's consternation, Callender suddenly buried his face in his hands and groaned aloud.

"Don't," said Brett; "some one's coming."

Callender recovered his usual poise with a great effort. But no one came.

"As far as my wishes go, sir," said Brett, "I'm your son. You never had a son, did you? If you had a son, and if he were young and resilient, you'd talk to him and explain to him, and in that way, perhaps, you'd get to see things so clearly in your own mind that you'd be able to think a way out. Why don't you talk to me as if I were your son? You see

I want to be so very much, and that's half the battle."

Callender often joked about his affairs, but he never talked about them. Now, however, he looked for a moment keenly into the young man's frank and intelligent face, hesitated, and then, with a grave and courtly bow, he waved his hand toward two deep chairs that stood in the corner of the room half facing each other, as if they themselves were engaged in conversation.

Twenty minutes later Callender went upstairs to dress for dinner, but Brett rejoined Powers on the piazza. He sat down without looking at Powers or speaking to him, and his eyes, crossing the darkening bay, rested once more on the lordly silhouette of the *Sappho*. In the failing light she had lost something of her emphatic outline, and was beginning to melt, as it were, into the shore.

Brett and Powers were partners. Powers was the floor member of the firm and Brett ran the office. But they were partners in more ways than the one, and had been ever since they could remember. As little boys they had owned things in common without dispute. At St. Marks Powers had pitched for the nine, and Brett had caught. In their senior year at New Haven they had played these positions to advantage, both against Harvard and Princeton. After graduation they had given a year to going around the world. In Bengal they had shot a tiger, each giving it a mortal wound. In Siam they had won the doubles championship at lawn tennis. When one rode on the water wagon the other sat beside him, and vice versa. Powers's family loved Brett almost as much as they loved Powers, and if Brett had had a family it would probably have felt about Powers in the same way.

As far as volume of business and legitimate commissions went, their firm was a success. It could execute orders with precision, despatch, and honesty. It could keep its mouth shut. But it had not yet learned to keep out of the market on its own account. Regularly as a clock ticks its profits were wiped out in speculation. The young men believed in the future of the country, and wanted to get rich quick, not because they were greedy, but because that desire is part of the average American's nature and equipment. Gradually, however, they were "getting wise," as the saying is. And they had taken a solemn oath and shaken hands upon it, that if ever they got out of their present difficulties they would never again tempt the goddess of fortune.

"Old man's in bad, I guess," said Powers.

"I shouldn't wonder," said Brett, and was ashamed to feel that he must not be more frank with his partner. "We're all in bad."

"The *Cumberland* has been sunk," said Powers, "and the rest of us are aground and helpless, waiting for the *Merrimac* to come down the river in the morning." He shook his fist at the distant *Sappho*. "Why," he said, "even if we knew what he knows it's too late to do anything, unless *he* does it. And he won't. He won't quit firing until Waters blows up."

"I've a good notion," said Brett, "to get out my pigeon gun, take the club launch, board the _Sappho_ about midnight, hold the gun to old Merriman's head, and make him promise to save the country; or else make him put to sea, and keep him there. If he were kidnapped and couldn't unload any more securities, the market would pull up by itself." The young men chuckled, for the idea amused them in spite of their troubles.

By a common impulse they turned and looked at the club's thirty-foot naphtha launch at anchor off the club's dock; and by a common impulse they both pointed at her, and both exclaimed:

"The _Monitor_!"

Then, of course, they were very careful not to say anything more until they had crooked together the little fingers of their right hands, and in silence registered a wish each. Then each spoke the name of a famous poet, and the spell was ended.

"What did you wish?" said Brett idly.

Powers could be very courtly and old fashioned.

"My dear boy," he said, "I fancy that I wished for you just what you wished for yourself."

Before this they had never spoken about her to each other.

"I didn't know that you knew," said Brett. "Thanks."

They shook hands. Then Brett broke into his gay, happy laugh.

"That," said he, "is why you have to pay for dinner for Mr. Callender and me."

"Are we to dine?" asked Powers, "before attacking the _Merrimac_?"

"Always," assented Brett, "and we are to dress first."

The two young men rose and went into the house, Powers resting his hand affectionately on Brett's further shoulder. It was so that they had come off the field after striking out Harvard's last chance to score.

At dinner Mr. Callender, as became his age and experience, told the young men many clean and amusing stories. Though the clouds were thick about his head he had recovered his poise and his twinkling eye of the good loser. Let his night be sleepless, let the morrow crush him, but let his young friends remember that he had gone to his execution calm, courteous, and amusing, his mustache trimmed, his face close-shaved, his nails clean and polished. They had often, he knew, laughed at him for his pretensions, and his affectation of mysterious knowledge, and all his little vanities and superiorities, but they would remember him for the very real nerve and courage that he was showing, and knew that he

was showing. The old gentleman took pleasure in thinking that although he was about to fail in affairs, he was not going to fail in character. He even began to make vague plans for trying again, and when, after a long dinner, they pushed back their chairs and rose from the table, there was a youthful resiliency in the voice with which he challenged Powers to a game of piquet.

"That seems to leave me out," said Brett.

"Well," said Mr. Callender, with snapping eyes, "can you play well enough to be an interesting opponent, or can't you?"

"No, I can't," said Brett. "And anyway, I'm going out in the launch to talk things over with Merriman." He shrugged his shoulders in a superior way, and they laughed; but when they had left him for the card-room he walked out on the veranda and stood looking through the darkness at the _Sappho's_ distant lights, and he might have been heard muttering, as if from the depths of very deep thought:

"Why not?"

II

At first Brett did not head the launch straight for the _Sappho_. He was not sure in his own mind whether he intended to visit her, or just to have a near-by look at her and then return to the club. He had ordered the launch on an impulse which he could not explain to himself. If she had been got ready for him promptly he might not have cared at the last minute to go out in her at all. But there had been a long delay in finding the engineer, and this had provoked him and made him very sure that he wanted to use the launch very much. And it hadn't smoothed his temper to learn that the engineer had been found in the kitchen eating a Virginia ham in company with the kitchen maid.

But the warmth and salt freshness that came into his face, and the softness and great number of the stars soon pacified him. If she were only with him, he thought, if her father were only not on the brink of ruin, how pleasant the world would be. He pretended that she was with him, just at his shoulder, where he could not see her, but there just the same, and that he was steering the launch straight for the ends of the world. He pretended that for such a voyage the launch would not need an engineer. He wondered if under the circumstances it would be safe to steer with only one hand.

But the launch ran suddenly into an oyster stake that went rasping aft along her side, and at the same moment the searchlight from Fort Schuyler beamed with dazzling playfulness in his face, and then having half blinded him wheeled heavenward, a narrow cornucopia of light that petered out just short of the stars. He watched the searchlight. He wondered how many pairs of lovers it had discovered along the shores of

Pelham Bay, how many mint-juleps it had seen drunk on the veranda of the country club, how many kisses it had interrupted; and whether it would rather pry into people's private affairs or look for torpedo-boats and night attacks in time of war. But most of all he wondered why it spent so much of its light on space, sweeping the heavens like a fiery broom with indefatigable zeal. There were no lovers or torpedo-boats up there. Even the birds were in bed, and the Wright brothers were known to be at Pau.

Once more the searchlight smote him full in the face and then, as if making a pointed gesture, swept from him, and for a long second illuminated the black hull and the yellow spars of the *_Sappho_*. Then, as if its earthly business were over, the shaft of light, lengthening and lengthening as it rose above intervening obstacles, the bay, the Stepping Stone light, the Long Island shore, turned slowly upward until it pointed at the zenith. Then it went out.

"That," thought Brett, "was almost a hint. First it stirred me up; then it pointed at the *_Sappho_*; then it indicated that there is One above, and then it went out."

He headed the launch straight for the *_Sappho_*, and began to wonder what one had to do to get aboard of a magnate's yacht at night. He turned to the engineer.

"Gryce," he said, "what do you know about yachts?"

"What about 'em?" Gryce answered sulkily. He was still thinking of the kitchen-maid and the unfinished ham, or else of the ham and the unfinished kitchen maid, I am not sure which.

"What about 'em?" Brett echoed. "Do they take up their gangways at night?"

"Unless some one's expected," said Gryce.

"Do they have a watchman?"

"One forward and one aft on big yachts."

"Making two," said Brett. "But aren't there usually two gangways--one for the crew and one for the owner's guests?"

"Crew's gangway is to starboard," Gryce vouchsafed.

Brett wondered if there was anything else that he ought to know. Then, in picturing himself as running the launch alongside the *_Sappho_*, and hoping that he would not bump her, a question presented itself.

"If I were going to visit the *_Sappho_*," he asked, "would I approach the gangway from the stern or from the bow?"

"I don't know," said Gryce.

"Do you mean," said Brett, "that you don't know which is the correct thing to do, or that you think I can't steer?"

"I mean," said Gryce, "that I know it's one or the other, but I don't know which."

"In that case," said Brett, "we will approach from the rear. That is always the better part of valor. But if the gangway has been taken up for the night I don't know what I shall do."

"The gangway was down when the light was on her," said Gryce. "I seen it."

And that it was still down Brett could presently see for himself. He doubted his ability to make a neat landing, but they seemed to be expecting him, for a sailor ran down to the gangway landing armed with a long boat-hook, and made the matter easy for him. When he had reached the Sappho's deck an officer came forward in the darkness, and said:

"This way, sir, if you please."

"There's magic about," thought Brett, and he accompanied the officer aft.

"Mr. Merriman," said the latter, "told us to expect you half an hour ago in a motor-boat. Did you have a breakdown?"

"No," said Brett, and he added mentally, "but I'm liable to."

They descended a companionway; the officer opened a sliding door of some rich wood, and Brett stepped into the highly lighted main saloon of the Sappho.

In one corner of the room, with his back turned, the famous Mr. Merriman sat at an upright piano, lugubriously drumming. Brett had often heard of the great man's secret vice, and now the sight of him hard at it made him, in spite of the very real trepidation under which he was laboring, feel good-natured all over--the Colossus of finance was so earnest at his music, so painstaking and interested in placing his thick, clumsy fingers, and so frankly delighted with the effect of his performance upon his own ear. It seemed to Brett homely and pleasant, the thought that one of the most important people of eighty millions should find his pleasure in an art for which he had neither gift nor training.

Mr. Merriman finished his piece with a badly fumbled chord, and turned from the piano with something like the show of reluctance with which a man turns from a girl who has refused him. That Mr. Merriman did not start or change expression on seeing a stranger in the very heart of his privacy was also in keeping with his reputed character. It was also like him to look steadily at the young man for quite a long while before speaking. But finally to be addressed in courteous and pleasant tones was not what Brett expected. For this he had his own good looks to

thank, as Mr. Merriman hated, with the exception of his own music, everything that was ugly.

"Good-evening, sir," said Mr. Merriman. "But I can't for the life of me think what you are doing on my yacht. I was expecting a man, but not you."

"You couldn't guess," said Brett, "why I have been so impertinent as to call upon you without an invitation."

"Then," said Mr. Merriman, "perhaps you had better tell me. I think I have seen you before."

"My name is Brett," said Brett. "You may have seen me trying to play tennis at Newport. I have often seen you there, looking on."

"You didn't come to accuse me of being a looker-on?" Mr. Merriman asked.

"No, sir," said Brett, "but I do wish that could have been the reason. I've come, sir, as a matter of fact, because you are, on the contrary, so very, very active in the game."

"I don't understand," said Merriman rather coldly,

"Oh," said Brett, "everybody I care for in the world is being ruined, including myself, and I said, 'Mr. Merriman could save us all if he only would.' So I came to ask you if you couldn't see your way to letting up on us all."

"Mr. Brett," said Mr. Merriman, "you may have heard, since gossip occasionally concerns herself with me, that in my youth I was a priest."

Brett nodded.

"Well," continued Mr. Merriman, "I have never before listened to so naïve a confession as yours."

Brett blushed to his eyes.

"I knew when I came," he said, "that I shouldn't know how to go about what I've come for."

"But I think I have a better opinion of you," smiled Mr. Merriman, and his smile was very engaging. "You have been frank without being fresh, you have been bashful without showing fear. You meet the eye in a manly way, and you seem a clean and worthy young man. As opposed to these things, what you might have thought out to say to me would hardly matter."

"Oh," cried Brett impulsively, "if you would only let up!"

"I suppose, Mr. Brett," the banker smiled, even more engagingly, "that you mean you would like me to come to the personal rescue of all those

persons who have recently shown bad judgment in the conduct of their affairs. But let me tell you that I have precisely your own objections to seeing people go to smash. But they will do it. They don't even come to me for advice."

"You wouldn't give it to them if they did," said Brett.

"No," said Mr. Merriman, "I couldn't. But I should like to, and a piece of my mind to boot. Now, sir, you have suggested something for me to do. Will you go further and tell me how I am to do it?"

"Why," said Brett, diffidently but unabashed, "you could start in early to-morrow morning, couldn't you, and bull the market?"

"Mr. Brett," said Mr. Merriman forcefully, "I have for the last month been straining my resources to hold the market. But it is too heavy, sir, for one pair of shoulders."

A look of doubt must have crossed Brett's face, for the banker smote his right fist into the palm of his left hand with considerable violence, and rose to his feet, almost menacingly.

"Have the courtesy not to doubt my statements, young sir," he said sharply. "I have made light of your intrusion; see that you do not make light of the courtesy and consideration thus shown you."

"Of course, I believe you," said Brett, and he did.

"You are one of those," said Mr. Merriman, "who listen to what the run of people say, and make capital of it."

"Of course, I can't help hearing what people say," said Brett.

"Or believing it!" Mr. Merriman laughed savagely, "What are they saying of me these days?" he asked.

Brett hesitated.

"Come, come," said the great man, in a mocking voice. "You are here without an invitation. Entertain me! Entertain me! Make good!"

Brett was nettled.

"Well," said he, "they say that Mr. Waters was tremendously extended for a rise in stocks, and that you found it out, and that you hate him, and that you went for him to give him a lesson, and that you pulled all the props out of the market, and smashed it all to pieces, just for a private spite. That's what they say!"

The banker was silent for quite a long time.

"If there wasn't something awful about that," he said at last, "it would be very funny."

The officer who had ushered Brett into the saloon appeared at the door.

"Well?" said Merriman curtly.

"There's a gentleman," said the officer, "who wants to come aboard. He says you are expecting him. But as you only mentioned one gentleman--"

"Yes, yes," said Merriman, "I'm expecting this other gentleman, too."

He turned to Brett.

"I am going to ask you to remain," he said, "to assist at a conference on the present state of the market between yourself, and myself, and my _arch-enemy_--Mr. Waters."

III

Even if Brett should live to be a distinguished financier himself--which is not likely--he will never forget that midnight conference on board the _Sappho_. He had supposed that famous men--unless they were dead statesmen--thought only of themselves, and how they might best and most easily increase their own power and wealth. He had believed with the rest of the smaller Wall Street interests that the present difficulties were the result of a private feud. Instead of this he now saw that the supposed quarrellers had forgotten their differences, and were in the closest kind of an alliance to save the situation. He discovered that until prices had fallen fifty points neither of them had been in the market to any significant extent; and that, to avert the appalling calamities which seemed imminent, both were ready if necessary to impoverish themselves or to take unusual risks of so doing. He learned the real causes of the panic, so far as these were not hidden from Merriman and Waters themselves, and when at last the two men decided what should be attempted, to what strategic points they should send re-enforcements, and just what assistance they should ask the Secretary of the Treasury to furnish, Brett felt that he had seen history in the making.

Waters left the _Sappho_ at one in the morning, and Brett was for going, too, but Merriman laid a hand on the young man's shoulder and asked him to remain for a few moments.

"Now, my son," he said, "you see how the panic has affected some of the so-called big interests. It may be that Waters and I can't do very much. But it will be good for you to remember that we tried; it will make you perhaps see others in a more tolerant light. But for purposes of conversation you will, of course, forget that you have been here. Now, as to your own affairs--"

Mr. Merriman looked old and tired, but very indulgent and kind.

"Knowing what I know now," said Brett, "I would rather take my chances with the other little fools who have made so much trouble for you and Mr. Waters. If your schemes work out I'll be saved in spite of myself; and if they don't--well, I hope I've learned not to be so great a fool again."

"In every honest young man," said Merriman, "there is something of the early Christian--he is very noble and very silly. Write your name and telephone number on that sheet of paper. At least, you won't refuse orders from me in the morning. Waters and I will have to use many brokers to-morrow, of whom I hope you will consent to be one."

Brett hung his head in pleasure and shame. Then he looked Mr. Merriman in the face with a bright smile.

"If you've got to help some private individual, Mr. Merriman, I'd rather you didn't make it me; I'd rather you made it old man Callender. If he goes under now he'll never get to the top again."

"Not Samuel B. Callender?" said Merriman, with a note of surprise and very real interest in his voice. "Is he in trouble? I didn't know. Why, that will never do--a fine old fighting character like that--and besides ... why, wouldn't you have thought that he would have come to me himself or that at least he would have confided in my son Jim?"

Brett winced.

Merriman wrote something upon a card and handed it to Brett.

"Can you see that he gets that?" he asked.

"Yes, sir," said Brett.

"Tell him, then, to present it at my office the first thing in the morning. It will get him straight to me. I can't stand idle and see the father of the girl my boy is going to marry ruined."

"I didn't know--" said Brett. He was very white, and his lips trembled in spite of his best efforts to control them. "I congratulate you, sir. She is very lovely," he added.

Mr. Merriman regarded the miserable young man quizzically.

"But," he said, "Mr. Callender has three daughters."

"Oh, no," said Brett dismally, "there is only the one."

"My boy," said Mr. Merriman, "I am afraid that you are an incorrigible plunger--at stocks, at romance, and at conclusions. I don't know if I am going to comfort you or give you pain, but the girl my son is going to marry is Mary Callender."

The color returned to Brett's cheek and the sparkle to his eyes. He grasped Mr. Merriman by both hands, and in a confidential voice he said:

"Mr. Merriman, there is no such person."

THE McTAVISH

I

By the look of her she might have been a queen, or a princess, or at the very least a duchess. But she was no one of these. She was only a commoner--a plain miss, though very far from plain. Which is extraordinary when you consider that the blood of the Bruce flowed with exceeding liveliness in her veins, together with the blood of many another valiant Scot--Randolph, Douglas, Campbell--who bled with Bruce or for him.

With the fact that she was not at the very least a duchess, _most_ of her temporal troubles came to an abrupt end. When she tired of her castle at Beem-Tay she could hop into her motor-car and fly down the Great North Road to her castle at Brig O'Dread. This was a fifty-mile run, and from any part of the road she could see land that belonged to her--forest, farm, and moor. If the air at Beem-Tay was too formal, or the keep at Brig O'Dread too gloomy, she could put up at any of her half-dozen shooting lodges, built in wild, inaccessible, wild-fowly places, and shake the dust of the world from her feet, and tread, just under heaven, upon the heather.

But mixed up with all this fine estate was one other temporal trouble. For, over and above the expenses of keeping the castles on a good footing, and the shooting lodges clean and attractive, and the motor-car full of petrol, and the horses full of oats, and the lawns empty of weeds, and the glass houses full of fruit, she had no money whatsoever. She could not sell any of her land because it was entailed--that is, it really belonged to somebody who didn't exist; she couldn't sell her diamonds, for the same reason; and she could not rent any of her shootings, because her ancestors had not done so. I honestly believe that a sixpence of real money looked big to her.

Her first name was the same as that of the Lady of the Lake--Ellen. Her last name was McTavish--if she had been a man she would have been The McTavish (and many people did call her that)--and her middle names were like the sands of the sea in number, and sounded like bugles blowing a charge--Campbell and Cameron, Dundee and Douglas. She had a family tartan--heather brown, with Lincoln green tit-tat-toe crisscrosses--and she had learned how to walk from a thousand years of strong-walking ancestors. She had her eyes from the deepest part of a deep moorland loch, her cheeks from the briar rose, some of the notes of her voice from the upland plover, and some from the lark. And her laugh was like

an echo of the sounds that the River Tay makes when it goes among the shallows.

One day she was sitting all by herself in the Seventh Drawing Room (forty feet by twenty-four) of Brig O'Dread Castle, looking from a fourteen-foot-deep window embrasure, upon the brig itself, the river rushing under it, and the clean, flowery town upon both banks. From most of her houses she could see nothing but her own possessions, but from Brig O'Dread Castle, standing, as it did, in one corner of her estates, she could see past her entrance gate, with its flowery, embattled lodge, a little into the outside world. There were tourists whirling by in automobiles along the Great North Road, or parties of Scotch gypsies, with their dark faces and ear-rings, with their wagons and folded tents, passing from one good poaching neighborhood to the next. Sometimes it amused her to see tourists turned from her gates by the proud porter who lived in the lodge; and on the present occasion, when an automobile stopped in front of the gate and the chauffeur hopped out and rang the bell, she was prepared to be mildly amused once more in the same way.

The proud porter emerged like a conquering hero from the lodge, the pleated kilt of the McTavish tartan swinging against his great thighs, his knees bare and glowing in the sun, and the jaunty Highland bonnet low upon the side of his head. He approached the gate and began to parley, but not with the chauffeur; a more important person (if possible) had descended from the car--a person of unguessable age, owing to automobile goggles, dressed in a London-made shooting suit of tweed, and a cap to match. The parley ended, the stranger appeared to place something in the proud porter's hand; and the latter swung upon his heel and strode up the driveway to the castle. Meanwhile the stranger remained without the gate.

Presently word came to The McTavish, in the Seventh Drawing Room, that an American gentleman named McTavish, who had come all the way from America for the purpose, desired to read the inscriptions upon the McTavish tombstones in the chapel of Brig O'Dread Castle. The porter, who brought this word himself, being a privileged character, looked very wistful when he had delivered it--as much as to say that the frightful itching of his palm had not been as yet wholly assuaged. The McTavish smiled.

"Bring the gentleman to the Great Tower door, McDougall," she said, "and--I will show him about, myself."

The proud porter's face fell. His snow-white mustachios took on a fuller droop.

"McDougall," said The McTavish--and this time she laughed aloud--"if the gentleman from America crosses my hand with silver, it shall be yours."

"More like"--and McDougall became gloomier still--"more like he will cross it with gold." (Only he said this in a kind of dialect that was delightful to hear, difficult to understand, and would be insulting to

the reader to reproduce in print.)

"If it's gold," said The McTavish sharply, "I'll not part wi' it, McDougall, and you may lay to that."

You might have thought that McDougall had been brought up in the Black Hole of Calcutta--so sad he looked, and so hurt, so softly he left the room, so loudly he closed the door.

The McTavish burst into laughter, and promised herself, not without some compunction, to hand over the gold to McDougall, if any should materialize. Next she flew to her dressing-room and made herself look as much like a gentlewoman's housekeeper as she could in the few minutes at her disposal. Then she danced through a long, dark passageway, and whisked down a narrow winding stair, and stood at last in the door of the Great Tower in the sunlight. And when she heard the stranger's feet upon the gravel she composed her face; and when he appeared round the corner of a clipped yew she rattled the keys at her belt and bustled on her feet, as becomes a housekeeper, and bobbed a courtesy.

The stranger McTavish was no more than thirty. He had brown eyes, and wore upon his face a steady, enigmatic smile.

II

"Good-morning," said the American McTavish. "It is very kind of Miss McTavish to let me go into her chapel. Are you the housekeeper?"

"I am," said The McTavish. "Mrs. Nevis is my name."

"What a pity!" murmured the gentleman.

"This way, sir," said The McTavish.

She stepped into the open, and, jangling her keys occasionally, led him along an almost interminable path of green turf bordered by larkspur and flowering sage, which ended at last at a somewhat battered lead statue of Atlas, crowning a pudding-shaped mound of turf.

"When the Red Currie sacked Brig O'Dread Castle," said The McTavish, "he dug a pit here and flung the dead into it. There will be McTavishes among them."

"There are no inscriptions," said the gentleman.

"Those are in the chapel," said The McTavish. "This way." And she swung into another turf walk, long, wide, springy, and bordered by birches.

"Tell me," said the American, "is it true that Miss McTavish is down on strangers?"

She looked at him over her shoulder. He still wore his enigmatic smile.

"I don't know what got into her," she said, "to let you in." She halted in her tracks and, looking cautiously this way and that, like a conspirator in a play: "She's a hard woman to deal with," she said, "between you and me."

"I've heard something of the kind," said the American. "Indeed, I asked the porter. I said, 'What manner of woman is Miss McTavish?' and he said, in a kind of whisper, 'The McTavish, sir, is a roaring, ranting, stingy, bony female.'"

"He said that, did he?" asked the pseudo Mrs. Nevis, tightening her lips and jangling her keys.

"But I didn't believe him," said the American; "I wouldn't believe what he said of any cousin of mine."

"Is The McTavish your cousin?"

"Why, yes," said he; "but just which one I don't know. That's what I have come to find out. I have an idea--I and my lawyers have--that if The McTavish died without a direct heir, I should be The McTavish; that is, that this nice castle, and Red Curries Mound, and all and all, would be mine. I could come every August for the shooting. It would be very nice."

"It wouldn't be very nice for The McTavish to die before you," said Mrs. Nevis. "She's only twenty-two."

"Great heavens!" said the American. "Between you, you made me think she was a horrid old woman!"

"Horrid," said Mrs. Nevis, "very. But not old."

She led the way abruptly to a turf circle which ended the birch walk and from which sprang, in turn, a walk of larch, a walk of Lebanon cedars, and one of mountain ash. At the end of the cedar walk, far off, could be seen the squat gray tower of the chapel, heavy with ivy. McTavish caught up with Mrs. Nevis and walked at her side. Their feet made no sound upon the pleasant, springy turf. Only the bunch of keys sounded occasionally.

"How," said McTavish, not without insinuation, "could one get to know one's cousin?"

"Oh," said Mrs. Nevis, "if you are troubled with spare cash and stay in the neighborhood long enough, she'll manage that. She has little enough to spend, poor woman. Why, sir, when she told me to show you the chapel, she said, 'Catherine,' she said, 'there's one Carnegie come out of the States--see if yon McTavish is not another.'"

"She said that?"

"She did so."

"And how did you propose to go to work to find out, Mrs. Nevis?"

"Oh," said she, "I've hinted broadly at the news that's required at headquarters. I can do no more."

McTavish reflected, "Tell her," he said presently, "when you see her, that I'm not Carnegie, nor near it. But tell her that, as we Americans say, 'I've enough for two.'"

"Oh," said Mrs. Nevis, "that would mean too much or too little to a Scot."

"Call it, then," said McTavish, "several million pounds."

"Several," Mrs. Nevis reflected.

"Say--three," said McTavish.

Mrs. Nevis sighed. "And where did you gather it all?" she asked.

"Oh, from my father," said McTavish. "And it was given to him by the government."

"Why?" she asked.

"Not why," said he, "so much as how. You see, our government is passionately fond of certain people and makes them very rich. But it's perfectly fair, because at the same time it makes other people, of whom it is not fond, desperately poor. We call it protection," he said. "For instance, my government lets a man buy a Shetland wool sweater in Scotland for two dollars, and lets him sell it on Broadway for twenty dollars. The process makes that man rich in time, but it's perfectly fair, because it makes the man who has to buy the sweater poor."

"But the fool doesn't have to buy it," said Mrs. Nevis.

"Oh yes, he does," said McTavish; "in America--if he likes the look of it and the feel of it--he has to buy. It's the climate, I suppose."

"Did your father make his money in Shetland sweaters?" she asked.

"Nothing so nice," said McTavish; "rails."

A covey of birds rose in the woods at their right with a loud whirl of wings.

"Whew!" exclaimed McTavish.

"Baby pheasants," explained Mrs. Nevis. "They shoot three thousand at Brig O'Dread in the season."

After certain difficulties, during which their hands touched, the greatest key in Mrs. Nevis's bunch was made to open the chapel door, and they went in.

The place had no roof; the flagged floor had disappeared, and it had been replaced by velvety turf, level between the graves and headstones. Supporting columns reared themselves here and there, supporting nothing. A sturdy thorn tree grew against the left-hand wall; but the sun shone brightly into the ruin, and sparrows twittered pleasantly among the in-growths of ivy.

"Will you wish to read all the inscriptions?" asked Mrs. Nevis, doubtfully, for there were hundreds of tombstones crowding the turf or pegged to the walls.

"No, no," said McTavish "I see what I came to see--already."

For the first time the enigmatic smile left his face, and she watched him with a kind of excited interest as he crossed the narrow houses of the dead and halted before a small tablet of white marble. She followed him, more slowly, and stood presently at his side as he read aloud:

"SACRED TO THE MEMORY OF
COLLAND McTAVISH,
WHO DISAPPEARED, AGED FIVE YEARS,
JUNE 15TH, 1801."

Immediately below the inscription a bar of music was engraved in the marble. "I can't read that," said McTavish.

Mrs. Nevis hummed a pathetic air very sweetly, almost under her breath. He listened until she had finished and then: "What tune is that?" he asked, excitedly.

"Wandering Willie," she answered.

"Of course," said he, "it would be that."

"Was this the stone you came to see?" she asked presently.

"Yes," he said. "Colland McTavish, who disappeared, was my great-grandfather. The old gentleman--I never saw him myself--used to say that he remembered a long, long driveway, and a great iron gate, and riding for ever and ever in a wagon with a tent over it, and sleeping at night on the bare hills or in forests beside streams. And that was all he remembered, except being on a ship on the sea for years and years. But he had this--"

McTavish extracted from a pocket into which it had been buttoned for safety what appeared, at first sight, to be a linen handkerchief yellow with age. But, on unfolding, it proved to be a child's shirt, cracked and broken in places, and lacking all but one of its bone buttons.

Embroidered on the tiny shirt tail, in faint and faded blue, was the name Colland McTavish.

"He always thought," said McTavish, "that the gypsies stole him. It looks as if they had, doesn't it? And, just think, he used to live in this beautiful place, and play in it, and belong to it! Wasn't it curious, my seeing that tablet the first thing when we came in? It looked as big as a house and seemed to beckon me."

"It looks more like the ghost of a little child," said Mrs. Nevis quietly. "Perhaps that is why it drew you so."

"Why," said he, "has this chapel been allowed to fall to pieces?"

"Because," said Mrs. Nevis, "there's never been the money to mend it."

"I wonder," he mused, "if The McTavish would let me do it? After all, I'm not an utter stranger; I'm a distant cousin--after all."

"Not so distant, sir," said Mrs. Nevis, "as may appear, if what you say is true. Colland McTavish, your great-grandfather, and The McTavish's great-grandfather, were brothers--and the poor bereft mother that put up this tablet was your great-great-grandmother, and hers."

"Surely then," said he, "The McTavish would let me put a roof on the chapel. I'd like to," he said, and the red came strongly into his cheeks. "I'll ask her. Surely she wouldn't refuse to see me on such a matter."

"You can never tell," Mrs. Nevis said. "She's a woman that won't bear forcing."

He looked at her for the first time in some minutes. "Why," said he, "you're ill; you're white as a sheet!"

"It's the long walk uphill. It takes me in the heart, somehow."

"I'm sorry," said McTavish simply. "I'm mighty sorry. It's all my fault."

"Why, so it is," said she, with the flicker of a smile.

"You must take my arm going back. I am sorry."

When they had left the chapel and locked the door, she took his arm without any further invitation.

"I will, if you don't mind," she said. "I am shaken, and that's the truth.... But what," and again the smile flickered--"what would The McTavish say if she saw us--her cousin and her housekeeper--dawdling along arm in arm?"

McTavish laughed. "I don't mind, if you don't."

They returned slowly by the long turf walk to the statue of Atlas.

"Now," said he, "how should I go about getting an interview with The McTavish?"

"Well," said Mrs. Nevis, "it will not be for to-day. She is leaving within the hour for Beem-Tay in her motor-car."

"Oh, then I shall follow her to Beem-Tay."

"If you can do that," said Mrs. Nevis, "I will give you a line to my sister. Maybe she could help you. She's the housekeeper at Beem-Tay--Miss MacNish is her name." And she added as if by an after-thought. "We are twins."

"Are there two of you?" exclaimed McTavish.

"Why not?" she asked, with a guileless face.

"Why," said he, "it's wonderful. Does she look like you?"

"Exactly," said Mrs. Nevis. "Same red hair, same eyes, nose, and faint spells--only," and there was a certain arch quality in her clear voice, "_she's_ single."

"And she looks exactly like you--and she's single! I don't believe it."

Mrs. Nevis withdrew her hand from his arm. When they had reached the door of the Great Tower she stopped.

"If you care for a line to my sister," she said, "I'll write it. You can wait here."

"I wish it of all things, and if there are any stairs to climb, mind you take your time. Remember you're not very good at hills."

When she had gone, he smiled his enigmatic smile and began to walk slowly up and down in front of the door, his hands clasped behind his back. Once he made a remark. "Scotland," he said, "is the place for me."

But when at length she returned with the letter, he did not offer her money; instead he offered his hand. "You've been very kind," he said, "and when I meet your mistress I will tell her how very courteous you have been. Thank you."

He placed the letter in the breast-pocket of his shooting-coat. "Any messages for your sister?" he asked.

"You may tell her I hope she is putting by something for a rainy day. You may tell her The McTavish is verra hard up the noo"--she smiled very charmingly in his face--"and will na' brook an extravagant table."

"Do you think," said McTavish, "that your sister will get me a chance to see _The_ McTavish?"

"If any one can, she can."

"Good-by," he said, and once more they shook hands.

A few minutes later she heard the distant purring of his car, and a thought struck her with dismay. "What if he goes straight to Beem-Tay and presents the letter before I get there!"

She flowered into swift action, flashed up the turret stairs, and, having violently rung a bell, flew into her dressing-room, and began to drag various automobiling coats, hats, and goggles out of their hiding places. When the bell was answered: "The car," she cried, "at once!"

A few moments later, veiled, goggled, and coated, she was dashing from the castle to the stables. Halfway she met the car. "McDonald," she cried, "can you make Beem-Tay in the hour?"

"It's fifty miles," said the driver, doubtfully.

"Can you make it?"

"The road--" he began.

"I know the road," she said impatiently; "it's all twisty-wisty. Can you make it?"

"I'm a married man," said he.

"Ten pounds sterling if you make it."

"And if we smash and are kilt?"

"Why, there'll be a more generous master than I in Beem-Tay and in Brig O'Dread--that's all."

She leaped into the car, and a minute later they were flying along the narrow, tortuous North Road like a nightmare. Once she leaned over the driver's seat and spoke in his ear: "I hav'na the ten pounds noo," she said, "but I'll beg them, McDonald, or borrow them--" The car began to slow down, the driver's face grew gloomy. "Or steal them!" she cried. McDonald's face brightened, for The McTavish's money difficulties were no better known than the fact that she was a woman of her word. He opened the throttle and the car once more shot dizzily forward.

Twenty miles out of Brig O'Dread they came upon another car, bound in the same direction and also running desperately fast. They passed it in a roaring smother of dust.

"McDonald," said The McTavish, "you needna run sae fast noo. Keep the lead o' yon car to Beem-Tay gate--that is all."

She sank back luxuriously, sighed, and began to wonder how she should find McDonald his ten pounds sterling.

III

She need not have hurried, nor thrown to the wind those ten pounds that she had somehow to raise. On arriving at Beem-Tay she had given orders that any note addressed to Miss MacNish, and presented at the gate, should be brought at once to her. McTavish did not come that day, but she learned indirectly that he had taken rooms at the McTavish Arms in Beem-Tay village, and from Mr. Traquair, manager of the local branch of the Bank of Scotland, that he was taking steps to hire for the season the forest of Clackmanness, a splendid sporting estate that marched with her own lands. Mr. Traquair, a gentleman as thin as a pipe stem, and as kind as tobacco, had called upon her the second day, in answer to an impetuous summons. He found her looking very anxious and very beautiful, and told her so.

"May the looks stand me in good stead, Mr. Traquair," said she, "for I'm like to become Wandering Willie of the song--Wandering Wilhelmina, rather. There's a man yont, named McTavish, will oost me frae hoose and name."

"That would be the young gentleman stopping at the McTavish Arms."

"Ah," said The McTavish, "he might stop here if he but knew."

"He's no intending it, then," said Mr. Traquair, "for he called upon me this morning to hire the Duke's forest of Clackmanness."

"Ah!" said The McTavish.

"And now," said Mr. Traquair, stroking his white mustache, "tell me what it all means."

"It means that Colland McTavish, who was my great-grandfather's elder brother, has returned in the person of the young gentleman at the Arms."

"A fine hornpipe he'll have to prove it," said Mr. Traquair.

"Fine fiddlesticks!" said The McTavish. "Man," she continued earnestly, "you have looked in his face and you tell me it will be a dance to prove him The McTavish?"

"He is a McTavish," admitted Mr. Traquair; "so much I knew before he told me his name."

"He has in his pocket the bit shirt that wee Colland wore when the gypsies snatched him and carried him over seas; it's all of a piece with

many another garment of wee Colland's. I've had out the trunk in which his little duds have been stored these many years. The man is Colland's great-grandson. I look at him, and I admit it without proof."

"My dear," said Mr. Traquair, "you have no comprehension of the law. I will fight this claim through every court of the land, or I'm ready to meet him on Bannockburn field, my ancestral claymore against his. A rare laugh we'll have when the pretender produces his bit shirtie in the court, and says, 'Look, your honor, upon my patent o' nobilitee.'"

"Mind this," said The McTavish, "I'll make no contests, nor have none made. Only," she smiled faintly, "I hay'na told him who he rightly is. He claims cousinship. But it has not dawned on him that Colland was to have been The McTavish, that he is The McTavish, that I am merely Miss Ellen Alice Douglas Cameron Dundee Campbell McGregor Breadalbane Blair McTavish, houseless, homeless spinster, wi' but a drap o' gude blood to her heritage. I have not told him, Mr. Traquair. He does not know. What's to be done? What would you do--if you knew_ that he was he, and that you were only you?"

"It's your meeserable conscience of a Church-going Scot," commiserated Traquair, not without indignation. "What would a Campbell have done? He'd have had himself made a judge in the land, and he'd have condemned the pretender to the gallows--out of hand, my dear--out of hand!"

She shook her head at him as at a naughty child. "Where is your own meeserable conscience, Traquair?"

"My dear," cried the little man, "it is storming my reason."

"There," said she, "I told you so. And now we are both of one mind, you shall present these tidings to McTavish together with my compliments."

"First," said Traquair cautiously, "I'll bide a bit on the thought."

"I will leave the time to your meeserable conscience," said Miss McTavish generously. "Meanwhile, my dear man, while the semblance of prosperity abides over my head in the shape of a roof, there's a matter o' ten pound--"

Mr. Traquair rose briskly to his feet. "Ten pound!" he exclaimed.

"Only ten pound," she wheedled.

"My dear," he said, "I don't see where you're to raise another matter o' saxpence this month."

"But I've promised the ten pound on my honor," she said. "Would you have me break my word to a servant?"

"Well--well," temporized Mr. Traquair, "I'll have another look at the books. Mind, I'm not saying it can be done--unless you'll sell a bit timber here and yont--"

"Dear man," she said, "full well ye know it's not mine to sell. Then you're to let me have the ten pound?"

"If I were to employ a wheedler," said Mr. Traquair, "I'd have no choice 'twixt you and Satan. Mind, I make no promises. Ten pound is a prodeegious sum o' money, when ye hay'na got it."

"Not later than to-morrow, then," said Miss McTavish, as though to cap a promise that had been made to her. "I'm obliged to you, Traquair, deeply obliged."

IV

But it was not the matter of the ten pounds that worried Traquair as he climbed into his pony cart and drove slowly through the castle policies to the gate. Indeed, the lofty gates had not been closed behind him before he had forgotten all about them. That The McTavish was not The McTavish alone occupied his attention. And when he perceived the cause of the trouble, strolling beside the lofty ring fence of stone that shielded the castle policies from impertinent curiosity, it was in anything but his usual cheerful voice that he hailed him.

"Will you take a lift, Mr. McTavish?" he invited dismally.

"Oh, no," said The McTavish, "I won't trouble you, thanks."

Traquair's meeserable conscience got the better of him all at once. And with that his cheerfulness returned.

"Get in," he said. "You cannot help troubling me, Mr. McTavish. I've a word for you, sir."

McTavish, wondering, climbed into the car.

"Fergus," said Traquair to the small boy who acted as groom, messenger, and shoe polisher to the local branch of the Bank of Scotland, "ye'll walk."

When the two were thus isolated from prying ears, Mr. Traquair cleared his throat and spoke. "Is there anything, Mr. McTavish," he said, "in this world that a rich man like you may want?"

"Oh, yes," said McTavish, "some things."

"More wealth?"

McTavish shook his head.

"Houses--lands?" Traquair looked up shrewdly from the corner of his eye,

but McTavish shook his head again.

"Power, then, Mr. McTavish?"

"No--not power."

"Glory?"

"No," said McTavish; "I'm sorry, but I'm afraid not."

"Then, sir," said Traquair, "it's a woman."

"No," said McTavish, and he blushed handsomely. "It's _the_ woman."

"I withdraw my insinuation," said Traquair gravely.

"I thank you," said Mr. McTavish.

"I am glad, sir," said Traquair presently, "to find you in so generous a disposition, for we have need of your generosity. I have it from Miss McTavish herself," he went on gravely, "that your ancestor, so far as you know, was Colland McTavish."

"So far as I know and believe," said McTavish, "he was."

"Did you know that Colland McTavish should have been _The_ McTavish?" asked Mr. Traquair.

"It never entered my head. Was he the oldest son?"

"He was," said Mr. Traquair solemnly, "until in the eyes of the _law_ he ceased to exist."

"Then," said McTavish, "in every eye save that of the law I am _The_ McTavish."

Mr. Traquair bowed. "Miss McTavish," he said, "was for telling you at once; but she left the matter entirely to my discretion. I have thought best to tell you."

"Would the law," asked McTavish, "oust Miss McTavish and stand me in her shoes?"

"The law," said Traquair pointedly, "would not do the former, and," with a glance at McTavish's feet, "the Auld Nick could not do the latter."

McTavish laughed. "Then why have you told me?" he asked.

"Because," said Traquair grandly, "it is Miss McTavish's resolution to make no opposition to your claim."

"I see; I am to become 'The' without a fight."

"Precisely," said Traquair.

"Well, discretionary powers as to informing me of this were given you, as I understand, Mr. Traquair?"

"They were," said Traquair.

"Well," said McTavish again, "there's no use crying over spilt milk. But is your conscience up to a heavy load?"

"'Tis a meeserable vehicle at best," protested Traquair.

"You must pretend," said McTavish, "that you have not yet told me."

"Ah!" Traquair exclaimed. "You wish to think it over."

"I do," said McTavish.

Both were silent for some moments. Then Traquair said rather solemnly:

"You are young, Mr. McTavish, but I have hopes that your thinking will be of a wise and courageous nature."

"Do you read Tennyson?" asked McTavish, apropos of nothing.

"No," said Traquair, slightly nettled. "Burns."

"I am sorry," said McTavish simply; "then you don't know the lines:

'If you are not the heiress born,
And I,' said he, 'the lawful heir,' etc.

do you?"

"No," said Traquair, "I do not."

"It is curious how often a lack of literary affinity comes between two persons and a heart-to-heart talk."

"Let me know," said Traquair, "when you have thought it over."

"I will. And now if you will put me down--?"

He leaped to the ground, lifted his hat to the older man, and, turning, strode very swiftly, as if to make up for lost time, back toward the castle gate.

V

McTavish was kept waiting a long time while a servant took his letter of introduction to Miss MacNish, and brought back an answer from

the castle.

Finally, midway of a winding and shrubby short cut, into which he turned as directed by the porter, he came suddenly upon her.

"Miss MacNish--?" he said.

"You're not Mr. McTavish!--" She seemed dumfounded, and glanced at a letter which she carried open in her hand. "My sister writes--"

"What does she write?" asked McTavish eagerly.

"No--no!" Miss MacNish exclaimed hastily, "the letter was to me." She tore it hastily into little pieces.

"Miss MacNish," said McTavish, somewhat hurt, "it is evident that I give diametrically opposed impressions to you and your sister. Either she has said something nice about me, and you, seeing me, are astonished that she should; or she has said something horrid about me--I do hope it's that way--and you are even more surprised. It must be one thing or the other. And before we shake hands I think it only proper for you to tell me which."

"Let bygones be bygones," said Miss MacNish, and she held out her hand. McTavish took it, and smiled his enigmatic smile.

"It is your special wish, I have gathered," said Miss MacNish, "to meet The McTavish. Now she knows about your being in the neighborhood, knows that you are a distant cousin, but she hasn't expressed any wish to meet you--at least I haven't heard her. If she wishes to meet you, she will ask you to call upon her. If she doesn't wish to, she won't. Of course, if you came upon her suddenly--somewhere in the grounds, for instance--she'd have to listen to what you had to say, and to answer you, I suppose. But to-day--well I'd not try it to-day."

"Why not?" asked McTavish.

"Why," said Miss MacNish, "she caught cold in the car yesterday, and her poor nose is much too red for company."

"Why do you all try to make her out such a bad lot?"

"Is it being a bad lot to have a red nose?" exclaimed Miss MacNish.

"At twenty-two?" McTavish looked at her in surprise and horror. "I ask you," he said. "There was the porter at Brig O'Dread, and your sister--they gave her a pair of black eyes between them, and here you give her a red nose. When the truth is probably the reverse."

"I don't know the reverse of red," said Miss MacNish, "but that would give her white eyes."

"I am sure, Miss MacNish, that quibbling is not one of your

prerogatives. It belongs exclusively to the Speaker of the House of Representatives. As for me--the less I see of The McTavish, the surer I am that she is rather beautiful, and very amusing, and good."

"Are these the matters on which you are so eager to meet her?" asked Miss MacNish. She stood with her back to a clump of dark blue larkspur taller than herself--a lovely picture, in her severe black housekeeper's dress that by contrast made her face and dark red hair all the more vivacious and flowery. Her eyes at the moment were just the color of the larkspur.

McTavish smiled his enigmatic smile. "They are," he said.

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Miss MacNish.

"When I meet her--" McTavish began, and abruptly paused.

"What?" Miss MacNish asked with some eagerness.

"Oh, nothing; _I'm_ so full of it that I almost betrayed my own confidence."

"I hope that you aren't implying that I might prove indiscreet."

"Oh, dear no!" said McTavish.

"It had a look of it, then," said Miss MacNish tartly.

"Oh," said McTavish, "if I've hurt your feelings--why, I'll go on with what I began, and take the consequences, shall I?"

"I think," said Miss MacNish primly, "that it would tend to restore confidence between us."

"When I meet her, then," said McTavish, "I shall first tell her that she is beautiful, and amusing, and good. And then," it came from him in a kind of eager, boyish outburst, "I shall ask her to marry me."

Miss MacNish gasped and stepped backward into the fine and deep soil that gave the larkspur its inches. The color left her cheeks and returned upon the instant tenfold. And it was many moments before she could find a word to speak. Then she said in an injured and astonished tone: "_Why?_"

"The Scotch Scot," said McTavish, "is shrewd, but cautious. The American Scot is shrewd, but daring. Caution, you'll admit, is a pitiful measure in an affair of the heart."

Miss MacNish was by this time somewhat recovered from her consternation. "Well," said she, "what then? When you have come upon The McTavish unawares somewhere in the shrubbery, and asked her to marry you, and she has boxed your ears for you--what then?"

"Then," said McTavish with a kind of anticipatory expression of pleasure, "I shall kiss her. Even if she hated it," he said ruefully, "she couldn't help but be surprised and flattered."

Miss MacNish took a step forward with a sudden hilarious brightening in her eyes. "Are you quizzing me," she said, "or are you outlining your honest and mad intentions? And if the latter, won't you tell me why? Why, in heaven's name, should you ask The McTavish to marry you--at first sight?"

"I can't explain it," said McTavish. "But even if I never have seen her--I love her."

"I have heard of love at first sight--" began Miss MacNish.

But he interrupted eagerly. "You haven't ever experienced it, have you?"

"Of course, I haven't," she exclaimed indignantly. "I've heard of it--_often_. But I have never heard of love without any sight at all."

"Love is blind," said McTavish.

"Now, who's quibbling?"

"Just because," he said, "you've never heard of a thing, away off here in your wild Highlands, is a mighty poor proof that it doesn't exist. I suppose you don't believe in predestination. I've always known," he said grandly, "that I should marry my cousin--even against her will and better judgment. You don't more than half believe me, do you?"

"Well, not more than half," Miss MacNish smiled.

"It's the truth," he said; "I will bet you ten pounds it's the truth."

Miss MacNish looked at him indignantly, and in the midst of the look she sighed. "I don't bet," said she.

McTavish lowered his glance until it rested upon his own highly polished brown boots.

"Why are you looking at your boots?" asked Miss MacNish.

"Because," he said simply, "considering that I am in love with my cousin, I don't think I ought to look at you any more. I'm afraid I got the habit by looking at your sister; but then, as she has a husband, it couldn't matter so much."

Miss MacNish, I'm afraid, mantled with pleasure. "My sister said something in her letter about your wishing to see the house of your ancestors. Miss McTavish is out now--would you like to look about a little?"

"Dearly," said McTavish.

VI

Miss McTavish sent for Mr. Traquair. He went to her with a heavy conscience, for as yet he had done nothing toward raising the ten pounds. At her first words his conscience became still more laden.

"Traquair," she said, "you mustn't tell him yet."

It was all Traquair could do to keep countenance. "Then it's fortunate I haven't," said he, "for you gave me a free hand."

"Consider it tied behind your back for the present, for a wonderful thing is going to happen."

"Indeed," said Traquair.

"You wouldn't believe me when I tell you that the silly man is going to fall in love with me, and ask me to marry him!"

"Although you haven't offered me a chair, my dear," said Traquair, "I will take one."

All in a burst then, half laughing, half in a grave kind of excitement, she told her old friend how she had played housekeeper first at Brig O'Dread and later at Beem-Tay. And how, on the latter occasion, McTavish had displayed his admiration so openly that there could be but the one climax.

"And after all," she concluded, "if he thinks I'm just a housekeeper, and falls in love with me and asks me to marry him--I'd know the man was sincere--wouldn't I, Traquair?"

"It seems to me," said Traquair, "that I have never seen you so thoroughly delighted with yourself."

"That is unkind. It is a wonderful thing when a girl of position, and hedged in as I have been, finds that she is loved for herself alone and not for her houses and lands, and her almost royal debts."

"Verra flattering," said Traquair, "na doot. And what answer will you give?"

"Traquair," she said, "I'm not a profane girl; but I'm hanged if I know."

"He is a very wealthy man, and I have no doubt a very kind and honest man."

"He is a very cheeky man," smiled Miss McTavish.

"No doubt--no doubt," said Traquair; "and it would leave you to the honest enjoyment of your houses and lands, which otherwise you propose to hand over to him. Still, it is well for a Scot to be cautious."

"For a Scotch Scot," said Miss McTavish. "I should be an American Scot if I married him. He tells me they are noted for their daring."

While they were thus animatedly conversing, word came that Mr. McTavish had called in the hope of seeing Miss MacNish.

"There," said Miss McTavish, "you see! Go down to him, Traquair, and be pleasant, until I come. Then vanish."

Traquair found McTavish smoking a thick London cigarette upon the steps of the side entrance, and gazing happily into a little garden of dark yew and vivid scarlet geraniums with daring edgings of brightest blue lobelia.

"Will you be making any changes," asked Traquair, "when you come into your own?"

McTavish looked up with a smile and handed his open cigarette case to the older man.

"Mr. Traquair," he said, "I'm young and a stranger. I wish you could find it in your heart to be an uncle to me."

Traquair accepted a cigarette and sat down, first assuring himself that the stone steps were dry.

"If I were your nephew," said McTavish, "and came to you all out of breath, and told you that I wished to marry Miss McTavish's housekeeper, what would you say?"

"I would say," said Traquair, "that she was the daughter of a grand family that had fallen from their high estate. I would say, 'Charge, nephew, charge!'"

"Do you mean it!" exclaimed McTavish.

"There's no more lovely lass in the United Kingdom," said Traquair, "than Miss--Miss--"

"MacNish," McTavish helped him; "and she would be mistress where she had been servant. That's a curious twist of fate."

"You have made up your mind, then," said Traquair, "to claim your own?"

"By no means--yet," said McTavish. "I was only speculating. It's all in the air. Suppose uncle, that Miss MacNish throws me down!"

"Throws you down!" Traquair was shocked.

"Well," said McTavish humbly, "you told me to charge."

"To charge," said Traquair testily, "but not to grapple."

"In my country," said McTavish, "when a girl refuses to marry a man they call it throwing him down, giving him the sack, or handing him a lemon."

"Yours is an exceptional country," said Traquair.

Miss MacNish appeared in the doorway behind them. "I'm sorry to have been so long," she said; "I had to give out the linen for luncheon."

McTavish flung away his cigarette, and sprang to his feet as if some one had stuck a pin into him. Traquair, according to the schedule, vanished.

"It seemed very, very long," said McTavish.

"Miss McTavish," said Miss MacNish, "has consented to see you."

"Good Heavens!--when?"

"Now."

"But I don't want to see her now."

"But you told me"--Miss MacNish looked thoroughly puzzled--"you told me just what you were going to say to her. You said it was all predestined."

"Miss MacNish, it was not Miss McTavish I was thinking of--I'm sure it wasn't. It was you."

"Are you proposing to me?" she asked.

"Of course, I am. Come into the garden--I can't talk on these steps, right on top of a gravel walk with a distant vista of three gardeners and a cartful of sand."

"I must say," said Miss MacNish, "that this is the suddenest thing that ever happened to me."

"But you said you believed in love at first sight," McTavish explained. "You knew yesterday what had happened to me--don't say you didn't, because I saw you smiling to yourself. You might come into the garden and let me say my say."

She didn't budge.

"Very well then. I will make a scene--right here--a terrible scene." He caught her two hands in his, and drew her toward him so that the keys at her belt jangled and clashed.

"This is preposterous!" she exclaimed.

"Not so preposterous as you think. But what's your first name?"

"I think I haven't any at the moment."

"Don't be ridiculous. There--there--"

She tore her hands from him and struck at him wildly. But he ducked like a trained boxer.

"With everybody looking!" she cried, crimson with mortification.

"I had a cable," he said, "calling me back to America. That is why I have to hurry over the preliminaries."

"The preliminaries," she cried, almost in tears. "Do you know who I am that you treat me like a barmaid?"

"Ladies," said McTavish, "who masquerade as housekeepers ought to know what to expect."

Her face was a blank of astonishment. "Traquair told," she said indignantly. "Wait till I--"

"No," said McTavish; "the porter at Brig O'Dread told. He said that you yourself would show me the chapel. He said not to be surprised if you pretended to be some one else. He said you had done that kind of thing before. He seemed nettled about something."

In spite of herself Miss McTavish laughed. "I told him," she said, "that if you crossed my hand with silver, I would give it to him; but if you crossed my hand with gold, I would keep it for myself. That made him furious, and he slammed the door when he left. So you knew all along?"

"Yes--Mrs. Nevis MacNish McTavish, I did; and when you had the faint spell in the chapel, I almost proposed then. I tell you, your voice and your face, and the way you walked--oh, they did for this young man on the spot! Do you know how much hunger and longing and loving can be crowded into a few days? I do. You think I am in a hurry? It seems to me as if there'd been millions of years of slow waiting."

"I have certainly played the fool," said Miss McTavish, "and I suppose I have let myself in for this." Her voice was gentler. "Do you know, too, why I turned white in the chapel?"

"Yes," he said, "I know that."

"Traquair told you."

"Yes."

"And if you hadn't liked me this way, would you have turned me out of

house and home?"

He drew her hand through his arm, and they crossed the gravel path into the garden. "What do you think?" he asked.

"I think--no," said she.

"Thank you," said he. "Do you read Tennyson?"

"No," said she, "Burns."

McTavish sighed helplessly. Then a light of mischief came into his eye.

"As Burns says," said he:

"If you are not the heiress born,
And I,' said he, 'the lawful heir,
We two will wed to-morrow morn,
And you shall still be Lady Clare,"

"I love every word Burns wrote," she said enthusiastically, and McTavish, though successful, was ashamed.

"McTavish," she said, "the other day, when I felt that I had to get here before you, I promised my driver ten pounds if he beat your car,"

"Yes," said McTavish, "I guessed what was up, and told my man to go slower. It wasn't the psychological moment for either of us to break our necks, was it?"

"No; but I promised the man ten pound, McTavish--and I hay'na got it."

"Ten pounds ought to have a certain purchasing power," said he.

"Then shut your eyes," she commanded.

"And after all," she said, "you'll be The McTavish, won't you?"

"I will not," he said. "Do you think I'm going to take you back to America with me Saturday, and have all my friends in New York point their fingers at me, and call me--The?"

THE PARROT

He had been so buffeted by fortune, through various climates and various applications of his many-sidedness, that when I first met Leslie it was difficult to believe him a fellow countryman. His speech had been welded by the influence of alien languages to a choice cosmopolitanism. His skin, thick and brown from blazing sunshines, puckered monkey-like about his blue, blinking eyes. He never hurried. He was going to Hong-Kong to build part of a dry-dock for the English Government, he said, but his

ambitions had dwindled to owning a farm somewhere in New York State and having a regular menagerie of birds and animals.

His most enthusiastic moments of conversation were in arguing and anecdotalizing the virtues and ratiocinations of animals and birds. The monkey, he said, was next to man the most clever, but was inferior to the elephant in that he had no sense of right or wrong. Furthermore, monkeys were immodest. Next came certain breeds of dogs. Very low in the scale he placed horses; very high, parrots.

"Concerning parrots," he said, "people are under erroneous impressions, but copying and imitation are not unreasonable processes. Your parrot, under his bright cynical feathers, is a modest fowl that grasps at every opportunity of education from the best source--man. In a native state his intelligence remains closed: the desire to be like a woodpecker or a humming-bird does not pick at the cover. Just as a boy born in an Indiana village and observing the houses of his neighbors might not wish to become an architect, but if he were transported to Paris or Vienna, to a confrontation of what is excellent in proportion, it might be that art would stir in his spirit and, after years of imitation, would come forth in a stately and exquisite procession of buildings. So in his native woods the parrot recognizes nothing but color that is worthy of his imitation. But in the habitations of man, surrounded by taste, which is the most precious of all gifts, his ambition begins to grow, his ignorance becomes a shame. He places his foot on the first rung of the educational ladder. His bright colors fade, perhaps; the eyes of his mind are turned toward brighter and more ornamental things. What creature but a parrot devotes such long hours to the acquirement of perfection in each trivial stage of progress? What creature remembers so faithfully and so well? We know not what we are, you and I and the rest of us; but if we had had the application, patience, and ambition of the average parrot, we should be greater men. But some people say that parrots are mean, self-centred, and malignant. They have, I admit, a crust of cynicism which might lead to that impression, and not unjustly, but underneath the parrot's crotchets there beats a great and benevolent heart. Let me give you an instance:

"In '88 my luck was down, and as a first step to raising it I shipped before the mast in an English bottom outward bound from Hong-Kong to Java. Jaffray was the cook, a big negro who owned a savage gray parrot--a mighty clever bird but to all intents and purposes of a most unscrupulous and cruel nature. Many a time her cleverness at provoking a laugh was all that saved her from sudden death. She bit whom she could; she stole what she could. She treated us like dogs. Only Jaffray could handle her without a weapon. Him she loved and made love to with a sheepish and resolute abandon. From him she endured the rapid alternations of whippings and caressings with the most stoical fortitude and self-restraint. When he whipped her she would close her eyes and say: 'I could bite him, but I won't. Polly's a bad girl. Hit her again,' When the whipping was over she would say: 'Polly's sore. Poor Polly! How I pity that poor girl!' Love-making usually succeeded a whipping in short order, and then she was at her best. She would turn her head to one side, cast the most laughably provoking glances, hold one claw

before her face, perhaps, like a skeleton fan, and say: 'Don't come fooling round me. Go away, you bad man,'

"I tried my best to be friends with her. But only to prove that the knack that I am supposed to have with birds and beasts has its limitations. With one long day following another and opportunity constantly at hand, I failed utterly in obtaining her friendship. Indeed, she was so lacking in breeding as to make public mockings of my efforts. There was no man before the mast but stood higher in her graces than I. My only success was in keeping my temper. But it was fated that we should be friends and comrades, drawn together by the bonds of a common suffering.

"I will tell you the story of the wreck another time. In some ways it was peculiar. I will only tell you now that I swam for a long time (there was an opaque fog) and bumped my head against one of the ship's boats. I seized the gunwale and said, 'Steady her, please, while I climb in,' but had no answer. The boat, apparently, had torn loose from her davits and gone voyaging alone. But as I made to climb in I was fiercely attacked in the face by the wings, beak, and claws of Jaffray's graceless parrot. In the first surprise and discomfiture I let go and sank. Coming up, choking with brine and fury, I overcame resistance with a backhanded blow, and tumbled over the gunwale into the boat. And presently I was aware that violence had succeeded where patience had failed. Polly sat in the stern sheets timidly cooing and offering to shake hands. At another time I should have burst laughing at her--she was so coy, so anxious to please. But I had just arrived from seeing my captain's head broken to pieces by a falling spar, and a good friend of mine stabbed by another good friend of mine, and I was nearer to tears.

"It was cold for that part of the world, and rain fell heavily from time to time. Polly complained bitterly all night and said that she would take her death o' cold, but in the morning (I had fallen asleep) she waked me in her pleasantest and most satisfied voice, saying, 'Tumble up for breakfast.' I pulled myself out of the rain-water into which I had slipped, and sat up. The sky and sea were clear from one horizon to the other and the sun was beginning to scorch.

"'Bully and warm, ain't it?' said Polly.

"'Right you are, old girl,' said I.

"She perched on my shoulder and began to oil and arrange her draggled feathers.

"'What a hell of a wreck that was!' she said suddenly, and, after a pause: 'Where's my nigger?'

"'He's forsaken you, old girl,' said I, 'for Mother Carey's chickens.'

"'Poor Polly,' said she; 'how I pity that poor girl!'

"Now I don't advance for a moment the theory that she understood all

that she said, nor even a part of what I said. But her statements and answers were often wonderfully apt. Have you ever known one of those tremendously clever deaf people whom you may talk with for a long time before discovering that they are deaf? Talking with poor Jaffray's parrot was like that. It was only occasionally--not often, mind--that her phrases argued an utter lack of reasoning power. She had been educated to what I suppose to be a point very close to the limit of a parrot's powers. At a fair count she had memorized a hundred and fifty sentences, a dozen songs, and twenty or thirty tunes to whistle. Many savages have not larger vocabularies; many highborn ladies have a less gentle and cultivated enunciation. Let me tell you that had I been alone in that boat, a young man, as I then was, who saw his ambitions and energies doomed to a watery and abrupt finish, with a brief interval of starvation to face, I might easily have gone mad. But I was saved from that because I had somebody to talk to. And to receive confidence and complaint the parrot was better fitted than a human being, better fitted than a woman, for she placed no bar of reticence, and I could despair as I pleased and on my own terms.

"My clothes dried during the first day, and at night she would creep under my coat to sleep. At first I was afraid that during unconsciousness I should roll on her. But she was too wary for that. If I showed a tendency to sprawl or turn over, she would wake and pierce my ears with a sharp 'Take your time! Take your time!'

"At sunrise every day she would wake me with a hearty 'Tumble up for breakfast.'

"Unfortunately there was never any breakfast to be had, but the rain-water in the bottom of the boat, warm as it was and tasting of rotting wood, saved us from more frightful trial.

"Here is a curious fact: After the second night I realized and counted every hour in all its misery of hunger and duration, yet I cannot, to save my soul, remember how many days and nights passed between the wreck and that singular argument for a parrot's power of reasoning that was to be advanced to me. It suffices to know that many days and nights went by before we began to die of hunger.

"In what remained of the rain-water (with the slow oscillations of the boat it swashed about and left deposits of slime on her boards) I caught from time to time glimpses of my face as affected by starvation. And it may interest you to know that it was not the leanness of my face that appalled me but the wickedness of it. All the sins I had ever sinned, all the lies I had told, all the meannesses I had done, the drunks I had been on, the lusts I had sated, came back to me from the bilge-water. And I knew that if I died then and there I should go straight to hell if there was one. I made divers trials at repentance but was not able to concentrate my mind upon them. I could see but one hope of salvation--to die as I had not lived--like a gentleman. It was not a voluminous duty, owing to the limits set upon conduct by the situation, but it was obvious. Whatever pangs I should experience in the stages of dissolution, I must spare Polly.

"In view of what occurred it is sufficiently obvious that I read my duty wrongly. For, when I was encouraging myself to spare the bird I should rather have been planning to save her. She, too, must have been suffering frightfully from the long-continued lack of her customary diet, but it seems that while enduring it she was scheming to save me.

"She had been sitting disconsolately on the gunwale when the means struck suddenly into her tortuously working mind and acted upon her demeanor like a sight of sunflower seeds, of which she was prodigiously fond. If I follow her reasoning correctly it was this. The man who has been so nice to me needs food. He can't find it for himself; therefore I must find it for him. Thus far she reasoned. And then, unfortunately, trusting too much to a generous instinct, and disregarding the most obvious and simple calculation, she omitted the act of turning around, and instead of laying the egg that was to save me in the boat, she laid it in the ocean. It sank."

* * * * *

Long voyages make for dulness. I had listened to the above narrative with so much interest as to lose for a moment my sense of what was patent. In the same absurd way that one man says to another whom he knows perfectly well, "What--is this you?" I said to Leslie very eagerly, "Were you saved?" And he answered, "No; we were both drowned."

ON THE SPOT; OR, THE IDLER'S HOUSE-PARTY

I

Last winter was socially the most disgusting that I remember ever having known, because everybody lost money, except Sally's father and mine. We didn't, of course, mind how much money our friends lost--they always had plenty left; but we hated to have them talk about it, and complain all the time, and say that it was the President's fault, or poor John Rockefeller's, or Senator So-and-so's, or the life insurance people's. When a man loses money it is, as a matter of fact, almost always his own fault. I said so at the beginning of last winter, and I say so still. And Sally, who is too lazy to think up original remarks, copied it from me and made no bones about saying it to all the people she knew who she thought needed that kind of comfort. But perhaps, now that I think of it, Sally and I may have contributed to making the winter socially disgusting. Be that as it may, we were the greatest sufferers.

We moved to Idle Island in September. And we were so delighted with what the architects, and landscape-gardeners, and mosquito doctors had done to make it habitable; with the house itself, and the grape-house, and greenhouses, and gardens, and pergolas, and marble columns from Athens, and terraces, and in-and-out door tennis-courts, and swimming-pools, and

boat-houses, and golf links, and all the other country-place necessities, and particularly with a line of the most comfortable lounging-chairs and divans in the world, that we decided to spend the winter there. Sally telephoned to my father's secretary and asked him to spend the winter with us, and make out lists for week-end parties, and to be generally civil and useful. The secretary said that he would be delighted to come if he could persuade my father and mother to go abroad for the winter; and later he called Sally up, and said that he had persuaded them.

Well, from the first our week-end parties were failures. On the first Friday in October the President of the United States said that he hated cheats and liars (only he mentioned names) and the stock-market went to smash. Saturday it was still in a messy state, and the people who came out Saturday afternoon couldn't or wouldn't talk about anything else. They came by the 4:30 to Stepping-Stone, and were ferried over to the island in the motor boat. Sally and I rode down to the pier in the jinrikishas that my father's secretary had had imported for us for a wedding present; and, I give you my word, the motor-boat as it slowed into the pier looked like an excursion steamer out to view the beauties of the Hudson. Everybody on board was hidden behind a newspaper.

"Fong," said Sally to her jinrikisha man, "take me back to the house."

He turned and trotted off with her, and they disappeared under the elms.

"Just because your guests aren't interested in you," I called after her, "is no reason why you shouldn't be interested in them."

But she didn't answer, and I was afraid I'd hurt her feelings; so I said to my man, or horse, or horse-man--it's hard to know what to call them:

"Long Lee, you go back to the house, clip-step."

Clip-step soon overtook Sally, and I asked her what she was mad about.

"I'm mad," she said, "because none of those people have ever seen this beautiful island before, and they wouldn't look up from their dirty old newspapers. What's the matter with them?"

"They're worried about the market," said I, "and each one wants the others to think that he's more worried than they are. That's all."

"But the women!" said Sally. "There we sat waving to them, and not so much as a look for our pains. My arm is all numb from waving hospitably."

"Never mind," I said. "I'll--I'll--ask your maid to rub it for you. And then we'll send the motor-boat for the very latest edition of the papers, and we'll have Blenheim and Windermere fold them like ships and cocked hats, the way they do the napkins, and put them at each person's place at dinner. That will be the tactful way of showing them what we think about it."

Sally, naturally enough, was delighted at this idea, and forgot all about her poor, numb arm. But the scheme sounded better than it worked. Because when we went in to dinner the guests, instead of being put to shame by the sight of the newspapers, actually sputtered with pleasure, and fell on them and unfolded them and opened them at the financial pages. And then the men began to shout, and argue, and perspire, and fling quotations about the table, and the women got very shrill, and said they didn't know what they would do if the wretched market kept up, or rather if it didn't keep up. And nobody admired the new furniture or the pictures, or the old Fiffield plate, or Sally's gown, or said anything pleasant and agreeable.

"Sam," said Tony Marshall to me, "I'm glad that you can empty your new swimming-pool in three-quarters of an hour, but if you don't watch out you may be so poor before the winter's over that you won't be able to buy water enough to fill it."

"If you're not careful," I said, "I'll fill it with champagne and make you people swim in it till you're more sprightly and agreeable. I never saw such a lot of oafs. I--"

"I tell you, Sam," bellowed Billoo, "that the financial status of this country, owing to that infernal lunatic in the White House--"

"If you must tell me again--" I began.

"Oh," he said disgustedly, "_you_ can't be serious about anything. You're so da--a--ah--urn--rich that you never give a thought to the suffering of the consumer."

"Don't I?" said I. "Did you happen to see me the morning after the Clarion's ball last winter?--I thought about the consumer then, I can tell you."

Billoo turned his back on me very rudely. I looked across the table to Sally. She smiled feebly. She had drawn back her chair so that Tombs and Randall could fight it out across her plate without hitting her in the nose. They were frantically shaking their fists at each other, and they kept saying very loud, and both at once:

"I tell _you!_" and they made that beginning over and over, and never got any further.

At two o'clock the next morning Mrs. Giddings turned to Sally and said:

"And now, my dear, I can't wait another moment. You must show me all over your lovely new house. I can think of nothing else."

"Can't you?" said Sally. "I can. It's two o'clock. But I'll show you to your own lovely room, if you like."

In the morning I sent for Blenheim, and told him to take all the Sunday

papers as soon as they arrived and throw them overboard. All I meant to be was tactful. But it wouldn't do. The first thing the men asked for was the papers; and the second thing. And finally they made such a fuss and threw out so many hints that I had to send the motor-boat over to the main-land. This made me rather sore at the moment, and I wished that the motor-boat was at the bottom of the Sound; but it wasn't, and had to be sent.

Later in the day I was struck with an idea. It was one of the few that ever struck me without outside help, and I will keep it dark for the present. But when I got Sally alone I said to her:

"Now, Sally, answer prettily: do you or do you not know what plausible weather is?"

"I do not," she said promptly.

"Of course, you do not," I said, "you miserable little ignoramus. It has to do with an idea."

"No, Sam!" cried Sally.

"One of mine," I said.

"Oh, Sam!" she said. "Can I help?"

"You can."

"How?"

"You can pray for it."

"For the idea?" she asked.

"No, you silly little goat," I said. "For the plausible weather."

"Must I?" she asked.

"You must," I said. "If you have marrow-bones, prepare to use them now."

Sally looked really shocked.

"Knees," I explained. "They're the same thing. But now that I think of it, you needn't use yours. If anybody were looking, it would be different, of course. But nobody is, and you may use mine."

So Sally used my knees for the moment, and I explained the idea to her briefly, and some other things at greater length; and then we both laughed and prayed aloud for plausible weather.

But it was months coming.

Think, if you can, of a whole winter passing in Westchester County without its storming one or more times on any single solitary Saturday or Sunday or holiday! Christmas Day, even, some of the men played tennis out-of-doors. The balls were cold and didn't bounce very high, and all the men who played wanted to sit in the bar and talk stocks, but otherwise it made a pretty good game. Often, because our guests were so disagreeable about the money they had lost or were losing, we decided not to give any more parties, but when we thought that fresh air was good for our friends, whether they liked it or not, of course we had to keep on asking them. And, besides, we were very much set on the idea that I have referred to, and there was always a chance of plausible weather.

It did not come till May. But then it "came good," as Sally said. It "came good" and it came opportunely. Everything was right. We had the right guests; we had the right situation in Wall Street, and the weather was right. It came out of the north-east, darkly blowing (this was Saturday, just after the usual motor-boat load and their afternoon editions had been landed), and at first it made the Sound, and even the sheltered narrows between the island and the main-land, look pancake-flat and oily. Then it turned the Sound into a kind of incoming gray, striped with white; and then into clean white, wonderfully bright and staring under the dark clouds. I never saw a finer storm come up finer. But nobody would go out to the point to see it come. The Stock Exchange had closed on the verge of panic (that was its chronic Saturday closing last winter) and you couldn't get the men or women away from the thought of what _might_ happen Monday. "Good heavens," said Billoo, "think of poor Sharply on his way home from Europe! Can't get to Wall Street before Wednesday, and God knows what he'll find when he gets there."

"What good would it do him to get there before?" I asked. "Wouldn't he sail right in and do the wrong thing, just as everybody has done all winter?"

"You don't understand, Sam," said Billoo, very lugubriously; and then he annihilated me by banging his fist on a table and saying, "_At least he'd be on the spot, wouldn't he_?"

"Oh," I said, "if you put it that way, I admit that that's just where he would be. Will anybody come and have a look at the fine young storm that I'm having served?"

"Not now, Sam--not now," said Billoo, as if the storm would always stay just where, and as, it was; and nobody else said anything. The men wanted to shout and get angry and make dismal prophecies, and the women wanted to stay and hear them, and egg them on, and decide what they would buy or sell on Monday.

"All right, Billoo-on-the-spot," I said. "Sally--?"

Sally was glad to come. And first we went out on the point and had a good look at the storm. The waves at our feet were breaking big and wild, the wind was groaning and howling as if it had a mortal stomach-ache, and about a mile out was a kind of thick curtain of perpendicular lines, with dark, squally shadows at its base.

"Sam!" cried Sally, "it's snow--snow," and she began to jump up and down.

In a minute or two flakes began to hit us wet slaps in the face, and we took hands and danced, and then ran (there must have been something intoxicating about that storm) all the way to the pier. And there was the captain of the motor-boat just stepping ashore.

"The man himself," said Sally.

"Captain," said I, "how are we off for boats?"

By good-luck there were in commission only the motor-boat, and the row-boat that she towed behind, and a canoe in the loft of the boat-house.

"Captain," I said, "take the Hobo (that was the name of the motor-boat) and her tender to City Island, and don't come back till Wednesday morning, in time for the Wall Street special."

"When you get to City Island," said Sally, "try to look crippled."

"Not you," I said, "but the Hobo."

"Tell them," said Sally, "if they ask questions, that you were blown from your moorings, and that you couldn't get back in the teeth of the gale because--because--"

"Because," said I, "your cylinders slipped, and your clutch missed fire, and your carbureter was full of prunes."

"In other words," said Sally, "if anybody ever asks you anything about anything--lie."

We gave him a lot more instructions, and some eloquent money, and he said, "Very good, ma'am," to me, and "Very good, miss," to Sally, and pretty soon he, and the Hobo, and the engineer, and the Hobo's crew of one, and the tender were neatly blown from their moorings, and drifted helplessly toward City Island at the rate of twenty-two miles an hour. Then Sally and I (it was snowing hard, now) climbed into the loft of the boat-house, and fixed the canoe.

"There," said Sally, putting down her little hatchet, "I don't believe the most God-fearing banker in this world would put to sea in that! Well, Sam, we've done it now."

"We have," said I.

"Will Monday never come?" said Sally.

"Stop," said I; "the telephone."

Idle Island was moored to the mainland by a telephone cable. It took us nearly an hour to find where this slipped into the water. And we were tired and hungry and wet and cold, but we simply had to persevere. It was frightful. At length we found the thing--it looked like a slimy black snake--and we cut it, where the water was a foot deep--the water bit my wrists and ankles as sharply as if it had been sharks--and went back to the house through the storm.

It was as black as night (the weather, not the house), snowing furiously and howling. We crept into the house like a couple of sneak-thieves, and heard Billoo at his very loudest shouting:

"I had Morgan on the wire all right--and the fool operator cut me off!"

Sally snipped her wet fingers in my face.

"Hello, fool operator," she said.

"Hello, yourself," said I. "But oh, Sally, listen to that wind, and tell me how it sounds to you. A wet hug if you guess the answer."

"To me," said Sally, "it sounds plausible." And she got herself hugged.

III

I don't believe that anybody slept much Saturday night. You never heard such a storm in your life. It seemed to Sally and me, who would have been the chief sufferers if it had blown down, that our comfortable, brand-new marble house flapped like a flag. Every now and then there came a tremendous crack from one part of the island or another; and each time Sally would say, "There goes my favorite elm," or I would say, "There goes that elm again."

Most of the men came down to breakfast Sunday morning. What with the storm and the worry about stocks keeping them awake most of the night, they were without exception nervous and cross, particularly Billoo. He looked like an owl that had been first stuffed and then boiled. Blenheim told me later that at various times during the night he had carried four several pints of champagne to Billoo's room; and at 7 A.M., bicarbonate of soda and aromatic spirits of ammonia.

"I tell you, Sam," said Billoo crossly, "I've been awake all night thinking what it would mean to some of us--yes, me!--if this storm should wreck that ferry-boat of yours."

A lot of wet snow and wind hit the dining-room windows a series of rattling slaps.

"She's a good boat, Sam, but smallish to ride out such a storm as this."

"What a goat you are, Sam," said Tombs, also crossly, "not to keep two ferry-boats, so that if one breaks down you have the other."

"When we made up our minds to spend the winter here," I said, "I ordered another; in fact, two. But they're still building; and besides, what if the _Hobo_ does break down? There's plenty to eat and drink, I hope. Nobody would suffer much."

"No," said Billoo, "it would be no suffering for a business man to be storm-bound here during a probable panic in Wall Street!"

"I'm tired," I said, "of hearing you refer to yourself or any of these gentlemen as business men. You always gamble; and when you're in good-luck you gambol, and when you aren't, you don't. What makes me sickest about you all is that you're so nauseatingly conceited and self-important. You all think that your beastly old Stock Exchange is the axle about which the wheel of the world revolves, and each of you thinks, privately, that he's the particular grease that makes it revolve smoothly."

"Well," said Billoo, "you know that the presence on the floor of one steady, conservative man may often avert a panic."

"Show me the man," I said. "Has any one here ever caused a panic or averted one? But you all lose money just as often because you're on the spot, as make it. Wouldn't you all be the richer for an absence now and then?"

"Of course," said Randall, "there are times when it doesn't matter one way or the other. But when--well, when the market's in the state it is now, it's life or death, almost, to be on the spot."

"I don't understand," I said. "When the market looks fussy, why not sell out, and wait for better times?"

"We _can't_ sell out," said Billoo. "We're loaded up to the muzzle."

"You look as if you had been," I said courteously; but Billoo brushed the remark aside as if it had been a fly.

"If we _try_ to unload," he said, "the market begins to collapse. We _can't_ unload, except a little at a time, and still prices get lower and lower and margins thinner and thinner. Now, I happen to _know_"--he looked about him importantly--"that to-morrow will hear the failure of a _very well-known_ house, and after that's announced--God knows."

"How true that is!" I said. "But tell me: suppose you gentlemen

deliberately absented yourselves for a few days--wouldn't it restore confidence? Wouldn't the other brokers say: 'Billoo, Randall, Tombs, Marshall, Bedlo, etc., don't seem to think there's much doing. None of 'em's here--what's the use of _me_ being scared?'"

"It would have the contrary effect, Sam," said Tombs solemnly. "They would think that we had decamped in a body for Canada."

"I don't know," said I, "but it would be a better thing for the country if you all did ship to Canada--I don't think there's much doing out-doors to-day. Hear that wind!"

"If I can get rid of all my holdings," said Billoo, "I'll sit tight. We'll see lower prices before we see higher."

"Well," said I, "I'll bet you we don't."

"Young man," said Billoo, and he looked almost well and happy, "just name your sum."

"I'll bet you a thousand," I said.

"Sammy," said Tombs very sweetly, "have you got another thousand up your sleeve?"

"Sure," I said.

"Done with you," said Tombs.

In about five minutes I had bet with everybody present.

"But mind," I said, "there mustn't be any dirty work. You people mustn't go to town to-morrow with the idea of forming a strong coalition and _putting_ prices down."

"It wouldn't be worth while," said Billoo. "As a matter of fact, we'd like nothing better than to see you win your bet, but as you can't, possibly--why, a thousand dollars is always a thousand dollars."

"Just the same," said I, "_no_ coalitions."

The wind went on howling till late in the afternoon and then it began to peter out. We had spent the whole day in the house, and everybody was tired and bored, and nervous about Monday, and bedtime came earlier than usual.

"Sam," said Sally, when we were alone, "it's just occurred to me that we _may_ be causing some of these people to lose a lot of money."

"Why, Sally," I said, "you look scared."

"I am," she said. "Don't _you_ think it would be rather awful?"

"No, I don't," I said; "I think it would be split-tingly funny. But they won't lose. Their absence will steady the market."

"Who told you that, Sam?" said Sally.

"Sam!" said I.

IV

Even before the leaves come, you can't see the pier from the house. It runs out from the bottom of a high bank and is otherwise hidden by trees. But it's only a short distance, and in good weather we have the guests walk it, because it gives them a better chance to admire the gardens and the Athenian columns and things. But Monday, which dawned bright and still and warm, and was just as typical of May in Westchester as was the snow-and-wind storm, we drove them down in a bus because the roads and paths were horribly muddy. Of course, none of the women wanted to take the early train, so there were only the men and Sally and I in the bus. Sally said that there was going to be some fun when the men got to the pier and didn't find the _Hobo_, and she wasn't going to miss it. Just before we started she drew me aside and said:

"Sam, when we get there, for Heaven's sake look blank."

"I understand your fears, Sally," I said, "and I will look as blank as I possibly can. But remember, child, how easy it is for _you_ to look blank; and don't always be urging others to attempt the impossible."

"Mrs. Sam," said Billoo, on the way down, "I can't tell you what a good time I've had."

"You nice man," said Sally, "I wish we could persuade you to stay a day or two longer."

"If it wasn't for the market, I could stay forever," said Billoo.

"Not if I lived," said I. "Saturday to Monday is plenty long enough--Hello--!"

The pier and the empty stretch of water between the island and the mainland were in sight, but there was no _Hobo_.

"Hello what?" said Tombs. "Why, where's the ferry?"

"I don't see her," I said, and, I hope, anxiously; "you don't suppose--"

"Isn't the _Hobo_ there?" shrieked Billoo. He turned his head on his fat neck, and at first he looked very angry, and then scared.

We walked down to the pier, and then out on the float to get as big a

water view as possible, but there wasn't so much as a row-boat in sight.

"What can have happened?" said Sally.

"I'm worried to death," I said. "Suppose she was blown from her moorings, the captain could have run her into New Rochelle, and come back yesterday afternoon when the wind went down. Something must have happened."

"Oh, Sam," cried Sally, "you don't think she may have been run down by one of the Sound steamers and sunk?"

"I dare not think of it," I said. "I dare not think of the poor chaps on board."

"I don't see how I'm to get to town," said Billoo dismally. He pulled out his watch, and held it in his hand, and every moment or two looked at it. "Haven't you a couple of row-boats? We couldn't get this train, but we could get the next--"

I shook my head. "I'm sorry," I said. "We're not much on the water, and we've never been properly supplied with boats--"

Billoo swallowed some hasty thought or other, and began to look across at the mainland. My father owns all the land opposite the island, even the pier and the short road to the village of Stepping-Stone; and although there were several boats at the pier, there were no people, and the rest of the shore is nothing but thick woods.

"We must telephone somewhere," said Billoo.

"You can't," I said. "You know you tried to telephone all yesterday and couldn't, and the butler told me this morning that he had tried to put in a call and got no answer."

"What does it matter?" said Sally. "You've all got to stay now. I think that's splendid."

"Mrs. Sam," said Tombs hollowly, "do you realize that this accident may mean ruin for some of us?"

"Oh, dear!" said Sally "how dreadful!"

"Somehow or other," said Billoo, "I'm going to get across."

And the others said that somehow or other they were going to get across, too.

"I've got to!" said Billoo, and he looked about in a fat, challenging way as if daring any one to say that he had not got to.

"You poor things," said Sally, "I hope to Heaven you can; but how?"

"Where there's a will, Mrs. Sam--" Billoo said. And he began to think hard. All of a sudden his face brightened.

"It's too easy," he said. "The wind's right; four or five of us have umbrellas--Sam, you'll have to lend us this float. We've only to cut it from its moorings, and sail it across--May we have it?"

"Yes," I said, "but you're crazy to try it."

"It's a case of sink or swim," said he. "Who's coming?"

Without exception the men agreed to sail with him on the float. It was a fine, big platform, floated on sheet-iron air-tanks, and moored at the four corners by heavy ropes.

Sally and I withdrew to the pier and watched Billoo and the others cut slowly through the ropes with their pocket-knives. Presently the float began to move, and a second or two later the float end of the gang-plank slipped into the water with a heavy splash. Those who had umbrellas opened them to catch the breeze, and the others lit cigars, and stood about in graceful attitudes. Sally and I cheered as loud as we could.

"I'll send you a tug or something," Billoo called back to us, "and try to find out what's happened to the _Hobo_."

"Thank _you_!" I called back.

"Sam," said Sally, "I don't know what you think, but I call it good sand."

"So do I," said I, "but foolish."

"Why foolish?" said Sally. "They're really going quite fast, and they'll be across in no time, and they'll get the next train and everything."

"They will not," I said.

"Why?" said Sally.

"Because," said I, "they will run on to the middle ground, and stay there."

"Not at high tide!" exclaimed Sally.

"At high tide," said I. "That float draws a good two feet, and it's so heavy that once it runs on the mud it will stay on the mud--" And then I shouted to Billoo:

"Look out for the middle ground!"

"What?" he answered.

"Why do you warn him?" said Sally.

"Because it won't help him," said I.

"What?" called Billoo again, and Sally answered at the top of her lungs, "Look--out--for--the--middle--ground!"

"Right O!" Billoo answered; "where is it?"

"Just ahead," Sally called.

Billoo turned to look, and at that moment the float, which was travelling at a good clip, ran into it.

Billoo and Randall fell flat on their faces; everybody staggered; one umbrella and two hats went overboard and drifted away, and Sally and I sat down on the pier and laughed till we were helpless.

V

The float had become a fixture in the landscape about two hundred and fifty yards out. We could converse with our friends by shouting only, and when we got tired of condoling with them and giving them assurances of our sympathy, we told them that we were going back to the house to get some more breakfast and think out what was best to be done,

"Sam," said Sally, "that's the maddest lot of men I ever saw."

We looked back. Billoo was stamping up and down the float, waving his arms and orating like Falstaff; Randall and Tombs had their heads together, and were casting what appeared to be baleful glances at Billoo. It was evident that he was not popular on the float.

When we had had some more breakfast, and had sat around a little to digest it, the women began to come down-stairs. Mrs. Randall was the first to come down, and she was in great distress.

"It's too dreadful," she said. "I had something of the utmost importance to tell Billy, something that I wanted him to do for me down-town. And I overslept."

"Well," said I, "let me tell you what a good fellow Billy is. He hasn't gone yet."

"Good Heavens!" she cried, "not gone yet? Why, what time is it? Why, he won't get down-town in time for the opening!"

"Probably not," I said. "He was just going, when suddenly he said, 'I know there's something my wife wants to say to me.' I said, 'Wake her up and find out what it is.' He said, 'No, she's getting so she can't do

without her beauty sleep; I'll just wait around till she wakes of herself."

"Sam," said Mrs. Randall, "what has happened to my husband?"

"Nothing much," I said. "He's in the same boat with many others--only it isn't a boat. Don't be alarmed."

"_Where is my husband?_" said she.

"If you are equal to a short, muddy walk," I said, "I will show him to you--Morning, little Miss Tombs--want to see brother and young Fitch? They said they wouldn't go to town till you'd seen them--Morning, Mrs. Giddings--morning, Miss Marshall--I'm not much on breaking bad news, but there's been an accident to all your husbands and brothers and fiancØs. They're all alive still, so far as I know--but they ought not to last more than five or six days."

"It's proposed," said Sally, "that we all go and see what can be done for them."

We refused to answer any questions. We led the way to the pier and pointed out the float, and the men on it. "There," said Sally, "you can see them quite plainly from here."

"Yes," said I, "and the more plainly you see them, the plainer they are."

"Will you kindly tell me," said Mrs. Randall, "what my husband is doing out there on that float?"

"He is doing nothing," I said. "You can see for yourself. And it isn't a float any more."

"Better tell them what has happened," said Sally.

"No, Sally," I said, "no."

"Yes, Sam," she said.

"Oh, all right," I said, "if you really think it's best. The fact is, ladies, the whole thing is a piece of drunken folly. You know how men are when they get drinking and arguing, and quarrelling. To make a long story short, it came to Billoo's insulting Randall; Randall challenges him; duelling is against the law; they take pistols and witnesses out on the water beyond the jurisdiction of the United States; and they _were_ going to murder each other. But it's all right now--don't be frightened."

Sally had turned her face away, and I'm sure I was serious as a judge. I patted Mrs. Randall on the shoulder.

"Even if your husband isn't brave," I said, "he's clever, clever and

deep."

"My husband not brave!" she cried. "I like that; he's the bravest man I ever saw."

"Well, that may be," I said doubtfully, "but, considering that on the way out to the duelling ground, or water, when nobody was looking but Sally and me, he kicked the box of cartridges overboard. But, perhaps they'll agree to use pocket-knives--"

"Sam," said little Miss Tombs, "I'll give you a kiss good-morning if you'll be serious."

"Wait till Fitch is looking," I said.

Then Sally explained what had happened, and edged herself so politely between little Miss Tombs and me that the others laughed.

"They'll float at high tide, won't they?" asked Mrs. Giddings.

"No," I said. "It was high tide when they ran aground. It will take a tugboat to get them off."

The words weren't out of my mouth when a tugboat appeared round the corner of the island, making up the channel. The men on the float began to scream and yell, and jump up and down, and wave their arms. But the tugboat paid no attention. It thought they were drunk. It passed within three hundred yards of them, whistled a couple of times, and became small in the distance.

"Sam," said Sally, "in about an hour they'll be high and dry on the mud. Then not even a boat can get to them. And by the time it's high tide again it will be dark and nobody will see them, and they'll be dying of hunger and thirst."

"That's true," I said. "Sally, you explain that to them, and I'll have the men fetch one of the stable doors, and we'll put a sail on it and provision it and trust to its hitting the middle ground about where they did."

I never worked so hard in my life. I had a stable door taken off its tracks and rigged with the canoe's sail; and we put a case of champagne on board, and a tub of ice, and bread, and cold meat, and butter, and jam, and cigars, and cigarettes, and liquors, and a cocktail shaker, and a bottle of olives stuffed with red peppers, for Billoo, and two kinds of bitters, and everything else to eat or drink that anybody could think of, and some camp-chairs, and cards for bridge, and score-pads, and pencils, and a folding table. Of course, most of the things got soaked the minute we launched the door, but there wasn't time to do the thing over again. So we gave the relief boat three cheers and let her go.

The way the men on the float eyed the course of the door, you would have thought them all nearly half dead with hunger and thirst. We were all

excited, too.

At first the door made straight for the float. Then the breeze shifted a little, and it made to the left of the float--then to the right of it--and then straight at it again.

Everybody cheered. The relief expedition looked like a success. The men all came to the edge of the float to meet it--and then, just as all seemed well, a dark patch of wind came scudding across the water, filled the door's sail, and sent the door kiting off to the right again. The game was up, The door was going to miss the float by sixty or seventy feet.

Then the men on the float began to toss coins; there was a shout of delight; and Billoo, trumpeting his hands, called to me:

"Make the ladies go behind the boat-house, quick!" And he began to unbutton his coat. I herded the women behind the boat-house and ran back to the pier. Billoo was stripping as fast as he could.

"What's he doing?" Mrs. Giddings called to me.

And I answered, "He seems to be overcome by the heat."

A few moments later Billoo stood revealed, a fat white silhouette against the opposite shore. He stepped from the float into the water; it came to his ankles. Then he waded, gingerly but with determination, toward the passing door. He went as if he expected the water to get suddenly deep, but it didn't. At no time did it reach to his ankles, until, just as he was reaching out his hand to catch hold of the door, and just as the men on the float set up a cheer, he stepped off the middle ground in to deep water.

The splash that he made lifted the door half out of water, and shot it away from him, the wind filled its sail, and when Billoo came to the surface and looked for it, it was thirty feet off. But he set his teeth (I think he set them) and swam after it. Just as he reached it, he fetched an awful yell. He had been seized with cramps. Still, he had sense enough to cling to the door, and, when the first spasm of the cramp had passed, to sprawl himself upon it. There he lay for a while, lapped by the water that came over the door, and writhing in his fat nakedness.

Meanwhile, the door was caught in the full strength of the ebbing tide, and began to make for the open Sound. Poor Billoo was in a bad way--and when he turned the ice-tub upside down for a seat, and wrapped himself in the canoe sail, I invited the women to come out and see for themselves how brave he was.

He waved his hand to us, and just as he and his well-provisioned craft rounded a corner of the island he selected a bottle of champagne and deftly extracted the cork.

I told some of my men to follow along the shore and to let me know what became of him. I couldn't do anything more for Billoo; but I liked the man, and took an affectionate interest in his ultimate fate--_whatever_ it might be. And I call that true friendship.

Pretty soon the middle ground on which the float was stuck began to show above water, and as it was evident that we could do nothing further for the relief of our shipwrecked friends, we decided to go back to the house, change our muddy boots, play a rubber or so, and have lunch. But first little Miss Tombs called to young Fitch, and told him if he found himself starving to dig clams in the mud.

VI

The only fault that I could find with the way things had gone so far was that Sally had a disgusting headache that marred her pleasure and her sense of humor. She hadn't said very much, and had laughed with only a half-heart at things that had seemed to me excruciatingly funny. For instance, when Billoo was seized with the cramps she had barely smiled, and once or twice when I had been doing the talking she had looked pityingly at me, instead of roaring with laughter, the way a wife should do.

And when we got to the house, she said that if we would excuse her she would go to her room and lie down.

"I've just got one of my usual headaches," she said.

That remark worried me, because it was the first headache she had ever complained of to _me_; and when, after she had gone upstairs, Miss Randall said, "Maybe Sally ought to see the doctor," I had a sudden awful, empty, gulpy feeling. Suppose she was going to be really sick! Suppose she was going to have pneumonia or scarlet-fever or spinal meningitis! Here we were, cut off from medical assistance till Wednesday morning. And it was our own fault--mine; mine, for being _too_ funny. Then I thought, "Maybe those men on the float are losing all the money they've got in the world," and that made me feel pretty glum; and then I thought, "Maybe poor Billoo is drowned by now," and I went cold all over.

"Why don't you make the trump, Sam?" said Mrs. Giddings.

"Good Heavens!" I said. "Did I deal? Won't somebody play my hand? I'm worried about Sally."

Then I bolted upstairs, and there was Sally lying on her bed, with a glass tube sticking out of her mouth.

"How are you," I said, "and what are you doing?"

"I feel rather sick, Sam," she said. And she looked so pale that I could have screamed. "And I'm taking my temperature."

"Do you think you've got fever?" I cried.

"I don't know," she said.

"Oh, Sally--Sally!" I cried. "Forgive me--it's all my fault--and I love you so--My God! what shall I do? I know--"

Then I kissed her, and ran out of the room, and all the way to the boat-house. I found a bathing-suit, undressed, put it on, tore down to the pier, and went overboard. I suppose the water was ghastly cold, but I didn't feel it. I suppose I never should have gotten all the way across to the main-land if I hadn't been boiling with fear and excitement, and besides I walked and waded across the middle ground and got a rest that way. The men on the float kept calling to me, and asking me questions, but I hadn't enough breath nor reason to answer them; I just swam and swam and swam.

About fifty feet from the pier on the main-land I began to get horrible pains up and down the muscles of my legs; and they wanted to stop kicking, but I wouldn't let them. I had to sit on the pier for a while to rest, but pretty soon I was able to stand, and somehow or other, running and walking, I got to the doctor's house in Stepping-Stone. He is very nice and an old friend, and the moment I told him Sally was desperately sick he said she wasn't, and I felt better. He gave me some brandy to drink, and we started for the island. I begged him to run, but he wouldn't. He walked leisurely and pointed out this tree as a very fine specimen and well grown, or that one as too much crowded by its neighbors. He was daft on forestry. Patients didn't interest him a bit. Finally, however, we got to the pier, and stole somebody's row-boat, and I took the oars, and then we went faster.

When we entered the house we found all the women except Sally surrounding Billoo. He was very red in the face and dressed only in the canoe sail; but he wasn't in the least embarrassed. He had a self-satisfied smile; and he was talking as fast and as loud as he could.

We told him to go to bed and be ashamed of himself, and sleep it off. And he said that nobody understood him, and denied having drunk the whole case of champagne, and he said that he was in perfect control of all his faculties, and that if the ladies wished him to, he could dance a hornpipe for them that he had learned when he was a sailor....

The doctor and I went upstairs; and while he was with Sally I changed into proper clothes; and then I waited outside the door for him to come out and tell me the worst. After a long time he came. He looked very solemn, and closed the door behind him.

"What is it?" I said, and I think my voice shook like a leaf.

"Sam," he said gravely, "Sally is by way of cutting her first wisdom tooth."

"Good Lord!" I said, "is that all?"

"It's enough," said the doctor, "because it isn't a _tooth_."

"Oh!" I said, "oh! What ought I to do?"

"Why," said he, "I'd go in, and tell her how glad you are, and maybe laugh at her a little bit, and make much of her."

But I couldn't laugh at Sally, because she was crying.

I took her in my arms and made much of her, and asked her why she was crying, and she said she was crying because she was glad.

When the doctor had returned to Stepping-Stone, he got the _Hobo's_ captain on the telephone and told him from me to bring the _Hobo_ back to Idle Island at once. She came about six, just as the tide was getting high, and she brought rescue to the men on the float, and, better than rescue, she brought the evening papers.

There had been a big day on Wall Street; one of the biggest in its history. And the men whom we had kept from going to business had made, among them, hundreds of thousands of dollars, just by sitting still. But they were ungrateful, especially Billoo. He complained bitterly, and said that he would have made three times as much money if he had been _on the spot_.

* * * * *

When the men paid the bets that they had lost to me, I turned the money over to my father's secretary and told him to deposit it as a special account.

"What shall I call the account?" he asked.

"Call it," I said, "the account of W. Tooth."

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