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ROBERT GRANT

The Law-Breakers
and Other Stories

The American Short Story Series

VOLUME 58

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THE LAW-BREAKERS

I

George Colfax was in an outraged frame of mind, and properly so. Politically speaking, George was what might be called, for lack of a better term, a passive reformer. That is, he read religiously the New York Nation, was totally opposed to the spoils system of party rewards, and was ostensibly as right-minded a citizen as one would expect to find in a Sabbath day's journey. He subscribed one dollar a year to the civil-service reform journal, and invariably voted on Election Day for the best men, cutting out in advance the names of the candidates favored by the Law and Order League of his native city, and carrying them to the polls in order to jog his memory. He could talk knowingly, too, by the card, of the degeneracy of the public men of the nation, and had at his finger-ends inside information as to the manner in which President This or Congressman That had sacrificed the ideals of a vigorous manhood to the brass idol known as a second term. In fact, there was scarcely a prominent political personage in the country for whom George had a good word in every-day conversation. And when the talk was of municipal politics he shook his head with a profundity of gloom which argued an utterly hopeless condition of affairs--a sort of social bottomless pit.

And yet George was practically passive. He voted right, but, beyond his yearly contribution of one dollar, he did nothing else but cavil

and deplore. He inveighed against the low standards of the masses, and went on his way sadly, making all the money he could at his private calling, and keeping his hands clean from the slime of the political slough. He was a censor and a gentleman; a well-set-up, agreeable, quick-witted fellow, whom his men companions liked, whom women termed interesting. He was apt to impress the latter as earnest and at the same time fascinating--an alluring combination to the sex which always likes a moral frame for its fancies.

It was to a woman that George was unbosoming his distress on this particular occasion, and, as has been already indicated, his indignation and disgust were entirely justified. Her name was Miss Mary Wellington, and she was the girl whom he wished with all his heart to marry. It was no hasty conclusion on his part. He knew her, as he might have said, like a book, from the first page to the last, for he had met her constantly at dances and dinners ever since she "came out" seven years before, and he was well aware that her physical charms were supplemented by a sympathetic, lively, and independent spirit. One mark of her independence--the least satisfactory to him--was that she had refused him a week before; or, more accurately speaking, the matter had been left in this way: she had rejected him for the time being in order to think his offer over. Meanwhile he had decided to go abroad for sixty days--a shrewd device on his part to cause her to miss him--and here he was come to pay his adieus, but bubbling over at the same time with what he called the latest piece of disregard for public decency on the part of the free-born voter.

"Just think of it. The fellow impersonated one of his heelers, took the civil-service examination in the heeler's name, and got the position for him. He was spotted, tried before a jury who found him guilty, and was sentenced to six months in jail. The day he was discharged, an admiring crowd of his constituents escorted him from prison with a brass band and tendered him a banquet. Yesterday he was chosen an alderman by the ballots of the people of this city. A self-convicted falsifier and cheat! A man who snaps his fingers in the face of the laws of the country! Isn't that a commentary on the workings of universal suffrage?" This was a caustic summing up on George's part of the story he had already told Miss Wellington piecemeal, and he looked at her as much as to ask if his dejection were not amply justified.

"It's a humiliating performance certainly," she said. "I don't wonder you are exercised about it. Are there no extenuating circumstances?" Miss Wellington appeared duly shocked; yet, being a woman of an alert and cheery disposition, she reached out instinctively for some palliative before accepting the affair in all its stark offensiveness.

"None which count--none which should weigh for a moment with any one with patriotic impulses," he answered. "The plea is that the people down there--Jim Daly's constituents--have no sympathy with the civil-service examination for public office, and so they think it was rather smart of him than otherwise to get the better of the law. In other words, that it's all right to break a law if one doesn't happen

to fancy it. A nation which nurses that point of view is certain to come to grief."

Mary nodded gravely. "It's a dangerous creed--dangerous, and a little specious, too. And can nothing be done about it? About Daly, I mean?"

"No. He's an alderman-elect, and the hero of his district. A wide-awake, square-dealing young man with no vices, as I heard one of his admirers declare. By the time I return from my trip to the Mediterranean I expect they will be booming him for Congress."

Looking at the matter soberly, Mary Wellington perceived that Jim Daly's performance was a disreputable piece of business, which merited the censure of all decent citizens. Having reached this conclusion, she dismissed George Colfax on his travels with a sense of satisfaction that he viewed the affair with such abhorrence. For, much as she liked George, her hesitation to become his wife and renounce the bachelor-girl career to which, since her last birthday--her twenty-fifth--she had felt herself committed, was a sort of indefinable suspicion as to the real integrity of his standards. He was an excellent talker, of course; his ideals of public life and private ethics, as expressed in drawing-rooms, or during pleasant dialogues when they were alone together, were exemplary. But every now and then, while he discoursed picturesquely of the evils of the age and the obligations of citizenship, it would occur to her to wonder how consistent he would be in case his principles should happen to clash with his predilections. How would he behave in a tight place? He was a fashionable young man with the tastes of his class, and she thought she had detected in him once or twice a touch of that complacent egotism which is liable to make fish of one foible and flesh of another, as the saying is, to suit convention. In short, were his moral perceptions genuinely delicate?

However, she liked him so well that she was anxious to believe her questionings groundless. Accordingly, his protestations of repugnance at Jim Daly's conduct were reassuring. For though they were merely words, his denunciation appeared heartfelt and to savor of clean and nice appreciation of the distinction between truth and falsehood. Indeed, she was half-inclined to call him back to tell him that she had changed her mind and was ready to take him for better or for worse. But she let him go, saying to herself that she could live without him perfectly well for the next sixty days, and that the voyage would do him good. Were she to become his wife, it would be necessary to give up the Settlement work in which she had become deeply interested as the result of her activities as a bachelor-girl. She must be certain that he was all she believed him to be before she admitted that she loved him and burned her philanthropical bridges.

Returning to her quarters in the heart of the city, Mary Wellington became so absorbed in her work of bringing cheer and relief to the ignorant and needy that she almost forgot George Colfax. Yet once in a while it would occur to her that it would be very pleasant if he should drop in for a cup of tea, and she would wonder what he was

doing. Did she, perchance, at the same time exert herself with an ardor born of an acknowledged inkling that these might be the last months of her service? However that may have been, she certainly was very busy, and responded eagerly to every call upon her sympathy.

Among the cases of distress brought to her attention which interested her most was that of two children whose mother had just died. Their father was a drinking man--a reeling sot who had neglected his family for years. His wife, proud in her destitution, had worked her fingers to the bone to maintain a tenement-roof over the heads of their two little boys and to send them neat and properly nourished to school. This labor of love had been too much for her strength, and finally she had fallen a victim to consumption. This was shortly after her necessities had become known to the Settlement to which Mary Wellington belonged. The dying mother besought her visitor to keep watch over her boys, which Mary promised faithfully to do.

The waifs, Joe and Frank, were two bright-eyed youngsters of eleven and nine. They stood so well in their classes at school that Mary resolved that their attendance should not be interrupted during the interval while a new home was being found for them. She accompanied them to the school-house, on the morning after the funeral, in order to explain the situation to their teacher and evince her personal interest. Miss Burke was a pretty girl two or three years younger than herself. She looked capable and attractive; a little coquettish, too, for her smile was arch, and her pompadour had that fluffy fulness which girls who like to be admired nowadays are too apt to affect. She was just the sort of girl whom a man might fall desperately in love with, and it occurred to Mary, as they conversed, that it was not likely she would remain a public-school teacher long.

Miss Burke evidently knew the art of ingratiating herself with her pupils. Joe and Frank smiled bashfully, but contentedly, under her sympathetic, sunny welcome. The two young women exchanged a few words, the sequel of which was that Mary Wellington accepted the invitation to remain and observe how the youthful mind was inoculated with the rudiments of knowledge by the honeyed processes of the modern school system. While the teacher stepped to the blackboard to write some examples before the bell should ring, Joe, the elder of the two orphans, utilized the occasion to remark in a low voice intended for Mary's ear:

"She's Jim Daly's mash."

Mary, who failed on the instant to grasp the meaning of this piece of eloquent information, invited the urchin to repeat it, which he did with the sly unction of one proud of his secret. Mary laughed to herself. Some girls would have repressed the youthful gossip, but she was human. Somehow, too, the name sounded familiar.

"Who's Jim Daly, Joe?"

"He's the boss of the Ninth Ward."

"The Daly who has just been elected alderman?"

"Yes, ma'am."

Then Mary understood. "Really, Joe!" she said in the stage whisper necessary to the situation.

"Maybe she's going to be married after Easter," the guileless prattler continued, to make his confidence complete.

"Then you and Frank would lose her." This was the answer which rose to Mary's lips, partly prompted, doubtless, by her own instinctive aversion to the match.

The suggestion of another loss worked upon Joe's susceptible feelings. Evidently he had not taken this side of the matter into consideration, and he put up one of his hands to his eyes. Fortunately the bell for the opening of the session broke in upon the conversation, and not only diverted him, but relegated the whole subject to the background for the time being. Nevertheless, the thought of it continued in Mary's mind as she sat listening to the exercises. How could an attractive girl like this take a fancy to such a trickster? It seemed totally incompatible with the teacher's other qualities, for in her attitude toward her pupils she appeared discerning and conscientious.

When the time came to go, Mary referred to her connection with the Settlement work in the course of the few minutes' further conversation which they had together. Miss Burke expressed so lively an interest in this that it was agreed before they parted that the schoolmistress should pay Mary a visit some day later in the week, with the twofold object of taking tea with the two orphans and of being shown the workings of the establishment.

At this subsequent interview, the two young women chatted briskly in a cosy corner. Each found the other sympathetic, despite Mary's secret prejudice; and it happened presently that Miss Burke, whose countenance now and again had seemed a little pensive, as though she had something on her mind, said after a pause:

"I'd like to ask your advice about something, Miss Wellington, if you don't object."

Mary thought she knew what was coming, surprising as it was to be consulted. She smiled encouragingly.

"It's about a gentleman friend of mine," continued Miss Burke, with rising color, "who wishes me to marry him. Perhaps you have heard of him," she added with a suggestion of furtive pride. "His name is Jim Daly."

"I know all about him."

Miss Burke was evidently not prepared for such a sweeping answer. "You know what he did, then?" she asserted after a moment's hesitation.

"He pretended to be some one else, and passed a civil-service examination, wasn't it?"

"Yes. I can tell by your tone that you think it was disreputable. So do I, Miss Wellington; though some of my friends say that it was Jim's desire to help a friend which led him to do it. But he had to serve his time in jail, didn't he?" She looked as though she were going to cry. Then she said awkwardly: "What I wished to ask was whether you would marry him if you were I."

Mary frowned. The responsibility was disconcerting. "Do you love him?" she asked plumply.

"I did love him; I suppose I do still; yes, I do." She jerked out her answers in quick succession. "But our engagement is broken."

"Because of this?"

"Because he has been in jail. None of my family has ever been in jail." Miss Burke set in place the loose hairs of her pompadour with a gesture of severe dignity as she spoke.

"And he knows, of course, that his dishonesty is the reason why you feel that you cannot trust him?" inquired Mary, who, being a logical person, regarded the last answer as not altogether categorical.

"It wasn't like stealing," said the girl, by way of resenting the phrase.

"It was dishonorable and untrue."

"The people down my way don't think much of the civil-service laws. They call them frills, something to get round if you can. That's how they excuse him." She spoke with nervous rapidity and a little warmth.

"But they are our country's laws just the same. And a good man--a patriotic man--ought not to break them." Mary was conscious of voicing George Colfax's sentiments as well as her own. The responsibility of the burden imposed on her was trying, and she disliked her part of mentor. Nevertheless, she felt that she must not abstain from stating the vital point clearly; so she continued:

"Is not the real difficulty, my dear, that the man who could be false in one thing might be false in another when the occasion arose?"

Miss Burke flushed at the words, and suddenly covered her face with her hands.

"That's it, of course. That's what haunts me. I could forgive him the other--the having been in jail and all that; but it's the possibility

that he might do something worse after we were married--when it was too late--which frightens me. 'False in one thing, false in everything,' that's what the proverb is. Do you believe that is true, Miss Wellington?"

Her unmasked conscience revealed clearly the distress caused by its own sensitiveness; but she spoke beseechingly, as though to invite comfort from her companion on the score of this adage.

"Tell me what sort of a man Mr. Daly is in other respects," said Mary.

"Oh, he's kind!" she answered with enthusiasm. "He has been a good son and brother; he is always helping people, and has more friends than any one in the district. I don't see why he cared for me," she added with seeming irrelevance.

"It's a great point in his favor that he does care for you, my dear. Is he steady at his work?"

"When he isn't too busy with politics. He says that he will give them up, if I insist; but my doing so might prevent his being chosen to Congress." There was again rueful pride in her plaint.

Mary sat silent for a moment. "He stands convicted of falsehood." She seemed to be speaking to herself.

"Yes," gasped the girl, as her mentor paused to let the fell substantive be weighed.

"That seems terrible to me. But you know him better than I do."

Miss Burke's face lighted at the qualification. Yet her quick intelligence refused to be thus cajoled. "But what would you do in my place? That's what I wish to know."

Mary winced. She perceived the proud delicacy of the challenge, and recognized that she had condescendingly shirked the real inquiry.

"It is so hard to put oneself in another's place. The excuses you have given for his conduct seem to me inadequate. That is, if a man gave those reasons to me--I believe I could never trust him again." Mary spoke with conviction, but she realized that she felt like a grandmother.

"Thank you," said Miss Burke. "That's what I wished to know." She looked at the floor for an instant. "Suppose you felt that you could trust him?"

Mary smiled and reflected. "If I loved him enough for that, I dare say I should forgive him."

"You really would?" Then Miss Burke perceived that in her elation she had failed to observe the logical inconsistency which the counsel

contained. "I don't know that I understand exactly," she added.

Mary smiled again, then shook her head. "I doubt if I can make it any plainer than that. I mean that--if I were you--I should have to feel absolutely sure that I loved him; and even then--" She paused without completing the ellipsis. "As to that, dear, no one can enlighten you but yourself.'

"Of course," said poor Miss Burke. Yet she was already beginning to suspect that the sphinx-like utterance might contain both the kernel of eternal feminine truth and the real answer to her own doubts.

II

Some two months later the *Meteoric*, one of the fast ocean greyhounds, was approaching the port of New York. At sight of land the cabin passengers, who had been killing time resignedly in one another's society, became possessed with a rampant desire to leave the vessel as soon as possible. When it was definitely announced that the *Meteoric* would reach her dock early enough in the afternoon to enable them to have their baggage examined and get away before dark, they gave vent to their pent-up spirits in mutual congratulations and adieus.

Among those on board thus chafing to escape from the limitations of an ocean voyage was George Colfax, whose eagerness to land was enhanced by the hope that his absence had made the heart of his lady-love fonder. His travels had been restful and stimulating; but there is nothing like one's own country, after all. So he reflected as, cigar in mouth, he perused the newspapers which the pilot had brought, and watched the coast-line gradually change to the familiar monuments of Manhattan.

Yet apparently there was a subconsciousness to his thought, for as he folded his last newspaper and stretched himself with the languor of a man no longer harried by lack of knowledge as to what has happened during the last seven days, he muttered under his breath:

"Confound the customs anyway!"

A flutter of garments and a breezy voice brought him politely to his feet.

"That's over with, thank Heaven!" The speaker was a charming woman from Boston, whose society he had found engrossing during the voyage--a woman of the polite world, voluble and well informed.

"I just signed and swore to the paper they gave me without reading it," she added, with a gay shrug of her shoulders, as though she were

well content with this summary treatment of a distasteful matter.

"Have you made your declaration yet?" she asked indifferently.

"No."

"What I don't understand is why they should make you take oath to a thing and then rummage through your trunks as though they didn't believe you."

"It's an outrage--an infernal outrage," said George. "Every time the Government does it the spirit of American institutions is insulted."

"I haven't much with me this time, anyway; they can hardly expect that a person will go to Europe for six months and not bring back more than one hundred dollars' worth of things," continued Miss Golightly artlessly. "One might almost as well stay at home. It isn't as if I bought them to sell. They are my own ownly effects, and I've no intention of paying the Government one cent on them if I can help it. And they charge one for presents. Of course, I won't pay on presents I have bought to give other people. That would simply make them cost so much more."

"The whole thing is a wretched and humiliating farce," was George's not altogether illuminating comment on this naive revelation of the workings of the female mind. He spoke doggedly, and then hummed the refrain of a song as though to keep up his courage.

"Well, I'll go and take my turn," he said, with the air of aristocratic urbanity which made him a favorite in social circles.

Miss Golightly detained him to add: "If you find any better method, I wish you'd let me know. It seemed the simplest way not to declare anything, and to trust to luck."

So great was the bustle and confusion that George was not conscious of the presence of his lively companion again until he heard her voice in his ear two hours later on the pier or platform where the baggage from the Meteoric was being inspected.

"Well," she said under her breath, "I'm all through. They gave me a jewel of a man. And you?"

"I've had no trouble." George spoke with nonchalance as if to imply that he had expected none. Out of the corner of his eye he was following the actions of the custom-house official allotted to him who was chalking his examined trunks with the hieroglyphics which signified that the Government had released its grip on them.

This done, George beckoned to an attendant porter, after which he turned again to Miss Golightly.

"If you'll wait a moment until I see these things of mine safely in the hands of the transfer express, I'll put you into your carriage and

take a fond farewell."

"You needn't hurry," was her answer.

"My friend, Miss Pilgrim, has declared thirty-four articles, and she doesn't know in which of her eight trunks any of them are. She and the citizen in glasses meted out to her, who insists on finding every one, are now engaged in ransacking her entire wardrobe. I intend to keep at a safe distance from the scene of worry. That's what comes of being conscientious."

George and the inspector, preceded by the porter wheeling the traveller's three trunks, hat-box, and small bags, set out for the other end of the shed.

George returned ten minutes later; he stepped briskly and was beaming.

"Still waiting, I see," he said jocularly.

"And in your eyes I read the purple light of love, young man. I wish you success." Her words were the rallying outcome of confidences on shipboard after five days at sea.

George blushed, but looked pleased. "You may see her first," he said, "for she is constantly at her cousin's, or was before she took up Settlement life."

"How much did you give him?" asked Miss Golightly.

The reversion to their previous topic was so abrupt and barefaced that the lover stared for a moment, then tried not to appear confused.

"Oh, a mere trifle!" he said with offhand dignity.

"I gave mine twenty-five dollars," she whispered. "Wasn't that enough?"

"Abundant, I should say. But I am not well posted on such matters." It was evident he wished to avoid the subject, and was also impatient to get away, for he took out his watch. "If Miss Pilgrim is really likely to be detained--" he began.

Miss Golightly rose to the occasion and dismissed him. "I understand," she exclaimed amiably. "Every minute is precious."

Nevertheless, it was not until two days later that he succeeded in finding Mary Wellington at home. He called that evening, but was told by the person in charge that she had taken a brief respite from work and would not return for another twenty-four hours. On the second occasion, as the first, he brought with him under his arm a good-sized package, neatly done up.

"I am back again," he said, and he pressed her hand with unmistakable

zeal.

Her greeting was friendly; not emotional like his, or unreserved; but he flattered himself that she seemed very glad to see him. He reflected: "I don't believe that it did me a particle of harm to let her go without the constant visits she had grown accustomed to expect."

He said aloud: "I came across this on the other side and took the liberty of bringing it to you."

Mary undid the parcel, disclosing a beautiful bit of jade; not too costly a gift for a friend to accept, yet really a defiance of the convention which forbids marriageable maidens to receive from their male admirers presents less perishable than flowers or sweetmeats.

"It is lovely, and it was very kind of you to remember me."

"Remember you? You were in my thoughts day and night."

She smiled to dispel the tension. "I shall enjoy hearing about your travels. A friend of yours has told me something of them."

"Ah! Miss Golightly. You have seen her, then, at your cousin's? A companionable woman; and she knows her Europe. Yes, we compared notes regarding our travels."

He colored slightly, but only at the remembrance of having confided to this comparative stranger his bosom's secret under the spell of an ocean intimacy.

"You brought home other things, I dare say?" Mary asked after a pause, glancing up at him.

"Oh, yes!" The trend of the question was not clear to him, but he was impelled to add: "For one thing, I ordered clothes enough to last me three years at least. I bought gloves galore for myself and for my sister. As I belong to the working class, and there is no knowing how soon I may be able to get away again, I laid in a stock of everything which I needed, or which took my fancy. Men's things as well as women's are so much cheaper over there if one knows where to go."

"With the duties?"

The words, gently spoken, were like a bolt from the blue. George betrayed his distaste for the inquiry only by a sudden gravity. "Yes, with the duties." He hastened to add: "But enough of myself and my travels. They were merely to pass the time." He bent forward from his chair and interrogated her meaningly with his glance.

"But I am interested in duties."

He frowned at her insistence.

"Miss Golightly," continued Mary, "explained to us yesterday how she got all her things through the custom-house by giving the inspector twenty-five dollars. She gloried in it and in the fact that, though her trunks were full of new dresses, she made oath that she had nothing dutiable."

He suspected now her trend, yet he was not certain that he was included in its scope. But he felt her eyes resting on him searchingly.

"Did she?" he exclaimed, with an effort at airy lightness which seemed to afford the only hope of escape.

"How did you manage?"

"I?" He spoke after a moment's pause with the calm of one who slightly resents an invasion of his privacy.

"Did you pay the duties on your things?"

George realized now that he was face to face with a question which, as lawyers say, required that the answer should be either "yes" or "no." Still, he made one more attempt to avert the crucial inquiry.

"Does this really interest you?"

"Immensely. My whole future may be influenced by it."

"I see." There was no room left for doubt as to her meaning. Nor did he choose to lie. "No, I paid no duties."

"I feared as much."

There was a painful silence. George rose, and walking to the mantel-piece, looked down at the hearth and tapped the ironwork with his foot. He would fain have made the best of what he ruefully recognized to be a shabby situation by treating it jocosely; but her grave, grieved demeanor forbade. Yet he ventured to remark:

"Why do you take this so seriously?"

"I expected better things of you."

He felt of his mustache and essayed extenuation. "It was--er--unworthy of me, of course; foolish--pig-headed--tricky, I suppose. I got mad. I'd nothing to sell, and the declaration is a farce when they examine after it. So I left them to find what they chose. I'm terribly sorry, for you seem to hate it so. But it's an idiotic and impertinent law, anyway."

"In other words, you think it all right to break a law if you don't happen to fancy it."

George started visibly and colored. He recognized the aphorism as his, but for the moment did not recall the occasion of its use. He chose to evade it by an attempt at banter. "You can't make a tragedy, my dear girl, out of the failure to pay duties on a few things bought for one's personal use, and not for sale. Why, nearly every woman in the world smuggles when she gets the chance--on her clothes and finery. You must know that. Your sex as a class doesn't regard it as disreputable in the least. At the worst, it is a peccadillo, not a crime. The law was passed to enable our native tailors to shear the well-to-do public."

Mary ignored the plausible indictment against the unscrupulousness of her sex. "Can such an argument weigh for a moment with any one with patriotic impulses?"

Again the parrot-like reminder caused him to wince, and this time he recognized the application.

"Oh!" he exclaimed, with sorry yet protesting confusion.

"It's the inconsistency," she answered without flinching, perceiving that he understood.

George flushed to the roots of his hair. "You compare me with that--er--blatherskite?" he asked, conscious as he spoke that her logic was irrefutable. Yet his self-respect cried out to try to save itself.

"Why not? The civil-service law seemed a frill to Jim Daly; the customs law an impertinence to you."

He looked down at the hearth again. There was an air of finality in her words which was disconcerting.

"I've been an ass," he ejaculated. "I'll give the things up; pay the duties; go to prison, if you like. The punishment is fine or imprisonment." He intended to be sincere in his offer of self-humiliation, though his speech savored of extravagance.

Mary shrugged her shoulders. "If you did, I dare say a bevy of society women would tender you a banquet when you were released from jail."

He bit his lip and stared at her. "You are taking this seriously with a vengeance!"

"I must."

He crossed the room and, bending beside her, sought to take her hand. "Do you mean that but for this--? Mary, are you going to let a little thing like this separate us?"

He had captured her fingers, but they lay limp and unresponsive in

his.

"It is not a little thing; from my standpoint it is everything."

"But you will give me another chance?"

"You have had your chance. That was it. I was trying to find out whether I loved you, and now I know that I do not. I could never marry a man I could not--er--trust."

"Trust?" I swear to you that I am worthy of trust."

She smiled sadly and drew away her hand. "Maybe. But I shall never know, you see, because I do not love you."

Her feminine inversion of logic increased his dismay. "I shall never give up," he exclaimed, rising and buttoning his coat. "When you think this over you will realize that you have exaggerated what I did."

She shook her head. His obduracy made no impression on her, for she was free from doubts.

"We will be friends, if you like; but we can never be anything closer."

An inspiration seized him. "What would the girl whom Jim Daly loves, if there is one, say? She has never given him up, I wager."

Mary blushed at his unconscious divination. "I do not know," she said. "But you are one person, Jim Daly is another. You have had every advantage; he is a--er--blatherskite. Yet you condescend to put yourself on a par with him, and condone the offence on the ground that your little world winks at it. Remember

"Spirits are not finely touched
But to fine issues.'

How shall society progress, unless my sex insists on at least that patent of nobility in the men who woo us? I am reading you a lecture, but you insisted on it."

George stood for a moment silent. "You are right, I suppose." He lifted her hand to his lips and kissed it. Then he turned and left the room.

As he passed out, Mary heard the voices of the orphans, Joe and Frank, in the entry. The former in greeting her held out a letter which had just been delivered by the postman.

"You've come back, Miss Wellington," cried the little boy rapturously.

"Yes, Joe dear."

Mechanically she opened the envelope. As she read the contents she smiled faintly and nodded her head as much as to say that the news was not unexpected.

"But *noblesse oblige*," she murmured to herself proudly, not realizing that she had spoken aloud.

"What did you say, Miss Wellington?"

Mary recalled her musing wits. "I've something interesting to tell you, boys. Miss Burke is going to be married to Jim Daly. That is bad for you, dears, but partly to make up for it, I wish to let you know that there is no danger of my leaving you any more."

AGAINST HIS JUDGMENT

Three days had passed, and the excitement in the neighborhood was nearly at an end. The apothecary's shop at the corner into which John Baker's body and the living four-year-old child had been carried together immediately after the catastrophe had lost most of its interest for the curious, although the noses of a few idlers were still pressed against the large pane in apparent search of something beyond the brilliant colored bottles or the soda-water fountains. Now that the funeral was over, the womenkind, whose windows commanded a view of the house where the dead man had been lying, had taken their heads in and resumed their sweeping and washing, and knots of their husbands and fathers no longer stood in gaping conclaves close to the very doorsill, rehearsing again and again the details of the distressing incident. Even the little child who had been so miraculously saved from the jaws of death, although still decked in the dirty finery which its mother deemed appropriate to its having suddenly become a public character, had ceased to be the recipient of the dimes of the tender-hearted. Such is the capriciousness of the human temperament at times of emotional excitement, the plan of a subscription for the victim's family had not been mooted until what was to its parents a small fortune had been bestowed on the rescued child; but the scale of justice had gradually righted itself. Contributions were now pouring in, especially since it was reported that the mayor and several other well-known persons had headed the list with fifty dollars each; and there was reason to believe that a lump sum of from fifteen hundred to two thousand dollars would be collected for the benefit of the widow and seven children before public generosity was exhausted.

Local interest was on the wane; but, thanks to the telegraph and the press, the facts were being disseminated through the country, and every leading newspaper in the land was chronicling, with more or less prominence according to the character of its readers, the item that John Baker, the gate-keeper at a railroad crossing in a Pennsylvania

city, had snatched a toddling child from the pathway of a swiftly moving locomotive and been crushed to death.

A few days later a dinner-company of eight was gathered at a country house several hundred miles distant from the scene of the calamity. The host and hostess were people of wealth and leisure, who enjoyed inviting congenial parties from their social acquaintance in the neighboring city to share with them for two or three days at a time the charms of nature. The dinner was appetizing, the wine good, and conversation turned lightly from one subject to another.

They had talked on a variety of topics: of tarpon fishing in Florida; of amateur photography, in which the hostess was proficient, and of gardens; of the latest novels and some current inelegancies of speech. Some one spoke of the growing habit of feeing employØs to do their duty. Another referred to certain breaches of trust by bank officers and treasurers, which occurring within a short time of one another had startled the community. This last subject begot a somewhat doleful train of commentary and gave the lugubrious their cue. Complaints were made of our easygoing standards of morality, and our disposition not to be severe on anybody; of the decay of ideal considerations and the lack of enthusiasm for all but money-spinning.

"The gist is here," reiterated one of the speakers: "we insist on tangible proof of everything, of being able to see and feel it--to get our dollar's worth, in short. We weigh and measure and scrutinize, and discard as fusty and outworn, conduct and guides to conduct that do not promise six per cent per annum in full sight."

"What have you to say to John Baker?" said the host, breaking the pause which followed these remarks. "I take for granted that you are all familiar with his story: the newspapers have been full of it. There was a man who did not stop to measure or scrutinize."

A murmur of approbation followed, which was interrupted by Mrs. Caspar Green, a stout and rather languid lady, inquiring to whom he referred. "You know I never read the newspapers," she added, with a decidedly superior air, putting up her eye-glass.

"Except the deaths and marriages," exclaimed her husband, a lynx-eyed little stockbroker, who was perpetually poking what he called fun at his more ponderous half.

"Well, this was a death: so there was no excuse for her not seeing it," said Henry Lawford, the host. "No, seriously, Mrs. Green, it was a splendid instance of personal heroism: a gate-keeper at a railway crossing in Pennsylvania, perceiving a child of four on the track just in front of the fast express, rushed forward and managed to snatch up the little creature and threw it to one side before--poor fellow!--he was struck and killed. There was no suggestion of counting upon six per cent there, was there?"

"Unless in another sphere," interjected Caspar Green.

"Don't be sacrilegious, Caspar," pleaded his wife, though she added her mite to the ripple of laughter that greeted the sally.

"It was superb!--superb!" exclaimed Miss Ann Newbury, a young woman not far from thirty, with a long neck and a high-bred, pale, intellectual face. "He is one of the men who make us proud of being men and women." She spoke with sententious earnestness and looked across the table appealingly at George Gorham.

"He left seven children, I believe?" said he, with precision.

"Yes, seven, Mr. Gorham--the eldest eleven," answered Mrs. Lawford, who was herself the mother of five. "Poor little things!"

"I think he made a great mistake," remarked George, laconically.

For an instant there was complete silence. The company was evidently making sure that it had understood his speech correctly. Then Miss Newbury gave a gasp, and Henry Lawford, with a certain stern dignity that he knew how to assume, said----

"A mistake? How so, pray?"

"In doing what he did--sacrificing his life to save the child."

"Why, Mr. Gorham!" exclaimed the hostess, while everybody turned toward him. He was a young man between thirty and thirty-five, a lawyer beginning to be well thought of in his profession, with a thoughtful, pleasant expression and a vigorous physique.

"It seems to me," he continued, slowly, seeking his words, "if John Baker had stopped to think, he would have acted differently. To be sure, he saved the life of an innocent child; but, on the other hand, he robbed of their sole means of support seven other no less innocent children and their mother. He was a brave man, I agree; but I, for one, should have admired him more if he had stopped to think."

"And let the child be killed?" exclaimed Mr. Carter, the gentleman who had deplored so earnestly the decay of ideal considerations. He was a young mill-treasurer, with aristocratic tendencies, and a strong interest in church affairs.

"Yes, if need be. It was in danger through no fault of his. Its natural guardians had neglected it."

"What a frightful view to take!" murmured Mrs. Green; and, although she was very well acquainted with George Gorham's physiognomy, she examined him disapprovingly through her glass, as if there must be something compromising about it which had hitherto escaped detection.

"Well, I don't agree with you at all," said the host, emphatically.

"Nor I," said Mr. Carter.

"Nor I, Mr. Gorham," said Mrs. Lawford, plaintively conveying the impression that if a woman so ready as she to accept new points of view abandoned him there could be no chance of his being right.

"No, you're all wrong, my dear fellow," said Caspar Green. "Such ideas may go down among your long-haired artistic and literary friends at the Argonaut Club, but you can't expect civilized Christians to accept them. Why, man, it's monstrous--monstrous, by Jove!--to depreciate that noble fellow's action--a man we all ought to be proud of, as Miss Newbury says. If we don't encourage such people, how can we expect them to be willing to risk their lives?" Thereupon the little broker, as a relief to his outraged feelings, emptied his champagne-glass at a draught and scowled irascibly. His jesting equanimity was rarely disturbed; consequently, everybody felt the importance of his testimony.

"I'm sorry to be so completely in the minority," said Gorham, "but that's the way the matter strikes me. I don't think you quite catch my point, though, Caspar," he added, glancing at Mr. Green. At a less heated moment the company, with the possible exception of Mrs. Green, might have tacitly agreed that this was extremely probable; but now Miss Newbury, who had hitherto refrained from comment, in order to digest the problem thoroughly before speaking, came to the broker's aid.

"It seems to me, Mr. Gorham," she said, "that your proposition is a very plain one: you claim simply that John Baker had better not have saved the child if, in order to do so, it was necessary to lose his own life."

"Precisely," exclaimed Mr. Green, in a tone of some contempt.

"Was not Mr. Gorham's meaning that, though it required very great courage to do what Baker did, a man who stopped to think of his own wife and children would have shown even greater courage?" asked Miss Emily Vincent. She was the youngest of the party, a beautiful girl, of fine presence, with a round face, dark eyes, and brilliant pink-and-white coloring. She had been invited to stay by the Lawfords because George Gorham was attentive to her; or, more properly speaking, George Gorham had been asked because he was attentive to her.

"Thank you, Miss Vincent: you have expressed my meaning perfectly," said Gorham; and his face gladdened. He was dead in love with her, and this was the first civil word, so to speak, she had said to him during the visit.

"Do you agree with him?" inquired Miss Newbury, with intellectual sternness.

"And do you agree with Mr. Gorham?" asked Mrs. Lawford, at the same

moment, caressingly.

All eyes were turned on Emily Vincent, and she let hers fall. She felt that she would give worlds not to have spoken. Why had she spoken?

"I understand what he means; but I don't believe a man in John Baker's place could help himself," she said quietly.

"Of course he couldn't!" cried Mrs. Lawford. "There, Mr. Gorham, you have lost your champion. What have you to say now?" A murmur of approval went round the table.

"I appreciate my loss, but I fear I have nothing to add to what has been said already," he replied, with smiling firmness. "Although in a pitiful minority, I shall have to stand or fall by that."

"Ah, but when it came to action we know that under all circumstances Mr. Gorham would be his father's son!" said Mrs. Lawford, with less than her usual tact, though she intended to be very ingratiating. Gorham's father, who was conspicuous for gallantry, had been killed in the Civil War.

Gorham bowed a little stiffly, feeling that there was nothing for him to say. There was a pause, which showed that the topic was getting threadbare. This prompted the host to call his wife's attention to the fact that one of the candles was flaring. So the current of conversation was turned, and the subject was not alluded to again, thereby anticipating Mr. Carter, who, having caught Miss Newbury's eye, was about to philosophize further on the same lines.

During the twelve months following his visit at the Lawfords' the attentions of George Gorham to Emily Vincent became noticeable. He had loved her for three years in secret; but the consciousness that he was not able to support a wife had hindered him from devoting himself to her. He knew that she, or rather her father, had considerable property; but Gorham was not willing to take this into consideration; he would never offer himself until his own income was sufficient for both their needs. But, on the other hand, his ideas of a sufficient income were not extravagant. He looked forward to building a comfortable little house in the suburbs in the midst of an acre or two of garden and lawn, so that his neighbors' windows need not overlook his domesticity. He would have a horse and buggy wherewith to drive his wife through the country on summer afternoons, and later, if his bank-account warranted it, a saddle-horse for Emily and one for himself. He would keep open house in the sense of encouraging his friends to visit him; and, that they might like to come, he would have a thoroughly good plain cook--thereby eschewing French kickashaws--and his library should contain the best new books, and etchings and sketches luring to the eye, done by men who were rising, rather than men who had risen. There should be no formality; his guests should do what they pleased, and wear what they pleased, and, above all, they should become intimate with his wife, instead of merely tolerating her after the manner of the bachelor friends of so many other men.

Thus he had been in the habit of depicting to himself the future, and at last, by dint of undeviating attention to his business, he had got to the point where he could afford to realize his project if his lady-love were willing. His practice was increasing steadily, and he had laid by a few thousand dollars to meet any unexpected emergency. His life was insured for fifty thousand dollars, and the policies were now ten years old. He had every reason to expect that in course of time as the older lawyers died off he would either succeed to the lucrative conduct of large suits or be made a judge of one of the higher tribunals. In this manner his ambition would be amply satisfied. His aim was to progress slowly but solidly, without splurge or notoriety, so that every one might regard him as a man of sound dispassionate judgment, and solid, keen understanding. His especial antipathy was for so-called cranks--people who went off at half-cock, who thought nothing out, but were governed by the impulse of the moment, shilly-shally and controlled by sentimentality.

It was with hope and yet with his heart in his mouth that he set out one afternoon determined to ask Emily Vincent to become his wife. She lived in the suburbs, within fifteen minutes by the train, or an hour's walk from town. Gorham took the cars. It was a beautiful day, almost the counterpart of that which they had passed together at the Lawfords' just a year before. As he sat in the train he analyzed the situation once more for the hundredth time, taking care not to give himself the advantage of any ambiguous symptoms. Certainly she was not indifferent to him; she accepted his attentions without demur, and seemed interested in his interests. But was that love? Was it any more than esteem or cordial liking, which would turn to pity at the first hint of affection on his part? But surely she could not plead ignorance of his intentions; she must long ere this have realized that he was seriously attentive to her. Still, girls were strange creatures. He could not help feeling nervous, because so very much was involved for him in the result. Should she refuse him, he would be and remain for a long time excessively unhappy. He obliged himself to regard this alternative, and his heart sank before the possibility. Not that the idea of dying or doing anything desperate presented itself to him. Such extravagance would have seemed out of keeping with respect either for her or for himself. Doubtless he might recover some day, but the interim would be terribly hard to endure. Rejection meant a dark, dreary bachelorhood; success, the crowning of his dearest hopes.

He found his sweetheart at home, and she came down to greet him with roses that he had sent her in her bosom. It was not easy for him to do or say anything extravagant, and Emily Vincent, while she might have pardoned unseemly effusiveness to his exceeding love for her, was well content with the deeply earnest though unriotous expression of his passion. When finally he had folded her in his arms she felt that the greatest happiness existence can give was hers, and he knew himself to be an utterly blissful lover. He had won the prize for which he had striven with a pertinacity like Jacob's, and life looked very roseate.

The news was broken to her family that evening, and received delightedly, though without the surprise which the lovers expected. They were left alone for a little while before the hour of parting, and in the sweet kisses given and taken Gorham redeemed himself in his mistress's estimation for any lack of folly he had been guilty of when he had asked her to be his wife. There was riot now in his eyes and in his embraces, revealing that he had needed only to be sure of her encouragement to become as ridiculous as she could desire. He stood disclosed to himself in a new light; and when he had kissed her once more for the last time he went tripping down the lawn radiantly happy, turning now and again to throw back with his fingers a message from his lips to the one being in all the world for him, who stood on the threshold, adding poetry and grace to the beautiful June evening.

When out of sight of the house, Gorham sped fleetly along the road. He intended to walk to town, for he felt like glorying in his happiness under the full moon which was shedding her silver light from a clear heaven. The air was not oppressive, and it was scented with the perfume of the lilacs and apple-blossoms, so that Gorham was fain every now and then to draw a deep breath in order to inhale their fragrance. There was no dust, and nature looked spruce and trig, without a taint of the frowziness which is observable in the foliage a month later.

Gorham took very little notice of the details; his eyes were busy rather with mind-problems than with the particular beauties of the night; yet his rapt gaze swept the brilliant heavens as though he felt their lustre to be in harmony with the radiance in his own soul. He was imagining the future--his hearth forever blessed by her sweet presence, their mutual joys and sorrows sweetened and alleviated through being shared. His efforts to live worthily would be fortified by her example and counsel. How the pleasures of walking and riding and reading and travelling--of everything in life--would be a hundredfold enhanced by being able to interchange impressions with each other! He pictured to himself the cosy evenings they would pass at home when the day's work was done, and the jolly trips they would take together when vacation-time arrived. How he would watch over her, and how he would guard her and tend her and comfort her if misfortune came or ill health assailed her! There would be little ones, perhaps, to claim their joint devotion, and bid him redouble his energies; he smiled at the thought of baby fingers about his neck, and there arose to his mind's eye a sweet vision of Emily sitting, pale but triumphant, rocking her new-born child upon her breast.

He walked swiftly on the wings of transport. It was almost as light as day, yet he met but few travellers along the country road. An occasional vehicle passed him, breaking the silvery stillness with its rumble which subsided at last into the distance. A pair of whispering lovers, arm in arm, who slunk into the shadow as he came abreast of them, won from him a glance of sympathy. Just after he had left them behind the shrill whistle of a locomotive jarring upon the silence seemed to bring him a message from the woman he adored. Had he not preferred to walk, this was the train he would have taken, and it must

have stopped not many hundred yards from her door. As he listened to it thundering past almost parallel to him in the cut below he breathed a prayer of blessing on her rest.

A little beyond this point the road curved and ran at a gradual incline so as to cross the railroad track at grade about half a mile farther on. This stretch was lined on each side by horse-chestnut trees set near to one another, the spreading foliage of which darkened the gravelled foot-path, so that Gorham, who was enjoying the moonlight, preferred to keep in the middle of the road, which, by way of contrast, gleamed almost like a river. He was pursuing his way with elastic steps, when of a sudden his attention was arrested about a hundred and fifty yards from the crossing by something lying at the foot of one of the trees on the right-hand side. At a second glance he saw that it was a woman's figure. Probably she was asleep: but she might be ill or injured. It was a lonely spot, so it occurred to him that it was proper for him to investigate. Accordingly, he stepped to her side and bent over her. From her calico dress, which was her only covering, she evidently belonged to the laboring class. She was a large, coarse-looking woman, and was lying, in what appeared to Gorham to be drunken slumber, on her bonnet, the draggled strings of which caught his eye. He hesitated a moment, and then shook her by the arm. She groaned boozily, but after he had shaken her again two or three times she rolled over and raised herself on her elbow, rubbing her eyes and staring at him glassily.

"Are you hurt, woman?" he asked.

She made a guttural response which might have meant anything, but she proved that she was uninjured by getting on her feet. She stared at her disturber bewilderedly, then, perceiving her bonnet, stooped to pick it up, and stood for a moment trying sleepily to poke it into shape and readjust its tawdry plumage. But all of a sudden she gave a start and began looking around her with recovered energy. She missed something, evidently. Gorham followed the direction of her gaze as it shifted, and as his glance met the line of the road he perceived a little figure standing in the middle of the railway crossing. It was a child--her child, without doubt--and as he said so to himself the roar of an approaching train, coupled with the sound of the whistle, made him start with horror. The late express from town was due. Gorham remembered that there was a considerable curve in the railroad at this point. The woman had not perceived the situation--she was too far in the shade--but Gorham from where he stood commanded a clear view of the track.

Without an instant's hesitation, he sprang forward and ran at full speed. His first thought was that the train was very near. He ran with all his might and main, his eyes fixed on the little white figure, and shouting to warn it of its danger. Suddenly there flashed before his mind with vividness the remembrance of John Baker, and he recalled his argument at the Lawfords'. But he did not abate his speed. The child had plumped itself down on one of the sleepers, and was apparently playing with some pebbles. It was on the farther track, and, startled

by his cries and by the clang of the approaching train, looked up at him. He saw a pale, besmeared little countenance; he heard behind him the agonizing screams of the mother, who had realized her baby's peril; in his ears rang the shrill warning of the engineer as the engine rounded the curve. Would he be in time?

As he reached the edge of the tracks, thought of Emily and a terrible consciousness of the sorrow she would feel if anything were to happen to him compressed his heart. But he did not falter. He was aware of the jangle of a fiercely rung bell, the hiss of steam, and a blinding glare; he could feel on his cheek the breath of the iron monster. With set teeth he threw himself forward, stooped, and reached out over the rail: in another instant he had tossed the child from the pathway of danger, and he himself had been mangled to death by the powerful engine.

ST. GEORGE AND THE DRAGON

Paul Harrington, the reporter, shifted his eagle glance from one feature to another of the obsequies with the comprehensive yet swift perception of an artist. An experience of three years on the staff had made him an expert on ceremonies, and, captious as he could be when the occasion merited his scorn, his predilection was for praise, as he was an optimist by instinct. This time he could praise unreservedly, and he was impatient to transfer to the pages of his note-book his seething impressions of the solemn beauty and simplicity of the last rites in the painful tragedy. In the rustic church into which he had wormed his way he had already found time to scribble a brief paragraph to the effect that the melancholy event had "shrouded the picturesque little town of Carver in gloom," and now as he stood on the greensward near, though not too near, he hastily jotted down the points of interest with keen anticipation of working out some telling description on the way home.

Out from the little church where the families of the pair of lovers had worshipped in summer time for a generation, the two coffins, piled high with flowers (Harrington knew them reportorially as caskets), were borne by the band of pall-bearers, stalwart young intimate friends, and lifted by the same hands tenderly into the hearse. The long blackness of their frock-coats and the sable accompaniment of their silk hats, gloves, and ties appealed to the observant faculties of Harrington as in harmony both with the high social position of the parties and the peculiar sadness of the occasion. That a young man and woman, on the eve of matrimony, and with everything to live for, should be hurled into eternity (a Harringtonian figure of speech) by a railroad train at a rustic crossing, while driving, was certainly an affair heartrending enough to invite every habiliment of woe. As he thus reasoned Harrington became aware that one of the stalwart young men was looking at him with an expression which seemed to ask only too

plainly, "What the devil are you doing here?"

As a newspaper man of some years' standing Harrington was hardened. Such an expression of countenance was an almost daily experience and slipped off the armor of his self-respecting hardihood like water off the traditional duck's back. When people looked at him like this he simply took refuge in his consciousness of the necessities of the case and the honesty of his own artistic purpose. The press must be served faithfully and indefatigably--boldly, moreover, and at times officiously, in order to attain legitimate results; yet he flattered himself that no one could ever say of him that he had "butted in" where others of his craft would have paused, or was lacking in reportorial delicacy. Was he not simply doing his professional duty for hire, like any respectable lawyer or doctor or architect, in order to support his family? Were he to trouble his head because impetuous people frowned, his wife, Amelia, and infant son, Tesla, would be the sufferers--a thought which was a constant stimulus to enterprise. His "job" required "cheek" perhaps, but nine people out of ten were not sensible enough to realize that he was a modern necessity, and to ask themselves, "Is this man doing his work creditably?" There was the essence of the situation for Harrington, and from the world's lack of nice perception he had made for himself a grievance which rendered him indifferent to ill-considered scowls.

But, however indifferent his attitude, nothing ever escaped Harrington, and he noticed that the young man whose eyes met his with the expression of annoyance was well set up and manly in appearance--a "dude," in Harrington's parlance, but a pleasant-looking dude, with an open and rather strong countenance. Such was Harrington's deduction, in spite of the obvious hostility to himself, and in confirmation of this view he had the satisfaction of perceiving the tension of the young man's face relax, as though he had come to the conclusion, on second thoughts, that interference was, on the whole, not worth while.

"He realizes," said the reporter to himself approvingly, "that there's no sense in being peevish. A swell funeral must be written up like any other society function."

While he thus soliloquized, the nearest relatives of the deceased victims issued from the church, seeking the carriages in waiting for them. Among those who came next was a handsome, spirited-looking girl of twenty-five, who, though not of the family group, was a sincere mourner. As she stepped forward with the elasticity of youth, glad of the fresh air on her tear-stained cheeks, it happened that she also observed the presence of the reporter, and she paused, plainly appalled. Her nostrils quivered with horrified distress, and she turned her head as though seeking some one. It proved to be the young man who had misjudged Harrington a few moments before. At least, he sprang to her side with an agility which suggested that his eyes had been following her every movement, thereby prompting Harrington, who was ever on the alert for a touch of romance amid the prose of every-day business, to remark shrewdly:

"That's plain as the nose on your face; he's her 'steady.'"

He realized at the same time that he was being pointed out in no flattering terms by the young lady in question, who cast a single haughty glance in his direction by way of identification. He saw her eyes flash, and, though the brief dialogue which ensued was necessarily inarticulate to him, it was plain that she was laying her outraged feelings at the feet of her admirer, with a command for something summary and substantial by way of relief.

At any rate, Harrington jumped at once to this conclusion, for he murmured: "She's telling him I'm the scum of the earth, and that it's up to him to get rid of me." He added, sententiously: "She'll find, I guess, that this is about the most difficult billet a fair lady ever intrusted to a gallant knight." Whereupon, inspired by his metaphor, he proceeded to hum under his breath, by way of outlet to his amused sensibilities, the dulcet refrain which runs:

In days of old, when knights were bold
And barons held their sway,
A warrior bold, with spurs of gold.
Sang merrily his lay,
Sang merrily his lay:
"My love is young and fair,
My love hath golden hair,
And eyes so blue and heart so true
That none with her compare.
So what care I, though death be nigh?
I'll live for love or die!
So what care I, though death be nigh,
I'll live for love or die!"

What was going to happen? How would Sir Knight set to work to slay or expel the obnoxious dragon? Harrington felt mildly curious despite his sardonic emotions, and while he took mental note of what was taking place around him he contrived to keep an eye on his censors. He had observed that the young man's face while she talked to him had worn a worried expression, as though he were already meditating whether the situation was not hopeless unless he had recourse to personal violence; but, having put his Dulcinea into her carriage, he appeared to be in no haste to begin hostilities. Indeed, without further ado, or even a glance in Harrington's direction, he took his place in the line of mourners which was moving toward the neighboring cemetery.

Harrington was for a moment divided in his own mind between the claims of reportorial delicacy and proper self-respect. It had been his intention to absent himself from the services at the grave, out of consideration for the immediate family. It occurred to him now that it was almost his duty to show himself there, in order not to avoid a meeting. But the finer instinct prevailed. Why allow what was, after all, nothing save ignorant disapproval to alter his arrangements? He had just time to walk leisurely to the station without overheating himself, and delay would oblige him to take a later train, as there

was no vehicle at his disposal.

Consequently, after his brief hesitation, he followed a high-road at right angles to that taken by the funeral procession, and gave himself up to the beguilement of his own thoughts. They were concerned with the preparation of his special article, and he indulged in the reflection that if it were read by the couple who had looked at him askance they would be put to shame by its accuracy and good taste.

Before Harrington had finished three-quarters of the distance which lay between the church and his destination, the carriages of those returning from the cemetery began to pass him. When the dust raised by their wheels had subsided he looked for an undisturbed landscape during the remainder of his walk, and had just given rein again to contemplation when a sound which revealed unmistakably the approach of an automobile caused him to turn his head. A touring car of large dimensions and occupied by two persons was approaching at a moderate rate of speed, which the driver, who was obviously the owner, reduced to a minimum as he ran alongside him.

"May I give you a lift?" asked a strong, friendly voice.

Before the question was put Harrington had recognized in the speaker the young man whose mission it had become, according to his shrewd guess, to call him to account for his presence at the funeral. He had exchanged his silk hat for a cap, and drawn on a white dust-coat over his other sable garments, but his identity was unmistakable. Viewing him close at hand Harrington perceived that he had large, clear eyes, a smooth-shaven, humorous, determined mouth, and full ruddy cheeks, the immobility of which suggested the habit of deliberation. Physically and temperamentally he appeared to be the antipodes of the reporter, who was thin, nervous, and wiry, with quick, snappy ways and electric mental processes. It occurred to him now at once that the offer concealed a trap, and he recalled, knowingly, the warning contained in the classical adage concerning Greeks who bear gifts. But, on the other hand, what had he to fear or to apologize for? Besides, there was his boy Tesla to consider. How delighted the little fellow, who already doted on electricity, would be to hear that his father had ridden in a huge touring car! He would be glad, too, of the experience himself, in order to compare the sensation with that of travelling in the little puffing machines with which he was tolerably familiar. Therefore he answered civilly, yet without enthusiasm:

"I don't mind if you do, as far as the station."

At his words the chauffeur at a sign made place for him, and he stepped in beside his pseudo-enemy, who, as he turned on the power, met Harrington's limitation as to distance with the remark:

"I'm going all the way to New York, if you care to go with me."

Harrington was tempted again. Apart from the peculiar circumstances of the case he would like nothing better. Then, why not? What had he or

his self-respect to dread from a trip with this accommodating dude? He would hardly sandbag him, and were he--Harrington grinned inwardly at the cunning thought--intending to have the machine break down in an inaccessible spot, and leave him stranded, what difference would it make? His article was too late already for the evening papers, and he would take excellent care to see that nothing should interfere with its appearance the following morning, for at a pinch he was within walking distance of the city. The thought of such an attempt to muzzle the liberty of the press was rather an incentive than otherwise, for it savored of real adventure and indicated that a moral issue was involved.

While he thus reflected he appeared not to have heard the observation. Meanwhile the automobile was running swiftly and smoothly, as though its owner were not averse to have his guest perceive what a superb machine it was.

"What make?" asked the reporter, wishing to show himself affable, yet a man of the world. He had come to the conclusion that if the invitation were repeated he would accept it.

His companion told him, and as though he divined that the inquiry had been intended to convey admiration, added, "She's going now only at about half her speed."

Harrington grinned inwardly again. "Springes to catch woodcock!" he said to himself, quoting Shakespeare, then went on to reflect in his own vernacular: "The chap is trying to bribe me, confound him! Well, here goes!" Thereupon he said aloud, for they were approaching the station: "If you really would like my company on the way to town I'd be glad to see how fast she can go." As he spoke he drew out his watch and added with suppressed humorous intention: "I suppose you'll guarantee to get me there in a couple of hours or so?"

"If we don't break down or are not arrested." The voice was gay and without a touch of sinister suggestion.

"Here's a deep one, maybe," thought Harrington.

Already the kidnapper--if he were one--was steering the car into a country way which diverged at a sharp curve from that in which they had been travelling. It was a smooth, level stretch, running at first almost parallel with the railroad, and in another moment they were spinning along at a hair-lifting rate of speed, yet with so little friction that the reporter's enthusiasm betrayed itself in a grunt of satisfaction, though he was reflecting that his companion knew the way and did not intend to allow him to change his mind. But Harrington was quite content with the situation, and gave himself up unreservedly to the pleasant thrill of skimming along the surface of the earth at such a pace that the summer breeze buffeted his face so that his eyes watered. There was nothing in sight but a clear, straight road flanked by hedges and ditches, save the railroad bed, along which after a while the train came whizzing. A pretty race ensued until it crossed

their path at almost a right angle.

"Now he thinks he has me," thought Harrington.

It almost seemed so, for in another moment he of the humorous, determined mouth diminished the power, and after they were on the other side of the railroad track he proceeded at a much less strenuous pace and opened conversation.

"You're a reporter, I judge?"

Harrington, who was enjoying himself, would have preferred to avoid business for a little longer and to talk as one gentleman to another on a pleasure trip. So, in response to this direct challenge, he answered with dry dignity:

"Yes. I have the honor of representing the Associated Press."

"One of the great institutions of the country."

This was reasonable--so reasonable, indeed, that Harrington pondered it to detect some sophistry.

"It must be in many respects an interesting calling."

"Yes, sir; a man has to keep pretty well up to date."

"Married or single, if I may be so bold?"

"I have a wife and a son nine years old."

"That is as it should be. Lucky dog!"

Harrington laughed in approval of the sentiment. "Then I must assume that you are a bachelor, Mr. ---- ?"

"Dryden. Walter Dryden is my name. Yes, that's the trouble."

"She won't have you?" hazarded the reporter, wishing to be social in his turn.

"Exactly."

"Mrs. Harrington would not the first time I asked her."

"I have offered myself to her six separate times, and she has thus far declined."

Harrington paused a moment. The temptation to reveal his own astuteness, and at the same time enhance the personal flavor which the dialogue had acquired, was not to be resisted. "May I venture to ask if she is the lady with whom you exchanged a few words this forenoon at the door of the church?"

The young man turned his glance from the road toward his questioner by way of tribute to such acumen. "I see that nothing escapes your observation."

"It is my business to notice everything and to draw my own conclusions," said the reporter modestly.

"They are shrewdly correct in this case. Would you be surprised," continued Dryden in a confidential tone, "if I were to inform you that I believe it lies in your power to procure me a home and happiness?"

Harrington chuckled in his secret soul. He would dissemble. "How could that possibly be?"

"I don't mind telling you that the last time I offered myself the young lady appeared a trifle less obdurate. She shook her head, but I thought I observed signs of wavering--faint, yet appreciable. If now I could only put her under an obligation and thus convince her of my effectiveness, I am confident I could win her."

"Your effectiveness?" queried Harrington, to whom the interview was becoming more psychologically interesting every moment.

"Yes, she considers me an unpractical person--not serious, you know. I know what you consider me," he added with startling divergence--"a dude."

Harrington found this searchlight on his own previous thought disconcerting. "Well, aren't you one?" he essayed boldly.

Dryden pondered a moment. "I suppose so. I don't wear reversible cuffs and I am disgustingly rich. I've shot tigers in India, lived in the Latin quarter, owned a steam yacht, climbed San Juan Hill--but I have not found a permanent niche. There are not places enough to go round for men with millions, and she calls me a rolling stone. Come, now, I'll swap places with you. You shall own this motor and--and I'll write the press notice on the Ward-Upton funeral."

Harrington stiffened instinctively. He did not believe that the amazing, splendid offer was genuine. But had he felt complete faith that the young man beside him was in earnest, he would have been proof against the lure of even a touring car, for he had been touched at his most sensitive point. His artistic capacity was assailed, and his was just the nature to take proper umbrage at the imputation. More; over, though this was a minor consideration, he resented slightly the allusion to reversible cuffs. Hence the answer sprang to his lips:

"Can you not trust me to write the notice, Mr. Dryden?"

"She would like me to write it."

"Ah, I see! Was that what she whispered to you this morning?"

Dryden hesitated. "Certainly words to that effect. Let me ask you in turn, can you not trust me? If so, the automobile is yours and----"

Harrington laughed coldly. "I'm sorry not to oblige you, Mr. Dryden. If you understood my point of view you would see that what you propose is out of the question. I was commissioned to write up the Ward-Upton obsequies, and I alone must do so."

As he spoke they were passing at a lively gait through the picturesquely shaded main street of a small country town and were almost abreast of the only tavern of the place, which wore the appearance of having been recently remodelled and repainted to meet the demands of modern road travel.

"Your point of view? What is your point of view?"

Before Harrington had time to begin to put into speech the statement of his principles there was a sudden loud explosion beneath them like the discharge of a huge pistol, and the machine came abruptly to a stop. So unexpected and startling was the shock that the reporter sprang from the car and in his nervous annoyance at once vented the hasty conclusion at which he arrived in the words: "I see; this is a trap, and you are a modern highwayman whose stunt will make good Sunday reading in cold print." He wore a sarcastic smile, and his sharp eyes gleamed like a ferret's.

Dryden regarded him humorously with his steady gaze. "Gently there; it's only a tire gone. Do you suspect me of trying to trifle with the sacred liberties of the press?"

"I certainly did, sir. It looks very much like it."

"Then you agree that I chose a very inappropriate place for my purpose. 'The Old Homestead' there is furnished with a telephone, a livery-stable, and all the modern protections against highway robbery. Besides, there is a cold chicken and a bottle of choice claret in the basket with which to supplement the larder of our host of the inn. We will take luncheon while my chauffeur is placing us on an even keel again, and no time will be lost. You will even have ten minutes in which to put pen to paper while the table is being laid."

Harrington as a nervous man was no less promptly generous in his impulses when convinced of error than he was quick to scent out a hostile plot. "I beg your pardon, Mr. Dryden. I see I was mistaken." He thrust out a lean hand by way of amity. "Can't I help?"

"Oh, no, thank you. My man will attend to everything."

"You see I got the idea to begin with and then the explosion following so close upon your offer----"

"Quite so," exclaimed Dryden. "A suspicious coincidence, I admit." He

shook the proffered fingers without a shadow of resentment. "I dare say my dust-coat and goggles give me quite the highwayman effect," he continued jollily.

"They sort of got on my nerves, I guess." Under the spell of his generous impulse various bits of local color flattering to his companion began to suggest themselves to Harrington for his article, and he added: "I'll take advantage of that suggestion of yours and get to work until luncheon is ready."

Some fifteen minutes later they were seated opposite to each other at an appetizing meal. As Dryden finished his first glass of claret, he asked:

"Did you know Richard Upton?"

"The man who was killed? Not personally. But I have read about him in the society papers."

"Ah!" There was a deep melancholy in the intonation which caused the reporter to look at his companion a little sharply. For a moment Dryden stirred in his chair as though about to make some comment, and twisted the morsel of bread at his fingers' ends into a small pellet. But he poured out another glass of claret for each of them and said:

"He was the salt of the earth."

"Tell me about him. I should be glad to know. I might----"

"There's so little to tell--it was principally charm. He was one of the most unostentatious, unselfish, high-minded, consistent men I ever knew. Completely a gentleman in the finest sense of that overworked word."

"That's very interesting. I should be glad----"

Dryden shook his head. "You didn't know him well enough. It was like the delicacy of the rose--finger it and it falls to pieces. No offence to you, of course. I doubt my own ability to do him justice, well as I knew him. But you put a stopper on that--and you were right. My kind regards," he said, draining his second glass of claret. "The laborer is worthy of his hire, the artist must not be interfered with. It was an impertinence of me to ask to do your work."

Harrington's eyes gleamed. "It's pleasant to be appreciated--to have one's point of view comprehended. It isn't pleasant to butt in where you're not wanted, but there's something bigger than that involved, the----"

"Quite so; it was a cruel bribe; and many men in your shoes would not have been proof against it."

"And you were in dead earnest, too, though for a moment I couldn't

believe it. But the point is--and that's what I mean--that the public--gentlemen like you and ladies like the handsome one who looked daggers at me this morning--don't realize that the world is bound to have the news on its breakfast-table and supper-table, and that when a man is in the business and knows his business and is trying to do the decent thing and the acceptable artistic thing, too, if I do say it, he is entitled to be taken seriously and--and trusted. There are incompetent men--rascals even--in my calling. What I contend is that you'd no right to assume that I wouldn't do the inevitable thing decently merely because you saw me there. For, if you only knew it, I was saying to myself at that very moment that for a funeral it was the most tastefully handled I ever attended."

"It is the inevitable thing; that's just it. My manners were bad to begin to with, and later--" Dryden leaned forward with his elbows on the table and his head between his hands, scanning his eager companion.

"Don't mention it. You see, it was a matter of pride with me. And now it's up to me to state that if there's anything in particular you'd like me to mention about the deceased gentleman or lady----"

Dryden sighed at the reminder, "One of the loveliest and most pure-hearted of women."

"That shall go down," said the reporter, mistaking the apostrophe for an answer, and he drew a note-book from his side pocket.

Dryden raised his hand by way of protest. "I was merely thinking aloud. No, we must trust you."

Harrington bowed. He hesitated, then by way of noticing the plural allusion in the speech added: "It was your young lady's look which wounded me the most. And she said something. I don't suppose you'd care to tell me what she said? It wasn't flattering, I'm sure of that, but it was on the tip of her tongue. I admit I'm mildly curious as to what it was."

Dryden reflected a moment. "You've written your article?" he asked, indicating the note-book.

"It's all mapped out in my mind, and I've finished the introduction."

"I won't ask to see it because we trust you. But I'll make a compact with you." Dryden held out a cigar to his adversary and proceeded to light one for himself. "Supposing what the lady said referred to something which you have written there, would you agree to cut it out?"

Harrington looked gravely knowing. "You think you can tell what I have written?" he asked, tapping his note-book.

Dryden took a puff. "Very possibly not. I am merely supposing. But in

case the substance of her criticism--for she did criticise--should prove to be almost word for word identical with something in your handwriting--would you agree?"

Harrington shrugged his shoulders. "Against the automobile as a stake, if it proves not to be?" he inquired by way of expressing his incredulity.

"Gladly."

"Let it be rather against another luncheon with you as agreeable as this."

"Done. I will write her exact language here on this piece of paper and then we will exchange copy."

Harrington sat pleasantly amused, yet puzzled, while Dryden wrote and folded the paper. Then he proffered his note-book with nervous alacrity. "Read aloud until you come to the place," he said jauntily.

Dryden scanned for a moment the memoranda, then looked up. "It is all here at the beginning, just as she prophesied," he said, with a promptness which was almost radiant, and he read as follows: "The dual funeral of Miss Josephine Ward, the leading society girl, and Richard Upton, the well-known club man, took place this morning at--" He paused and said: "Read now what you have there."

Harrington flushed, then scowled, but from perplexity. He was seeking enlightenment before he proceeded further, so he unfolded the paper with a deliberation unusual to him, which afforded time to Dryden to remark with clear precision:

"Those were her very words."

Harrington read aloud: "'Look at that man; he is taking notes. Oh, he will describe them in his newspaper as a leading society girl and a well-known club man, and they will turn in their graves. If you love me, stop it.'"

There was a brief pause. The reporter pondered, visibly chagrined and disappointed. The silence was broken by Dryden. "Do you not understand?" he inquired.

"Frankly, I do not altogether. I--I thought they'd like it."

"Of course you did, my dear fellow; there's the ghastly humor of it; the dire tragedy, rather." As he spoke he struck his closed hand gently but firmly on the table, and regarded the reporter with the compressed lips of one who is about to vent a long pent-up grievance.

"He was in four clubs; I looked him up," Harrington still protested in dazed condition.

"And they seemed to you his chief title to distinction? You thought they did him honor? He would have writhed in his grave, as Miss Mayberry said. Like it? When the cheap jack or the social climber dies, he may like it, but not the gentleman or lady. Leading society girl? Why, every shop-girl who commits suicide is immortalized in the daily press as 'a leading society girl,' and every deceased Tom, Dick, or Harry has become a 'well-known club man.' It has added a new terror to death. Thank God, my friends will be spared!"

Harrington felt of his chin. "You object to the promiscuity of it, so to speak. It's because everybody is included?"

"No, man, to the fundamental indignity of it. To the baseness of the metal which the press glories in using for a social crown."

Harrington drew himself up a little. "If the press does it, it's because most people like it and regard it as a tribute."

"Ah! But my friends do not. You spoke just now of your point of view. This is ours. Think it over, Mr. Harrington, and you will realize that there is something in it." He sat back in his chair with the air of a man who has pulled victory out of the jaws of defeat and is well content.

Harrington meditated a moment. "However that be, one thing is certain--it has got to come out. It will come out. You may rest assured of that, Mr. Dryden." So saying he reached for his note-book and proceeded to run a pencil through the abnoxious paragraph.

"You have won your bet and--and the young lady, too, Sir Knight, I trust. You seem to have found your niche." Which goes to prove that the reporter was a magnanimous fellow at heart.

Dryden forbore to commit himself as to the condition of his hopes as he thanked his late adversary for this expression of good-will. Ten minutes later they were sitting in the rehabilitated motor-car and speeding rapidly toward New York. When they reached the city Dryden insisted on leaving the reporter at his doorsteps, a courtesy which went straight to Harrington's heart, for, as he expected would be the case, his wife and son Tesla were looking out of the window at the moment of his arrival and saw him dash up to the curbstone. His sturdy urchin ran out forthwith to inspect the mysteries of the huge machine. As it vanished down the street Harrington put an arm round Tesla and went to meet the wife of his bosom.

"Who is your new friend, Paul?" she asked.

It rose to Harrington's lips to say--an hour before he would have said confidently--"a well-known club man"; but he swallowed the phrase before it was uttered and answered thoughtfully:

"It was one of the funeral guests, who gave me a lift in his motor, and has taught me a thing or two about modern journalism on the way

up. I got stung."

"I thought you knew everything there is to know about that," remarked Mrs. Harrington with the fidelity of a true spouse.

To this her husband at the moment made no response. When, six months later, however, he received an invitation to the wedding of Walter Dryden and Miss Florence Mayberry, he remarked in her presence, as he sharpened his pencil for the occasion: "Those swells have trusted me to write it up after all."

THE ROMANCE OF A SOUL

When Marion Willis became a schoolmistress in the Glendale public school at twenty-two she regarded her employment as a transient occupation, to be terminated presently by marriage. She possessed an imaginative temperament, and one of her favorite and most satisfying habits was to evoke from the realm of the future a proper hero, shining with zeal and virtue like Sir Galahad, in whose arms she would picture herself living happily ever after a sweet courtship, punctuated by due maidenly hesitation. This fondness for letting her fancy run riot and evolve visions splendid with happenings for her own advancement and gladness was not confined to matrimonial day-dreams. On the morning when she entered the school-house door for the first time the eyes of her mind saw the curtain which veils the years divide, and she beheld herself a famous educator, still young, but long since graduated from primary teaching. She forgot the vision of her Sir Galahad there. Nor were the circumstances of her several day-dreams necessarily consistent in other respects. It sufficed for her spiritual exaltation that they should be merely a fairy-like manifestation in her own favor. But though she loved to give her imagination rein, the fairy-like quality of these visions was patent to Miss Willis, for she possessed a quiet sense of humor as a sort of east-wind supplementary to the sentimental and poetic properties of her nature. She had a way of poking fun at herself, which, when exercised, sent the elfin figures scattering with a celerity suggestive of the departure of her own pupils at the tinkle of the bell for dismissal. Then she was left alone with her humor and her New England conscience, that stern adjuster of real values and enemy of spiritual dissipation. This same conscience was a vigilant monitor in the matter of her school-teaching, despite Miss Willis's reasonable hope that Sir Galahad would claim her soon. The hope would have been reasonable in the case of any one of her sex, for every woman is said to be given at least one opportunity to become a wife; but in the case of Miss Willis nature had been more than commonly bounteous. She was not a beauty, but she was sweet and fresh-looking, with clear, honest eyes, and a cheery, gracious manner such as is apt to captivate discerning men. She was one of those wholesome spirits, earnest and refined, yet prone to laughter, which do not remain long unmated in

the ordinary course of human experience. But her conscience did not permit her to dwell on this advantage to the detriment of her scholars.

Miss Willis lived at home with her mother. They owned their small house. The other expenses were defrayed from the daughter's salary; hence strict economy was obligatory, and the expenditure of every five-dollar bill was a matter of moment. Miss Willis's father had died when she was a baby. The meagre sum of money which he left had sufficed to keep his widow and only child from want until Marion's majority. All had been spent except the house; but, as Miss Willis now proudly reflected, she had become a breadwinner, and her mother's declining years were shielded from poverty. They would be able to manage famously until Sir Galahad arrived, and when he came one of the joys of her surrender would be that her mother's old age would be brightened by a few luxuries.

Glendale, as its name denotes, had been a rustic village. When Miss Willis was engaged (to teach school, not to be married) it was a thriving, bustling, overgrown, manufacturing town already yearning to become a city. By the end of another five years Glendale had realized its ambition, and Miss Willis was still a teacher in its crowded grammar-school. How the years creep, yet how they fly, when one is busy with regular, routine employment! The days are such a repetition of each other that they sometimes seem very long, but when one pauses and looks back one starts at the accumulation of departed time, and deplores the swiftness of the seasons.

Five years had but slightly dimmed the freshness of Miss Willis's charms. She was as comely as ever. She was a trifle stouter, a trifle less girlish in manner, and only a trifle--what shall we call it?--wilted in appearance. The close atmosphere of a school-room is not conducive to rosininess of complexion; and the constant strain of guiding over forty immature minds in the paths of knowledge will weigh upon the flesh, though the soul be patient and the heart light. Miss Willis's class comprised the children whose average age was twelve to thirteen--those who had been in the school three years. There were both boys and girls, and they remained with her a year. She had begun with the youngest children, but promotion had presently established her in this position.

Forty immature minds--minds just groping on the threshold of life--to be watched, shaped, and helped for ten months, and their individual needs treated with sympathy and patience. For ten months--the school term,--then to be exchanged for a new batch, and so from year to year. Glendale's manufacturing population included several nationalities, so that the little army of scholars which sat under Miss Willis's eye included Poles, Italians, negroes, and now and then a youthful Chinaman, as well as the sons and daughters of the merchant, the tailor, the butcher, and baker, and other citizens whose title as Americans was of older date. It was not easy to keep the atmosphere of such a school-room wholesome, for the apparel of the poorest children, though often well darned, was not always clean, and the ventilating

apparatus represented a political job. But it was Miss Willis's pride that she knew the identity of every one of her boys and girls, and carried it by force of love and will written on her brain as well as on the desk-tablets which she kept as a safeguard against possible lapses of memory. She loved her classes, and it was a grief to her at first to be obliged to pass them on at the end of the school year. But habit reconciles us to the inevitable, and she presently learned to steel her heart against a too sensitive point of view in this respect, and to supplement the bleeding ties thus rudely severed with a fresh set without crying her eyes out. Yet though faithful teachers are thus schooled to forget, they rarely do, and Miss Willis found herself keeping track, in her mind's eye, of her little favorites--some of them youthful reprobates--in their progress up the ladder of knowledge and out into the world.

But what of Sir Galahad? He had dallied, but about this time--the sixth year of her life as a teacher--he appeared. Not as she had imagined him--a lover of great personal distinction, amazing talents, compelling virtues, and large estates; yet, nevertheless, a presentable being in trousers, whose devotion touched her maidenly heart until it reciprocated the passion which his lips expressed. He was a young bookkeeper in a banker's office, with a taste for literary matters and a respectable gift for private theatricals. A small social club was the medium by which they became intimate. Sir Galahad was refined in appearance and bearing, a trifle too delicate for perfect manliness, yet, as Miss Willis's mother justly observed, a gentle soul to live with. He had a taste for poetry, and a sentimental vein which manifested itself in verses of a Wordsworthian simplicity descriptive of his lady-love's charms. No wonder Marion fell in love with him, and renounced, without even a sigh of regret, her vision of a husband with lordly means. Sir Galahad had only his small means, which were not enough for a matrimonial venture. They would wait in the hope that some opportunity for preferment would present itself. So for three years--years when she was in the heyday of her comeliness--they attended the social club as an engaged couple, and fed their mutual passion on the poets and occasional chaste embraces. Marion felt sure that something would happen before long to redeem the situation and establish her Sir Galahad in the seat to which his merit entitled him. Her favorite vision was of some providential catastrophe, even an epidemic or wholesale maiming, by which the partners of the banking-house and all in authority over her lover should be temporarily incapacitated, and the entire burden of the business be thrown on his shoulders long enough to demonstrate his true worth. As a sequel she beheld him promptly admitted to partnership and herself blissfully married.

The course of events did not respect her vision. After they had been engaged nearly four years Sir Galahad came to the conclusion one day that the only hope of establishing himself in business on his own account was (to repeat his own metaphor) to seize the bull by the horns and go West. Marion bravely and enthusiastically seconded his resolution, and fired his spirit by her own prophecy as to his rapid success. Western real estate for Eastern investors was the line of

business to which Sir Galahad decided to fasten his hopes. He set forth upon his crusade protesting that within a twelvemonth he would win a home for Marion and her mother in the fashionable quarter of St. Paul, Minn., and carrying in his valise a toilet-case tastefully embroidered by his sweetheart, in a corner of which were emblazoned two hearts beating as one.

Marion returned to her scholars more than ever convinced that her employment was but a transient occupation. What followed was this: Sir Galahad put out his sign as a broker in Western real estate for Eastern investors, and fifteen months slipped away before he earned more than his bare living expenses. He had carried with him his poetic tastes and his gift for private theatricals. The first of these he exercised in his fond letters home; the second he employed for the entertainment of the social club in St. Paul, to which he presently obtained admittance. By the end of the second year he was doing better financially, but his letters to Marion had become less frequent and less frank in regard to his own circumstances and doings. There came a letter at last from Sir Galahad--a letter of eight pages of soul stress and sorrow, as he would have called it, and of disingenuous wriggling, as the world would call it--in which he explained as delicately as was possible under the circumstances that his love for Miss Willis had become the love of a brother for a sister, and that he was engaged to be married to Miss Virginia Crumb, the only daughter of Hon. Cephas I. Crumb, owner and treasurer of the Astarte Metal Works, of Minnesota. Exit Sir Galahad! And following his perfidy Marion's imagination evoked a vision of revenge in which she figured as the plaintiff in a breach-of-promise suit, and had the fierce yet melancholy joy of confronting him and his new love face to face before a sympathizing judge and jury. But her New England conscience and her sense of humor combined disposed of this vision in a summary fashion, so that she let Sir Galahad off with the assurance that it was a happiness to her that he had discovered how little he cared before it was too late. Then her New England conscience bade her settle down to her teaching with a grim courage, and be thankful that she had never been unfaithful to her work. Also her sense of humor told her that she must not assume all men to be false because Sir Galahad had been. It was then, when she needed him sorely, that destiny introduced on the scene Jimmy.

Jimmy was no Sir Galahad. He was a chunky, round-faced school-boy with brown hair, which, when it had not been cut for a month, blossomed into close, curly tangles. At first sight Jimmy was dull-eyed, and in the class his mental processes were so slow that he had already acquired among his mates the reputation of being stupid. The teacher who had taught him last confided to Miss Willis that she feared Jimmy was hopeless. Hopeless! Somehow the word went to Marion's heart. Not that she was hopeless; far from it, she would have told you. But her sense of humor did not conceal from her that in spite of her grin-and-bear-it mien, she was far from happy. At any rate, the suggestion that Jimmy was hopeless awoke a sympathetic chord in her breast, so that she looked at him more tenderly on the day after she had been told. Jimmy was slow of speech and rather dirty as to his

face. There were warts on his hands, and his sphinx-like countenance was impassive almost to the point of stolidity. Somehow, though, Miss Willis said to herself, in her zeal to characterize him fairly, the little thirteen-year-old product of democracy (Jimmy was the son of a carpenter and a grocer's daughter) suggested power; suggested it as a block of granite or a bull-dog suggests it. His compact, sturdy frame and well-poised head, with its close, brown curls, seemed a protest in themselves against hopelessness. On the third day he smiled; it was in recess that she detected him at it. An organ-grinder's monkey in the school-yard called it forth, a sweet, glad smile, which lit up his dense features as the sun at twilight will pierce through and illuminate for a few minutes a sullen cloud-bank. Miss Willis saw in a vision on the spot a refuge from hopelessness. Behind that smile there must be a winsome soul. That spiritless expression was but a veil or rind hiding the germs of sensibility and reason. This was discovery number one. After it came darkness again, so far as outward manifestation was concerned. Jimmy's attitude toward his lessons appeared to be one of utter density. He listened with blank but slightly lowered eyes. When questioned he generally gurgled inarticulately, as though seeking a response, then broke down. Occasionally he essayed an answer, which revealed that he had understood nothing. Oftener he sought refuge in complete silence. But hope had been stimulated in Miss Willis's breast, and she relaxed neither scrutiny nor tenderness. One day matters were brought to a head by the thoughtless jest of a classmate, a flaxen-haired fairy, who, in the recess following one of Jimmy's least successful gurgles, crept up behind him and planted upon his curls a brown-paper cap, across which the little witch had painted "DUNCE" in large capital letters.

Jimmy did not know what had happened. For a moment he thought, perhaps, that he had been introduced to some new game. But the jeers of the children checked the rising smile and led him to pluck at his forehead. As he gazed at the fool's-cap in his hand a roar of merciless laughter greeted his discovery. Miss Willis had realized the fairy's deed too late to prevent the catastrophe. The sharp tap of her ruler on the desk produced a silence interjected with giggles. The fairy was a successful scholar, and would not have harmed a fly willingly. It was a case of fun--the rough expression of an indisputable fact. Jimmy was such a dunce that he ought really to wear the brand as a notice to the world. What Miss Willis said by way of reproof to the fairy is immaterial. If Jimmy heard it he gave no sign. He dropped his head upon his desk and was sobbing audibly. The bewildered children hearkened to the protest against cruelty with that elfin look which mischievous youth dares assume, while the culprit stood with a finger in her mouth, not quite understanding the enormity of her conduct. In a moment more they were in the school-yard, and Miss Willis was beside Jimmy's desk patting his tangled head. He wept as though his heart would break.

"No matter, Jimmy; it was only a thoughtless jest. She didn't mean to hurt your feelings."

Her words and variations on the same theme called forth successive bursts of sobs. Only silence diminished their intensity. When at last they had become only quiverings of his shoulders he looked up and said, with a wail of fierce despair, but with a grasp upon self which was a fresh revelation:

"It's true; it's true! She did it because I'm so stupid!"

Thereupon his shoulders shook again convulsively, and he burst into fresh grief.

Marion's arms were about him in an instant. "Jimmy, Jimmy, it is not true! You are not stupid! You and I will fight it out together! Will you trust me, Jimmy?"

He sobbed, but she could perceive that he was listening. Had her hope become his? Surely they were words he had never heard before.

"Jimmy, listen to me. I have found out something, and all owing to that ridiculous dunce-cap. It is I who have been stupid. I never knew until now how much you wish to learn and to improve. You are not stupid, Jimmy. I am sure of it. You are slow, but you and I will put our heads together and make the best of that. Will you try with me, Jimmy?"

The curly head was raised again. His tear-stained eyes looked out at her shyly, but with a beam of astonished gratitude. From his quivering lips fell a low but resolute "Yes, ma'am!"

"We will begin to-day. We need each other, Jimmy."

As a work of art grows slowly from confusion and lack of form to coherence and symmetry to the moral joy of its maker, so her experience in human plastic enterprise filled the heart of Miss Willis with a vital happiness. For two years--day in and day out--she never flagged in her task of giving sight to the eyes and ears to the mind of the unshaped clay which fate had put into her hands for making or marring. How patient she had to be! How ingenious, vigilant, and sympathetic! Through working upon the souls of Jimmy's father and mother by pathetic appeal she obtained permission to keep him an hour after school each day and drill him step by step, inch by inch. She brought her midday meal and shared it with him. In the evening she framed cunning devices to lure his budding intelligence. And from the very first she beheld her figure of human ignorance respond to her gentle moulding. Jimmy's soul was first of all a hot-spring of ambition; the evidences of which, when once recognized, were ever paramount. But how blocked and intricate were the passages through which this yearning for fame sought to express itself! Sometimes it seemed even to her as though she would never dissipate the fog-bank which tortured his intelligence. But Jimmy was patient, too, and his bull-dog features were but the reflex of a grim tenacity of purpose. At the end of the first year she reported that he was unfit to be promoted, in order that she need not lose him just when he needed her

most. She was able to make clear to Jimmy that this was not a disgrace, but a sign of progress. But when the end of the second year came she passed him on with only the qualm of love parting with its own. Her task was done. The dull, clouded brow was clear with the light of eager reason; the still struggling faculties had begun to understand that in slowness there was the compensation of power, and were resolute with hope.

"Good-by, Miss Willis. I'm going to be at the head of my class next year; see if I'm not!"

So said Jimmy as he left her. She hesitated a moment, then stooped and kissed him. It made her blush, for she had never kissed a pupil before, nor any one but her mother since Sir Galahad. It made Jimmy blush, too, for he did not know exactly what to make of it. So they parted, and Jimmy went up the ladder of knowledge for two years more at that school. He was not the head of his class; he was number five the first year and number three the second. When he graduated he promised to write; but, boylike, he never did, so he vanished into the open polar world, and was lost to the eyes of the woman who had grown gray in his service.

Yes, Miss Willis had grown gray. That is, there were more or less becoming threads of silver in her maiden tresses, and the dignity of middle age had added inches to her waist and a few interesting lines to her forehead. There was no new Sir Galahad on the horizon even of her day-dreams, and her mother was in failing health. Mrs. Willis continued now to fail for five years--years which taxed her daughter's strength, though not her affection. Pupils came and went--pupils to whom she gave herself with the faithfulness of her New England conscience--but no one exactly like Jimmy. He remained unique, yet lost in the maze of life. When her mother died she settled down as an incorrigible old maid, and her daydreams knew no more the vision of a love coming from the clouds to possess her. Nor did the years bring with them realization of that other vision--herself enthroned in the public mind as a wonderful educator to whom the world should bow. She was only Miss Marion Willis, the next to the oldest and the most respected teacher of the Glendale grammar-school. So she found herself at the end of twenty-five years of continuous service. It did occur to her as a delightful possibility that the authorities or scholars or somebody would observe this quarter-centennial anniversary in a suitable manner, and a vision danced before her mind's eye of a surprise-party bearing a pretty piece of silver or a clock as a memorial of her life-work. But the date came and passed without comment from any source, and Marion's sense of humor made the best of it by drinking her own health on the evening of the day in question, and congratulating herself that she loved her work and was happy. At that supper there was no guest save Jimmy's tintype, which she fetched from the mantelpiece and leaned against the cake-basket on the table. Jimmy stood now not only for himself, but for a little army of struggling souls upon whom her patient intelligence had been freely lavished.

Of course, Jimmy was found. Miss Willis had always felt sure that he would be. But ten years more had slipped away before he was brought to light. One day she discovered his name in the newspaper as a rising political constellation, and she was convinced, without the least particle of evidence to support her credulity, that the James in question was her Jimmy. His name had suddenly become prominent in the political firmament on account of his resolute conduct as the mayor of a Western city. The public had been impressed by his strength and pluck and executive ability, working successfully against a gang of municipal cutthroats, and his name was being paraded over the country.

"I've half a mind to write to him and discover if it's he," Miss Willis said to herself. "How surprised he would be to receive a postal card 'Are you my Jimmy?'" But somehow she refrained. She did not wish to run the risk of disappointment, though she was sure it was he. She preferred to wait and to watch him now that she had him under her eye again. This was an easy thing to do, for Jimmy the mayor became Jimmy the governor before two years had passed, and one morning Miss Willis found facing her in the Daily Dispatch a newspaper cut of large dimensions which set her heart beating as it had not throbbed since the days of Sir Galahad. It was a portrait of her Jimmy; Jimmy magnified and grown into a hirsute man, but the same old Jimmy with the tangled hair, serious brow, and large, pathetic eyes. Miss Willis laughed and Miss Willis cried, and presently, after she had time to realize the full meaning of what had happened, she had a vision of Jimmy in the White House, and herself, a venerable yet hale old woman, standing beside him in a famous company, and Jimmy was saying before them all, "I wish to make you acquainted with my dear teacher--the woman to whom I owe my start in life." The idea tickled her imagination, and she said to herself that she would keep the secret until that happy day arrived. What a delightful secret it was, and how surprised he would be when she said to him, "I suppose you don't recognize me, Jimmy?" Then, perhaps, he would embrace her before everybody, and the newspapers would have her picture and give the particulars of her life.

* * * * *

Jimmy was not elected President until four years later, and in the meantime Miss Willis kept her secret. When he was nominated, and the details of his career were eagerly sought for, it was announced by the press that in early life he had attended the Glendale grammar-school, and the fact was regarded by the authorities as a feather in the school's cap, and was commemorated during the campaign by the display in the exhibition hall of a large picture of the candidate festooned with an American flag. It was vaguely remembered that he had been under Miss Willis, among other teachers, but the whole truth was unknown to anybody, and Marion's New England conscience shrank from obtaining glory and sympathy through brag. She hugged her secret, and bore it with her intact when she took her departure for Washington to attend the inauguration ceremonies. She did not tell the authorities where she was going when she asked for a short leave of absence--the first she had ever requested in all her years of service. She was

setting forth on the spree of her life, and her spirit was jubilant at the thought of Jimmy's amazement when he found out who she was.

A day came at last, after the new chief magistrate had taken the oaths of office and was in possession of the White House, when the American public was at liberty to file past their President and shake his hand in their might as free men and free women. Miss Willis had not been able to obtain a location near enough to the inauguration proceedings to distinguish more than the portly figure of a man, or to hear anything except the roar of the multitude. But now she was to have the chance to meet Jimmy face to face and overwhelm him with her secret. Little by little the file of visitors advanced on its passage toward the nation's representative, and presently Miss Willis caught her first glimpse of Sir Galahad--her real Sir Galahad. Her heart throbbed tumultuously. It was he--her Jimmy; he, beyond the shadow of a doubt; a strong, grave, resolute man; the prototype of human power and American intelligence.

Her Jimmy! She let her eyes fall, for it would soon be her turn, and her nerves were all tingling with a happy mixture of pride and diffidence. Her vision, her dearest vision, was about to be realized. There was no chance for delusion or disappointment now. So it seemed. Yet, as she stood there waiting, with her New England conscience and her sense of humor still active, of a sudden her imagination was seized by a new prospect. Why should she tell her secret? What was the use? There he stood--her Jimmy--good, great, and successful, and she had helped to make him so. Nothing could ever deprive her of that. The truth was hers forever. She was only an elderly spinster. Perhaps he would have forgotten. He was but fifteen when he left her, and he had never written to her during all these years. Very likely he did not realize at all what she had done for him. Nothing which he could do for her now would add to the joy of her heart. Secret? To share it with him might spoil all. The chances were it was her secret only; that only she could understand it.

She was close to the President now, and some one at her ear was asking her name. Suddenly she heard her name called, and stepping forward she was face to face with her soul's knight, and he was holding her hand.

"I am very glad to see you, Miss Willis," she heard him say.

She had been stepping shyly, with her eyes lowered. At his words, spoken in a voice which for all its manliness was still the same, she looked up into his face and murmured, as she pressed his fingers:

"God bless you, sir!"

She did not even say "Jimmy." Then she passed, and--and her secret was safe.

Six months later Miss Willis was found one morning dead in her bed. She had died peacefully in her sleep. When her personal effects were administered there was noticed on the mantelpiece in her sitting-room

a mounted tintype, on the paper back of which were two inscriptions. Of these the upper, in faded ink, was dated forty years before and read "From Jimmy." The other, recent and written with the pen of an elderly person, ran as follows: "Portrait of the President of the United States as a school-boy."

AN EXCHANGE OF COURTESIES

I

In the opinion of many persons competent to judge, "The Beaches" was suffering from an invasion of wealth. Unquestionably it had been fashionable for a generation; but the people who had established summer homes there were inhabitants of the large neighboring city which they forsook during five months in the year to enjoy the ocean breezes and sylvan scenery, for The Beaches afforded both. Well-to-do New England families of refinement and taste, they enjoyed in comfort, without ostentation, their picturesque surroundings. Their cottages were simple; but each had its charming outlook to sea and a sufficient number of more or less wooded acres to command privacy and breathing space. In the early days the land had sold for a song, but it had risen steadily with the times, as more and more people coveted a foothold. The last ten years had introduced many changes; the older houses had been pulled down and replaced by lordly structures with all the modern conveniences, including spacious stables and farm buildings. Two clubs had been organized along the six miles of coast to provide golf and tennis, afternoon teas and bridge whist for the entertainment of the colony. The scale of living had become more elaborate, and there had been many newcomers--people of large means who offered for the finest sites sums which the owners could not afford to refuse. The prices paid in several instances represented ten times the original outlay. All the desirable locations were held by proprietors fully aware of their value, and those bent on purchase must pay what was asked or go without.

Then had occurred the invasion referred to--the coming to The Beaches of the foreign contingent, so called: people of fabulous means, multi-millionaires who were captains in one or another form of industry and who sought this resort as a Mecca for the social uplifting of their families and protection against summer heat. At their advent prices made another jump--one which took the breath away. Several of the most conservative owners parted with their estates after naming a figure which they supposed beyond the danger point, and half a dozen second-rate situations, affording but a paltry glimpse of the ocean, were snapped up in eager competition by wealthy capitalists from Chicago, Pittsburg, and St. Louis who had set their hearts on securing the best there was remaining.

Among the late comers was Daniel Anderson, known as the furniture king in the jargon of trade, many times a millionaire, and comparatively a person of leisure through the sale of his large plants to a trust. He hired for the season, by long-distance telephone, at an amazing rental, one of the more desirable places which was to let on account of the purpose of its owners to spend the summer abroad. It was one of the newer houses, large and commodious; yet its facilities were severely taxed by the Anderson establishment, which fairly bristled with complexity. Horses by the score, vehicles manifold, a steam yacht, and three automobiles were the more striking symbols of a manifest design to curry favor by force of outdoing the neighborhood.

The family consisted of Mrs. Anderson, who was nominally an invalid, and a son and daughter of marriageable age. If it be stated that they were chips of the old block, meaning their father, it must not be understood that he had reached the moribund stage. On the contrary, he was still in the prime of his energy, and, with the exception of the housekeeping details, set in motion and directed the machinery of the establishment.

It had been his idea to come to The Beaches; and having found a foothold there he was determined to make the most of the opportunity not only for his children but himself. With his private secretary and typewriter at his elbow he matured his scheme of carrying everything before him socially as he had done in business. The passport to success in this new direction he assumed to be lavish expenditure. It was a favorite maxim of his--trite yet shrewdly entertained--that money will buy anything, and every man has his price. So he began by subscribing to everything, when asked, twice as much as any one else, and seeming to regard it as a privilege. Whoever along The Beaches was interested in charity had merely to present a subscription list to Mr. Anderson to obtain a liberal donation. The equivalent was acquaintance. The man or woman who asked him for money could not very well neglect to bow the next time they met, and so by the end of the first summer he was on speaking terms with most of the men and many of the women. Owing to his generosity, the fund for the building of a new Episcopal church was completed, although he belonged to a different denomination. He gave a drinking fountain for horses and dogs, and when the selectmen begrudged to the summer residents the cost of rebuilding two miles of road, Daniel Anderson defrayed the expense from his own pocket. An ardent devotee of golf, and daily on the links, he presented toward the end of the season superb trophies for the competition of both men and women, with the promise of others in succeeding years. In short, he gave the society whose favor he coveted to understand that it had merely "to press the button" and he would do the rest.

Mr. Andersen's nearest neighbors were the Misses Ripley--Miss Rebecca and Miss Caroline, or Carry, as she was invariably called. They were among the oldest summer residents, for their father had been among the first to recognize the attractions of The Beaches, and their childhood had been passed there. Now they were middle-aged women and their father was dead; but they continued to occupy season after season

their cottage, the location of which was one of the most picturesque on the whole shore. The estate commanded a wide ocean view and included some charming woods on one side and a small, sandy, curving beach on the other. The only view of the water which the Andersons possessed was at an angle across this beach. The house they occupied, though twice the size of the Ripley cottage, was virtually in the rear of the Ripley domain, which lay tantalizingly between them and a free sweep of the landscape.

One morning, early in October of the year of Mr. Anderson's advent to The Beaches, the Ripley sisters, who were sitting on the piazza enjoying the mellow haze of the autumn sunshine, saw, with some surprise, Mr. David Walker, the real-estate broker, approaching across the lawn--surprise because it was late in the year for holidays, and Mr. Walker invariably went to town by the half-past eight train. Yet a visit from one of their neighbors was always agreeable to them, and the one in question lived not more than a quarter of a mile away and sometimes did drop in at afternoon tea-time. Certain women might have attempted an apology for their appearance, but Miss Rebecca seemed rather to glory in the shears which dangled down from her apron-strings as she rose to greet her visitor; they told so unmistakably that she had been enjoying herself trimming vines. Miss Carry--who was still kittenish in spite of her forty years--as she gave one of her hands to Mr. Walker held out with the other a basket of seckel pears she had been gathering, and said:

"Have one--do."

Mr. Walker complied, and, having completed the preliminary commonplaces, said, as he hurled the core with an energetic sweep of his arm into the ocean at the base of the little bluff on which the cottage stood:

"There is no place on the shore which quite compares with this."

"We agree with you," said Miss Rebecca with dogged urbanity. "Is any one of a different opinion?"

"On the contrary, I have come to make you an offer for it. It isn't usual for real-estate men to crack up the properties they wish to purchase, but I am not afraid of doing so in this case." He spoke buoyantly, as though he felt confident that he was in a position to carry his point.

"An offer?" said Miss Rebecca. "For our place? You know that we have no wish to sell. We have been invited several times to part with it, and declined. It was you yourself who brought the last invitation. We are still in the same frame of mind, aren't we, Carry?"

"Yes, indeed. Where should we get another which we like so well?"

"My principal invites you to name your own figure."

"That is very good of him, I'm sure. Who is he, by the way?"

"I don't mind telling you; it's your neighbor, Daniel Anderson." David Walker smiled significantly. "He is ready to pay whatever you choose to ask."

"Our horses are afraid of his automobiles, and his liveried grooms have turned the head of one of our maids. Our little place is not in the market, thank you, Mr. Walker."

The broker's beaming countenance showed no sign of discouragement. He rearranged the gay blue flower which had almost detached itself from the lapel of his coat, then said laconically:

"I am authorized by Mr. Anderson to offer you \$500,000 for your property."

"What?" exclaimed Miss Rebecca.

"Half a million dollars for six acres," he added.

"The man must be crazy." Miss Rebecca stepped to the honeysuckle vine with a detached air and snipped off a straggling tendril with her shears. "That is a large sum of money," she added.

David Walker enjoyed the effect of his announcement; it was clear that he had produced an impression.

"Money is no object to him. I told him that you did not wish to sell, and he said that he would make it worth your while."

"Half a million dollars! We should be nearly rich," let fall Miss Carry, upon whom the full import of the offer was breaking.

"Yes; and think what good you two ladies could do with all that money--practical good," continued the broker, pressing his opportunity and availing himself of his knowledge of their aspirations. "You could buy elsewhere and have enough left over to endow a professorship at Bryn Mawr, Miss Rebecca; and you, Miss Carry, would be able to revel in charitable donations."

Those who knew the Ripley sisters well were aware that plain speaking never vexed them. Beating about the bush from artificiality or ignoring a plain issue was the sort of thing they resented. Consequently, the directness of David Walker's sally did not appear to them a liberty, but merely a legitimate summing up of the situation. Miss Rebecca was the spokesman as usual, though her choice was always governed by what she conceived to be the welfare of her sister, whom she still looked on as almost a very young person. Sitting upright and clasping her elbows, as she was apt to do in moments of stress, she replied:

"Money is money, Mr. Walker, and half a million dollars is not to be

discarded lightly. We should be able, as you suggest, to do some good with so much wealth. But, on the other hand, we don't need it, and we have no one dependent on us for support. My brother is doing well and is likely to leave his only child all that is good for her. We love this place. Caroline may marry some day" (Miss Carry laughed protestingly at the suggestion and ejaculated, "Not very likely"), "but I never shall. I expect to come here as long as I live. We love every inch of the place--the woods, the beach, the sea. Our garden, which we made ourselves, is our delight. Why should we give up all this because some one offers us five times what we supposed it to be worth? My sister is here to speak for herself, but so far as I am concerned you may tell Mr. Anderson that if our place is worth so much as that we cannot afford to part with it."

"Oh, no, it wouldn't do at all! Our heartstrings are round the roots of these trees, Mr. Walker," added the younger sister in gentle echo of this determination.

"Don't be in a hurry to decide; think it over. It will bear reflection," said the broker briskly.

"There's nothing to think over. It becomes clearer every minute," said Miss Rebecca a little tartly. Then she added: "I dare say it will do him good to find that some one has something which he cannot buy."

"He will be immensely disappointed, for his heart was set on it," said David Walker gloomily. His emotions were not untinged by personal dismay, for his commission would have been a large one.

He returned forthwith to his client, who was expecting him, and who met him at the door.

"Well, Walker, what did the maiden ladies say? Have one of these," he exclaimed, exhibiting some large cigars elaborately wrapped in gold foil. "They're something peculiarly choice which a friend of mine--a Cuban--obtained for me."

"They won't sell, Mr. Anderson."

The furniture king frowned. He was a heavily built but compact man who looked as though he were accustomed to butt his way through life and sweep away opposition, yet affable and easy-going withal.

"They won't sell? You offered them my price?"

"It struck them as prodigious, but they were not tempted."

"I've got to have it somehow. With this land added to theirs I should have the finest place on the shore."

The broker disregarded this flamboyant remark, which was merely a repetition of what he had heard several times already. "I warned you," he said, "that they might possibly refuse even this munificent offer."

They told me to tell you that if it was worth so much they could not afford to sell."

"Is it not enough? They're poor, you told me--poor as church mice."

"Compared with you. But they have enough to live on simply, and--and to be able to maintain such an establishment as yours, for instance, would not add in the least degree to their happiness. On the contrary, it is because they delight in the view and the woods and their little garden just as they see them that they can't afford to let you have the place." Now that the chances of a commission were slipping away David Walker was not averse to convey in delicate language the truth which Miss Rebecca had set forth.

Mr. Anderson felt his chin meditatively. "I seem to be up against it," he murmured. "You think they are not holding out for a higher figure?" he asked shrewdly.

David shook his head. Yet he added, with the instinct of a business man ready to nurse a forlorn hope, "There would be no harm in trying. I don't believe, though, that you have the ghost of a chance."

The furniture king reflected a moment. "I'll walk down there this afternoon and make their acquaintance."

"A good idea," said Walker, contented to shift the responsibility of a second offer. "You'll find them charming--real thoroughbreds," he saw fit to add.

"A bit top-lofty?" queried the millionaire.

"Not in the least. But they have their own standards, Mr. Anderson."

The furniture king's progress at The Beaches had been so uninterrupted on the surface and so apparently satisfactory to himself that no one would have guessed that he was not altogether content with it. With all his easy-going optimism, it had not escaped his shrewd intelligence that his family still lacked the social recognition he desired. People were civil enough, but there were houses into which they were never asked in spite of all his spending; and he was conscious that they were kept at arm's length by polite processes too subtle to be openly resented. Yet he did resent in his heart the check to his ambitions, and at the same time he sought eagerly the cause with an open mind. It had already dawned on him that when he was interested in a topic his voice was louder than the voices of his new acquaintances. He had already given orders to his chauffeur that the automobiles should be driven with some regard for the public safety. Lately the idea had come to him, and he had imparted it to his son, that the habit of ignoring impediments did not justify them in driving golf balls on the links when, the players in front of them were slower than they liked.

On the way to visit the Misses Ripley later in the day the broker's

remark that they had standards of their own still lingered in his mind. He preferred to think of them and others along the shore as stiff and what he called top lofty; yet he intended to observe what he saw. He had been given to understand that these ladies were almost paupers from his point of view; and, though when he had asked who they were, David Walker had described them as representatives of one of the oldest and most respected families, he knew that they took no active part in the social life of the colony as he beheld it; they played neither golf, tennis, nor bridge at the club; they owned no automobile, and their stable was limited to two horses; they certainly cut no such figure as seemed to him to become people in their position, who could afford to refuse \$500,000 for six acres.

He was informed by the middle-aged, respectable-looking maid that the ladies were in the garden behind the house. A narrow gravelled path bordered with fragrant box led him to this. Its expanse was not large, but the luxuriance and variety of the old-fashioned summer flowers attested the devotion bestowed upon them. At the farther end was a trellised summer-house in which he perceived that the maiden ladies were taking afternoon tea. There was no sign of hothouse roses or rare exotic plants, but he noticed a beehive, a quaint sundial with an inscription, and along the middle path down which he walked were at intervals little dilapidated busts or figures of stone on pedestals--some of them lacking tips of noses or ears. It did not occur to Mr. Anderson that antiquity rather than poverty was responsible for these ravages. Their existence gave him fresh hope.

"Who can this be?" said Miss Carry with a gentle flutter. An unknown, middle-aged man was still an object of curiosity to her.

Miss Rebecca raised her eyeglass. "I do believe, my dear, that it's--yes, it is."

"But who?" queried Miss Carry.

Miss Rebecca rose instead of answering. The stranger was upon them, walking briskly and hat in hand. His manner was distinctly breezy--more so than a first meeting would ordinarily seem to her to justify.

"Good afternoon, ladies. Daniel Anderson is my name. My wife wasn't lucky enough to find you at home when she returned your call, so I thought I'd be neighborly."

"It's very good of you to come to see us," said Miss Rebecca, relenting at once. She liked characters--being something of one herself--and her neighbor's heartiness was taking. "This is my sister, Miss Caroline Ripley," she added to cement the introduction, "and I am Rebecca. Sit down, Mr. Anderson; and may I give you a cup of tea?"

Four people were apt to be cosily crowded in the summer-house. Being only a third person, the furniture king was able to settle himself in his seat and look around him without fear that his legs would molest

any one. He gripped the arms of his chair and inhaled the fragrance of the garden.

"This is a lovely place, ladies," he asserted.

"Those hollyhocks and morning-glories and mignonettes take me back to old times. Up to my place it's all roses and orchids. But my wife told me last week that she heard old-fashioned flowers are coming in again. Seems she was right."

"Oh, but we've had old-fashioned flowers for years! Our garden has been always just like this--only becoming a little prettier all the time, we venture to hope," said Miss Carry.

"I want to know!" said Mr. Anderson; and almost immediately he remembered that both his son and daughter had cautioned him against the use of this phrase at The Beaches. He received the dainty but evidently ancient cup from Miss Rebecca, and seeing that the subject was, so to speak, before the house, he tasted his tea and said:

"It's all pretty here--garden, view, and beach. And I hear you decline to sell, ladies."

Miss Rebecca had been musing on the subject all day, and a heartfelt response rose promptly to her lips--spoken with the simple grace of a self-respecting gentlewoman:

"Why should we sell, Mr. Anderson?"

The question was rather a poser to answer categorically; yet the would-be purchaser felt that he sufficiently conveyed his meaning when he said:

"I thought I might have made it worth your while."

"We are people of small means in the modern sense of the word," Miss Rebecca continued, thereby expressing more concretely his idea; "yet we have sufficient for our needs. Our tastes are very simple. The sum which you offered us is a fortune in itself--but we have no ambition for great wealth or to change our mode of life. Our associations with this place are so intimate and tender that money could not induce us to desecrate them by a sale."

"I see," said Mr. Anderson. Light was indeed breaking on him. At the same time his appreciation of the merits of the property had been growing every minute. It was an exquisite autumn afternoon. From where they sat he could behold the line of shore on either side with its background of dark green woods. Below the wavelets lapped the shingle with melodious rhythm. As far as the eye could see lay the bosom of the ocean unruffled, and lustrous with the sheen of the dying day. Accustomed to prevail in buying his way, he could not resist saying, after a moment of silence:

"If I were to increase my offer to a million would it make any difference in your attitude?"

A suppressed gurgle of mingled surprise and amusement escaped Miss Carry.

Miss Rebecca paused a moment by way of politeness to one so generous. But her tone when she spoke was unequivocal, and a shade sardonic.

"Not the least, Mr. Anderson. To tell the truth, we should scarcely understand the difference."

II

One summer afternoon two years later the Ripley sisters were again drinking tea in their attractive summer-house. In the interval the peaceful current of their lives had been stirred to its depths by unlooked-for happenings. Very shortly after their refusal of Mr. Anderson's offer, their only brother, whose home was on the Hudson within easy distance of New York, had died suddenly. He was a widower; and consequently the protection of his only daughter straightway devolved on them. She was eighteen and good-looking. This they knew from personal observation at Thanksgiving Day and other family reunions; but owing to the fact that Mabel Ripley had been quarantined by scarlet fever during the summer of her sixteenth year, and in Europe the following summer, they were conscious, prior to her arrival at The Beaches, that they were very much in the dark as to her characteristics.

She proved to be the antipodes of what they had hoped for. Their traditions had depicted a delicate-appearing girl with reserved manners and a studious or artistic temperament, who would take an interest in the garden and like nothing better than to read aloud to them the new books while they did fancy-work. A certain amount of coy coquetry was to be expected--would be welcomed, in fact, for there were too many Miss Ripleys already. Proper facilities would be offered to her admirers, but they took for granted that she would keep them at a respectful distance as became a gentlewoman. She would be urged to take suitable exercise; they would provide a horse, if necessary; and doubtless some of the young people in the neighborhood would invite her occasionally to play tennis.

Mabel's enthusiasm at the nearness of the sea took precedence over every other emotion as she stood on the piazza after the embraces were over.

"How adorably stunning! I must go out sailing the first thing," were her words.

Meanwhile the aunts were observing that she appeared the picture of health and was tall and athletic-looking. In one hand she had carried a tennis-racket in its case, in the other, a bag of golf clubs, as she alighted from the vehicle. These evidently were her household gods. The domestic vision which they had entertained might need rectification.

"You sail, of course?" Mabel asked, noticing, doubtless, that her exclamation was received in silence.

Aunt Rebecca shook her head. "I haven't been in a sail-boat for twenty years."

"But whose steam yacht is that?"

"It belongs to Mr. Anderson, a wealthy neighbor."

"Anyhow, a knockabout is more fun--a twenty-footer," the girl continued, her gaze still fixed on the haven which the indentations of the coast afforded, along which at intervals groups of yachts, large and small, floated at their moorings picturesque as sea-gulls on a feeding-ground.

"There is an old rowboat in the barn. I daresay that Thomas, the coachman, will take you out rowing sometimes after he has finished his work," said Aunt Carry kindly.

"Do you swim?" inquired Aunt Rebecca, failing to note her niece's bewildered expression.

"Like a duck. I'm quite as much at home on the water as on land. I've had a sailboat since I was thirteen, and most of our summers have been spent at Buzzard's Bay."

"But you're a young lady now," said Aunt Rebecca.

Mabel looked from one to the other as though she were speculating as to what these new protectors were like. "Am I?" she asked with a smile. "I must remember that, I suppose; but it will be hard to change all at once." Thereupon she stepped lightly to the edge of the cliff that she might enjoy more completely the view while she left them to digest this qualified surrender.

"No pent-up Utica contracts her powers," murmured Miss Rebecca, who was fond of classic verse.

"It is evident that we shall have our hands full," answered Miss Carry. "But she's fresh as a rose, and wide-awake. I'm sure the dear girl will try to please us."

Mabel did try, and succeeded; but it was a success obtained at the cost of setting at naught all her aunts' preconceived ideas regarding the correct deportment of marriageable girls. The knockabout was

forthcoming shortly after she had demonstrated her amphibious qualities by diving from the rocks and performing water feats which dazed her anxious guardians. Indeed, she fairly lived in her bathing-dress until the novelty wore off. Thomas, the coachman, who had been a fisherman in his day, announced with a grin, after accompanying her on the trial trip of the hired cat-boat, that he could teach her nothing about sailing. Henceforth her small craft was almost daily a distant speck on the horizon, and braved the seas so successfully under her guidance that presently the aunts forbore to watch for disaster through a spyglass.

She could play tennis, too, with the best, as she demonstrated on the courts of The Beaches Club. Her proficiency and spirit speedily made friends for her among the young people of the colony, who visited her and invited her to take part in their amusements. She was prepared to ride on her bicycle wherever the interest of the moment called her, and deplored the solemnity of the family carryall. When her aunts declared that a wheel was too undignified a vehicle on which to go out to luncheon, she compromised on a pony cart as a substitute, for she could drive almost as well as she could sail. She took comparatively little interest in the garden, and was not always at home at five-o'clock tea to read aloud the latest books; but her amiability and natural gayety were like sunshine in the house. She talked freely of what she did, and she had an excellent appetite.

"She's as unlike the girls of my day as one could imagine, and I do wish she wouldn't drive about the country bareheaded, looking like a colt or a young Indian," said Miss Rebecca pensively one morning, just after Mabel's departure for the tennis-court. "But I must confess that she's the life of the place, and we couldn't get on without her now. I don't think, though, that she has done three hours of solid reading since she entered the house. I call that deplorable."

"She's a dear," said Aunt Carry. "We haven't been much in the way of seeing young girls of late, and Mabel doesn't seem to me different from most of those who visit her. Twenty years ago, you remember, girls pecked at their food and had to lie down most of the time. Now they eat it. What I can't get quite used to is the habit of letting young men call them by their first names on short acquaintance. In my time," she added with a little sigh, "it would have been regarded as inconsistent with maidenly reserve. I'm sure I heard the young man who was here last night say, 'I've known you a week now; may I call you Mabel?'"

As to young men, be it stated, the subject of this conversation showed herself impartially indifferent. Her attitude seemed to be that boys were good fellows as well as girls, and should be encouraged accordingly. If they chose to make embarrassing speeches regarding one's personal appearance and to try to be alone with one as much as possible, while such favoritism was rather a filip to existence, it was to be considered at bottom as an excellent joke. Young men came and young men went. Mabel attracted her due share. Yet evidently she seemed to be as glad to see the last comer as any of his predecessors.

Then occurred the second happening in the tranquil existence of the maiden ladies. One day at the end of the first summer, an easterly day, when the sky was beginning to be obscured by scud and the sea was swelling with the approach of a storm, Dan Anderson, the only son of his father, was knocked overboard by the boom while showing the heels of his thirty-foot knockabout to the hired boat of his neighbor, Miss Mabel Ripley. They were not racing, for his craft was unusually fast, as became a multi-millionaire's plaything. Besides, he and the girl had merely a bowing acquaintance. The *_Firefly_* was simply bobbing along on the same tack as the *_Enchantress_*, while the fair skipper, who had another girl as a companion, tried vainly, at a respectful distance, to hold her own by skill.

The headway on Dan's yacht was so great that before the two dazed salts on board realized what had happened their master was far astern. They bustled to bring the *_Enchantress_* about and to come to his rescue in the dingy. Stunned by the blow of the--spar, he had gone down like a stone; so, in all probability, they would have been too late. When he came up the second time it was on the port bow of the *_Firefly_*, but completely out of reach. Giving the tiller to her friend, and stripping off superfluous apparel, Mabel jumped overboard in time to grasp and hold the drowning youth. There she kept him until aid reached them. But the unconscious victim did not open his eyes until after he had been laid on the Misses Ripley's lawn, where, by virtue of brandy from the medicine-closet and hot-water bottles, the flickering spark of life was coaxed into a flame.

It was an agitating experience for the aunts. But Mabel was none the worse for the wetting; and though she naturally made light of her performance, congratulations on her pluck and presence of mind came pouring in. David Walker suggested that the Humane Society would be sure to take the matter up and confer a medal upon the heroine. The members of the Anderson family came severally to express with emotion their gratitude and admiration. The father had not been there since his previous eventful visit, though once or twice he had met his neighbors on the road and stopped to speak to them, as if to show he harbored no malice in spite of his disappointment.

Now with a tremulous voice he bore testimony to the greatness of the mercy which had been vouchsafed him.

The third and last happening might be regarded as a logical sequel to the second by those who believe that marriages are made in heaven. It was to ponder it again after having pondered it for twenty-four hours that the Ripley sisters found themselves in their pleached garden at the close of the day. That the event was not unforeseen by one of them was borne out by the words of Miss Carry:

"I remember saying to myself that day on the lawn, Rebecca, that it would be just like the modern girl if she were to marry him; because she saved his life, I mean. If he had saved hers, as used to happen, she would never have looked at him twice. I didn't mention it because

it was only an idea, which might have worried you."

"We have seen it coming, of course," answered Miss Rebecca, who was clasping the points of her elbows. "And there was nothing to do about it--even if we desired to. I can't help, though, feeling sorry that she isn't going to marry some one we know all about--the family, I mean.

"Well," she added with a sigh, "the Andersons will get our place in the end, after all, and we shall be obliged to associate more or less with multi-millionaires for the rest of our days. It's depressing ethically; but there's no use in quarrelling with one's own flesh and blood, if it is a modern girl, for one would be quarrelling most of the time. We must make the best of it, Carry, and--and try to like it."

"He really seems very nice," murmured Miss Carry. "He gives her some new jewel almost every day."

Miss Rebecca sniffed disdainfully, as though to inquire if love was to be attested by eighteen-carat gold rather than by summer blooms.

The sound of steps on the gravel path interrupted their confabulation.

"It is Mr. Anderson, _pŁre_" said Miss Carry laconically.

"He is coming to take possession," responded her sister.

The crunch of the gravel under his solid, firm tread jarred on their already wearied sensibilities. Nevertheless they knew that it behooved them to be cordial and to accept the situation with good grace. Their niece was over head and ears in love with a young man whose personal character, so far as they knew, was not open to reproach, and who would be heir to millions. What more was to be said? Indeed, Miss Rebecca was the first to broach the subject after the greetings were over.

"Our young people seem to have made up their minds that they cannot live apart," she said.

"So my son has informed me."

Mr. Anderson spoke gravely and then paused. His habitually confident manner betrayed signs of nervousness.

"I told him this morning that there could be no engagement until after I had talked with you," he added.

One could have heard a pin drop. Each of the sisters was tremulous to know what was coming next. Could he possibly be meditating purse-proud opposition? The Ripley blue blood simmered at the thought, and Miss Rebecca, nervous in her turn, tapped the ground lightly with her foot.

"The day I was first here," he resumed, "you ladies taught me a lesson. I believed then that money could command anything. I discovered that I was mistaken. It provoked me, but it set me thinking. I've learned since that the almighty dollar cannot buy gentle birth and--and the standards which go with it."

Unexpectedly edifying as this admission was, his listeners sought in vain to connect it with the immediate issue, and consequently forebore to speak.

"The only return I can make for opening my eyes to the real truth is by doing what I guess you would do if you or one of your folk were in my shoes. I'm a very rich man, as you know. If your niece marries my son her children will never come to want in their time. He's a good boy, if I do say it; and I should be mighty proud of her."

Miss Carry breathed a gentle sigh of relief at this last avowal.

"I don't want her to marry him, though, without knowing the truth, and perhaps when you hear it you'll decide that she must give him up."

Thereupon Mr. Anderson blew his nose by way of gathering his faculties for the crucial words as a carter rests his horse before mounting the final hill when the sledding is hard.

"I'm going to tell you how I made my first start. I was a clerk in a bank and sharp as a needle in forecasting what was going to happen downtown. I used to say to myself that if I had capital it would be easy to make money breed money. Well, one day I borrowed from the bank, without the bank's leave, \$3,000 in order to speculate. I won on that deal and the next and the next. Then I was able to return what I'd borrowed and to set up in a small way for myself in the furniture business. That was my start, ladies--the nest-egg of all I've got."

He sat back in his chair and passed his handkerchief across his forehead like one who has performed with credit an agonizing duty.

There was silence for a moment. Unequivocal as the confession was, Miss Rebecca, reluctant to believe her ears, asked with characteristic bluntness:

"You mean that you--er--misappropriated the money?"

"I was an embezzler, strictly speaking."

"I see."

"Perhaps you wonder why I told you this," he said, bending forward.

"No, we understand," said Miss Rebecca.

"We understand perfectly," exclaimed Miss Carry with gentle warmth.

"It's very honest of you, Mr. Anderson," said Miss Rebecca after a musing pause.

"I've never been dishonest since then," he remarked naïvely. "But a year ago I wouldn't have told you this, though it's been in the back of my mind as a rankling sore, growing as I grew in wealth and respectability. I made a bluff at believing that it didn't matter, and that a thing done has an end. Well, now I've made a clean breast of it to the ones who have a right to know. I should like you to tell Mabel."

As he spoke the lovers appeared in the near distance at the edge of the lawn, coming up from the beach. "But I don't think it will be necessary to tell my son," he added yearningly.

"Certainly _not_" said Miss Rebecca with emphasis.

The sisters exchanged glances, trying to read each other's thoughts.

"It's a blot in the 'scutcheon, of course," said Miss Rebecca. "It's for our niece to say." But there was no sternness in her tone.

This gave Miss Carry courage. Her hand shook a little as she put down her teacup, for she was shy of taking the initiative. "I think I know what she would say. In our time it would probably have been different, on account of the family--and heredity; but Mabel is a modern girl. And a modern girl would say that she isn't to marry the father but the son. She loves him, so I'm certain she would never give him up. Therefore is it best to tell her?"

Daniel Anderson's face was illumined with the light of hope, and he turned to the elder sister, whom he recognized as the final judge.

Miss Rebecca sniffed. Her ideas of everlasting justice were a little disconcerted. Nevertheless she said firmly after brief hesitation:

"I was taught to believe that the sins of the fathers should be visited on the children; but I believe, Carry, you're right."

"Bless you for that," exclaimed the furniture king. Then, groping in the excess of his emotion for some fit expression of gratitude, he bent forward and, taking Miss Rebecca's hand, pressed his lips upon her fingers as an act of homage.

Miss Carry would have been justified in reflecting that it would have been more fitting had he kissed her fingers instead. But she was used to taking the second place in the household, and the happy expression of her countenance suggested that her thoughts were otherwise engaged.

The news that the late Mr. Cherrington's house on Saville Street had been let for a school, within a few months after his death, could not have been a surprise to any one in the neighborhood. Ten years before, when Mr. Cherrington and those prominent in his generation were in their heyday, Saville Street had been sacred to private residences from one end to the other, but the tide of fashion had been drifting latterly. There was already another school in the same block, and there were scattered all along on either side of the street a sprinkling of throat, eye, and ear doctors, a very fashionable dressmaker or two, an up-town bank, and numerous apartments for bachelors.

The news could not have been a surprise even to Mr. Homer Ramsay, but that crusty old bachelor in the seventies brought down his walking-stick with a vicious thump when he heard it, and remarked that he would live to be ninety "if only to spite 'em." This threat, however, had reference, not to Mr. Cherrington's residence, but his own, which was exactly opposite, and which he had occupied for more than forty years. It was a conviction of Mr. Ramsay's that there was a conspiracy on foot to purchase his house, and accordingly he took every opportunity to declare that he would never part with an inch of his land while he was in the flesh. A wag in the neighborhood had expressed the opinion that the old gentleman waxed hale and hearty on his own bile. He was certainly a churlish individual in his general bearing toward his fellow-beings, and violent in his prejudices. For the last ten years his favorite prophecy had been that the country was going to the devil.

Besides the house on Saville Street, Mr. Ramsay had some bonds and stock--fifty or sixty thousand dollars in all--which tidy little property would, in the natural course of events, descend to his next of kin; in this case, however, only a first cousin once removed. In the eye of the law a living person has no heir; but blood is thicker than water, and it was generally taken for granted that Mr. Horace Barker, whose grandmother had been the sister of Mr. Ramsay's father, would some day be the owner of the house on Saville Street. At least, confident expectation that this would come to pass had long restrained Mr. Barker from letting any one but his better half know that he regarded his Cousin Homer as an irascible old curmudgeon; and perhaps, on the other hand, had justified Mr. Ramsay in his own mind for referring in common parlance to his first cousin once removed as a stiff nincompoop who had married a sickly doll. Not that Mr. Horace Barker needed the money, by any means. He was well-to-do already, and lived in a more fashionable street than Saville Street, where he occupied a dignified-looking brown-stone house, from the windows of which his three little people--all girls--peeped and nodded at the organ-grinder and the street-band.

The name of the person to whom Mr. Cherrington's house had been leased was Miss Elizabeth Whyte. She was twenty-five, and she was starting a school because it was necessary for her to earn her own living. She

considered that life, from the point of view of happiness, was over for her; and yet, though she had made up her mind that she could never be really happy again, she was resolved neither to mope nor to be a burden on any one. Mr. Mills, the executor of Mr. Cherrington's estate, who believed himself to be a judge of human nature withal, had observed that she seemed a little overwrought, as though she had lived on her nerves; but, on the other hand, he had been impressed by her direct, business-like manner, which argued that she was very much in earnest. Besides, she was vouched for by the best people, and Mrs. Cyrus Bangs was moving heaven and earth to procure pupils for her. It was clearly his duty as a business man to let her have the house.

Until within a few months Elizabeth Whyte had lived in a neighboring town--the seat of a college, where the minds of young men for successive generations have been cultivated, but sometimes at the expense of a long-suffering local community. Her father, who at the time of her birth was a clergyman with a parish, had subsequently evolved into an agnostic and an invalid without one, and she had been used to plain living and high thinking from her girlhood. Even parents who find it difficult to keep the wolf at a respectful distance by untiring economy will devise some means to make an only daughter look presentable on her first appearance in society. Fine feathers do not make fine birds, and yet the consciousness of a becoming gown will irradiate the cheek of beauty. Elizabeth at eighteen would have been fetching in any dress, but in each of her three new evening frocks she looked bewitching. She was a gay, trig little person, with snapping, dark eyes and an arch expression; a tireless dancer, quick and audacious at repartee; the very ideal of a college belle. The student world had fallen prostrate at her feet, and Tom Whittemore most conspicuously and devotedly of all.

Tom was, perhaps, the most popular man of his day; a Philadelphian of reputedly superfine stock, fresh-faced and athletic, with a jaunty walk. There was no one at the college assemblies who whispered so entrancingly in her ear when she was all alone with him in a corner, and no one who placed her new fleecy wrap about her shoulders with such an air of devotion when it was time to go home. She liked him from the very first; and all her girl friends babbled, "Wouldn't it be a lovely match?" But Tom's classmates from Philadelphia, when they became confidential in the small hours of the morning, asked each other what Tom's mother would say. Tom was a senior, and it was generally assumed that matters would culminate on Class-day evening, that evening of all evenings in the collegiate world sacred to explanation and vows. Elizabeth lay awake all that night, remembering that she had let Tom have his impetuous say, and that at the end he had folded her in his arms and kissed her. Not until the next morning, and then merely as an unimportant fact, did it occur to her that, though Tom had told her she was dearer to him than all the world besides, there was no definite engagement between them. It was only when whispers reached her that Tom, who had gone to Philadelphia to attend the wedding of a relation, was not coming back to his Commencement, that she began to think a little. But she never really doubted until the news came that Tom had been packed off by his mother

on a two years' journey round the world.

What mother in a distant city would be particularly pleased to have her only son, on whom rested the hopes of an illustrious stock, lose his heart to a college belle? But Elizabeth can scarcely be blamed for not having taken the illustrious stock into consideration. She kept saying to herself, that, if he had only written, she could have forgiven him; and it was not surprising that the partners with whom she danced at the college assemblies during the next five years described her to each other as steely. Indeed, she danced and prattled with such vivacious energy, and her black eyes shone so like beads, that college tradition twisted her story until it ran that she had thrown over Tom Whittemore, the most popular man of his day, and that she had no more heart than a nether millstone. And all the time, just to prove to herself that she had not cared for him, she kept the roses that he had given her on that Class-day evening in the secret drawer of her work-box. It had been all sheer nonsense, a boy and girl flirtation. So she had taught herself to argue, knowing that it was untrue, and knowing that she knew it to be so.

Then had come the deaths of her father and mother within three months of each other, and she had awakened one morning to the consciousness that she was alone in the world, and face to face with the necessity of earning her daily bread. The gentleman who had charge of the few thousand dollars belonging to her father's estate, in announcing that her bonds had ceased to pay interest, had added that she was in the same boat with many of the best people; which ought to have been a consolation, had she needed any. But this loss of the means of living had seemed a mere trifle beside her other griefs; indeed, it acted as a spur rather than a bludgeon. The same pride which had prompted her to continue to dance bade her bestir herself to make a living. Upon reflection, the plan of starting a school struck her as the most practicable. But it should be a school for girls; she had done with the world of men. She had loved with all her heart, and her heart was broken; it was withered, like the handful of dried roses in the secret drawer of her work-box.

* * * * *

Elizabeth was fortunate enough to obtain at the outset the patronage of some of those same "best people" in the adjacent city, who happened to know her story. Fashionable favor grows apace. It was only after hearing that Mrs. Cyrus Bangs had intrusted her little girl to the tender mercies of Miss Whyte that Mrs. Horace Barker subdued the visions of scarlet-fever, bad air, and evil communications which haunted her, sufficiently to be willing to send her own darlings to the new kindergarten. People intimate with Mrs. Barker were apt to say that worry over her three little girls, who were exceptionally healthy children, kept her a nervous invalid.

"I consider Mrs. Cyrus Bangs a very particular woman," she said, with plaintive impressiveness to her husband. "If she is willing to send her Gwendolen to Miss Whyte, I am disposed to let Margery, Gladys, and

Dorothy go. Only you must have a very clear understanding with Miss Whyte, at the outset, as to hours and ventilation and Gladys's hot milk. We cannot move from the seaside until a fortnight after her term begins, and it will be utterly impossible for me to get the children to school in the mornings before half-past nine."

It never occurred to Horace Barker, when one morning about ten o'clock, some six weeks later, he called at the kindergarten with his precious trio, that there was any impropriety in breaking in upon Miss Whyte's occupations an hour after school had begun. What school-mistress could fail to be proud of the distinction of obtaining his three daughters as pupils at any hour of the twenty-four when he saw fit to proffer them? He expected to find a cringing, deferential young person, who would, in the interest of her own bread and butter, accede without a murmur to any stipulations which so important a patroness as Mrs. Horace Barker might see fit to impose. He became conscious, in the first place, that the school-mistress was a much more attractive-looking young person than he had anticipated, and secondly, that she seemed rather amused than otherwise at his conditions. No man, and least of all a man so consummate as Mr. Barker--for he was a dapper little person with a closely cropped beard and irreproachable kid gloves--likes to be laughed at by a woman, especially by one who is young and moderately good-looking; and he instinctively drew himself up by way of protest before Elizabeth spoke.

"Really, Mr. Barker," she replied, after a few moments of reflection, "I don't see how it is possible for me to carry out Mrs. Barker's wishes. To let the children come half an hour later and go home half an hour earlier than the rest would interfere with the proper conduct of the school. I will do my best to have the ventilation satisfactory, and perhaps I can manage to provide some hot milk for the second one, as her mother desires; but in the matter of the hours, I do not see how I can accommodate Mrs. Barker. To make such an exception would be entirely contrary to my principles."

Horace Barker smiled inwardly at the suggestion that a school-mistress could have principles which an influential parent might not violate.

"When I say to you that it is Mrs. Barker's particular desire that her preferences regarding hours should be observed, I am sure that you will interpose no further objection."

Elizabeth gave a strange little laugh, and her eyes, which were still her most salient feature, snapped noticeably. "It is quite out of the question, Mr. Barker," she said with decision. "Much as I should like to have your little girls, I cannot consent to break my rules on their account."

"Mrs. Barker would be very sorry to be compelled to send her children elsewhere," he said solemnly, with the air of one who utters a dire threat.

"I should be glad to teach your little girls upon the same terms as I do my other pupils," said Elizabeth, quietly. "But if my regulations are unsatisfactory, you had better send them elsewhere."

Horace Barker was a man who prided himself on his deportment. He would no more have condescended to express himself with irate impetuosity than he would have permitted his closely cropped beard to exceed the limits which he imposed upon it. He simply bowed stiffly, and turning to the Misses Barker, who, under the supervision of a nurse, whom they had been taught to address by her patronymic Thompson instead of by her Christian name Bridget, had been open-mouthed listeners to the dialogue, said, "Come, children."

It so happened that as Mr. Horace Barker and the Misses Barker descended the steps of the late Mr. Cherrington's house, they came plump upon Mr. Homer Ramsay, who was taking his morning stroll. The old gentleman was standing leaning on his cane, glaring across the street; and, by way of acknowledging that he perceived his first cousin once removed, he raised the cane, and, pointing in the line of his scowling gaze, ejaculated:

"This street is going to perdition. As though it weren't enough to have a school opposite me, a fellow has had the impudence to put his doctor's sign right next door to my house--an oculist, he calls himself. In my day, a man who was fit to call himself a doctor could set a leg, or examine your eyes, or tell what was the matter with your throat, and not leave you so very much the wiser even then; but now there's a different kind of quack for every ache and pain in our bodies."

"We live in a progressive world, Cousin Homer," said Mr. Barker, placing his eyeglass astride his nose to examine the obnoxious sign across the way. "Dr. James Clay, Oculist," he read aloud, indifferently.

"Progressive fiddlesticks, Cousin Horace. A fig for your oculists and your dermatologists and all the rest of your specialists! I have managed to live to be seventy-five, and I never had anybody prescribe for me but a good old-fashioned doctor, thank Heaven! And I'm not dead yet, as the speculators who have their eyes on my house and are waiting for me to die will find out." Mr. Ramsay scowled ferociously; then casting a sweeping glance from under his eyebrows at the little girls, he said, "Cousin Horace, if your children don't have better health than their mother, they might as well be dead. Do they go there?" he asked, indicating the school-house with his cane.

"I am removing them this morning. Anabel had concluded to send them there, but I find that the young woman who is the teacher has such hoity-toity notions that I cannot consent to let my daughters remain with her. In my opinion, so arbitrary a young person should be checked; and my belief is that before many days she will find herself without pupils." Whereupon Mr. Barker proceeded on his way, muttering to himself, when at a safe distance, "Irrational old idiot!"

Mr. Ramsay stood for some moments mulling over his cousin's answer; by degrees his countenance brightened and he began to chuckle; and every now and then, in the course of his progress along Saville Street, he would stand and look back at the late Mr. Cherrington's house, as though it had acquired a new interest in his eyes. His daily promenade was six times up and six times down Saville Street; and he happened to complete the last lap, so to speak, of his sixth time down at the very moment when Miss Whyte's little girls came running out on the sidewalk for recess. Behind them appeared the school-mistress, who stood looking at her flock from the top of the stone flight.

Elizabeth knew the old gentleman by sight but not by name, and she was therefore considerably astonished to see him suddenly veer from his ordinary course, and come slowly up the steps.

"You're the school-mistress?" he asked, with the directness of an old man who feels that he need not mince his words.

"Yes, sir. I'm Miss Whyte."

"My name's Ramsay; Homer Ramsay. I live opposite, and I've come to tell you I admire your pluck in not letting my cousin, Hortace Barker, put you down. I'll stand by you, too; you can tell him that. Break up your school? I should like to see him do it. Had to take his three little girls away, did he? Ho, ho! A grand good joke that; a grand good joke. What was it he asked you to do?"

"Mr. Barker wished me to change some of my rules about hours, and I was not able to accommodate him, that was all," answered Elizabeth, who found herself eminently puzzled by the interest in her affairs displayed by this strange visitor.

"I'll warrant he did. And you wouldn't make the change. A grand good joke that. I know him; he's my first cousin once removed, and the only relation I've left. And he is going to try and break up your school. I'd like to see him do it."

"I don't believe that Mr. Barker would do anything so unjust," said Elizabeth, flushing.

"Yes, he would. I had it from his own lips. But he shan't; not while I'm in the flesh. What did you say your name was?"

"Whyte--Elizabeth Whyte."

"And what made you become a school-teacher, I should like to know?"

"I had to earn my living."

"Humph! In my day, girls as pretty as you got married; but now the rich ones are those who get husbands, and those who are poor have to tend shop instead of baby."

"I know a number of girls who were poor, who have excellent husbands," said Elizabeth quietly, spurred into coming to the rescue of the sex she despised. "But," she added, "there are many girls nowadays who are poor who prefer to remain single." She was amused at having been led into so unusual a discussion with this queer old gentleman.

"Bah! That caps the climax. When pretty girls pretend that they don't wish to be married, the world is certainly turned upside down. Well, I like your spirit, though I don't approve of your methods. I just dropped in to say that if Horace Barker does cause you any trouble, you've a friend across the way. Good-morning."

And before Elizabeth could bethink herself to say that she was very much obliged to him, Mr. Ramsay was gone.

That very day after school, while Elizabeth was on her way across the park which lay between Saville Street and the section of the city where her rooms were, she dodged the wrong way in a narrow path, so that she ran plump into the arms of a young man who was walking in the opposite direction. Most women expect men to look out for them when they dodge, but Elizabeth's code did not allow her to put herself under obligations to any man. To tell the truth, she was in such a brown study over the events of the morning that she had become practically oblivious of her surroundings. When she recovered sufficiently from her confusion at her clumsiness to take in the details of the situation, she realized that the individual in question was a young man whom she was in the habit of passing daily at this same hour. Only the day before he had rescued her veil which had been swept away by a high wind; and here she was again, within twenty-four hours, forcing herself upon his attention. She, too, of all women, who had done with men forever!

But Elizabeth's confusion was slight compared with that manifested by her victim, who, notwithstanding that his hat had been jammed in by her school-bag (which she had raised as a shield), was so profuse in the utterance of his apologies and so willing to shoulder all responsibility, that her own sensibilities were speedily comforted. She found herself, after they had separated, much more engrossed by the fact that he had addressed her by name. Although they had been passing each other daily for over two months, it had never occurred to her to wonder who he might be. But it was evident that she was not unknown to him. She remembered now merely that he was a gentleman, and that he had intelligent eyes and a pleasant, deferential smile. The recollection of his blushing diffidence made her laugh.

On the following day, when they were about to pass as usual, she was suddenly confronted in her mind by the alternative whether to recognize him or not. A glance at him as he approached told her that he himself was evidently uncertain if she would choose to consider their experience of the previous day as equivalent to an introduction, and yet she noticed a certain wistfulness of expression which suggested the desire to be permitted to doff his hat to her. To

acknowledge by a simple inclination of her head the existence of a man whom she was likely to pass every day seemed the natural thing to do, however unconventional; so she bowed.

"Good afternoon, Miss Whyte," he said, lifting his hat with a glad smile.

How completely our lives are often appropriated by incidents which seem at the time of but slight importance! For the next few months Elizabeth was buffeted as it were between the persistent persecution of Mr. Horace Barker and the persistent devotion of Mr. Homer Ramsay. With Mr. Barker she had no further interview, but not many weeks elapsed before the influence of malicious strictures and insinuations circulated by him concerning the hygienic arrangements of her school began to bear their natural fruit. Parents became querulous and suspicious; and when calumny was at its height, a case of scarlet-fever among her pupils threw consternation even into the soul of Mrs. Cyrus Bangs, her chief patroness. But, on the other hand, she soon realized that she possessed an ardent, if not altogether discreet, champion in her enemy's septuagenarian first cousin once removed, who sang her praises and fought her battles from one end of Saville Street to the other. Mr. Ramsay no longer railed against electric cars and specialists; all his fulminations were uttered against the malicious warfare which his Cousin Horace and that blood relative's sickly wife were waging against the charming little Miss Whyte, who had hired Mr. Cherrington's house across the way. What is more, he paid Elizabeth almost daily visits, during which, after he had discussed ways and means for confounding his vindictive kinsman, he was apt to declare that she ought to be married, and that it was a downright shame so pretty a girl should be condemned to drudgery because she lacked a dowry. This was a point on which the old gentleman never ceased to harp; and Elizabeth labored vainly to make him understand that teaching was a delight to her instead of a drudgery, and that she had not the remotest desire for a husband. And by way of proving how indifferent she was to the whole race of men, she continued to bow to the unknown stranger of her daily walk without making the slightest effort to discover his name.

Pneumonia, that deadly foe of hale and hearty septuagenarians, carried Mr. Homer Ramsay off within forty-eight hours in the first week of May. And very shortly after, Elizabeth received a letter from Mr. Mills, the lawyer, requesting her to call on a matter of importance. She supposed that it concerned her lease. Perhaps her enemy had bought the roof over her head.

Mr. Mills ushered her into his private office. Then opening a parchment envelope on his desk, he turned to her, and said: "I have the pleasure to inform you, Miss Whyte, that my client, the late Mr. Homer Ramsay, has left you the residuary legatee of his entire property--some fifty or sixty thousand dollars. Perhaps," he added, observing Elizabeth's bewildered expression, "you would like to read the will while I attend to a little matter in the other office. It is quite short, and straight as a string. I drew the instrument, and the

testator knew what he was about just as well as you or I."

Mr. Mills, who, as you may remember, was a student of human nature, believed that Miss Whyte lived on her nerves, and he had therefore planned to leave her alone for a few moments to allow any hysterical tendency to exhaust itself. When he returned, he found her looking straight before her with the document in her lap.

"Is it all plain?" he asked kindly.

"Yes. But I don't understand exactly why he left it to me."

"Because he liked you, my dear. He had become very fond of you. And if you will excuse my saying so," he added, with a knowing smile, "he was very anxious to see you well married. He said that he wished to provide you with a suitable dowry."

"I see," said Elizabeth, coloring. She reflected for a moment, then looked up and said, "But I am free to use it as I see fit?"

"Absolutely. I may as well tell you now as any time, however," Mr. Mills added smoothly, "that Mr. Ramsay's cousin, Mr. Horace Barker, has expressed an intention to contest the will. He is the next of kin, though only a first cousin once removed."

Elizabeth started at the name, and drew herself up slightly.

"You need not give yourself the smallest concern in the matter," the lawyer continued. "If Mr. Barker were in needy circumstances or were a nearer relative, he might be able to make out a case, but no jury will hesitate between a first cousin once removed, amply rich in this world's goods, and a--a--pretty woman. I myself am ready to testify that Mr. Ramsay was completely in his right mind," he added, with professional dignity; "and as for the claim of undue influence, it is rubbish--sheer rubbish."

Elizabeth sat for a few moments without speaking. She seemed to pay no heed to several further reassuring remarks which Mr. Mills, who judged that she was appalled by the idea of a legal contest, hastened to let fall. At last she looked straight at him, and said with firmness, "I suppose that I am at liberty not to take this money, if I don't wish to?"

"At liberty? Bless my stars, Miss Whyte, anybody is at liberty to refuse a gift of fifty thousand dollars. But when you call to see me again, you will be laughing at the very notion of such a thing. Go home, my dear young lady, and leave the matter in my hands. Naturally you are overwrought at the prospect of going into court."

"It isn't that, Mr. Mills. I cannot take this money; I have no right to it. I am no relation to Mr. Ramsay, and the only reason he left it to me was--was because he thought it would help me to be married. Otherwise he would have left it to Mr. Barker. I have no intention of

marrying, and I should not be willing to take a fortune under such circumstances."

"The will is perfectly legal, my dear. And as to marrying, you are free to remain single all your days, if you wish to," said Mr. Mills, with another knowing smile. "Indeed, you are overwrought."

Elizabeth shook her head. "I am sure that I shall never change my mind," she answered. "I could never take it."

Elizabeth slept little that night; but when she arose in the morning, she felt doubly certain that she had acted to her own satisfaction. What real right had she to this money? It was coming to her as the result of the fancy of an eccentric old man, who, in a moment of needless pity and passing interest, had made a will in her favor to the prejudice of his natural heir. Of what odds was it that that heir had ample means already, or even that he was her bitter enemy? Did not the very fact that he was her enemy and that she despised him make it impossible for her to take advantage of an old man's whim so as to rob him? She would have no lawsuit; he might keep the fifty thousand dollars, and she would go her way as though Mr. Homer Ramsay and Mr. Horace Barker had never existed. Mr. Ramsay had left her his money on the assumption that she would be able to marry. To have taken it knowing that she intended never to marry would have been to take it under false pretences.

Mr. Mills consoled himself after much additional expostulation with the reflection that if a woman is bent on making a fool of herself, the wisest man in the world is helpless to prevent her. He set himself at last to prepare the necessary papers which would put Mr. Horace Barker in possession of his cousin's property; and very shortly the act of signal folly, as he termed it, was completed. Tongues in the neighborhood wagged energetically for a few days; but presently the birth of twins in the next block distracted the public mind, and Elizabeth was allowed to resume the vocation of an inconspicuous schoolmistress. From the object of her bounty, Mr. Horace Barker, she heard nothing directly; but at least he had the grace to discontinue his persecutions. And parental confidence, which, in spite of scarlet-fever, had never been wholly lost, was manifested in the form of numerous applications to take pupils for the coming year. For the first time for many weeks Elizabeth was in excellent spirits and was looking forward to the summer vacation, now close at hand; during which she hoped to be able to fit herself more thoroughly for her duties after a few weeks of necessary rest.

One evening, about a fortnight before the date when the school was to close, she noticed that the print of her book seemed blurred; she turned the page and, perceiving the same effect, realized that her vision was impaired. On the following morning at school she noticed the same peculiarity whenever she looked at a book. She concluded that it was but a passing weakness, the result of having studied too assiduously at night. Still, recognizing that her eyes were all-important to her, she decided to consult an oculist at once. It

would be a simple matter to do, for was there not one directly opposite in the house next to Mr. Ramsay's? The sign, Dr. James Clay, Oculist, had daily stared her in the face. She resolved to consult him that very day after school. To be sure she knew nothing about him individually, but she was aware that only doctors of the best class were to be found in Saville Street.

She was obliged to wait in an anteroom, as there were three or four patients ahead of her. When her turn came to be ushered into the doctor's office, she found herself suddenly in the presence of the unknown young man whom she was accustomed to meet daily on her way from school. Her impulse at recognizing him, though she could not have told why, was to slip away; but before she could move, he looked up from the table over which he was bent making a memorandum.

"Miss Whyte!" he exclaimed with pleased astonishment and some confusion, advancing to meet her. "In what way can I be of service to you?"

"Dr. Clay? I should like you to look at my eyes; they have been troubling me lately."

Elizabeth briefly detailed her symptoms. He listened with gravity, and then after requesting her to change her seat, he examined her eyes with absorbed attention. This took some minutes, and when he had finished there was something in his manner which prompted her to say:

"Of course you will tell me, Dr. Clay, exactly what is the matter."

"I am bound to do so," he said, slowly. "I wished to make perfectly sure, before saying that your eyes are quite seriously affected--not that there is danger of a loss of sight, if proper precautions are taken--but--but it will be absolutely necessary for you to abstain from using them in order to check the progress of the disease."

"I see," she said, quietly, after a brief silence. "Do you mean that I cannot teach school? I am a school-teacher."

"I knew that; and knowing it, I thought it best to tell you the whole truth. No, Miss Whyte; you must not use your eyes for at least a year, if you do not wish to lose your sight."

"I see," said Elizabeth again, with the hopeless air of one from whom the impossible is demanded. "I thank you, Dr. Clay, for telling me the truth," she added, simply. "Have I strained my eyes?"

"You have evidently overtaxed them a little; but the disease is primarily a disease of the nerves. Will you excuse me for asking if at any time within the last few years you have suffered a severe shock?"

"A shock?" Elizabeth hesitated an instant, and replied gently: "Yes; but it was a number of years ago."

"That would account for the case, nevertheless."

A few minutes later Elizabeth was walking along the street, face to face with despair. She had not been able to obtain permission from the doctor to use her eyes even during the ten days which remained before vacation. He had said that every moment of delay would make the cure more difficult. She must absolutely cease to look at a book for one whole year. It would be necessary at first for her to visit him for treatment two or three times a week. He had said--she remembered his exact words--"I cannot do a very great deal for you; we can rely only on time for that; but believe me, I shall endeavor to help you so far as it lies in human power. I hope that you will trust me--and--and come to me freely." Kind words these, but of what avail were they to answer the embarrassing question how she was to live? She must give up her school at least for a year; that seemed inevitable. How was she to earn her daily bread if she obeyed the doctor's orders? Would it not be better to use her eyes to the end, and trust to charity to send her to an infirmary when she became blind? Why had she been foolish enough to refuse Mr. Ramsay's property? But for a quixotic theory, she would not now have been at the world's mercy.

It was the sting of shame which this last thought aroused, following in the train of her bitter reasoning, that caused her to quicken her pace and clench her hands. That same pride, which had been her ally hitherto, had come to her rescue once more. She said to herself that she had done what she knew was right, and that no force of cruel circumstances should induce her to regret that she had not acted differently. She would prove still that she was able to make her own way without assistance, even though she were obliged to scrub floors. A shock? The shock of a betrayed faith which had arrayed her soul in bitterness against mankind. Must she own that she was crushed? Not while she had an arm to toil and a heart to strive.

The next ten days were bitter ones. Elizabeth, after disbanding her school, began to plan and contrive for the future. Schemes bright with prospect suggested themselves, and faded into smoke at the touch of practicability. She had a few hundred dollars, which would enable her to live until she had been able to devise a plan, and she determined that the world should not think that she was discouraged. The world, and chiefly at the moment Dr. Clay, whose kindness and earnest attention during the visits which she paid him suggested that he felt great pity for her. Pity? She wished the pity of no man.

One evening while she was alone in her parlor, wrestling with her schemes, the maid entered and said that a gentleman wished to see her. A gentleman? She could think of none who would be likely to call upon her, but she bade the girl show him in; and a moment later she was greeting Dr. Clay. Presently, while she was wondering why he had come, she found herself listening to these words: "I am a stranger to you to all intents and purposes, but you are none to me. For months I have dogged your footsteps unknown to you, and haunted this house in my walks because I knew that you lived here. The memory of your face has sweetened my dreams, and those brief moments when we have passed each

other daily have been sweeter than any paradise. I know the story of your struggle with that coward and of your noble act of renunciation. It cut into my heart like a knife to speak to you those necessary words the other day, and I have been miserable ever since. I said to myself at last that I would go to you and tell you that I could not be happy apart from you; and that your happiness was mine. This seems presumptuous, intrusive: I wish to be neither. I have merely come to ask that I may be free to call upon you and to try to make you love me. I am not rich, but my practice is such that I am able to offer you a home. Will you allow me to come to see you, at least to be your friend?"

The silence which followed this eager question seemed to demand an answer. Elizabeth, who had been sitting with bent head, looked up presently and answered with a sweet smile:

"I have no friends, Dr. Clay. I think it would be very pleasant to have one."

A few minutes later when he was gone, Elizabeth sat for some time without moving, with the same happy smile on her lips. He had asked nothing more and she had given him no greater assurance. Why was it that at last she buried her face in her hands and sobbed as though her bosom would break? Why was it, too, that before she went to bed that night she took a handful of withered flowers, mere dust and ashes, from the secret drawer of her work-box, and, wrapping them in the paper which had enclosed them, held them in the flame of the lamp until they were consumed? Why? Because love, unwatched for, unbidden had entered her heart, which she thought sere as the rose-leaves, and restored light to the sunshine and joy to the world.

A SURRENDER

Morgan Russell and I were lolling one day on the beach at Rock Ledge watching the bathers. We had played three sets of tennis, followed by a dip in the ocean, and were waiting for the luncheon hour. Though Russell was my junior by four years, we were old friends, and had prearranged our vacation to renew our intimacy, which the force of circumstances had interrupted since we were students together at Harvard. Russell had been a Freshman when I was a Senior, but as we happened to room in the same entry, this propinquity had resulted in warm mutual liking. I had been out of college for eight years, had studied law, and was the managing clerk of a large law firm, and in receipt of what I then thought a tremendous salary. Russell was still at Cambridge. He had elected at graduation to pursue post-graduate courses in chemistry and physics, and had recently accepted a tutorship. He had not discovered until the beginning of the Junior year his strong predilection for scientific investigation, but he had given himself up to it with an ardor which dwarfed everything else on

the horizon of his fancy. It was of his future we were talking, for he wished to take his old chum into his confidence and to make plain his ambition. "I recognize of course," he told me, "that I've an uphill fight ahead of me, but my heart is in it. My heart wouldn't be in it if I felt that the best years of my life were to be eaten up by mere teaching. Nowadays a man who's hired to teach is expected to teach until his daily supply of gray matter has run out, and his original work has to wait until after he's dead. There's where I'm more fortunate than some. The fifteen hundred dollars--a veritable godsend--which I receive annually under the will of my aunt, will keep the wolf at a respectful distance and enable me to play the investigator to my heart's content. I'm determined to be thorough, George. There is no excuse for superficiality in science. But in the end I intend to find out something new. See if I don't, old man."

"I haven't a doubt you will, Morgan," I replied. "I don't mind letting on that I ran across Professor Drayson last winter, and he told me you were the most promising enthusiast he had seen for a long time; that you were patient and level-headed as well as eager. Drayson doesn't scatter compliments lightly. But fifteen hundred dollars isn't a very impressive income."

"It was very good of the old fellow to speak so well of me."

"Suppose you marry?"

"Marry?" Russell looked up from the sea-shells with which he had been playing, and smiled brightly. He had a thin, slightly delicate face with an expression which was both animated and amiable, and keen, strong gray eyes. "I've thought of that. I'm not what is called contemplating matrimony at the moment; but I've considered the possibility, and it doesn't appall me."

"On fifteen hundred a year?"

"And why not, George?" he responded a little fiercely. "Think of the host of teachers, clerks, small tradesmen, and innumerable other reputable human beings who marry and bring up families on that or less. Which do you think I would prefer, to amass a fortune in business and have my town and country house and steam yacht, or to exist on a pittance and discover before I die something to benefit the race of man?"

"Knowing you as I do, there's only one answer to that conundrum," said I. "And you're right, too, theoretically, Morgan. My ancestors in Westford would have thought fifteen hundred downright comfort, and in admitting to you that five thousand in New York is genteel poverty, I merely reveal what greater comforts the ambitious American demands. I agree with you that from the point of view of real necessity one-half the increase is sheer materialism. But who's the girl?"

"There is no girl. Probably there never will be. But I'm no crank. I like a good dinner and a seat at the play and an artistic domestic

hearth as well as the next man. If I were to marry, of course I should retain the tutorship which I accepted temporarily as a means of training my own perceptions, though I should try to preserve as at present a considerable portion of my time free from the grind of teaching. Then much as I despise the method of rushing into print prematurely in order to achieve a newspaper scientific reputation, I should expect to eke out my income by occasional magazine articles and presently a book. With twenty-five hundred or three thousand a year we should manage famously."

"It would all depend upon the woman," said I with the definiteness of an oracle.

"If the savants in England, France, and Germany--the men who have been content to starve in order to attain immortality--could find wives to keep them company, surely their counterparts are to be found here where woman is not the slave but the companion of man and is encouraged to think not merely about him but think of him." After this preroration Russell stopped abruptly, then raised himself on one elbow. Attracted by his sudden interest I turned lazily in the same direction, and after a moment's scrutiny ejaculated: "It looks just like her."

As it was nearing the luncheon hour, most of the bathers had retired. Two women, one of them a girl of twenty-five, in the full bloom of youth and vigor, with an open countenance and a self-reliant, slightly effusive smile, were on the way to their bath. They were stepping transversely across the beach from their bath-house at one end in order to reach the place where the waves were highest, and their course was taking them within a few yards of where we lay. For some reason the younger woman had not put on the oil-skin cap designed to save her abundant hair from getting wet, but carried it dangling from her fingers, and, just as Russell noticed her, she dropped it on the beach. After stooping to pick it up, she waited a moment for her friend to join her, revealing her full face.

"Yes, it's certainly she," I announced. "I spoke to her on the pier in New York last autumn, when she was returning from Europe, and it's either she or her double."

"You know her?"

"Yes, the Widow Spaulding."

"Widow? You mean the girl?"

There was just a trace of disappointment in the tone of Russell's surprise.

"Yes, I mean the girl. But you needn't dismiss her altogether from your fastidiously romantic soul merely because she has belonged to another. There are extenuating circumstances. She married the Rev. Horace Spaulding, poor fellow, on his deathbed, when he was in the

last stages of consumption, and two days later she was his widow."

"You seem to know a good deal about her."

"I ought to, for she was born and bred in Westford. Edna Knight was her name--the daughter of Justin Knight, the local attorney, half-lawyer and half-dreamer. His parents were followers of Emerson, and there have been plain living and high thinking in that family for three generations. Look at her," I added, as she breasted a giant wave and jubilantly threw herself into its embrace, "she takes to the water like a duck. I never saw a girl so metamorphosed in three years."

"What was she like before?" asked Russell.

"Changed physically, I mean, and--and socially, I suppose it should be called. Three years ago, at the time of her marriage to Spaulding, she was a slip of a girl, shy, delicate, and introspective. She and her lover were brought up in adjacent houses, and the world for her signified the garden hedge over which they whispered in the gloaming, and later his prowess at the divinity school and his hope of a parish. When galloping consumption cut him off she walked about shrouded in her grief as one dead to the world of men and women. I passed her occasionally when I returned home to visit my family, and she looked as though she were going into a decline. That was a year after her marriage. Solicitous sympathy was unavailing, and the person responsible for her regaining her grip on life was, curiously enough, a summer boarder whom old Mrs. Spaulding had taken into her family in order to make both ends meet. Westford has been saved from rusting out by the advent in the nick of time of the fashionable summer boarder, and Mrs. Sidney Dale, whose husband is a New York banker, and who spent two summers there as a cure for nervous prostration, fascinated Edna without meaning to and made a new woman of her in the process. There is the story for you. A year ago Mrs. Dale took her to Europe as a sort of finishing touch, I suppose. I understand Westford thinks her affliction has developed her wonderfully, and finds her immensely improved; which must mean that she has triumphed over her grief, but has not forgotten, for Westford would never pardon a purely material evolution."

"I noticed her at the hotel this morning before you arrived, and admired the earnestness and ardor of her expression."

"And her good looks presumably. I saw you start when she approached just now. She may be just the woman for you."

"Introduce me then. And her companion?"

"Will fall to my lot, of course, but I have no clew as to her identity."

Mrs. Spaulding enlightened me on the hotel piazza, after luncheon, when, as a sequence to this persiflage I brought up my friend. The stranger proved to be Mrs. Agnes Gay Spinney, a literary person, a

lecturer on history and literature. It transpired later that she and Edna had become acquainted and intimate at Westford the previous spring during a few weeks which Mrs. Spinney had spent there in the preparation of three new lectures for the coming season. She was a rather serious-looking woman of about forty with a straight figure, good features, and a pleasant, but infrequent smile, suggesting that its owner was not susceptible to flippancy. However, she naïvely admitted that she had come away for pure recreation and to forget the responsibilities of life.

Morgan and the widow were conversing with so much animation that I, to whom this remark was addressed, took upon myself to give youth a free field; consequently I resigned myself to Mrs. Spinney's dignified point of view, and, avoiding badinage or irony, evinced such an amiable interest in drawing her out that by the end of fifteen minutes she asked leave to show me the catalogue of her lectures, a proof of which she had just received from the printer. When she had gone to fetch it, I promptly inquired:

"Why don't you two young people improve this fine afternoon by a round of golf?"

A gleam of animation over Morgan's face betrayed that he regarded the suggestion as eminently happy. But it was Edna who spoke first.

"If Mr. Russell will put up with my poor game, I should enjoy playing immensely. But," she added smiling confidently and regarding him with her large, steady brown eyes, "I don't intend to remain a duffer at it long. I see," she continued after a moment, "from your expression, Mr. Randall, that you doubt this. I could tell from the corners of your mouth."

"I must grow a mustache to conceal my thoughts, it seems. I was only thinking, Mrs. Spaulding, that golf is a difficult game at which to excel."

"Yes, but they say that care and determination and--and keeping the eye on the ball will work wonders even for a woman. I shall be only a moment in getting ready, Mr. Russell."

"But what is to become of you, George?" asked Morgan as she disappeared.

"I noticed that a sensitive conscience kept you tongue-tied. This is probably one of the most self-sacrificing acts which will be performed the present summer. But you will remember that Mephistopheles on a certain occasion was equally good-natured."

"Don't be absurd. Is she very trying?"

"Dame Martha had some humor and no understanding; Mrs. Spinney has some understanding and no humor. Here she comes with her catalogue of lectures. There are over fifty of them, and from their scope she must

be almost omniscient. How are you getting on with the widow?"

"Mrs. Spaulding seems to me an interesting woman. She has opinions of her own, which she expresses clearly and firmly. I like her," responded Morgan with a definiteness of manner which suggested that he was not to be debarred by fear of banter from admitting that he was attracted.

It seems that as they strode over the links that afternoon he was impressed by her fine physical bearing. There were a freedom and an ease in her movements, essentially womanly and graceful, yet independent and self-reliant, which stirred his pulses. He had been a close and absorbed student, and his observation of the other sex had been largely indifferent and formal. He knew, of course, that the modern woman had sloughed off helplessness and docile dependence on man, but like an ostrich with its head in the sand he had chosen to form a mental conception of what she was like, and he had pictured her either as a hoyden or an unsympathetic blue-stocking. This trig, well-developed beauty, with her sensible, alert face and capable manner was an agreeable revelation. If she was a type, he had neglected his opportunities. But the present was his at all events. Here was companionship worthy of the name, and a stimulating vindication of the success of woman's revolt from her own weakness and subserviency. When at the conclusion of their game they sat down on a bank overlooking the last hole and connected conversation took the place of desultory dialogue between shots, he was struck by her common sense, her enthusiasm, and her friendliness. He gathered that she was eager to support herself by some form of intellectual occupation, preferably teaching or writing, and that she had come to Rock Ledge with Mrs. Spinney in order to talk over quietly whether she might better take courses of study at Radcliffe or Wellesley, or learn the Kindergarten methods and at the same time apply herself diligently to preparation for creative work. Of one thing she was certain, that she did not wish to rust out in Westford. While her father lived, of course her nominal home would be there, but she felt that she could not be happy with nothing but household employment in a small town out of touch with the movement and breadth of modern life. The substance of this information was confided to me by Morgan before we went to bed that night.

It is easy and natural for two young people vegetating at a summer resort to become exceedingly intimate in three or four days, especially when facility for intercourse is promoted and freedom from interruption guaranteed by a self-sacrificing accessory. My complicity at the outset had been pure off-hand pleasantry, but by the end of thirty-six hours it was obvious to me that Morgan's interest was that of a man deeply infatuated. Seeing that the two young people were of marriageable age and free, so far as I knew, from disqualifying blemishes which would justify me in putting either on guard against the other, I concluded that it behooved me as a loyal friend to keep Mrs. Spinney occupied and out of the way. Consequently Morgan and Mrs. Spaulding were constantly together during the ensuing ten days, and so skilfully did I behave that the innocent pair regarded the flirtation

which I was carrying on as a superb joke--a case of a banterer caught in the toils, and Mrs. Spinney's manners suggested that she was agreeably flattered.

Morgan's statement that he had never contemplated marriage was true, and yet in the background of his dream of the future lurked a female vision whose sympathy and companionship were to be the spur of his ambition and the mainstay of his courage. Had he found her? He did not need to ask himself the question more than once. He knew that he had, and, knowing that he was deeply in love, he turned to face the two questions by which he was confronted. First, would she have him? Second, in case she would, was he in a position to ask her to marry him, or, more concretely, could he support her? The first could be solved only by direct inquiry. The answer to the second depended on whether the views which he had expressed to me as to the possibilities of matrimonial content in circumstances like his were correct. Or was I right, and did it all depend upon the woman? But what if it did? Was not this just the woman to sympathize entirely with his ambition and to keep him up to the mark in case the shoe pinched? There was no doubt of her enthusiasm and interest when in the course of one of their walks he had confided to her that he had dedicated his life to close scientific investigation. Well, he would lay the situation squarely before her and she could give him his answer. If she was the kind of woman he believed her to be and she loved him and had faith in him, would the prospect of limited means appall her? He felt sure that it would not.

By the light of subsequent events, being something of a mind reader, I know the rest of their story as well as though I had been present in the flesh.

Before the end of the fortnight he made a clean breast of his love and of his scruples. He chose an occasion when they had strolled far along the shore and were resting among picturesque rocks overlooking the ocean. She listened shyly, as became a woman, but once or twice while he was speaking she looked up at him with unmistakable ardor and joy in her brown eyes which let him know that his feelings were reciprocated before she confessed it by speech. He was so determined to make clear to her what was in store for her if she accepted him that without waiting for an answer to his burning avowal he proceeded to point out and to reiterate that the scantiest kind of living so far as creature comforts were concerned was all which he could promise either for the present or for the future.

When, having satisfied his conscience, he ceased speaking, Edna turned toward him and with a sigh of sentiment swept back the low bands of profuse dark hair from her temples as though by the gesture she were casting all anxieties and hindrances to the winds. "How strange it is!" she murmured. "The last thing which I supposed could happen to me in coming here was that I should marry. But I am in love--in love with you; and to turn one's back on that blessing would be to squander the happiness of existence." She was silent a moment. Then she continued gravely, "As you know, I was engaged--married once before. How long

ago it seems! I thought once, I believed once, that I could never love again. Dear Horace, how wrapped up we were in each other! But I was a child then, and--and it seems as though all I know of the real world has been learned since. I must not distrust--I will not refuse the opportunity to make you happy and to become happier myself by resisting the impulse of my heart. I love you--Morgan."

"Thank God! But are you sure, Edna, that you have counted the cost of marrying me?"

"Oh, yes! We shall manage very well, I think," she answered, speaking slowly and contracting a little her broad brow in the attempt to argue dispassionately. "It isn't as if you had nothing. You have fifteen hundred dollars and your salary, nearly two thousand more. Five years ago that would have seemed to me wealth, and now, of course, I understand that it isn't; and five years ago I suppose I would have married a man if I loved him no matter how poor he was. But to-day I am wiser--that's the word, isn't it? For I recognize that I might not be happy as a mere drudge, and to become one would conflict with what I feel that I owe myself in the way of--shall I call it civilizing and self-respecting comfort? So you see if you hadn't a cent, I might feel it was more sensible and better for us both to wait or to give each other up. But it isn't a case of that at all. We've plenty to start on--plenty, and more than I'm accustomed to; and by the time we need more, if we do need more, you will be famous."

"But it's just that, Edna," he interjected quickly. "I may never be famous. I may be obscure, and we may be poor, relatively speaking, all our lives," and he sighed dismally.

"Oh, yes, you will, and oh, no, we shan't!" she exclaimed buoyantly. "Surely, you don't expect me to believe that you are not going to succeed and to make a name for yourself? We must take some chances--if that is a chance. You have told me yourself that you intended to succeed."

"In the end, yes."

"Why, then, shouldn't I believe it, too? It would be monstrous--disloyal and unromantic not to. I won't listen to a word more on that score, please. And the rest follows, doesn't it? We are marrying because we love each other and believe we can help each other, and I am sure one of the reasons why we love each other is that we both have enthusiasm and find life intensely absorbing and admire that in the other. There's the great difference between me now and what I was at eighteen. The mere zest of existence seems to me so much greater than it used. There are so many interesting things to do, so many interesting things which we would like to do. And now we shall be able to do them together, shan't we?" she concluded, her eyes lighted with confident happiness, her cheeks mantling partly from love, partly, perhaps, from a sudden consciousness that she was almost playing the wooer.

Morgan was equal to the occasion. "Until death do us part, Edna. This is the joy of which I have dreamed for years and wondered if it could ever be mine," he whispered, as he looked into her face with all the ardor of his soul and kissed her on the lips.

That evening he hooked his arm in mine on the piazza after dinner and said, "You builded better than you knew, George. We are engaged, and she's the one woman in the world for me. I've told her everything-- everything, and she isn't afraid."

"And you give me the credit of it. That's Christian and handsome. I'll say one thing for her which any one can see from her face, that she has good looks and intelligence. As to the rest, you monopolized her so that our acquaintance is yet to begin."

"It shall begin at once," said Morgan, with a happy laugh. "But what about you, George?"

"I leave for New York to-night. Now that the young lovers have plighted their troth my presence is no longer necessary. A sudden telegram will arrive."

"But Mrs. Spinney? We have begun to--er--hope--"

"Hope?"

"Begun to think--wondered if--"

"I were going to marry a woman several years my senior who has the effrontery to believe that she can lecture acceptably on the entire range of literary and social knowledge from the Troubadours and the Crusades to Rudyard Kipling and the Referendum? Such is the reward of disinterested self-sacrifice!"

"Forgive me, George. I knew at first that you were trying to do me a good turn, but--but you were so persistent that you deceived us. I'm really glad there's nothing in it."

"Thanks awfully." Then bending a sardonic glance on my friend, I murmured sententiously:

"Love looks not with the eyes, but with the mind,
And therefore is Winged Cupid painted blind."

* * * * *

"Edna, why don't you take a more active interest in these club gatherings?" asked Morgan Russell one afternoon eight years subsequent to their marriage. He had laid aside his work for the day, and having joined his wife on the piazza was glancing over a printed notice of a meeting which she had left on the table. "I'm inclined to think you would get considerable diversion from them, and the study work at home

would be in your line."

Edna was silent a moment. She bent her head over her work--a child's blouse--that he might not notice that she was biting her lip, and she managed to impart a dispassionate and almost jaunty tone to the indictment which uttered.

"Every now and then, Morgan, you remind me of Edward Casaubon in 'Middlemarch.' Not often, but every now and then lately."

"That selfish, fusty, undiscerning bookworm?"

"You're not selfish and you're not fusty; but you remind me of him when you make remarks like your first." She brushed a caterpillar from her light summer skirt, and noticing the dragged edge held it up.

"There's one answer to your question about taking an active interest in clubs. There are twenty others, but this is one."

Her husband appeared puzzled. He looked well, but pale and thin, as though accustomed to close application.

"I mean I can't afford it," she added.

"I see. Then it was stupid of me--Casaubonish, I dare say, to have spoken. I was only trying to put a little more variety into your life because I realized that you ought to have it."

Edna gave a faint sigh by way of acquiescence. Marriage had changed her but little in appearance. She looked scarcely older, and her steady eyes, broad brow, and ready smile gave the same effect of determination and spirit, though she seemed more sober.

"I'm a little dull myself and that makes me captious," she asserted. Then dropping her work and clasping her hands she looked up earnestly at him and said, "Don't you see the impossibility of my being active in my club, Morgan? I go to it, of course, occasionally, so as not to drop out of things altogether, but in order to take a prominent part and get the real benefit of the meetings a woman needs time and money. Not so very much money, nor so very much time, but more of either than I have at my disposal. Of course, I would like, if we had more income--and what is much more essential--more time, to accept some of the invitations which I receive to express my ideas before the club, but it is out of the question. I have a horror of superficiality just as you have."

"A sad fate; a poor man's wife," said Morgan with a smile which, though tranquil, was wan.

"And you warned me. Don't think for a moment I'm complaining or regretting. I was only answering your question. Do you realize, dear, we shall have been married eight years day after to-morrow?"

"So we have, Edna. And what a blessing our marriage has been to me!"

"We have been very happy." Then, she said, after a pause, as though she had been making up her mind to put the question, "You are really content, Morgan?"

"Content?" he echoed, "with you, Edna?"

"Not with me as me, but with us both together; with our progress, and with what we stand for as human beings?"

"I think so. That is, relatively speaking, and provided I understand correctly what you mean."

She had not resumed her work, and her eager, resolute expression indicated that she was preparing to push the conversation to a more crucial point.

"I suppose what I mean is, would you, if we were going to start over again, do just as you have--devote yourself to science?"

"Oh!" Morgan flushed. "I don't see the use of considering that conundrum. I have devoted myself to science and there is no help for it, even if I were dissatisfied."

"No present help."

"No help at any time, Edna. But why resurrect this ghost? We burned our bridges at the altar."

"We did. And don't misunderstand me, dear. I'm not flinching, I'm not even regretting, as I said to you before. Perhaps it may seem to you brutal--which is worse than Casaubonish--to ask you such a question. Still, we're husband and wife, and on an anniversary like this why isn't it sensible to look matters squarely in the face, and consider whether we've been wise or not? You ask the use. Are we not both seeking the truth?"

"Just as a tradesman takes an account of stock to ascertain whether he is bankrupt. I suppose you are thinking of the children and--and you admitted that you are a little tired yourself."

"I wasn't thinking of any one. I was simply considering the question as an abstract proposition--by the light, of course, of our experience."

"It is hard for you, Edna; yes, it is hard. I often think of it."

"But I shouldn't mind its being hard if I were sure we were wise--justified."

Morgan leaned toward her and said with grave intensity, "How, dear, are the great truths of science to be ascertained unless men--men and their wives--are willing to delve lovingly, to sacrifice comforts, and

even endure hardships in pursuit of them?"

Edna drew a deep breath. "But you must answer me a question. How are children to be educated, and their minds, bodies, and manners guarded and formed in the ideal way on a small income such as ours?"

"I thought it was the children."

"It isn't merely the children. It's myself and you--you, Morgan. It breaks my heart to see you pale, thin, and tired most of the time. You like good food and we can't afford to keep a decent cook. You have to consider every cent you spend, and the consequence is you have no amusement, and if you take a vacation, it is at some cheap place where you are thoroughly uncomfortable. And, of course, it is the children, too. If you, with your talents had gone into business or followed medicine or the law, like your friend Mr. Randall, we should have an income by this time which--well, for one thing, we should be able to keep the children at the seaside until October, and for another have Ernest's teeth straightened."

"Perhaps I can manage both of those, as it is. But, Edna, what's the advantage of considering what might have been? Besides, you haven't answered my question."

"I know it," she said slowly. "You mustn't misunderstand me, Morgan. I'm very proud of you, and I appreciate fully your talent, your self-sacrifice, and your modesty. I thought you entirely right the other day in repulsing that odious reporter who wished to make a public character of you before you were ready. I'm content to wait--to wait forever, and I shall be happy in waiting. But, on the other hand, I've never been afraid to face the truth. It's my way. I've done so all my life; and my growth mentally and morally has come through my willingness to acknowledge my mistakes. Every one says it is fine for other people to starve for the sake of discovery, but how few are willing to do it themselves! If we were in a book, the world would admire us, but sometimes I can't help wondering if we would not be happier and more satisfactory human products if you had done something which brought you rewards more commensurate with your abilities. I'm merely thinking aloud, Morgan. I'm intensely interested, as you know, in the problems of life, and this is one of them."

"But you know foreigners claim that we as a nation are not really interested in culture and knowledge, but only in their money value. What becomes of the best scholarship if we are ready to admit it?"

"Ah! but Professor Drayson told me only the other day that abroad, in Germany, for instance, they give their learned professors and savants suitable salaries and make much of them socially, because it is recognized that otherwise they wouldn't be willing to consecrate themselves to their work."

"Then the essential thing for me to do is to invent some apparatus which I can sell to a syndicate for half a million dollars."

"That would be very nice, Morgan," she answered, smiling brightly. "But you know perfectly well that if we go on just as we are to the end, I shall be thoroughly proud of you, and thoroughly happy--relatively speaking." So saying she put her arm around her husband's neck and kissed him affectionately.

Although this conversation was more definite than any which had taken place between them, Morgan was not seriously distressed. He knew that it was his wife's method to think aloud, and he knew that she would be just as loyal to him and no less cheerful because of it. She was considering a problem in living, and one which indisputably had two sides. He had always been aware of it, and the passage of time without special achievement on his part had brought it more pointedly before him now that there were two children and the prospect of a third. He was absorbed in his vocation; and the lack of certain comforts--necessities, perhaps--though inconvenient, would not have weighed appreciably in the scale were he the only one affected. But though he was pursuing his course along the path of investigation eagerly and doing good work without a shadow of disappointment, he was aware not merely that he had not as yet made a concrete valuable discovery, but might never do so. This possibility did not appall him, but he recognized that it was a part of the circumstances of his particular case viewed from the standpoint of a contemplative judgment on his behavior. He was succeeding, but was his success of a character to justify depriving his wife and children of what might have been theirs but for his selection? The discussion was purely academic, for he had made his choice, but he did not question Edna's privilege to weigh the abstract proposition, and accordingly was not depressed by her frankness.

It happened a few weeks later that Edna received a letter from Mrs. Sidney Dale inviting her and Morgan to spend a fortnight at the Dale spring and autumn home on the Hudson. Edna had seen Mrs. Dale but twice since their trip abroad. She had been unable to accept a previous similar invitation, but on this occasion Morgan insisted that she should go. He argued that it would refresh and rest her, and he agreed to conduct her to Cliffside and remain for a day or two himself.

Cliffside proved to be a picturesque, spacious house artistically situated at the vantage point of a domain of twenty acres and furnished with the soothing elegancies of modern ingenuity and taste. Among the attractions were a terrace garden, a well-appointed stable, a tennis court, and a steam yacht. Mrs. Dale, who had prefaced her invitation by informing her husband that she never understood exactly why she was so fond of Edna and feared that the Russells were very poor, sat, a vision of successive cool, light summer garments, doing fancy work on the piazza, and talking in her engaging, brightly indolent manner. Morgan found Mr. Dale, who was taking a vacation within telephonic reach of New York, a genial, well-informed man with the effect of mental strength and reserve power. They became friendly over their cigars, and a common liking for old-fashioned gardens. On the evening before he departed, Morgan, in the course of conversation,

expressed an opinion concerning certain electrical appliances before the public in the securities of which his host was interested. The banker listened with keen attention, put sundry questions which revealed his own acuteness, and in pursuance of the topic talked to Morgan graphically until after midnight of the large enterprises involving new mechanical discoveries in which his firm was engaged.

Morgan was obliged to go home on the following morning, but Edna remained a full fortnight. On the day of her return Morgan was pleased to perceive that the trip had evidently done her good. Not only did she look brighter and fresher, but there was a sparkling gayety in her manner which suggested that the change had served as a tonic. Morgan did not suspect that this access of spirits was occasioned by the secret she was cherishing until she confronted him with it in the evening.

"My dear," she said, "you would never guess what has happened, so I won't ask you to try. I wonder what you will think of it. Mr. Dale is going to ask you--has asked you to go into his business--to become one of his partners."

"Asked me?"

"Yes. It seems you made a good impression on him from the first--especially the last evening when you sat up together. It came about through Mrs. Dale, I think. That is, Mr. Dale has been looking about for some time for what he calls the right sort of man to take in, for one of his partners has died recently and the business is growing; and Mrs. Dale seems to have had us on her mind because she had got it into her head that we were dreadfully poor. I don't think she has at all a definite idea of what your occupation is. But the long and short of it is her husband wants you. He told me so himself in black and white, and you will receive a letter from him within a day or two."

"Wants me to become a broker?"

"A banker and broker."

"And--er--give up my regular work?"

Edna nervously smoothed out the lap of her dress as though she realized that she might be inflicting pain, but she raised her steady eyes and said with pleasant firmness:

"You would have to, of course, wouldn't you? But Mr. Dale explained that you would be expected to keep a special eye on the mechanical and scientific interests of the firm. He said he had told you about them. So all that would be in your line of work, wouldn't it?"

"I understand--I understand. It would amount to nothing from the point of view of my special field of investigation," he answered a little sternly. "What reply did you make to him, Edna?"

"I merely said that I would tell you of the offer; that I didn't know what you would think."

"I wish you had refused it then and there."

"I couldn't do that, of course. The decision did not rest with me. Besides, Morgan, I thought you might think that we could not--er--afford to refuse it, and that as you would still be more or less connected with scientific matters, you might regard it as a happy compromise. Mr. Dale said," she continued with incisive clearness in which there was a tinge of jubilation, "that on a conservative estimate you could count on ten or twelve thousand dollars a year, and his manner suggested that your share of the profits would be very much more than that."

"The scientific part is a mere sop; it amounts to nothing. I should be a banker, engaged in floating new financial enterprises and selling their securities to the public."

There was a brief silence. Edna rose and seating herself on the sofa beside him took his hands and said with solemn emphasis, "Morgan, if you think you will be unhappy--if you are satisfied that this change would not be the best thing for us, say so and let us give it up. Give it up and we will never think of it again."

He looked her squarely in the face. "My God, Edna, I don't know what to answer! It's a temptation. So many things would be made easy. It comes to this, Is a man justified in refusing such an opportunity and sacrificing his wife and children in order to be true to his----?"

She interrupted him. "If you put it that way, Morgan, we must decline. If you are going to break your heart--"

"Or yours--"

"Morgan, whichever way you decide I shall be happy, provided only you are sure. If you feel that you--we--all of us will be happier and er--more effective human creatures going on as we are, it is your duty to refuse Mr. Dale's offer."

"It's a temptation," murmured Morgan. "I must think it over, Edna. Am I bound to resist it?"

"Bound?"

"You know I may never be heard of in science outside of a few partial contemporaries." His lip quivered with his wan smile.

"That has really nothing to do with it," she asserted.

"I think it has, Edna," he said simply. Then suddenly the remembrance of the conversation with his friend Randall recurred to him with vivid

clearness. He looked up into his wife's eyes and said, "After all, dear, it really rests with you. The modern woman is man's helpmate and counsellor. What do you advise?"

Edna did not answer for a few moments. Her open, sensible brow seemed to be seeking to be dispassionate as a judge and to expel every vestige of prejudice.

"It's a very close question to decide, Morgan. Of course, there are two distinct sides. You ask me to tell you, as your wife, what I think is wisest and best. I can't set it forth as clearly as I should like--I won't attempt to give my reasons even. But somehow my instinct tells me that if you don't accept Mr. Dale's offer, you will be sorry three years hence."

"Then I shall accept, Edna, dear," he said.

Three years later I took Mrs. Sidney Dale out to dinner at the house of a common friend in New York. In the course of conversation I remarked, "I believe it is you, Mrs. Dale, who is responsible for the metamorphosis in my friend, Morgan Russell."

"Is he a friend of yours?"

"An old friend since college days. I never saw any one so spruced up, shall I call it? He has gained fifteen pounds, is growing whiskers, and is beginning to look the embodiment of worldly prosperity."

"It is delightful to see them--both him and his wife. Yes, I suppose I may claim to be responsible for rescuing him from obscurity. My husband finds him a most valuable man in his business. I'm very fond of Mrs. Russell. She hasn't the obnoxious ways of most progressive women, and she certainly has executive ability and common sense. Being such an indolent person myself, I have always been fascinated by her spirit and cleverness. I'm glad she has been given a chance. They are getting on nicely."

"I think she is in her element now. I was at their house the other day," I continued blandly. "It seems that Edna is prominent in various educational and philanthropic bodies, high in the councils of her club, and a leading spirit in diverse lines of reform. They are entertaining a good deal--a judicious sprinkling of the fashionable and the literary. The latest swashbuckler romances were on the table, and it was evident from her tone that she regarded them as great American literature. Everything was rose color. Morgan came home while I was there. His hands were full of toys for his children and violets for his wife. He began to talk golf. It's a complete case of ossification of the soul--pleasant enough to encounter in daily intercourse, but sad to contemplate."

Mrs. Dale turned in her chair. "I believe you're laughing at me, Mr. Randall. What is sad? And what do you mean by ossification of the soul?"

Said I with quiet gravity, "Fifteen or twenty thousand dollars a year. Morgan Russell's life is ruined--and the world had great hopes of him."

Mrs. Dale, who is a clever person, in spite of her disclaimers, was silent a moment. "I know what you mean, of course. But I don't agree with you in the least. And you," she added with the air of a woman making a telling point--"you the recently appointed attorney of the paper trust, with a fabulous salary, you're the last man to talk like that."

I regarded her a moment with sardonic brightness. "Mrs. Dale," I said, "it grieves us to see the ideals of our friends shattered."

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