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YOU NEVER KNOW YOUR LUCK

[BEING THE STORY OF A MATRIMONIAL DESERTER]

By Gilbert Parker

Volume 2.



## CHAPTER VI

## "HERE ENDETH THE FIRST LESSON"

The stillness of a summer's day in Prairie Land has all the characteristics of music. That is not so paradoxical as it seems. The effect of some music is to produce a divine quiescence of the senses, a suspension of motion and aggressive life; to reduce existence to mere pulsation. It was this kind of feeling which pervaded that region of sentient being when Shiel Crozier told his story. The sounds that sprinkled the general stillness were in themselves sleepy notes of the pervasive music of somnolent nature--the sough of the pine at the door, the murmur of insect life, the low, thudding beat of the steam-thresher out of sight hard by, the purring of the cat in the arms of Kitty Tynan as, with fascinated eyes, she listened to a man tell the tale of a life as distant from that which she lived as she was from Eve.

She felt more awed than curious as the tale went on; it even seemed to her she was listening to a theme beyond her sphere, like some shameless eavesdropper at the curtains of a secret ceremonial. Once or twice she looked at her mother and at the Young Doctor, as though to reassure herself that she was not a vulgar intruder. It was far more impressive to her, and to the Young Doctor too, than the scene at the Logan Trial when a man was sentenced to death. It was strangely magnetic, this tale of a man's existence; and the clock which sounded so loud on the mantelpiece, as it mechanically ticked off the time, seemed only part of some mysterious machinery of life. Once a dove swept down upon the window-sill, and, peering in, filled one of the pauses in the recital with its deep contralto note, and then fled like a small blue cloud into the wide and--as it seemed--everlasting peace beyond the doorway.

There was nothing at all between themselves and the far sky-line save little clumps of trees here and there, little clusters of buildings and houses--no visible animal life. Everything conspired to give a dignity

in keeping with the drama of failure being unfolded in the commonplace home of the widow Tynan. Yet the home too had its dignity. The engineer father had had tastes, and he had insisted on plain, unfigured curtains and wallpaper and carpets, when carpets were used; and though his wife had at first protested against the unfigured carpets as more difficult to keep clean and as showing the dirt too easily, she had come to like the one-colour scheme, and in that respect her home had an individuality rare in her surroundings.

That was why Kitty Tynan had always a good background; for what her bright colouring would have been in the midst of gaudy, cheap chintzes and "Axminsters," such as abounded in Askatoon, is better left to the imagination. It was not, therefore, in sordid, mean, or incongruous surroundings that Crozier told his tale; as would no doubt have been arranged by a dramatist, if he had had the making and the setting of the story; and if it were not a true tale told just as it happened.

Perhaps the tale was the more impressive because of Crozier's deep baritone voice, capable, as it was, of much modulation, yet, except when. he was excited, having a slight monotone like the note of a violin with the mute upon the strings.

This was his tale:

"Well, to begin with, I was born at Castlegarry, in Kerry--you know the main facts from what I said in court. As a boy I wasn't so bad a sort. I had one peculiarity. I always wanted 'to have something on,' as John Sibley would say. No matter what it was, I must have something on it. And I was very lucky--worse luck!"

They all laughed at the bull. "I feel at home at once," murmured the Young Doctor, for he had come from near Enniskillen years agone, and there is not so much difference between Enniskillen and Kerry when it comes to Irish bulls.

"Worse luck, it was," continued Crozier, "because it made me confident of always winning. It's hard to say how early I began to believe I could see things that were going to happen. By the hour I used to shake the dice on the billiard-table at Castlegarry, trying to see with my eyes shut the numbers about to come up. Of course now and then I saw the right numbers; and it deepened the conviction that if I cultivated the gift I'd be able to be right nearly every time. When I went to a horse-race I used to fasten my mind on the signal, and tried to see beforehand the number of the winner. Again sometimes I was very right indeed, and that deepened my confidence in myself. I was always at it. I'd try and guess--try and see--the number of the hymn which was on the paper in the vicar's hand before he gave it out, and I would bet with myself on it. I would bet with myself or with anybody available on any conceivable thing--the minutes late a train would be; the pints of milk a cow would give; the people who would be at a hunt breakfast; the babies that would be christened on a Sunday; the number of eyes in a peck of raw potatoes. I was out against the universe. But it wasn't serious at all--just a

boy's mania--till one day my father met me in London when I came down from Oxford, and took me to Thwaite's Club in St. James's Street. There was the thing that finished me. I was twenty-one, and restless-minded, and with eyes wide open.

"Well, he took me to Thwaite's where I was to become a member, and after a little while he left me to go and have a long pow-wow with the committee--he was a member of it. He told me to make myself at home, and I did so as soon as his back was turned. Almost the first thing with which I became sociable was a book which, at my first sight of it, had a fascination for me. The binding was very old, and the leather was worn, as you will see the leather of a pocketbook, till it looks and feels like a nice soap. That book brought me here."

He paused, and in the silence the Young Doctor pushed a glass of milk and brandy towards him. He sipped the contents. The others were in a state of tension. Kitty Tynan's eyes were fixed on him as though hypnotised, and the Young Doctor was scarcely less interested; while the widow knitted harder and faster than she had ever done, and she could knit very fast indeed.

"It was the betting-book of Thwaite's, and it dated back almost to the time of the conquest of Quebec. Great men dead and gone long ago--near a hundred and fifty years ago-had put down their bets in the book, for Thwaite's was then what it is now, the highest and best sporting club in the world."

Kitty Tynan's face had a curious look, for there was a club in Askatoon, and it was said that all the "sports" assembled there. She had no idea what Thwaite's Club in St. James's Street would look like; but that did not matter. She supposed it must be as big as the Askatoon Court House at least.

"Bets--bets--bets by men whose names were in every history, and the names of their sons and grandsons and great-grandsons; and all betting on the oddest things as well as the most natural things in the world. Some of the bets made were as mad as the bets I made myself. Oh! ridiculous, some of them were; and then again bets on things that stirred the world to the centre, from the loss of America to the beheading of Louis XVI.

"It was strange enough to see the half-dozen lines of a bet by a marquis whose great-grandson bet on the Franco-German War; that the Government which imposed the tea-tax in America would be out of power within six months; or that the French Canadians would join the colonists in what is now the United States if they revolted. This would be cheek-by-jowl with a bet that an heir would be born to one new-married pair before another pair. The very last bet made on the day I opened the book was that Queen Victoria would make Lord Salisbury a duke, that a certain gentleman known as S. S. could find his own door in St. James's Square, blindfold, from the club, and that Corsair would win the Derby.

"For two long hours I sat forgetful of everything around me, while I read that record--to me the most interesting the world could show. Every line

was part of the history of the country, a part of the history of many lives, and it was all part of the ritual of the temple of the great god Chance. I was fascinated, lost in a land of wonders. Men came and went, but silently. At last there entered a gentleman whose picture I had so often seen in the papers--a man as well known in the sporting world as was Chamberlain in the political world. He was dressed spectacularly, but his face oozed good-nature, though his eyes were like bright bits of coal. He bred horses, he raced this, he backed that, he laid against the other; he was one of the greatest plungers, one of the biggest figures on the turf. He had been a kind of god to me--a god in a grey frock-coat, with a grey top-hat and field-glasses slung over his shoulder; or in a hunting-suit of the most picturesque kind--great pockets in a well-fitting coat, splendid striped waistcoat. Well, there, I only mention this because it played so big a part in bringing me to Askatoon.

"He came up to the table where I sat in the room with the beautiful Adam's fireplace and the ceiling like an architrave of Valhalla, and said, 'Do you mind--for one minute?' and he reached out a hand for the book.

"I made way for him, and I suppose admiration showed in my eyes, because as he hastily wrote--what a generous scrawl it was!--he said to me, 'Haven't we met somewhere before? I seem to remember your face.

"Great gentleman, I thought, because it was certain he knew he had never seen me before, and I was overcome by the reflection that he wished to be civil in that way to me. 'It's my father's face you remember, I should think,' I answered. 'He is a member here. I am only a visitor. I haven't been elected yet.' 'Ah, we must see to that!' he said with a smile, and laid a hand on my shoulder as though he'd known me many a year--and I only twenty-one. 'Who is your father?' he asked. When I told him he nodded. 'Yes, yes, I know him--Crozier of Castlegarry; but I knew his father far better, though he was so much older than me, and indeed your grandfather also. Look--in this book is the first bet I ever made here after my election to the club, and it was made with your grandfather. There's no age in the kingdom of sport, dear lad,' he added, laughing--'neither age nor sex nor position nor place. It's the one democratic thing in the modern world. It's a republic inside this old monarchy of ours. Look, here it is, my first bet with your grandfather--and I'm only sixty now!' He smoothed the page with his hand in a manner such as I have seen a dean do with his sermon-paper in a cathedral puplit. 'Here it is, thirty-six years ago.' He read the bet aloud. It was on the Derby, he himself having bet that the Prince of Wale's horse would win. 'Your grandfather, dear lad,' he repeated, 'but you'll find no bets of mine with your father. He didn't inherit that strain, but your grandfather and your great-grandfather had it--sportsmen both, afraid of nothing, with big minds, great eyes for seeing, and a sense for a winner almost uncanny. Have you got it by any chance? Yes, yes, by George and by John, I see you have; you are your grandfather to a hair! His portrait is here in the club--in the next room. Have a look at it. He was only forty when it was done, and you're very like him; the cut of the jib is there.' He took my hand. 'Good-bye, dear lad,' he said; 'we'll meet-yes, we'll meet often enough if you are like your

grandfather.  And I'll always like to see you,' he added generously.

"'I always wanted to meet you,' I answered.  'I've cut your pictures out of the papers to keep them--at Eton and Oxford.'  He laughed in great good-humour and pride.  'So so, so so, and I am a hero then, with one follower!  Well, well, dear lad, I don't often go wrong, or anyhow I'm oftener right than wrong, and you might do worse than follow me--but no, I don't want that responsibility.  Go on your own--go on your own.'

"A minute more and he was gone with a wave of the hand, and in excitement I picked up the betting-book.  It almost took my breath away.  He had staked a thousand pounds that the favourite of the Derby would not win the race, and that one of three outsiders would.  As I sat overpowered by the magnitude of the bet the door opened, and he appeared with another man, not one with whose face I was then familiar, though as a duke and owner of great possessions, he was familiar to society.  'I've put it down,' he said.  'Sign it, if it's all in order.' This the duke did, after apologizing for disturbing me.  He looked at me keenly as he turned away.  'Not the most elevating literature in the library,' he said, smiling ironically.  'If you haven't got a taste for it beyond control, don't cultivate it.'  He nodded kindly, and left; and again, till my father came and found me, I buried myself in that book of fate--to me. I found many entries in my grandfather's name, but not one in my father's name.  I have an idea that when a vice or virtue skips one generation, it appears with increased violence or persistence in the next, for, passing over my father into my defenceless breast, the spirit of sport went mad in me--or almost so.  No miser ever had a more cheerful and happy hour than I had as I read the betting-book at Thwaites'.

"I became a member of Thwaite's soon after I left Oxford.  As some men go to the Temple, some to the Stock Exchange, some to Parliament, I went to Thwaite's.  It was the centre of my interest, and I took chambers in Park Place, St. James's Street, a few steps away.  Here I met again constantly the great sportsman who had noticed me so kindly, and I became his follower, his disciple.  I had started with him on a wave of prejudice in his favour; because that day when I read in the betting-book what he had staked against the favourite, I laid all the cash and credit I could get with his outsiders and against the favourite, and I won five hundred pounds.  What he won--to my youthful eyes-was fabulous.  There's no use saying what you think--you kind friends, who've always done something in life--that I was a good-for-nothing creature to give myself up to the turf, to horses and jockeys, and the janissaries of sport.  You must remember that for generations my family had run on a very narrow margin of succession, there seldom, if ever, being more than two born in any generation of the family, so that there was always enough for the younger son or daughter; and to take up a profession was not necessary for livelihood.  If my mother, who was an intellectual and able woman, had lived, it's hard to tell what I should have become; for steered aright, given true ideas of what life should mean to a man, I might have become ambitious and forged ahead in one direction or another.  But there it was, she died when I was ten, and there was no one to mould me.  At Eton, at Oxford-well, they are not preparatory schools to the business of life. And when at twenty-four I inherited the fortune my mother left me, I had

only one idea: to live the life of a sporting gentleman. I had a name as a cricketer--"

"Ah--I remember, Crozier of Lammis !" interjected the Young Doctor involuntarily. "I'm a north of Ireland man, but I remember--"

"Yes, Lammis," the sick man went on. "Castlegarry was my father's place, but my mother left me Lammis. When I got control of it, and of the securities she left, I felt my oats, as they say; and I wasn't long in making a show of courage, not to say rashness, in following my leader. He gave me luck for a time, indeed so great that I could even breed horses of my own. But the luck went against him at last, and then, of course, against me; and I began to feel that suction which, as it draws the cash out of your pocket, the credit out of your bank, seems to draw also the whole internal economy out of your body--a ghastly, empty, collapsing thing."

Mrs. Tynan gave a great sigh. She had once put two hundred dollars in a mine--on paper--and it ended in a lawsuit; and on the verdict in the lawsuit depended the two hundred dollars and more. When she read a fatal telegram to her saying that all was lost, she had had that empty, collapsing feeling.

Pausing for a moment, in which he sipped some milk, Crozier then continued: "At last my leader died, and the see-saw of fortune began for me; and a good deal of my sound timber was sawed into logs and made into lumber to build some one else's fortune. When things were balancing pretty easily, I married. It wasn't a sordid business to restore my fortunes--I'll say that for myself; but it wasn't the thing to do, for I wasn't secure in my position. I might go on the rocks; but was there ever a gambler who didn't believe that he'd pull it off in a big way next time, and that the turn of the wheel against him was only to tame his spirit? Was there ever a gambler or sportsman of my class who didn't talk about the 'law of chances,' on the basis that if red, as it were, came up three times, black stood a fair chance of coming up the fourth time? A silly enough conclusion; for on the law of chances there's no reason why red shouldn't come up three hundred times; and so I found that your run of bad luck may be so long that you cannot have a chance to recover, and are out of it before the wheel turns in your favour. I oughn't to have married."

His voice had changed in tone, his look become most grave, there was something very like reverence in his face, and deprecating submission in his eyes. His fingers fussed with the rug that covered his knees.

"God help the man that's afraid of his own wife!" remarked the Young Doctor to himself, not erroneously reading the expression of Crozier's face and the tone of his voice. "There's nothing so unnerving."

"No, I oughtn't to have done it," Crozier went on. "But I will say again it wasn't a sordid marriage, though she had great expectations, but not immediate; and she was a girl of great character. She was able and brilliant and splendid and far-seeing, and she knew her own mind,

and was radiantly handsome."

Kitty Tynan almost sniffed. Through a whole fortnight she had, with a courage and a right-mindedness quite remarkable, fought her infatuation for this man, and as she fought she had imagined a hundred times what his wife was like. She had pictured to herself a gossamer kind of woman, delicate, and in contour like one of the fashion-plate figures she saw in the picture-papers. She had imagined her with a wide, drooping hat, with a soft, clinging gown, and a bodice like a great white handkerchief crossed on her breast, holding a basket of flowers, while a King Charles spaniel gambolled at her feet.

This was what she had imagined with a kind of awe; but the few words Crozier had said of her gave the impression of a Juno, commanding, exacting, bullying, sailing on with this man of men in her wake, who was afraid of stepping on her train. Was it strange she should think that? She was only a simple prairie girl who drew her own comparisons according to her kind and from what she knew of life. So she imagined Crozier's wife to have been a sort of Zenobia, Queen of Palmyra, who swept up the dust of the universe with her skirts, and gave no chance at all to the children of nature like Kitty, who wore skirts scarcely lower than their ankles. She almost sniffed, and she became angry, too, that a man like Crozier, who had faced the offensive Augustus Burlingame in the witness-box as he did; who took the bullet of the assassin with such courage; who broke a horse like a Mexican; who could ride like a leech on a filly's flank, should crumple up at the thought of a woman who, anyhow, couldn't be taller than Crozier himself was, and hadn't a hand like a piece of steel and the skin of an antelope. It was enough to make a cat laugh, or a woman cry with rage.

"Able and brilliant and splendid and far-seeing, and radiantly handsome!" There the picture was of a high, haughty, and overbearing woman, in velvet, or brocade, or poplin-yes, something stiff and overbearing, like grey poplin. Kitty looked at herself suddenly in the mirror-the half-length mirror on the opposite wall--and she felt her hands clench and her bosom beat hard under her pretty and inexpensive calico frock, a thing for Chloe, not for Juno.

She was very angry with Crozier, for it was absurd, that look of deprecating homage, that "Hush-she-is-coming" in his eyes. What a fool a man was where a woman was concerned! Here she had been fighting herself for a fortnight to conquer a useless passion for her man of all the world, fit to command an array of giants; and she saw him now almost breathless as he spoke of a great wild-cat of a woman who ought to be by his side now. What sort of a woman was she anyhow, who could let him go into exile as he had done and live apart from her all these years, while he "slogged away"--that was the Western phrase which came to her mind--to pull himself level with things again? Her feet shuffled unevenly on the floor, and it would have been a joy to shake the in valid there with the rapt look in his face. Unable to bear the situation without some demonstration, she got to her feet and caught up the glass of brandy and milk with a little exclamation.

"Here," she said, holding the glass to his lips, "here, courage, soldier. You don't need to be afraid at a six-thousand-mile range."

The Young Doctor started, for she had said what was in his own mind, but what he would not have said for a thousand dollars. It was fortunate that Crozier was scarcely conscious of what she was saying. His mind was far away. Yet, when she took the glass from him again, he touched her arm.

"Nothing is good enough for your friends, is it?" he said gratefully.

"That wouldn't be an excuse for not getting them the best there was at hand," she answered with a little laugh, and at least the Young Doctor read the meaning of her words.

Presently Crozier, with a sigh, continued: "If I had done what my wife wanted from the start, I shouldn't have been here. I'd have saved what was left of a fortune, and I'd have had a home of my own."

"Is she earning her living too?" asked Kitty softly, and Crozier did not notice the irony under the question.

"She has a home of her own," answered Crozier almost sharply. "Just before the worst came to the worst she inherited her fortune--plenty of it, as I got near the end of mine. One thing after another had gone. I was mortgaged up to the eyes. I knew the money-lenders from Newry to Jewry and Jewry to Jerusalem. Then it was I promised her I'd bet no more--never again: I'd give up the turf; I'd try and start again. Down in my soul I knew I couldn't start again--not just then. But I wanted to please her. She was remarkable in her way; she had one of the most imposing intelligences I have ever known. So I promised. I promised I'd bet no more."

The Young Doctor caught Kitty Tynan's eyes by accident, and there was the same look of understanding in both. They both knew that here was the real tragedy of Crozier's life. If he had had less reverence for his wife, less of that obvious prostration of soul, he probably would never have come to Askatoon.

"I broke my promise," he murmured. "It was a horse--well, never mind. I was as sure of Flamingo as that the sun would rise by day and set by night. It was a certainty; and it was a certainty. The horse could win, it would win; I had it from a sure source. My judgment was right, too. I bet heavily on Flamingo, intending it for my last fling, and, to save what I had left, to get back what I had lost. I could get big odds on him. It was good enough. From what I knew, it was like picking up a gold-mine. And I was right, right as could be. There was no chance about it. It was being out where the rain fell to get wet. It was just being present when they called the roll of the good people that God wished to be kind to. It meant so much to me. I couldn't bear to have nothing and my wife to have all. I simply couldn't stand--"

Again the Young Doctor met the glance of Kitty Tynan, and there was, once

more, a new and sudden look of comprehension in the eyes of both. They began to see light where their man was concerned.

After a moment of struggle to control himself, Crozier proceeded: "It didn't seem like betting. Besides, I had planned it, that when I showed her what I had won, she would shut her eyes to the broken promise, and I'd make another, and keep it ever after. I put on all the cash there was to put on, all I could raise on what was left of my property."

He paused as though to get strength to continue. Then a look of intense excitement suddenly possessed him, and there--passed over him a wave of feeling which transformed him. The naturally grave mediaeval face became fired, the eyes blazed, the skin shone, the mouth almost trembled with agitation. He was the dreamer, the enthusiast, the fanatic almost, with that look which the pioneer, the discoverer, the adventurer has when he sees the end of his quest.

His voice rose, vibrated. "It was a day to make you thank Heaven the world was made. Such days only come once in a while in England, but when they do come, what price Arcady or Askatoon! Never had there been so big a Derby. Everybody had the fever of the place at its worst. I was happy. I meant to pouch my winnings and go straight to my wife and say, 'Peccavi,' and I should hear her say to me, 'Go and sin no more.' Yes, I was happy. The sky, the green of the fields, the still, home-like, comforting trees, the mass of glorious colour, the hundreds of horses that weren't running and the scores that were to run, sleek and long, and made like shining silk and steel, it all was like heaven on earth to me--a horse-race heaven on earth. There you have the state of my mind in those days, the kind of man I was."

Sitting up, he gazed straight in front of him as though he saw Epsom Downs before his eyes; as though he was watching the fateful race that bore him down. He was terribly, exhaustingly alive. Something possessed him, and he possessed his hearers.

"It was just as I said and knew--my horse, Flamingo, stretched away from the rest at Tattenham Corner and came sailing away home two lengths ahead. It was a sight to last a lifetime, and that was what I meant it to be for me. The race was all Flamingo's own, and the mob was going wild, when all of a sudden a woman--the widow of a racing-man gone suddenly mad--rushed out in front of the horse, snatched at its bridle with a shrill cry and down she came, and down Flamingo and the jockey came, a melee of crushed humanity. And that was how I lost my last two thousand five hundred pounds, as I said at the Logan Trial."

"Oh! Oh!" said Kitty Tynan, her face aflame, her eyes like topaz suns, her hands wringing. "Oh, that was--oh, poor Flamingo!" she added.

A strange smile shot into Crozier's face, and the dark passion of reminiscence fled from his eyes. "Yes, you are right, little friend," he said. "That was the real tragedy after all. There was the horse doing his best, his most beautiful best, as though he knew so much depended on him, stretching himself with the last ounce of energy he could summon,

feeling the psalm of success in his heart--yes, he knows, he knows what he has done, none so well!--and out comes a black, hateful thing against him, and down he goes, his game over, his course run. I felt exactly as you do, and I felt that before everything else when it happened. Then I felt for myself afterwards, and I felt it hard, as you can think."

The break went from his voice, but it rang with reflective, remembered misery. "I was ruined. One thing was clear to me. I would not live on my wife's money. I would not eat and drink what her money bought. No, I would not live on my wife. Her brother, a good enough, impulsive lad, with a tongue of his own and too small to thresh, came to me in London the night of the race. He said his sister had been in the country-down at Epsom--and that she bitterly resented my having broken my promise and lost all I had. He said he had never seen her so angry, and he gave me a letter from her. On her return to town she had been obliged to go away at once to see her sister taken suddenly ill. He added, with an unfeeling jibe, that he wouldn't like the reading of the letter himself. If he hadn't been such a chipmunk of a fellow I'd have wrung his neck. I put the letter her letter-in my pocket, and next day gave my lawyer full instructions and a power of attorney. Then I went straight to Glasgow, took steamer for Canada, and here I am. That was near five years ago."

"And the letter from your wife?" asked Kitty Tynan demurely and slyly.

The Young Doctor looked at Crozier, surprised at her temerity, but Crozier only smiled gently. "It is in the desk there. Bring it to me, please," he said.

In a moment Kitty was beside him with the letter. He took it, turned it over, examined it carefully as though seeing it for the first time, and laid it on his knee.

"I have never opened it," he said. "There it is, just as it was handed to me."

"You don't know what is in it?" asked Kitty in a shocked voice. "Why, it may be that--"

"Oh, yes, I know what is in it!" he replied. "Her brother's confidences were enough. I didn't want to read it. I can imagine it all."

"It's pretty cowardly," remarked Kitty.

"No, I think not. It would only hurt, and the hurting could do no good. I can hear what it says, and I don't want to see it."

He held the letter up to his ear whimsically. Then he handed it back to her, and she replaced it in the desk.

"So, there it is, and there it is," he sighed. "You have got my story, and it's bad enough, but you can see it's not what Burlingame suggested."

"Burlingame--but Burlingame's beneath notice," rejoined Kitty. "Isn't he, mother?"

Mrs. Tynan nodded. Then, as though with sudden impulse, Kitty came forward to Crozier and leaned over him. The look of a mother was in her eyes. Somehow she seemed to herself twenty years older than this man with the heart of a boy, who was afraid of his own wife.

"It's time for your beef-tea, and when you've had it you must get your sleep," she said, with a hovering solicitude.

"I'd like to give him a threshing first, if you don't mind," said the Young Doctor to her.

"Please let a little good advice satisfy you," Crozier remarked ruefully. "It will seem like old times," he added rather bitterly.

"You are too young to have had 'old times,'" said Kitty with gentle scorn. "I'll like you better when you are older," she added.

"Naughty jade," exclaimed the Young Doctor, "you ought to be more respectful to those older than yourself."

"Oh, grandpapa!" she retorted.

## CHAPTER VII

## A WOMAN'S WAY TO KNOWLEDGE

The harvest was over. The grain was cut, the prairie no longer waved like a golden sea, but the smoke of the incense of sacrifice still rose in innumerable spirals in the circle of the eye. The ground appeared bare and ill-treated, like a sheep first shorn; but yet nothing could take away from it the look of plenty, even as the fat sides of the shorn sheep invite the satisfied eye of the expert. The land now, all stubble, still looked good for anything. If bare, it did not seem starved. It was naked and unshaven; it was stripped like a boxer for the rubbing-down after the fight. Not so refined and suggestive and luxurious as when it was clothed with the coat of ripe corn in the ear, it still showed the fibre of its being to no disadvantage. And overhead the joy of the prairie grew apace.

September saw the vast prairie spaces around Askatoon shorn and shrivelled of its glory of ripened grain, but with a new life come into the air-sweet, stinging, vibrant life, which had the suggestion of nature recreating her vitality, inflaming herself with Edenic strength, a battery charging itself, to charge the world in turn with force and energy. Morning gave pure elation, as though all created being must strive; noon was the pulse of existence at the top of its activity; evening was glamorous; and all the lower sky was spread with those

colours which Titian stole from the joyous horizon that filled his eyes. There was in that evening light, somehow, just a touch of pensiveness--the triste delicacy of heliotrope, harbinger of the Indian summer soon to come, when the air would make all sensitive souls turn to the past and forget that to-morrow was all in all.

Sensitive souls, however, are not so many as to crowd each other unduly in this world, and they were not more numerous in Askatoon than elsewhere. Not everybody was taking joy of sunrises and losing himself in the delicate contentment of the sunset. There were many who took it all without thought, who absorbed it unconsciously, and got something from it; though there were many others who got nothing out of it at all, save the health and comfort brought by a precious climate whose solicitous friend is the sun. These heeded it little, even though a good number of them came from the damp islands lying between the north Atlantic and the German Ocean. From Erin and England and the land o' cakes they came, had a few days of staring bright-eyed happy incredulity as to the permanency of such conditions, and then settled down to take it as it was, endless days of sunshine and stirring vivacious air--as though they had always known it and had it.

There were exceptions, and these had joy in what they saw and felt according to the measure of their temperament. Shiel Crozier saw and felt much of it, and probably the Young Doctor saw more of it than any one; stray people here and there who take no part in this veracious tale had it in greater or less degree; fat Jesse Bulrush was so sensitive to it that he, as he himself said, "almost leaked sentimentality" and Kitty Tynan possessed it. She was pulsing with life, as a bird drunken with the air's sweetness sings itself into an abandonment of motion.

Before Crozier came she had enjoyed existence as existence, wondering often why it was she wanted to spring up from the ground with the idea that she could fly, if she chose to try. Once when she was quite a little girl she had said to her mother, "I'm going to ile away," and her mother, puzzled, asked her what she meant. Her reply was, "It's in the hymn." Her mother persisted in asking what hymn; and was told with something like scorn that it was the hymn she herself had taught her only child--"I'll away, I'll away to the Promised Land."

Kitty had thought that "I'll away" meant some delicious motion which was to ile, and she had visions of something between floating and flying as being that blessed means of transportation.

As the years grew, she still wanted to "ile away" whenever the spirit of elation seized her, and it had increased greatly since Shiel Crozier came. Out of her star as he was, she still felt near to him, and as though she understood him and he comprehended her. He had almost at once become to her an admired mystery, which, however, at first she did not dare wish to solve. She had been content to be a kind of handmaiden to a generous and adored master. She knew that where he had been she could in one sense never go, and yet she wanted to be near him just the same. This was intensified after the Logan Trial and the shooting of the man who somehow seemed to have made her live in a new way.

As long ago as she could recall she had, in a crude, untutored way, been fond of the things that nature made beautiful; but now she seemed to see them in a new light, but not because any one had deliberately taught her. Indeed, it bored her almost to hear books read as Jesse Bulrush and Nurse Egan, and even her mother, read them to Crozier after his operation, to help him pass away the time. The only time she ever cared to listen--at school, though quick and clever, she had never cared for the printed page--was when, by chance, poetry or verses were read or recited. Then she would listen eagerly, not attracted by the words, but by the music of the lines, by the rhyme and rhythm, by the underlying feeling; and she got something out of it which had in one sense nothing to do with the verses themselves or with the conception of the poet.

Curiously enough, she most liked to hear Jesse Bulrush read. He was a born sentimentalist, and this became by no means subtly apparent to Kitty during Crozier's illness. Whenever Nurse Egan was on duty Jesse contrived to be about, and to make himself useful and ornamental too; for he was a picturesque figure, with a taste for figured waistcoats and clean linen--he always washed his own white trousers and waistcoats, and he had a taste in ties, which he made for himself out of silk bought by the yard. He was, in fact, a clean, wholesome man, with a flair for material things, as he had shown in the land proposal on which Shiel Crozier's fortunes hung, but with no gift for carrying them out, having neither constructive ability nor continuity of purpose. Yet he was an agreeable, humorous, sentimental soul, who at fifty years of age found himself "an old bach," as he called himself, in love at last with a middle-aged nurse with dark brown hair and set figure, keen, intelligent eyes, and a most cheerful, orderly, and soothing way with her.

Before Shiel Crozier was taken ill their romance began; but it grew in volume and intensity after the trial and the shooting, when they met by the bedside of the wounded man. Jesse had been away so much in different parts of the country before then that their individual merits never had had a real chance to make permanent impression. By accident, however, his business made it necessary for him to be much in Askatoon at the moment, and it was a propitious time for the growth of the finer feelings.

It had given Jesse Bulrush real satisfaction that Kitty Tynan listened to his reading of poetry--Longfellow, Byron, Tennyson, Whyte Melville, and Adam Lindsay Gordon chiefly--with such absorbed interest. His content was the greater because his lovely nurse--he did think she was lovely, as Rubens thought his painted ladies beautiful, though their cordial, ostentatious proportions are not what Raphael regarded as the divine lines--because his lovely nurse listened to his fat, happy voice rising and falling, swelling and receding on the waves of verse; though it meant nothing to her that one who had the gift of pleasant sound was using it on her behalf.

This was not apparent to her Bulrush, though Crozier and Kitty understood. Jesse only saw in the blue-garbed, clear-visaged woman a mistress of his heart, who had all the virtues and graces and who did not

talk. That, to him, was the best thing of all. She was a superb listener, and he was a prodigious talker--was it not all appropriate?

One day he went searching for Kitty at her favourite retreat, a little knoll behind and to the left of the house, where a half-dozen trees made a pleasant resting-place at a fine look-out point. He found her in her usual place, with a look almost pensive on her face. He did not notice that, for he was excited and elated.

"I want to read you something I've written," he said, and he drew from his pocket a paper.

"If it's another description of the timber-land you have for sale-please, not to me," she answered provokingly, for she guessed well what he held in his hand. She had seen him writing it. She had even seen some of the lines scrawled and re-scrawled on bits of paper, showing careful if not swift and skillful manufacture. One of these crumpled-up bits of paper she had in her pocket now, having recovered it that she might tease him by quoting the lines at a provoking opportunity.

"It's not that. It's some verses I've written," he said, with a wave of his hand.

"All your own?" she asked with an air of assumed innocent interest, and he did not see the frivolous gleam in her eyes, or notice the touch of aloes on her tongue.

"Yes. Yes. I've always written verses more or less--I write a good many advertisements in verse," he added cheerfully. "They are very popular. Not genius, quite, but there it is, the gift; and it has its uses in commerce as in affairs of the heart. But if you'd rather not, if it makes you tired--"

"Courage, soldier, bear your burden," she said gaily. "Mount your horse and get galloping," she added, motioning him to sit.

A moment later he was pouring out his soul through a pleasing voice, from fat lips, flanked by a high-coloured healthy cheek like a russet apple:

"Like jewels of the sky they gleam,
Your eyes of light, your eyes of fire;
In their dark depths behold the dream
Of Life's glad hope and Love's desire.

"Above your quiet brow, endowed
With Grecian charm to crown your grace,
Your hair in one soft Titian cloud
Throws heavenly shadows on your face."

"Well, I've never had verses written to me before," Kitty remarked demurely, when he had finished and sat looking at her questioningly. "But 'dark depths'--that isn't the right thing to say of my eyes! And Titian cloud of hair--is my hair Titian? I thought Titian hair was

bronzy-tawny was what Mr. Burlingame called it when he was spouting," --her upper lip curled in contempt.

"It isn't you, and you know it," he replied jerkily. She bridled. "Do you mean to say that you come and read to me without a word of explanation, so that I shouldn't misunderstand, verses written for another? Am I to be told now that my eyes aren't eyes of light and eyes of fire, that I haven't got a Grecian brow? Do you dare to say those verses don't fit me--except for the Titian hair and heavenly shadows? And that I've got no right to think they're meant for me? Is it so, that a man that's lived in my mother's house for years, eating at the same table with the family, and having his clothes mended free, with supper to suit him and no questions asked--is it so, that he reads me poetry, four lines at a stretch, and a rhyme every other line, and then announces it isn't for me!"

Her eyes flashed, her bosom palpitated, her hand made passionate gestures, and she really seemed a young fury let loose. For a moment he was deceived by her acting; he did not see the lurking grin in the depths of her eyes.

Her voice shook with assumed passion. "Because I didn't show what I felt all these years, and only exposed my real feelings when you read those verses to me, do you think any man who was a gentleman wouldn't in the circumstances say, 'These verses are for you, Kitty Tynan'? You betrayed me into showing you what I felt, and then you tell me your verses are for another girl!"

"Girl! Girl! Girl!" he burst out. "Nurse is thirty-seven--she told me so herself, and how could I tell that you--why, it's absurd! I've only thought of you always as a baby in long skirts"--she spasmodically drew her skirts down over her pretty, shapely ankles, while she kept her eyes covered with one hand--"and you've seen me makin' up to her ever since Crozier got the bullet. Ever since he was operated on, I've--"

"Yes, yes, that's right," she interrupted. "That's manly! Put the blame on him--him that couldn't help himself, struck by a horse-thief's bullet in the dark; him that's no more to blame for your carryings on while death was prowling about the door there--"

"Carryings on! Carryings on!" Jesse Bulrush was thoroughly excited and indignant. The little devil, to put him in a hole like this! "Carryings on! I've acted like a man all through--never anything else in your house, and it's a shame that I've got to listen to things that have never been said of me in all my life. My mother was a good, true woman, and she brought me up--"

"Yes, that's it, put it on your mother now, poor woman! who isn't here to stretch out her hand and stop you from playing a double game with two girls so placed they couldn't help themselves--just doing kind acts for a sick man." Suddenly she got to her feet. "I tell you, Jesse Bulrush, that you're a man--you're a man--"

But she could keep it up no longer. She burst out laughing, and the false tears of the actress she dashed from her eyes as she added: "That you're a man after my own heart. But you can't have it, even if you are after it, and you are welcome to the thirty-seven-year-old seraph in there!" She tossed a hand towards the house.

By this time he was on his feet too, almost bursting. "Well, you wicked little rip--you Ellen Terry at twenty-two, to think you could play it up like that! Why, never on the stage was there such--!"

"It's the poetry made me do it. It inspired me," she gurgled. "I felt --why, I felt here"--she pressed her hand to her heart "all the pangs of unrequited love--oh, go away, go back to the house and read that to her! She's in the sitting-room, and my mother's away down-town. Now's your chance, Claude Melnotte."

She put both hands on his big, panting chest and pushed him backward towards the house. "You're good enough for anybody, and if I wasn't so young and daren't leave mother till I get my wisdom-teeth cut, and till I'm thirty-seven--oh, oh, oh!" She laughed till the tears came into her eyes. "This is as good as--as a play."

"It's the best acted play I ever saw, from 'Ten Nights in a Bar-room' to 'Struck Oil,'" rejoined Jesse Bulrush, with a face still half ashamed yet beaming. "But, tell me, you heartless little woman, are the verses worth anything? Do you think she'll like them?"

Kitty grew suddenly serious, and a curious look he could not read deepened in her eyes. "Nurse 'll like them--of course she will," she said gently. "She'll like them because they are you. Read them to her as you read them to me, and she'll only hear your voice, and she'll think them clever and you a wonderful man, even if you are fifty and weigh a thousand pounds. It doesn't matter to a woman what a man's saying or doing, or whether he's so much cleverer than she is, if she knows that under everthing he's saying, 'I love you.' A man isn't that way, but a woman is. Now go." Again she pushed him with a small brown hand.

"Kitty Tynan, what a girl you are!" he said admiringly.

"Then be a father to me," she said teasingly.

"I can't marry both your mother and nurse."

"P'r'aps you can't marry either," she replied sarcastically, "and I know that in any case you'll never be any relative of mine by marriage. Get going," she said almost impatiently.

He turned to go, and she said after him, as he rolled away, "I'll let you hear some of my verses one day when you're more developed and can understand them."

"I'll bet they beat mine," he called back.

"You'll win your bet," she answered, and stood leaning against a tree with a curious look emerging and receding in her eyes. When he had disappeared, sitting down, she drew from her breast a slip of paper, unfolded it, and laid it on her knee. "It is better," she said. "It's not good poetry, of course, but it's truer, and it's not done according to a pattern like his. Yes, it's real, real, real, and he'll never see it--never see it now, for I've fought it' all out, and I've won."

Then she slowly read the verses aloud:

"Yes, I've won," she said with determination. So many of her sex have said things just as decisively, and while yet the exhilaration of their decision was inflaming them, have done what they said they would never, never, never do. Still there was a look in the fair face which meant a new force awakened in her character.

For a long time she sat brooding, forgetful of the present and of the little comedy of elderly lovers going on inside the house. She was thinking of the way conventions hold and bind us; of the lack of freedom in the lives of all, unless they live in wild places beyond the social pale. Within the past few weeks she had had visions of such a world beyond this active and ordered civilisation, where the will and the conscience of a man or woman was the only law. She was not lawless in mind or spirit. She was only rebelling gainst a situation in which she was bound hand and foot, and could not follow her honest and exclusive desire, if she wished to do so.

Here was a man who was married, yet in a real sense who had no wife. Suppose that man cared for her, what a tragedy it would be for them to be kept apart! This man did not love her, and so there was no tragedy for both. Still all was not over yet--yes, all was "over and over and over," she said to herself as she sprang to her feet with a sharp exclamation of disgust--with herself.

Her mother was coming hurriedly towards her from the house. There was a quickness in her walk suggesting excitement, yet from the look in her face it was plain that the news she brought was not painful. "He told me you were here, and--"

"Who told you I was here?"

"Mr. Bulrush."

"So it's all settled," she said, with a little quirk of her shoulders.

"Yes, he's asked her, and they're going to be married. It's enough to make you die laughing to see the two middle-aged doves cooing in there."

"I thought perhaps it would be you. He said he would like to be a father to me."

"That would prevent me if nothing else would," answered the widow of Tyndall Tynan. "A stepfather to an unmarried girl, both eyeing each

other for a chance to find fault--if you please, no thank you!"

"That means you won't get married till I'm out of the way?" asked Kitty, with a look which was as much touched with myrrh as with mirth.

"It means I wouldn't get married till you are married, anyway," was the complacent answer.

"Is there any one special that--"

"Don't talk nonsense. Since your father died I've only thought of his child and mine, and I've not looked where I might. Instead, I've done my best to prove that two women could live and succeed without a man to earn for them; though of course without the pension it couldn't have been done in the style we've done it. We've got our place!"

There is a dignity attached to a pension which has an influence quite its own, and in the most primitive communities it has an aristocratic character which commands general respect. In Askatoon people gave Mrs. Tynan a better place socially because of her pension than they would have done if she had earned double the money which the pension brought her.

"Everybody has called on us," she added with reflective pride.

"Principally since Mr. Crozier came," added Kitty. "It's funny, isn't it, how he made people respect him before they knew who he was?"

"He would make Satan stand up and take off his hat, if he paid Hades a visit," said Mrs. Tynan admiringly. "Anybody'd do anything for him."

Kitty eyed her mother closely. There was a strange, far-away, brooding look in Mrs. Tynan's eyes, and she seemed for a moment lost in thought.

"You're in love with him," said Kitty sharply.

"I was, in a way," answered her mother frankly. "I was, in a way, a kind of way, till I knew he was married. But it didn't mean anything. I never thought of it except as a thing that couldn't be."

"Why couldn't it be?" asked Kitty, smothering an agitation rising in her breast.

"Because I always knew he belonged to where we didn't, and because if he was going to be in love himself, it would be with some girl like you. He's young enough for that, and it's natural he should get as his profit the years of youth that a young woman has yet to live."

"As though it was a choice between you and me, for instance!"

Mrs. Tynan started, but recovered herself. "Yes. If there had been any choosing, he'd not have hesitated a minute. He'd have taken you, of course. But he never gave either of us a thought that way."

"I thought that till--till after he'd told us his story," replied Kitty boldly.

"What has happened since then?" asked her mother, with sudden apprehension.

"Nothing has happened since. I don't understand it, but it's as though he'd been asleep for a long time and was awake again."

Mrs. Tynan gravely regarded her daughter, and a look of fear came into her face. "I knew you kept thinking of him always," she said; "but you had such sense, and he never showed any feeling for you; and young girls get over things. Besides, you always showed you knew he wasn't a possibility. But since he told us that day about his being married and all, has--has he been different towards you?"

"Not a thing, not a word," was the reply; "but--but there's a difference with him in a way. I feel it when I go in the room where he is."

"You've got to stop thinking of him," insisted the elder woman querulously. "You've got to stop it at once. It's no good. It's bad for you. You've too much sense to go on caring for a man that--"

"I'm going to get married," said Kitty firmly. "I've made up my mind. If you have to think about one person, you should stop thinking about another; anyhow, you've got to make yourself stop. So I'm going to marry--and stop."

"Who are you going to marry, Kitty? You don't mean to say it's John Sibley !"

"P'r'aps. He keeps coming."

"That gambling and racing fellow!"

"He owns a big farm, and it pays, and he has got an interest in a mine, and--"

"I tell you, you shan't," peevishly interjected Mrs. Tynan. "You shan't. He's vicious. He's--oh, you shan't! I'd rather--"

"You'd rather I threw myself away--on a married man?" asked Kitty covertly.

"My God--oh, Kitty!" said the other, breaking down. "You can't mean it --oh, you can't mean that you'd--"

"I've got to work out my case in my own way," broke in Kitty calmly. "I know how I've got to do it. I have to make my own medicine--and take it. You say John Sibley is vicious. He has only got one vice."

"Isn't it enough? Gambling--"

"That isn't a vice; it's a sport. It's the same as Mr. Crozier had. Mr. Crozier did it with horses only, the other does it with cards and horses. The only vice John Sibley's got is me."

"Is you?" asked her mother bewilderedly.

"Well, when you've got an idea you can't control and it makes you its slave, it's a vice. I'm John's vice, and I'm thinking of trying to cure him of it--and cure myself too," Kitty added, folding and unfolding the paper in her hand.

"Here comes the Young Doctor," said her mother, turning towards the house. "I think you don't mean to marry Sibley, but if you do, make him give up gambling."

"I don't know that I want him to give it up," answered Kitty musingly.

A moment later she was alone with the Young Doctor.

## CHAPTER VIII

## ALL ABOUT AN UNOPENED LETTER

"What's this you've been doing?" asked the Young Doctor, with a quizzical smile. "We never can tell where you'll break out."

"Kitty Tynan's measles!" she rejoined, swinging her hat by its ribbon. "Mine isn't a one-sided character, is it?"

"I know one of the sides quite well," returned the Young Doctor.

"Which, please, sir?"

The Young Doctor pretended to look wise. "The outside. I read it like a book. It fits the life in which it moves like the paper on the wall. But I'm not sure of the inside. In fact, I don't think I know that at all."

"So I couldn't call you in if my character was sick inside, could I?" she asked obliquely.

"I might have an operation, and see what's wrong with it," he answered playfully.

Suddenly she shivered. "I've had enough of operations to last me awhile," she rejoined. "I thought I could stand anything, but your operation on Mr. Crozier taught me a lesson. I'd never be a doctor's wife if I had to help him cut up human beings."

"I'll remember that," the Young Doctor replied mockingly.

"But if it would help put things on a right basis, I'd make a bargain that I wasn't to help do the carving," she rejoined wickedly. The Young Doctor always incited her to say daring things. They understood each other well. "So don't let that stand in the way," she added slyly.

"The man who marries you will be glad to get you without the anatomy," he returned gallantly.

"I wasn't talking of a man; I was talking of a doctor."

He threw up a hand and his eyebrows. "Isn't a doctor a man?"

"Those I've seen have been mostly fish."

"No feelings--eh?"

She looked him in the eyes, and he felt a kind of shiver go through him. "Not enough to notice. I never observed you had any," she replied. "If I saw that you had, I'd be so frightened I'd fly. I've seen pictures of an excited whale turning a boat full of men over. No, I couldn't bear to see you show any feeling."

The dark eyes of the Young Doctor suddenly took on a look which was a stranger to them. In his relations with women he was singularly impersonal, but he was a man, and he was young enough to feel the Adam stir in him. The hidden or controlled thing suddenly emerged. It was not the look which would be in his eyes if he were speaking to the woman he wanted to marry. Kitty saw it, and she did not understand it, for she had at heart a feeling that she could go to him in any trouble of life and be sure of healing. To her he seemed wonderful; but she thought of him as she would have thought of her father, as a person of authority and knowledge--that operation showed him a great man, she thought, so skillful and precise and splendid; and the whole countryside had such confidence in him.

She regarded him as a being apart; but for a moment, an ominous moment, he was almost one with that race of men who feed in strange pastures. She only half saw the reddish glow which came swimming into his eyes, and she did not realise it, for she did not expect to find it there. For an instant, however, he saw with new eyes that primary eloquence of woman life, the unspent splendour of youth, the warm joy of the material being, the mystery of maidenhood in all its efflorescence. It was the emergence of his own youth again, as why should it not be, since he had never married and had never dallied! But in a moment it was gone again--driven away.

"What a wicked little flirt you are!" he said, with a shake of the head. "You'll come to a bad end, if you don't change your ways."

"Perform an operation, then, if you think you know what's the matter with me," she retorted. "Sometimes in operating for one disease we come on another, and then there's a lot of thinking to be done."

The look in her face was quizzical, yet there was a strange, elusive gravity in her eyes, an almost pathetic appealing. "If you were going to operate on me, what would it be for?" she asked more flippantly than her face showed.

"Well, it's obscure, and the symptoms are not usual, but I should strike for the cancer love," he answered, with a direct look.

She flushed and changed on the instant. "Is love a cancer?" she asked. All at once she felt sure that he read her real story, and something very like anger quickened in her.

"Unrequited love is," he answered deliberately. "How do you know it is unrequited?" she asked sharply.

"Well, I don't know it," he answered, dismayed by the look in her face. "But I certainly hope I'm right. I do, indeed."

"And if you were right, what would you do--as a surgeon?" she questioned, with an undertone of meaning.

"I would remove the cause of the disease."

She came close and looked him straight in the eyes. "You mean that he should go? You think that would cure the disease? Well, you are not going to interfere. You are not going to manoeuvre anything to get him away--I know doctors' tricks. You'd say he must go away east or west to the sea for change of air to get well. That's nonsense, and it isn't necessary. You are absolutely wrong in your diagnosis--if that's what you call it. He is going to stay here. You aren't going to drive away one of our boarders and take the bread out of our mouths. Anyhow, you're wrong. You think because a girl worships a man's ability that she's in love with him. I adore your ability, but I'd as soon fall in love with a lobster--and be boiled with the lobster in a black pot. Such conceit men have!"

He was not convinced. He had a deep-seeing eye, and he saw that she was boldly trying to divert his belief or suspicion. He respected her for it. He might have said he loved her for it--with a kind of love which can be spoken of without blushing or giving cause to blush, or reason for jealousy, anger, or apprehension.

He smiled down into her gold-brown eyes, and he thought what a real woman she was. He felt, too, that she would tell him something that would give him further light if he spoke wisely now.

"I'd like to see some proof that you are right, if I am wrong," he answered cautiously.

"Well, I'm going to be married," she said, with an air of finality.

He waved a hand deprecatingly. "Impossible--there's no man worth it.

Who is the undeserving wretch?"

"I'll tell you to-morrow," she replied. "He doesn't know yet how happy he's going to be. What did you come here for? Why did you want to see me?" she added. "You had something you were going to tell me. Hadn't you?"

"That's quite right," he replied. "It's about Crozier. This is my last visit to him professionally. He can go on now without my care. Yours will be sufficient for him. It has been all along the very best care he could have had. It did more for him than all the rest, it--"

"You don't mean that," she interrupted, with a flush and a bosom that leaped under her pretty gown. "You don't mean that I was of more use than the nurse--than the future Mrs. Jesse Bulrush?"

"I mean just that," he answered. "Nearly every sick person, every sick man, I should say, has his mascot, his ministering angel, as it were. It's a kind of obsession, and it often means life or death, whether the mascot can stand the strain of the situation. I knew an old man--down by Dingley's Flat it was, and he wanted a boy--his grand-nephew-beside him always. He was getting well, but the boy took sick and the old man died the next day. The boy had been his medicine. Sometimes it's a particular nurse that does the trick; but whoever it is, it's a great vital fact. Well, that's the part you played to Mr. Shiel Crozier of Lammis and Castlegarry aforetime. He owes you much."

"I am glad of that," she said softly, her eyes on the distance.

"She is in love with him in spite of what she says," remarked the Young Doctor to himself. "Well," he continued aloud, "the fact is, Crozier's almost well in a way, but his mind is in a state, and he is not going to get wholly right as things are. Since things came out in court, since he told us his whole story, he has been different. It's as though--"

She interrupted him hastily and with suppressed emotion. "Yes, yes, do you think I've not noticed that? He's been asleep in a way for five years, and now he's awake again. He is not James Gathorne Kerry now; he is James Shiel Gathorne Crozier, and--oh, you understand: he's back again where he was before--before he left her."

The Young Doctor nodded approvingly. "What a little brazen wonder you are! I declare you see more than--"

"Yet you won't have me?" she asked mockingly. "You're too clever for me," he rejoined with spirit. "I'm too conceited. I must marry a girl that'd kneel to me and think me as wise as Socrates. But he's back again, as you say, and, in my view, his wife ought to be back again also."

"She ought to be here," was Kitty's swift reply, "though I think mighty little of her--mighty little, I can tell you. Stuckup, great tall stork of a woman, that lords it over a man as though she was a goddess. Wears

diamonds in the middle of the day, I suppose, and cold-blooded as--as a fish."

"She ought to have married me, according to your opinion of me. You said I was a fish," remarked the Young Doctor, with a laugh.

"The whale and the catfish!"

"Heavens, what spite!" he rejoined. "Catfish--what do you know about Mrs. Crozier? You may be brutally unjust--waspishly unjust, I should say."

"Do I look like a wasp?" she asked half tearfully. She was in a strange mood.

"You look like a golden busy bee," he answered. But tell me, how did you come to know enough about her to call her a cat?"

"Because, as you say, I was a busy golden bee," she retorted.

"That information doesn't get me much further," he answered.

"I opened that letter," she replied.

"'That letter'--you mean you opened the letter he showed us which he had left sealed as it came to him five years ago?" The Young Doctor's face wore a look of dismay.

"I steamed the envelope open--how else could I have done it! I steamed it open, saw what I wanted, and closed it up again."

The Young Doctor's face was pale now. This was a terrible revelation. He had a man's view of such conduct. He almost shrank from her, though she stood there as inviting and innocent a specimen of girlhood as the eye could wish to see. She did not look dishonourable.

"Do you realise what that means?" he asked in a cold, hard tone.

"Oh, come, don't put on that look and don't talk like John the Evangelist," she retorted. "I did it, not out of curiosity, and not to do any one harm, but to do her good--his wife."

"It was dishonourable--wicked and dishonourable."

"If you talk like that, Mr. Piety, I'm off," she rejoined, and she started away.

"Wait--wait," he said, laying firm fingers on her arm. "Of course you did it for a good purpose. I know. You cared enough for him for that."

He had said the right thing, and she halted and faced him. "I cared enough to do a good deal more than that if necessary. He has been like a second father to me, and--"

Suddenly a light of humour shot into the eyes of both. Sheil Crozier as a "father" to her was too artificial not to provoke their sense of the grotesque.

"I wanted to find out his wife's address to write to her and tell her to come quick," she explained. "It was when he was at the worst. And then, too, I wanted to know the kind of woman she was before I wrote to her. So--"

"You mean to say you read that letter which he had kept unopened and unread for five long years?" The Young Doctor was certainly disturbed again.

"Every word of it," Kitty answered shamelessly, "and I'm not sorry. It was in a good cause. If he had said, 'Courage, soldier,' and opened it five years ago, it would have been good for him. Better to get things like that over."

"It was that kind of a letter, was it--a catfish letter?"

Kitty laughed a little scornfully. "Yes, just like that, Mr. Easily Shocked. Great, showy, purse-proud creature!"

"And you wrote to her?"

"Yes--a letter that would make her come if anything would. Talk of tact --I was as smooth as a billiard-ball. But she hasn't come."

"The day after the operation I cabled to her," said the Young Doctor.

"Then you steamed the letter open and read it too?" asked Kitty sarcastically.

"Certainly not. Ladies first-and last," was the equally sarcastic answer. "I cabled to Castlegarry, his father's place, also to Lammis that he mentioned when he told us his story. Crozier of Lammis, he was."

"Well, I wrote to the London address in the letter," added Kitty. "I don't think she'll come. I asked her to cable me, and she hasn't. I wrote such a nice letter, too. I did it for his sake."

The Young Doctor laid his hands on both her shoulders. "Kitty Tynan, the man who gets you will get what he doesn't deserve," he remarked.

"That might mean anything."

"It means that Crozier owes you more than he can guess."

Her eyes shone with a strange, soft glow. "In spite of opening the letter?"

The Young Doctor nodded, then added humorously: "That letter you wrote

her--I'm not sure that my cable wouldn't have far more effect than your letter."

"Certainly not. You tried to frighten her, but I tried to coax her, to make her feel ashamed. I wrote as though I was fifty."

The Young Doctor regarded her dubiously. "What was the sort of thing you said to her?"

"For one thing, I said that he had every comfort and attention two loving women and one fond nurse could give him; but that, of course, his legitimate wife would naturally be glad to be beside him when he passed away, and that if she made haste she might be here in time."

The Young Doctor leaned against a tree shaking with laughter.

"What are you smiling at?" Kitty asked ironically. "Oh, she'll be sure to come--nothing will keep her away after being coaxed like that!" he said, when he could get breath.

"Laughing at me as though I was a clown in a circus!" she exclaimed. "Laughing when, as you say yourself, the man that she--the cat--wrote that fiendish letter to is in trouble."

"It was a fiendish letter, was it?" he asked, suddenly sobered again. "No, no, don't tell me," he added, with a protesting gesture. "I don't want to hear. I don't want to know. I oughtn't to know. Besides, if she comes, I don't want to be prejudiced against her. He is troubled, poor fellow."

"Of course he is. There's the big land deal--his syndicate. He's got a chance of making a fortune, and he can't do it because--but Jesse Bulrush told me in confidence, so I can't explain."

"I have an idea, a pretty good idea. Askatoon is small."

"And mean sometimes."

"Tell me what you know. Perhaps I can help him," urged the Young Doctor. "I have helped more than one good man turn a sharp corner here."

She caught his arm. "You are as good as gold." "You are--impossible," he replied.

They talked of Crozier's land deal and syndicate as they walked slowly towards the house. Mrs. Tynan met them at the door, a look of excitement in her face. "A telegram for you Kitty," she said.

"For me!" exclaimed Kitty eagerly. "It's a year since I had one."

She tore open the yellow envelope. A light shot up in her face. She thrust the telegram into the Young Doctor's hands.

"She's coming; his wife's coming. She's in Quebec now. It was my letter--my letter, not your cable, that brought her," Kitty added triumphantly.

## CHAPTER IX

## NIGHT SHADE AND MORNING GLORY

It was as though Crozier had been told of the coming of his wife, for when night came, on the day Kitty had received her telegram, he could not sleep. He was the sport of a consuming restlessness. His brain would not be still. He could not discharge from it the thoughts of the day and make it vacuous. It would not relax. It seized with intentness on each thing in turn, which was part of his life at the moment, and gave it an abnormal significance. In vain he tried to shake himself free of the successive obsessions which stormed down the path of the night, dragging him after them, a slave lashed to the wheels of a chariot of flame.

At last it was the land deal and syndicate on which his future depended, and the savage fate which seemed about to snatch his fortune away as it had done so often before; as it had done on the day when Flamingo went down near the post at the Derby with a madwoman dragging at the bridle. He had had a sure thing then, and it was whisked away just when it would have enabled him to pass the crisis of his life. Wife, home, the old fascinating, crowded life--they had all vanished because of that vile trick of destiny; and ever since then he had been wandering in the wilderness through years that brought no fruit of his labours. Yet here was his chance, his great chance, to get back what he had and was in the old misspent days, with new purposes in life to follow and serve; and it was all in cruel danger of being swept away when almost within his grasp.

If he could but achieve the big deal, he could return to wife and home, he could be master in his own house, not a dependent on his wife's bounty. That very evening Jesse Bulrush, elated by his own good fortune in capturing Cupid, had told him as sadly as was possible, while his own fortunes were, as he thought, soaring, that every avenue of credit seemed closed; that neither bank nor money-lender, trust nor loan company, would let him have the ten thousand dollars necessary for him to hold his place in the syndicate; while each of the other members of the clique had flatly and cheerfully refused, saying they were busy carrying their own loads. Crozier had commanded Jesse not to approach them, but the fat idealist had an idea that his tongue had a gift of wheedling, and he believed that he could make them "shell out," as he put it. He had failed, and he was obliged to say so, when Crozier, suspecting, brought him to book.

"They mean to crowd you out--that's their game," Bulrush had said. "They've closed up all the ways to cash or credit. They're laying to do you out of your share. Unless you put up the cash within the four days left, they'll put it through without you. They told me to tell you

that."

And Crozier had not even cursed them. He said to Jesse Bulrush that it was an old game to get hold of a patent that made a fortune for a song while the patentee died in the poor-house. Yet that four days was time enough for a live man to do a "flurry of work," and he was fit enough to walk up their backs yet with hobnailed boots, as they said in Kerry when a man was out for war.

Over and over again this hovering tragedy drove sleep from his eyes; and in the spaces between there were a hundred fleeting visions of little and big things to torture him--remembrances of incidents when debts and disasters dogged his footsteps; and behind them all, floating among the elves and gnomes of ill-luck and disappointment, was a woman's face. It was not his wife's face, not a face that belonged to the old life, but one which had been part of his daily existence for over four years. It was the first face he saw when he came back from consciousness after the operation which saved his life--the face of Kitty Tynan.

And ever since the day when he had told the story of his life this face had kept passing before his eyes with a disturbing persistence. Kitty had said to her mother and to the Young Doctor that he had seemed after he had told his story like one who had awakened; and in a sense it was startlingly true. It was as though, while he was living under an assumed name, the real James Shiel Gathorne Crozier did not exist, or was in the far background of the doings and sayings of J. G. Kerry. His wife and the past had been shadowy in a way, had been as part of a life lived out, which would return in some distant day, but was not vital to the present. Much as he had loved his wife, the violent wrench away from her had seemed almost as complete as death itself; but the resumption of his own name and the telling if his story had produced a complete psychological change in him mentally and bodily. The impersonal feeling which had marked his relations with the two women of this household, and with all women, was suddenly gone. He longed for the arms of a woman round his neck--it was five years since any woman's arms had been there, since he had kissed any woman's lips. Now, in the hour when his fortunes were again in the fatal balance, when he would be started again for a fair race with the wife from whom he had been so long parted, another face came between.

All at once the question Burlingame asked him, as to whether his wife was living, came to him. He had never for an instant thought of her as dead, but now a sharp and terrifying anxiety came to him. If his wife was living! Living? Her death had never been even a remote possibility to his mind, though the parting had had the decisiveness of death. Beneath all his shrewdness and ability he was at heart a dreamer, a romancist to whom life was an adventure in a half-real world.

It was impossible to sleep. He tossed from side to side. Once he got up in the dark and drank great draughts of water; once again, as he thought of Mona, his wife, as she was in the first days of their married life, a sudden impulse seized him. He sprang from his bed, lit a candle, went to the desk where the unopened letter lay, and took it out. With the

feeling that he must destroy this record, this unread but, as he knew, ugly record of their differences, and so clear her memory of any cruelty, of any act of anger, he was about to hold it to the flame of the candle when he thought he heard a sound behind him as of the door of his room gently closing. Laying the letter down, he went to the door and opened it. There was no one stirring. Yet he had a feeling as though some one was there in the darkness. His lips framed the words,

"Who is it? Is any one there?" but he did not utter them.

A kind of awe possessed him. He was Celtic; he had been fed on the supernatural when he was a child; he had had strange, indefinable experiences or hallucinations in the days when he lived at Castlegarry, and all his life he had been a friend of the mystical. It is hard to tell what he thought as he stood there and peered into the darkness of the other room-the living-room of the house. He was in a state of trance, almost, a victim of the night. But as he closed the door softly the words of the song that Kitty Tynan had sung to him the day when he found her brushing his coat came to him and flooded his brain. The last two verses of the song kept drowning his sense of the actual, and he was swayed by the superstition of bygone ancestors:

"Whereaway goes my lad--tell me, has he gone alone?
Never harsh word did I speak, never hurt I gave;
Strong he was and beautiful; like a heron he has flown
Hereaway, hereaway will I make my grave.

"When once more the lad I loved hereaway, hereaway,
Comes to lay his hand in mine, kiss me on the brow,
I will whisper down the wind, he will weep to hear me say--
'Whereaway, whereaway goes my lover now?'"

He went to bed again, but sleep would not come. The verses of the lament kept singing in his brain. He tossed from side to side, he sought to control himself, but it was of no avail. Suddenly he remembered the bed of boughs he had made for himself at the place where Kitty had had her meeting with the Young Doctor the previous day. Before he was shot he used to sleep in the open in the summer-time. If he could get to sleep anywhere it would be there.

Hastily dressing himself in flannel shirt and trousers, and dragging a blanket from the bed, he found his way to the bedroom door, went into the other room, and felt his way to the front door, which would open into the night. All at once he was conscious of another presence in the room, but the folk-song was still beating in his brain, and he reproved himself for succumbing to fantasy. Finding the front door in the dark, he opened it and stepped outside. There was no moon, but there were millions of stars in the blue vault above, and there was enough light for him to make his way to the place where he had slept "hereaway and oft."

He knew that the bed of boughs would be dry, but the night would be his, and the good, cool ground, and the soughing of the pines, and the sweet, infinitesimal and innumerable sounds of the breathing, sleeping earth.

He found the place and threw himself down. Why, here were green boughs under him, not the dried remains of what he had placed there! Kitty--it was Kitty, dear, gay, joyous, various Kitty, who had done this thing, thinking that he might want to sleep in the open again after his illness. Kitty--it was she who had so thoughtfully served him; Kitty, with the instinct of strong, unselfish womanhood, with the gift of the outdoor life, with the unpurchasable gift of friendship. What a girl she was! How rich she could make the life of a man!

> "Hereaway my heart was soft; when he kissed my happy eyes,
> Held my hand, and laid his cheek warm against my brow,
> Home I saw upon the earth, heaven stood there in the skies
> Whereaway, whereaway goes my lover now?"

How different she was, this child of the West, of Nature, from the woman he had left behind in England, the sophisticated, well-appointed, well-controlled girl; too well-controlled even in the first days of married life; too well-controlled for him who had the rushing impulses of a Celtic warrior of olden days. Delicate, refined, perfectly poised, and Kitty beside her like a sunflower to a sprig of heliotrope! Mona--Kitty, the two names, the two who, so far, had touched his life, each in her own way, as none others had done, they floated before his eyes till sight and feeling grew dim. With a last effort he strove to eject Kitty from his thoughts, for there was the wife he had won in the race of life, and he must stand by her, play the game, ride honestly, even in exile from her, run straight, even with that unopened, bitter, upbraiding letter in the--

He fell asleep, and soon and slowly and ever so dimly the opal light of the prairie dawn crept shyly over the landscape. With it came stealing the figure of a girl towards the group of trees where lay the man of Lammis on the bed of green boughs which she had renewed for him. She had followed him from the dark room, where she had waited near him through the night--near him, to be near him for the last time; alone with him and the kind, holy night before the morrow came which belonged to the other woman, who had written to him as she never could have written to any man in whose arms she ever had lain. And the pity and the tragedy of it was that he loved his wife--the catfish wife. The sharp, pitiless instinct of love told her that the stirring in his veins which had come of late to him, which beat higher, even poignantly, when she was near him now, was only the reflection of what he felt for his wife. She knew the unmerciful truth, but it only deepened what she felt for him, yet what she must put away from herself after to-morrow. Those verses she wrote --they were to show that she had conquered herself. Yet, but a few hours after, here she was kneeling outside his door at night, here she was pursuing him to the place where he slept. The coming of the other woman --she knew well that she was something to this man of men--had roused in her all she had felt, had intensified it.

She trembled, but she drew near, accompanied by the heavenly odours of the freshened herbs and foliage and the cool tenderness of the river close by. In her white dress and loosened hair she was like some spirit of a new-born world finding her way to the place she must call home. It was all so dim, so like clouded silver, the trees and the grass and the

bushes and the night. Noiselessly she stole over the grass and into the shadows of the trees where he lay. Again and again she paused. What would she do if he was awake and saw her? She did not know. The moment must take care of itself. She longed to find him sleeping.

It was so. The hazy light showed his face upward to the skies, his breast rising and falling in a heavy, luxurious sleep.

She drew nearer and nearer till she was kneeling beside him. His face was warm with colour even in the night air, warmer than she had ever seen it. One hand lay across his chest and one was thrown back over his head with the abandon of perfect rest. All the anxiety and restlessness which had tortured him had fled, and his manhood showed bold and serene in the brightening dusk.

A sob almost broke from her as she gazed her fill, then slowly she leaned over and softly pressed her lips to his--the first time that ever in love they had been given to any man. She had the impulse to throw her arms round him, but she mastered herself. He stirred, but he did not wake. His lips moved as she withdrew hers.

"My darling!" he said in the quick, broken way of the dreamer.

She rose swiftly and fled away among the trees towards the house.

What he had said in his sleep--was it in reality the words of unconsciousness, or was it subconscious knowledge?--they kept ringing in her ears.

"My darling!" he had said when she kissed him. There was a light of joy in her eyes now, though she felt that the words were meant for another. Yet it was her kiss, her own kiss, which had made him say it. If--but with happy eyes she stole to her room.

## CHAPTER X

### "S. O. S."

At breakfast next morning Kitty did not appear. Had it been possible she would have fled into the far prairie and set up a lonely tabernacle there; for with the day came a reaction from the courage possessing her the night before and in the opal wakening of the dawn. When broad daylight came she felt as though her bones were water and her body a wisp of straw. She could not bear to meet Shiel Crozier's eyes, and thus it was she had an early breakfast on the plea that she had ironing to do. She was not, however, prepared to see Jesse Bulrush drive up with a buggy after breakfast and take Crozier away. When she did see them at the gate the impulse came to cry out to Crozier; what to say she did not know, but still to cry out. The cry on her lips was that which she had seen in the newspaper the day before, the cry of the shipwrecked seafarers, the

signal of the wireless telegraphy, "S. O. S."--the piteous call, "Save Our Souls!" It sprang to her lips, but it got no farther except in an unconscious whisper. On the instant she felt so weak and shaken and lonely that she wanted to lean upon some one stronger than herself; as she used to lean against her father, while he sat with one arm round her studying his railway problems. She had been self-sufficient enough all her life,--"an independent little bird of freedom," as Crozier had called her; but she was like a boat tossed on mountainous waves now.

"S. O. S.!-Save Our Souls!"

As though she really had made this poignant call Crozier turned round in the buggy where he sat with Jesse Bulrush, pale but erect; and, with a strange instinct, he looked straight to where she was. When he saw her his face flushed, he could not have told why. Was it that there had passed to him in his sleep the subconscious knowledge of the kiss which Kitty had given him; and, after all, had he said "My darling" to her and not to the wife far away across the seas, as he thought? A strange feeling, as of secret intimacy, never felt before where Kitty was concerned, passed through him now, and he was suddenly conscious that things were not as they had ever been; that the old impersonal comradeship had vanished. It disturbed, it almost shocked him. Whereupon he made a valiant effort to recover the old ground, to get out of the new atmosphere into the old, cheering air.

"Come and say good-bye, won't you?" he called to her.

"S. O. S.--S. O. S.--S. O. S.!" was the cry in her heart, but she called back to him from her lips, "I can't. I'm too busy. Come back soon, soldier."

With a wave of the hand he was gone. "Not a care in the world she has," Crozier said to Jesse Bulrush. "She's the sunniest creature Heaven ever made."

"Too skittish for me," responded the other with a sidelong look, for he had caught a note in Crozier's voice which gave him a sudden suspicion.

"You want the kind you can drive with an oatstraw and a chirp--eh, my friend?"

"Well, I've got what I want," was the reply. "Neither of us 'll kick over the traces."

"You are a lucky man," replied Crozier. "You've got a remarkably big prize in the lottery. She is a fine woman, is Nurse Egan, and I owe her a great deal. I only hope things turn out so well that I can give her a good fat wedding-present. But I shan't be able to do anything that's close to my heart if I can't get the cash for my share in the syndicate."

"Courage, soldier, as Kitty Tynan says," responded Jesse Bulrush cheerily. "You never know your luck. The cash is waiting for you somewhere, and it'll turn up, be sure of that."

"I'm not sure of that. I can see as plain as your nose how Bradley and his clique have blocked me everywhere from getting credit, and I'd give five years of my life to beat them in their dirty game. If I fail to get it at Aspen Vale I'm done. But I'll have a try, a good big try. How far exactly is it? I've never gone by this trail."

Bulrush shook his head reprovingly. "It's too long a journey for you to take after your knock-out. You're not fit to travel yet. I don't like it a bit. Lydia said this morning it was a crime against yourself, going off like this, and--"

"Lydia?--oh yes, pardonnez-moi, m'sieu'! I did not know her name was Lydia."

"I didn't either till after we were engaged." Crozier stared in blank amazement. "You didn't know her name till after you were engaged? What did you call her before that?"

"Why, I called her Nurse." answered the fat lover. "We all called her that, and it sounded comfortable and homelike and good for every day. It had a sort of York-shilling confidence, and your life was in her hands --a first-class you-and-me kind of feeling."

"Why don't you stick to it, then?"

"She doesn't want it. She says it sounds so old, and that I'd be calling her 'mother' next."

"And won't you?" asked Crozier slyly. "Everything in season," beamed Jesse, and he shone, and was at once happy and composed. Crozier relapsed into silence, for he was thinking that the lost years had been barren of children. He turned to look at the home they had left. It was some distance away now, but he could see Kitty still at the corner of the house with a small harvest of laundered linen in her hand.

"She made that fresh bed of boughs for me--ah, but I had a good sleep last night!" he added aloud. "I feel fit for the fight before me." He drew himself up and began to nod here and there to people who greeted him.

In the house behind them at that moment Kitty was saying to her mother, "Where is he going, mother?"

"To Aspen Vale," was the reply. "If you'd been at breakfast you'd have heard. He'll be gone two days, perhaps three."

Three days! She regretted now that she had not said to herself, "Courage, soldier," and gone to say good-bye to him when he called to her. Perhaps she would not see him again till after the other woman-- till after the wife-came. Then--then the house would be empty; then the house would be so still. And then John Sibley would come and--

## CHAPTER XI

## IN THE CAMP OF THE DESERTER

Three days passed, but before they ended there came another telegram from Mrs. Crozier stating the time of her expected arrival at Askatoon. It was addressed to Kitty, and Kitty almost savagely tore it up into little pieces and scattered it to the winds. She did not even wait to show it to the Young Doctor; but he had a subtle instinct as to why she did not; and he was rather more puzzled than usual at what was passing before his eyes. In any case, the coming of the wife must alter all the relations existing in the household of the widow Tynan. The old, unrestrained, careless friendship could not continue. The newcomer would import an element of caste and class which would freeze mother and daughter to the bones. Crozier was the essence of democracy, which in its purest form is akin to the most aristocratic element and is easily affiliated with it. He had no fear of Crozier. Crozier would remain exactly the same; but would not Crozier be whisked away out of Askatoon to a new fate, reconciled to being a receiver of his wife's bounty.

"If his wife gets her arms round his neck, and if she wants to get them there, she will, and once there he'll go with her like a gentleman," said the Young Doctor sarcastically. Admiring Crozier as he did, he also had underneath all his knowledge of life an unreasonable apprehension of man's weakness where a woman was concerned. The man who would face a cannon's mouth would falter before the face of a woman whom he could crumple with one hand.

The wife arrived before Crozier returned, and the Young Doctor and Kitty met the train. The local operator had not divulged to any one the contents of the telegram to Kitty, and there were no staring spectators on the platform. As the great express stole in almost noiselessly, like a tired serpent, Kitty watched its approach with outward cheerfulness. She had braced herself to this moment, till she looked the most buoyant, joyous thing in the world. It had not come easily. With desperation she had fought a fight during these three lonely days, till at last she had conquered, sleeping each night on Crozier's star-lit bed of boughs and coming in with the silver-grey light of dawn. Now she leaned forward with heart beating fast; but with smiling face and with eyes so bright that she deceived the Young Doctor.

There was no sign of inward emotion, of hidden troubles, as she leaned forward to see the great lady step from the train--great in every sense was this lady in her mind; imposing in stature, a Juno, a tragedy queen, a Zenobia, a daughter of the gods who would not stoop to conquer. She looked in vain, however, for the Mrs. Crozier she had imagined made no appearance from the train. She hastened down the platform still with keen eyes scanning the passengers, who were mostly alighting to stretch their legs and get a breath of air.

"She's not here," she said at last darkly to the Young Doctor who had followed her.

Then suddenly she saw emerge from a little group at the steps of a car a child in a long dress--so it seemed to her, the being was so small and delicate--and come forward, having hastily said good-bye to her fellow-passengers. As the Young Doctor said afterwards, "She wasn't bigger than a fly," and she certainly was as graceful and pretty and piquante as a child-woman could be.

Presently, with her alert, rather assertive blue eyes she saw Kitty, and came forward. "Miss Tynan?" she asked, with an encompassing look.

Now Kitty was idiomatic in her speech at times, and she occasionally used slang of the best brand, but she avoided those colloquialisms which were of the vocabulary of the uneducated. Indeed, she had had no inclination to use them, for her father had set her a good example, and she liked to hear good English spoken. That was why Crozier's talk had been like music to her; and she had been keen to distinguish between the rhetorical method of Augustus Burlingame, who modelled himself on the orators of all the continents, and was what might be called a synthetic elocutionist. Kitty was as simple and natural as a girl could be, and as a rule had herself in perfect command; but she was so stunned by the sight of this petite person before her that, in reply to Mrs. Crozier's question, she only said abruptly

"The same!"

Then she came to herself and could have bitten her tongue out for that plunge into the vernacular of the West; and forthwith a great prejudice was set up in her mind against Mona Crozier, in whose eyes she caught a look of quizzical criticism or, as she thought, contemptuous comment. That for one instant she had been caught unawares and so had put herself at a disadvantage angered her; but she had been embarrassed and confounded by this miniature goddess, and her reply was a vague echo of talk she heard around her every day. Also she could have choked the Young Doctor, whom she caught looking at her with wondering humour, as though he was trying to see "what her game was," as he said to her afterwards.

It was all due to the fact that from the day of the Logan Trial, and particularly from the day when Shiel Crozier had told his life-story, she had always imagined his wife as a stately Amazonian being with the carriage of a Boadicea. She had looked for an empress in splendid garments, and--and here was a humming-bird of a woman, scarcely bigger, than a child, with the buzzing energy of a bee, but with a queer sort of manfulness too; with a square, slightly-projecting chin, as Kitty came to notice afterwards; together with some small lines about the mouth and at the eyes, which came from trouble endured and suffering undergone. Kitty did not notice that, but the Young Doctor took it in with his embracing glance, as the wife saluted Kitty with her inward comment, which was:

"So this is the chit who wrote to me like a mother!" But Mona Crozier

did not underestimate Kitty for all that, and she wondered why it was that Kitty had written as she did. One thing was quite clear: Kitty had had good intentions, else why have written at all?

All these thoughts had passed through the mind of each, with a good many others, while they were shaking hands; and the Young Doctor summoned his man to carry Mona's hand-luggage to the extra buggy he had brought to the station. One of the many other thoughts that were passing through three active minds was Kitty's unspoken satire:

"Just think; this is the woman he talked of as though she was a moving mountain which would fall on you and crush you, if you didn't look out!"

No doubt Crozier would have repudiated this description of his talk, but the fact was he had unconsciously spoken of Mona with a sort of hush in his voice; for a woman to him was something outside real understanding. He had a romantic mediaeval view, which translated weakness and beauty into a miracle, and what psychologists call "an inspired control."

"She's no bigger than--than a wasp," said Kitty to herself, after the Young Doctor had assured Mrs. Crozier that her husband was almost well again; that he had recovered more quickly than was expected, and had gained strength wonderfully after the crisis was passed.

"An elephant can crush you, but a wasp can sting you," was Kitty's further inward comment, "and that's why he was always nervous when he spoke of her." Then, as the Young Doctor had already done, she noticed the tiny lines about the tiny mouth, and the fine-spun webs about the bird-bright eyes.

The Young Doctor attributed these lines mostly to anxiety and inward suffering, but Kitty set them down as the outward signs of an inward fretfulness and quarrelsomeness, which was rendered all the more offensive in her eyes by the fact that Mona Crozier was the most, spotless thing she had ever seen, at the end of a journey--and this, a journey across a continent. Orderliness and prim exactness, taste and fastidiousness, tireless tidiness were seen in every turn, in every fold of her dress, in the way everything she wore had been put on, in the decision of every step and gesture. Kitty noticed all this, and she said to herself,

"Wound up like a watch, cut like a cameo," and she instinctively felt the little dainty cameo-brooch at her own throat, the only jewellery she ever wore, or had ever worn.

"Sensible of her not to bring a maid," commented the Young Doctor inwardly. "That would have thrown Kitty into a fit. Yet how she manages to look like this after six thousand miles of sea and land going is beyond me--and Crozier so rather careless in his ways. Not what you would call two notes in the same key, she and Crozier," he reflected as he told her she need not trouble about her luggage, and took charge of the checks for it.

"My husband--is--is he quite better now?" Mrs. Crozier asked with sharp anxiety, as the two-seated "rig" started away with the ladies in the back seat.

"Oh, better, thanks to him," was Kitty's reply, nodding towards the Young Doctor.

"You have told him I was coming?"

"Wasn't it better to have a talk with you first?" asked Kitty meaningly.

Mrs. Crozier almost nervously twitched the little jet bag she carried, then she looked Kitty in the eyes.

"You will, of course, have reason for thinking so, if you say it," was her enigmatical reply. "And of course you will tell me. You did not let him know that you had written to me, or that the doctor had cabled me?"

"Oh, you got his cable?" questioned Kitty with a little ring of triumph in her voice, meant to reach the ears of the Young Doctor. It did reach him, and he replied to the question.

"We thought it better not; chiefly because he had in this country planned his life with an exclusiveness, and on a principle which did not, unfortunately, take you into account."

The little lady blushed, or flushed. "May I ask how you know this to be so, if it is so?" she asked, and there was the sharpness of the wasp in her tone, as it seemed to Kitty.

"The Logan Trial--I mentioned it in my letter to you," interposed Kitty. "He was shot for the evidence he gave at the trial. Well, at the trial a great many questions were asked by a lawyer who wanted to hurt him, and he answered them."

"Why did the lawyer want to hurt him?" Mona Crozier asked quickly.

"Just mean-hearted envy and spite and devilry," was Kitty's answer. "They were both handsome men, and perhaps that was it."

"I never thought my husband handsome, though he was always distinguished looking," was the quiet reply.

"Ah, but you haven't seen him at all for so long!" remarked Kitty, a little spitefully.

"How do you know that?" Mrs. Crozier was nettled, though she did not show it; but Kitty felt it was so, and was glad.

"He said so at the Logan Trial."

"Was that the kind of question asked at the trial?" the wife quickly interjected.

"Yes, lots of that kind," returned Kitty.

"What was the object?"

"To make him look not so distinguished--like nothing. If a man isn't handsome, but only distinguished"--Kitty's mood was dangerous--"and you make him look cheap, that's one advantage, and--"

Here the Young Doctor, having observed the rising tide of antagonism in the tone of the voices behind him, gently interposed, and made it clear that the purpose was to throw a shadow on the past of her husband in order to discredit his evidence; to which Mrs. Crozier nodded her understanding. She liked the Young Doctor, as who did not who came in contact with him, except those who had fear of him, and who had an idea that he could read their minds as he read their bodies. And even this girl at her side--Mona Crozier realised that the part she had played was evidently an unselfish one, though she felt with piercing intuition that whatever her husband thought of the girl, the girl thought too much of her husband. Somehow, all in a moment, it made her sorry for the girl's sake. The girl had meant well by her husband in sending for his wife, that was certain; and she did not look bad. She was too sedately and reservedly dressed, in spite of her auriferous face and head and her burnished tone, to be bad; too fearless in eye, too concentrated to be the rover in fields where she had no tenure or right.

She turned and looked Kitty squarely in the eyes, and a new, softer look came into her own, subduing what to Kitty was the challenging alertness and selfish inquisitiveness.

"You have been very good to Shiel--you two kind people," she said, and there came a sudden faint mist to her eyes.

That was her lucky moment, and she spoke as she did just in time, for Kitty was beginning to resent her deeply; to dislike her far more than was reasonable, and certainly without any justice.

Kitty spoke up quickly. "Well, you see, he was always kind and good to other people, and that was why--"

"But that Mr. Burlingame did not like him?" The wife had a strange intuition regarding Mr. Burlingame. She was sure that there was a woman in the case--the girl beside her?

"That was because Mr. Burlingame was not kind or good to other people," was Kitty's sedate response. There was an undertone of reflection in the voice which did not escape Mrs. Crozier's senses, and it also caught the ear of the Young Doctor, to whom there came a sudden revelation of the reason why Burlingame had left Mrs. Tynan's house.

"Oh!" exclaimed Mrs. Crozier enigmatically. Presently, with suppressed excitement as she saw the Young Doctor reining in the horses slowly, she added: "My husband--when have you arranged that I should see him?"

"When he gets back--home," Kitty replied, with an accent on the last word.

Mrs. Crozier started visibly. "When he gets back home-back from where? He is not here?" she asked in a tone of chagrin. She had come a long way, and she had pictured this meeting at the end of the journey with a hundred variations, but never with this one--that she should not see Shiel at once when the journey was over, if he was alive. Was it hurt pride or disappointed love which spoke in her face, in her words? After all, it was bad enough that her private life and affairs should be dragged out in a court of law; that these two kind strangers, whom she had never seen till a few minutes ago, should be in the inner circle of knowledge of the life of her husband and herself, without her self-esteem being hurt like this. She was very woman, and the look of the thing was not nice to her eyes, while it must belittle her in theirs. Had this girl done it on purpose? Yet why should she--she who had so appealed to her to come to him--have sought to humiliate her?

Kitty was not quite sure what she ought to say. "You see, we expected him back before this. He is very exact!"

"Very exact?" asked Mrs. Crozier in astonishment. This was a new phase of Shiel Crozier's character. He must, indeed, have changed since he had caused her so much anxiety in days gone by.

"Usen't he to be so?" asked Kitty, a little viciously. "He is so very exact now," she added. "He expected to be back home before this"--how she loved to use that word home--"and so we thought he would be here when you arrived. But he has been detained at Aspen Vale. He had a big business deal on--"

"A big business deal? Is he--is he in a large way of business?" Mona asked almost incredulously. Shiel Crozier in a large way of business, in a big business deal? It did not seem possible. His had ever been the game of chance. Business--business?

"He doesn't talk himself, of course; that wouldn't be like him,"--Kitty had joy in giving this wife the character of her husband," but they say that if he succeeds in what he's trying to do now he will make a great deal of money."

"Then he has not made it yet?" asked Mrs. Crozier.

"He has always been able to pay his board regularly, with enough left for a pew in church," answered Kitty with dry malice; for she mistook the light in the other's eyes, and thought it was avarice; and the love of money had no place in Kitty's make-up. She herself would never have been influenced by money where a man was concerned.

"Here's the house," she quickly added; "our home, where Mr. Crozier lives. He has the best room, so yours won't be quite so good. It's mother's--she's giving it up to you. With your trunks and things, you'll

want a room to yourself," Kitty added, not at all unconscious that she was putting a phase of the problem of Crozier and his wife in a very commonplace way; but she did not look into Mrs. Crozier's face as she said it.

Mrs. Crozier, however, was fully conscious of the poignancy of the remark, and once again her face flushed slightly, though she kept outward composure.

"Mother, mother, are you there?" Kitty called, as she escorted the wife up the garden walk.

An instant later Mrs. Tynan cheerfully welcomed the disturber of the peace of the home where Shiel Crozier had been the central figure for so long.

ETEXT EDITOR'S BOOKMARKS:

And I was very lucky--worse luck!
God help the man that's afraid of his own wife!
Sensitive souls, however, are not so many as to crowd each other

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