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CARNAC'S FOLLY

By Gilbert Parker

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BOOK I

CHAPTER I

IN THE DAYS OF CHILDHOOD

"Carnac! Carnac! Come and catch me, Carnac!" It was a day of perfect summer and hope and happiness in the sweet, wild world behind the near woods and the far circle of sky and pine and hemlock. The voice that called was young and vibrant, and had in it the simple, true soul of things. It had the clearness of a bugle-call-ample and full of life and all life's possibilities. It laughed; it challenged; it decoyed.

Carnac heard the summons and did his best to catch the girl in the wood by the tumbling stream, where he had for many an hour emptied out his wayward heart; where he had seen his father's logs and timbers caught in jams, hunched up on rocky ledges, held by the prong of a rock, where man's purpose could, apparently, avail so little. Then he had watched the black-bearded river-drivers with their pike-poles and their levers loose the key-logs of the bunch, and the tumbling citizens of the woods and streams toss away down the current to the wider waters below. He was only a lad of fourteen, and the girl was only eight, but she--Junia--was as spry and graceful a being as ever woke the echoes of a forest.

He was only fourteen, but already he had visions and dreamed dreams. His father--John Grier--was the great lumber-king of Canada, and Junia was the child of a lawyer who had done little with his life, but had had great joy of his two daughters, who were dear to him beyond telling.

Carnac was one of Nature's freaks or accidents. He was physically strong and daring, but, as a boy, mentally he lacked concentration and decision, though very clever. He was led from thing to thing like a ray of errant light, and he did not put a hand on himself, as old Denzil, the partly deformed servant of Junia's home, said of him on occasion; and Denzil was a man of parts.

Denzil was not far from the two when Junia made her appeal and challenge. He loved the girl exceedingly, and he loved Carnac little less, though in a different way. Denzil was French of the French, with habit of mind and character wholly his own.

Denzil's head was squat upon his shoulders, and his long, handsome body was also squat, because his legs were as short, proportionately, as his mind was long. His face was covered by a well-cared-for beard of dark brown, streaked with grey; his features were rugged and fine; and his eyes were like two coals burning under a gnarled headland; for his forehead, ample and full, had lines which were not lines of age, but of concentration. In his motions he was quiet and free, yet always there was a kind of stealthiness in his movements, which made him seem less frank than he really was.

For a time, with salient sympathy in his eyes, he watched the two children playing. The whisking of their forms among the trees and over the rocks was fine, gracious, and full of life-life without alarm. At length he saw the girl falter slightly, then make a swift deceptive movement to avoid the boy who pursued her. The movement did not delude the boy. He had quickness of anticipation. An instant later the girl

was in his arms.

As Denzil gazed, it seemed she was in his arms too long, and a sudden anxiety took hold of him. That anxiety was deepened when he saw the boy kiss the girl on the cheek. This act seemed to discompose the girl, but not enough to make drama out of an innocent, yet sensuous thing. The boy had meant nothing more than he had shown, and Denzil traced the act to a native sense of luxury in his nature. Knowing the boy's father and mother as he did, it seemed strange that Carnac should have such demonstration in his character. Of all the women he knew, Carnac's mother was the most exact and careful, though now and again he thought of her as being shrouded, or apart; while the boy's father, the great lumber-king, cantankerous, passionate, perspicuous, seemed to have but one passion, and that was his business.

It was strange to Denzil that the lumber-king, short, thin, careless in his clothes but singularly clean in his person, should have a son so little like himself, and also so little like his mother. He, Denzil, was a Catholic, and he could not understand a man like John Grier who, being a member of the Episcopal Church, so seldom went to service and so defied rules of conduct suitable to his place in the world.

As for the girl, to him she was the seventh wonder of the earth. Wantonly alive, dexterously alert to all that came her way, sportive, indifferent, joyous, she had all the boy's sprightliness, but none of his weaknesses. She was a born tease; she loved bright and beautiful things; she was a keen judge of human nature, and she had buoyant spirits, which, however, were counterbalanced by moments of extreme timidity, or, rather, reserve and shyness. On a day like this, when everything in life was singing, she must sing too. Not a mile away was a hut by the river where her father had brought his family for the summer's fishing; not a half-mile away was a tent which Carnac Grier's father had set up as he passed northward on his tour of inspection. This particular river, and this particular part of the river, were trying to the river-man and his clans. It needed a dam, and the great lumber-king was planning to make one not three hundred yards from where they were.

The boy and the girl resting idly upon a great warm rock had their own business to consider. The boy kept looking at his boots with the brass-tipped toes. He hated them. The girl was quick to understand. "Why don't you like your boots?" she asked.

A whimsical, exasperated look came into his face. "I don't know why they brass a boy's toes like that, but when I marry I won't wear them--that's all," he replied.

"Why do you wear them now?" she asked, smiling.

"You don't know my father."

"He's got plenty of money, hasn't he?" she urged. "Plenty; and that's what I can't understand about him! There's a lot of waste in river-driving, timber-making, out in the shanties and on the river, but he

don't seem to mind that. He's got fads, though, about how we are to live, and this is one of them." He looked at the brass-tipped boots carefully. A sudden resolve came into his face. He turned to the girl and flushed as he spoke. "Look here," he added, "this is the last day I'm going to wear these boots. He's got to buy me a pair without any brass clips on them, or I'll kick."

"No, it isn't the last day you're going to wear them, Carnac."

"It is. I wonder if all boys feel towards their father as I do to mine. He don't treat me right. He--"

"Oh, look," interrupted Junia. "Look-Carnac!" She pointed in dismay.

Carnac saw a portion of the bank of the river disappear with Denzil. He ran over to the bank and looked down. In another moment he had made his way to a descending path which led him swiftly to the river's edge. The girl remained at the top. The boy had said to her: "You stay there. I'll tell you what to do."

"Is-is he killed?" she called with emotion.

"Killed! No. He's all right," he called back to her. "I can see him move. Don't be frightened. He's not in the water. It was only about a thirty-foot fall. You stay there, and I'll tell you what to do," he added.

A few moments later, the boy called up: "He's all right, but his leg is broken. You go to my father's camp--it's near. People are sure to be there, and maybe father too. You bring them along."

In an instant the girl was gone. The boy, left behind, busied himself in relieving the deformed broken-legged habitant. He brought some water in his straw hat to refresh him. He removed the rocks and dirt, and dragged the little man out.

"It was a close call--bien sur," said Denzil, breathing hard. "I always said that place wasn't safe, but I went on it myself. That's the way in life. We do what we forbid ourselves to do; we suffer the shames we damn in others--but yes."

There was a pause, then he added: "That's what you'll do in your life, M'sieu' Carnac. That's what you'll do."

"Always?"

"Well, you never can tell--but no."

"But you always can tell," remarked the boy. "The thing is, do what you feel you've got to do, and never mind what happens."

"I wish I could walk," remarked the little man, "but this leg of mine is broke--ah, bah, it is!"

"Yes, you mustn't try to walk. Be still," answered the boy. "They'll be here soon." Slowly and carefully he took off the boot and sock from the broken leg, and, with his penknife, opened the seam of the corduroy trouser. "I believe I could set that leg myself," he added.

"I think you could--bagosh," answered Denzil heavily. "They'll bring a rope to haul me up?"

"Junia has a lot of sense, she won't forget anything."

"And if your father's there, he'll not forget anything," remarked Denzil.

"He'll forget to make me wear these boots tomorrow," said the boy stubbornly, his chin in his hands, his eyes fixed gloomily on the brass-headed toes.

There was a long silence. At last from the stricken Denzil came the words: "You'll have your own way about the boots."

Carnac murmured, and presently said:

"Lucky you fell where you did. Otherwise, you'd have been in the water, and then I couldn't have been of any use."

"I hear them coming--holy, yes!"

Carnac strained his ears. "Yes, you're right. I hear them too."

A few moments later, Carnac's father came sliding down the bank, a rope in his hands, some workmen remaining above.

"What's the matter here?" he asked. "A fall, eh! Dang little fool--now, you are a dang little fool, and you know it, Denzil."

He nodded to his boy, then he raised the wounded man's head and shoulders, and slipped the noose over until it caught under his arms.

The old lumber-king's movements were swift, sure and exact. A moment later he lifted Denzil in his arms, and carried him over to the steep path up which he was presently dragged.

At the top, Denzil turned to Carnac's father. "M'sieu', Carnac hates wearing those brass-toed boots," he said boldly.

The lumber-king looked at his boy acutely. He blew his nose hard, with a bandana handkerchief. Then he nodded towards the boy.

"He can suit himself about that," he said.

With accomplished deftness, with some sacking and two poles, a hasty but comfortable ambulance was made under the skilful direction of the river-master. He had the gift of outdoor life. He did not speak as he worked,

but kept humming to himself.

"That's all right," he said, as he saw Denzil on the stretcher. "We'll get on home now."

"Home?" asked his son.

"Yes, Montreal--to-night," replied his father. "The leg has to be set."

"Why don't you set it?" asked the boy.

The river-master gazed at him attentively. "Well, I might, with your help," he said. "Come along."

CHAPTER II

ELEVEN YEARS PASS

Eleven years had passed since Denzil's fall, and in that time much history had been made. Carnac Grier, true to his nature, had travelled from incident to incident, from capacity to capacity, apparently without system, yet actually with the keenest desire to fulfil himself; with an honesty as inveterate as his looks were good and his character filled with dark recesses. In vain had his father endeavoured to induce him to enter the lumber business; to him it seemed too conventional and fixed.

Yet, in his way, he knew the business well. By instinct, over the twenty-five years of his life, he had observed and become familiar with the main features of the work. He had once or twice even buried himself in the shanties of the backwoods, there to inhale and repulse the fetid air, to endure the untoward, half-savage life, the clean, strong food, the bitter animosities and the savage friendships. It was a land where sunshine travelled, and in the sun the bright, tuneful birds made lively the responsive world. Sometimes an eagle swooped down the stream; again and again, hawks, and flocks of pigeons which frequented the lonely groves on the river-side, made vocal the world of air; flocks of wild ducks, or geese, went whirring down the long spaces of water between the trees on either bank; and some one with a fiddle or a concertina made musical the evening, while the singing voices of rough habitants rang through the air.

It was all spirited; it smelt good; it felt good; but it was not for Carnac. When he had a revolt against anything in life, the grim storm scenes of winter in the shanties under the trees and the snow-swept hills came to his mind's eye. The summer life of the river, and what is called "running the river," had for him great charms. The smell of hundreds of thousands of logs in the river, the crushed bark, the slimy ooze were all suggestive of life in the making. But the savage seclusion of the wild life in winter repelled his senses. Besides, the lumber business meant endless figures and measurements in stuffy offices and he retreated from

it all.

He had an artistic bent. From a small child he had had it, and it grew with his years. He wanted to paint, and he painted; he wanted to sculpt in clay, and he sculpted in clay; but all the time he was conscious it was the things he had seen and the life he had lived which made his painting and his sculpture worth while. It was absurd that a man of his great outdoor capacity should be the slave of a temperamental quality, and yet it was so. It was no good for his father to condemn, or his mother to mourn, he went his own way.

He had seen much of Junia Shale in these years and had grown fond of her, but she was away much with an aunt in the West, and she was sent to boarding-school, and they saw each other only at intervals. She liked him and showed it, but he was not ready to go farther. As yet his art was everything to him, and he did not think of marriage. He was care-free. He had a little money of his own, left by an uncle of his mother, and he had also an allowance from his mother--none from his father--and he was satisfied with life.

His brother, Fabian, being the elder, by five years, had gone into his father's business as a partner, and had remained there. Fabian had at last married an elder sister of Junia Shale and settled down in a house on the hill, and the lumber-king, John Grier, went on building up his splendid business.

At last, Carnac, feeling he was making small headway with his painting, determined to go again to New York and Paris. He had already spent a year in each place and it had benefited him greatly. So, with that sudden decision which marked his life, he started for New York. It was immediately after the New Year and the ground was covered with snow. He looked out of the window of the train, and there was only the long line of white country broken by the leafless trees and rail-fences and the mansard-roofs and low cottages with their stoops, built up with earth to keep them warm; and the sheds full of cattle; and here and there a sawmill going hard, and factories pounding away and men in fur coats driving the small Indian ponies; and the sharp calls of the men with the sleigh bringing wood, or meat, or vegetables to market. He was by nature a queer compound of Radical and Conservative, a victim of vision and temperament. He was full of pride, yet fuller of humility of a real kind. As he left Montreal he thought of Junia Shale, and he recalled the day eleven years before when he had worn brass-toed boots, and he had caught Junia in his arms and kissed her, and Denzil had had his accident. Denzil had got unreasonably old since then; but Junia remained as she was the joyous day when boyhood took on the first dreams of manhood.

Life was a queer thing, and he had not yet got his bearings in it. He had a desire to reform the world and he wanted to be a great painter or sculptor, or both; and he entered New York with a new sense developed. He was keen to see, to do, and to feel. He wanted to make the world ring with his name and fame, yet he wanted to do the world good also, if he could. It was a curious state of mind for the English boy, who talked French like a native and loved French literature and the French people,

and was angry with those English-Canadians who were so selfish they would never learn French.

Arrived in New York he took lodgings near old Washington Square, where there were a few studios near the Bohemian restaurants and a life as nearly continental as was possible in a new country. He got in touch with a few artists and began to paint, doing little scenes in the Bowery and of the night-life of New York, and visiting the Hudson River and Long Island for landscape and seascape sketches.

One day he was going down Broadway, and near Union Square he saved a girl from being killed by a street-car. She had slipped and fallen on the track and a car was coming. It was impossible for her to get away in time, and Carnac had sprung to her and got her free. She staggered to her feet, and he saw she was beautiful and foreign. He spoke to her in French and her eyes lighted, for she was French. She told him at once that her name was Luzanne Larue. He offered to get a cab and take her home, but she said no, she was fit to walk, so he went with her slowly to her home in one of the poor streets on the East side. They talked as they went, and Carnac saw she was of the lower middle-class, with more refinement than was common in that class, and more charm. She was a fascinating girl with fine black eyes, black hair, a complexion of cream, and a gift of the tongue. Carnac could not see that she was very subtle. She seemed a marvel of guilelessness. She had a wonderful head and neck, and as he was planning a picture of an early female martyr, he decided to ask her to sit to him.

Arrived at her humble home, he was asked to enter, and there he met her father, Isel Larue, a French monarchist who had been exiled from Paris for plotting against the Government. He was handsome with snapping black eyes, a cruel mouth and a droll and humorous tongue. He was grateful to Carnac for saving his daughter's life. Coffee and cigarettes were produced, and they chatted and smoked while Carnac took in the surroundings. Everything was plain, but spotlessly clean, and he learned that Larue made his living by doing odd jobs in an electric firm. He was just home from his work. Luzanne was employed every afternoon in a milliner's shop, but her evenings were free after the housework was done at nine o'clock. Carnac in a burst of enthusiasm asked if she would sit to him as a model in the mornings. Her father instantly said, of course she would.

This she did for many days, and sat with her hair down and bared neck, as handsome and modest as a female martyr should. Carnac painted her with skill. Sometimes he would walk with her to lunch and make her eat something sustaining, and they talked freely then, though little was said while he was painting her. At last one day the painting was finished, and she looked up at him wistfully when he told her he would not need another sitting. Carnac, overcome by her sadness, put his arms round her and kissed her mouth, her eyes, her neck ravenously. She made only a slight show of resistance. When he stopped she said: "Is that the way you keep your word to my father? I am here alone and you embrace me-- is that fair?"

"No, it isn't, and I promise I won't do it again, Luzanne. I am sorry. I wanted our friendship to benefit us both, and now I've spoiled it all."

"No, you haven't spoiled it all," said Luzanne with a sigh, and she buttoned up the neck of her blouse, flushing slightly as she did so. Her breast heaved and suddenly she burst into tears. It was evident she wanted Carnac to comfort her, perhaps to kiss her again, but he did not do so. He only stood over her, murmuring penance and asking her to forget it.

"I can't forget it--I can't. No man but my father has ever kissed me before. It makes me, oh! so miserable!" but she smiled through her tears. Suddenly she dried her eyes. "Once a man tried to kiss me--and something more. He was rich and he'd put money into Madame Margot's millinery business. He was brilliant, and married, but he had no rules for his morals--all he wanted was money and pleasures which he bought. I was attracted by him, but one day he tried to kiss me. I slapped his face, and then I hated him. So, when you kissed me to-day, I thought of that, and it made me unhappy--but yes."

"You did not slap my face, Luzanne?"

She blushed and hung her head. "No, I did not; you are not a bad man. He would have spoiled my life. He made it clear I could have all the luxuries money could buy--all except marriage!" She shrugged her shoulders.

Carnac was of an impressionable nature, but brought to face the possibility of marriage with Luzanne, he shrank. If ever he married it would be a girl like Junia Shale, beautiful, modest, clever and well educated. No, Luzanne could never be for him. So he forbore doing more than ask her to forgive him, and he would take her to lunch--the last lunch of the picture--if she would. With features in chagrin, she put on her hat, yet when she turned to him, she was smiling.

He visited her home occasionally, and Luzanne's father had a friend, Ingot by name, who was sometimes present. This man made himself almost unbearable at first; but Luzanne pulled Ingot up acridly, and he presently behaved well. Ingot disliked all men in better positions than himself, and was a revolutionary of the worst sort--a revolutionary and monarchist. He was only a monarchist because he loved conspiracy and hated the Republican rulers who had imprisoned him--"those bombastics," he called them. It was a constitutional quarrel with the world. However, he became tractable, and then he and Larue formed a plot to make Carnac marry Luzanne. It was hatched by Ingot, approved by Larue, and at length consented to by the girl, for so far as she could love anyone, she loved Carnac; and she made up her mind that if he married her, no matter how, she would make him so happy he would forgive all.

About four months after the incident in the studio, a picnic was arranged for the Hudson River. Only the four went. Carnac had just sold a picture at a good price--his Christian Martyr picture--and he was in high spirits. They arrived at the spot arranged for the picnic in time for

lunch, and Luzanne prepared it. When the lunch was ready, they sat down. There was much gay talk, compliments to Carnac came from both Larue and Ingot, and Carnac was excited and buoyant. He drank much wine and beer, and told amusing stories of the French-Canadians which delighted them all. He had a gift of mimicry and he let himself go.

"You got a pretty fine tongue in your head--but of the best," said Ingot with a burst of applause. "You'd make a good actor, a holy good actor. You got a way with you. Coquelin, Salvini, Bernhardt! Voila, you're just as good! Bagosh, I'd like to see you on the stage."

"So would I," said Larue. "I think you could play a house full in no time and make much cash--I think you could. Don't you think so, Luzanne?"

Luzanne laughed. "He can act very first-class, I'm sure," she said, and she turned and looked Carnac in the eyes. She was excited, she was handsome, she was slim and graceful, and Carnac felt towards her as he did the day at the studio, as though he'd like to kiss her. He knew it was not real, but it was the man in him and the sex in her.

For an hour and a half the lunch went on, all growing gayer, and then at last Ingot said: "Well, I'm going to have a play now here, and Carnac Grier shall act, and we all shall act. We're going to have a wedding ceremony between M'sieu' Grier and Luzanne--but, hush, why not!" he added, when Luzanne shook her finger at him, and said she'd do nothing of the kind, having, however, agreed to it beforehand. "Why not! There's nothing in it. They'll both be married some day and it will be good practice for them. They can learn now how to do it. It's got to be done--but yes. I'll find a Judge in the village. Come now, hands up, those that will do it."

With a loud laugh Larue held up his hand, Carnac, who was half-drunk, did the same, and after a little hesitation Luzanne also.

"Good--a gay little comedy, that's what it is. I'm off for the Judge," and away went Ingot hard afoot, having already engaged a Judge, called Grimshaw, in the village near to perform the ceremony. When he had gone, Larue went off to smoke and Luzanne and Carnac cleared up the lunch-things and put all away in the baskets. When it was finished, Carnac and Luzanne sat down under a tree and talked cheerfully, and Luzanne was never so effective as she was that day. They laughed over the mock ceremony to be performed.

"I'm a Catholic, you know," said Luzanne, "and it isn't legal in my church with no dispensation to be married to a Protestant like you. But as it is, what does it matter!"

"Well, that's true," said Carnac. "I suppose I ought to be acting the lover now; I ought to be kissing you, oughtn't I?"

"As an actor, yes, but as a man, better not unless others are present. Wait till the others come. Wait for witnesses, so that it can look like

the real thing.

"See, there they come now." She pointed, and in the near distance Ingot could be seen approaching with a short, clean-shaven, roly-poly sort of man who did not look legal, but was a real magistrate. He came waddling along in good spirits and rather pompously. At that moment Larue appeared. Presently Ingot presented the Judge to the would-be bride and bridegroom. "You wish to be married-you are Mr. Grier?" said Judge Grimshaw.

"That's me and I'm ready," said Carnac. "Get on with the show. What's the first thing?"

"Well, the regular thing is to sign some forms, stating age, residence, etc., and here they are all ready. Brought 'em along with me. Most unusual form of ceremony, but it'll do. It's all right. Here are the papers to sign."

Carnac hastily scratched in the needed information, and Luzanne doing the same, the magistrate pocketed the papers.

"Now we can perform the ceremony," said the Judge. "Mr. Larue, you go down there with the young lady and bring her up in form, and Mr. Carnac Grier waits here."

Larue went away with Luzanne, and presently turned, and she, with her arm in his, came forward. Carnac stood waiting with a smile on his face, for it seemed good acting. When Luzanne came, her father handed her over, and the marriage ceremony proceeded. Presently it concluded, and Grimshaw, who had had more drink than was good for him, wound up the ceremony with the words: "And may the Lord have mercy on you!"

Every one laughed, Carnac kissed the bride, and the Judge handed her the marriage certificate duly signed. It was now Carnac's duty to pay in the usual way for the ceremony, and he handed the Judge ten dollars; and Grimshaw rolled away towards the village, Ingot having also given him ten.

"That's as good a piece of acting as I've ever seen," said Larue with a grin. "It beats Coquelin and Henry Irving."

"I didn't think there was much in it," said Carnac, laughing, "though it was real enough to cost me ten dollars. One has to pay for one's fun. But I got a wife cheap at the price, and I didn't pay for the wedding ring."

"No, the ring was mine," said Larue. "I had it a long time. It was my engagement ring, and I want it back now."

Luzanne took it off her finger--it was much too large--and gave it to him. "It's easy enough to get another," she said in a queer voice.

"You did the thing in style, young man," said Ingot to Carnac with a nod.

"I'll do it better when it's the real thing," said Carnac. "I've had my rehearsal now, and it seemed almost real."

"It was almost real," said Ingot, with his head turned away from Carnac, but he winked at Larue and caught a furtive look from Luzanne's eye.

"I think we'd better have another hour hereabouts, then get back to New York," said Larue. "There's a circus in the village--let us go to that."

At the village, they did the circus, called out praise to the clown, gave the elephant some buns, and at five o'clock started back to New York. Arrived at New York, they went to a hotel off Broadway for dinner, and Carnac signed names in the hotel register as "Mr. and Mrs. Carnac Grier." When he did it, he saw a furtive glance pass from Luzanne's eyes to her father. It was disconcerting to him. Presently the two adjourned to the sitting-room, and there he saw that the table was only laid for two. That opened his eyes. The men had disappeared and he and Luzanne were alone. She was sitting on a sofa near the table, showing to good advantage. She was composed, while Carnac was embarrassed. Carnac began to take a grip on himself.

The waiter entered. "When shall I serve dinner, sir?" he said.

Carnac realized that the dinner had been ordered by the two men, and he said quietly: "Don't serve it for a half-hour yet--not till I ring, please. Make it ready then. There's no hurry. It's early."

The waiter bowed and withdrew with a smile, and Carnac turned to Luzanne. She smiled, got up, came over, laid a hand on his arm, and said: "It's quiet and nice here, Carnac dear," and she looked up ravishingly in his face.

"It's too quiet and it's not at all nice," he suddenly replied. "Your father and Ingot have gone. They've left us alone on purpose. This is a dirty game and I'm not going to play it any longer. I've had enough of it. I've had my fill. I'm going now. Come, let's go together."

She looked a bit smashed and overdone. "The dinner!" she said in confusion.

"I'll pay for that. We won't wait any longer. Come on at once, please."

She put on her things coolly, and he noticed a savage stealthiness as she pushed the long pins through her hat and hair. He left the room. Outside the hotel, Carnac held out his hand.

"Good night and good-bye, Luzanne," he said huskily. "You can get home alone, can't you?"

She laughed a little, then she said: "I guess so. I've lived in New York some years. But you and I are married, Carnac, and you ought to take me to your home."

There was something devilish in her smile now. Then the whole truth burst upon Carnac. "Married--married! When did I marry you? Good God!" "You married me this afternoon after lunch at Shipton. I have the certificate and I mean to hold you to it."

"You mean to hold me to it--a real marriage to-day at Shipton! You and your father and Ingot tricked me into this."

"He was a real Judge, and it was a real marriage."

"It is a fraud, and I'll unmask it," Carnac declared in anger.

"It would be difficult to prove. You signed our names in the hotel register as Mr. and Mrs. Carnac Grier. I mean to stick to that name--Mrs. Carnac Grier. I'll make you a good wife, Carnac--do believe it.

"I'll believe nothing but the worst of you ever. I'll fight the thing out, by God!"

She shook her head and smiled. "I meant you to marry me, when you saved my life from the streetcar. I never saw but one man I wanted to marry, and you are that man, Carnac. You wouldn't ask me, so I made you marry me. You could go farther and fare worse. Come, take me home--take me home, my love. I want you to love me."

"You little devil!" Carnac declared. "I'd rather cut my own throat. I'm going to have a divorce. I'm going to teach you and the others a lesson you won't forget."

"There isn't a jury in the United States you could convince after what you've done. You've made it impossible. Go to Judge Grimshaw and see what he will say. Go and ask the hotel people and see what they will say. You're my husband, and I mean you shall live with me, and I'll love you better than any woman on earth can love you. . . . Won't you?" She held out her hand.

With an angry exclamation, Carnac refused it, and then she suddenly turned on her heel, slipped round a corner and was gone.

Carnac was dumbfounded. He did not know what to do. He went dazedly home, and slept little that night. The next day he went out to Shipton and saw Judge Grimshaw and told him the whole tale. The Judge shook his head.

"It's too tall a story. Why, you went through the ceremony as if it was the real thing, signed the papers, paid my fee, and kissed the bride. You could not get a divorce on such evidence. I'm sorry for you, if you don't want the girl. She's very nice, and 'd make a good wife. What does she mean to do?"

"I don't know. She left me in the street and went back to her home. I won't live with her."

"I can't help you anyhow. She has the certificate. You are validly married. If I were you, I'd let the matter stand."

So they parted, and Carnac sullenly went back to his apartments. The next day he went to see a lawyer, however. The lawyer opened his eyes at the story. He had never heard anything like it.

"It doesn't sound as if you were sober when you did it. Were you, sir? It was a mad prank, anyhow!"

"I had been drinking, but I wasn't drunk. I'd been telling them stories and they used them as a means of tempting me to act in the absurd marriage ceremony. Like a fool I consented. Like a fool--but I wasn't drunk."

"No, but when you were in your right mind and sober you signed your names as Mr. and Mrs. Carnac Grier in the register of a hotel. I will try to win your case for you, but it won't be easy work. You see the Judge himself told you the same thing. But it would be a triumph to expose a thing of that kind, and I'd like to do it. It wouldn't be cheap, though. You'd have to foot the bill. Are you rich?"

"No, but my people are," said Carnac. "I could manage the cash, but suppose I lost!"

"Well, you'd have to support the woman. She could sue you for cruelty and desertion, and the damages would be heavy."

Carnac shook his head, paid his fee and left the office.

He did not go near Luzanne. After a month he went to Paris for eight months, and then back to Montreal.

CHAPTER III

CARNAC'S RETURN

Arrived in Montreal, there were attempts by Carnac to settle down to ordinary life of quiet work at his art, but it was not effective, nor had it been in Paris, though the excitement of working in the great centre had stimulated him. He ever kept saying to himself, "Carnac, you are a married man--a married man, by the tricks of rogues!" In Paris, he could more easily obscure it, but in Montreal, a few hundred miles from the place of his tragedy, pessimism seized him. He now repented he did not fight it out at once. It would have been courageous and perhaps successful. But whether successful or not, he would have put himself right with his own conscience. That was the chief thing. He was straightforward, and back again in Canada, Carnac flung reproaches at himself.

He knew himself now to be in love with Junia Shale, and because he was married he could not approach her. It galled him. He was not fond of Fabian, for they had little in common, and he had no intimate friends. Only his mother was always sympathetic to him, and he loved her. He saw much of her, but little of anyone else. He belonged to no clubs, and there were few artists in Montreal. So he lived his own life, and when he met Junia he cavilled at himself for his madness with Luzanne. The curious thing was he had not had a word from her since the day of the mock marriage. Perhaps she had decided to abandon the thing! But that could do no good, for there was the marriage recorded in the registers of New York State.

Meanwhile, things were not going well with others. There befell a day when matters came to a crisis in the Grier family. Since Fabian's marriage with Junia Shale's sister, Sybil, he had become discontented with his position in his father's firm. There was little love between him and his father, and that was chiefly the father's fault. One day, the old man stormed at Fabian because of a mistake in the management, and was foolish enough to say that Fabian had lost his grip since his marriage.

Fabian, enraged, demanded freedom from the partnership, and offered to sell his share. In a fit of anger, the old man offered him what was at least ten per cent more than the value of Fabian's share. The sombre Fabian had the offer transferred to paper at once, and it was signed by his father--not without compunction, because difficult as Fabian was he might go further and fare worse. As for Fabian's dark-haired, brown-faced, brown-eyed wife, to John Grier's mind, it seemed a good thing to be rid of her.

When Fabian left the father alone in his office, however, the stark temper of the old man broke down. He had had enough. He muttered to himself. Presently he was roused by a little knock at the door. It was Junia, brilliant, buoyant, yellow haired, with bright brown eyes, tingling cheeks, and white laughing teeth that showed against her red lips. She held up a finger at him.

"I know what you've done, and it's no good at all. You can't live without us, and you mustn't," she said. The old man glowered still, but a reflective smile crawled to his lips. "No, it's finished," he replied.

"It had to come, and it's done. It can't be changed. Fabian wouldn't alter it, and I shan't."

His face was stern and dour. He tangled his short fingers in the hair on top of his head.

"I wouldn't say that, if I were you," she responded cheerily. "Fabian showed me the sum you offered for his share. It's ridiculous. The business isn't worth it."

"What do you know about the business?" remarked the other.

"Well, whatever it was worth an hour ago, it's worth less now," she answered with suggestion. "It's worth much less now," she added.

"What do you mean by that?" he asked sharply, sitting upright, his hands clasping his knees almost violently, his clean-shaven face showing lines of trouble.

"I mean he's going to join the enemy," she answered quickly.

"Join the enemy!" broke from the old man's lips with a startled accent.

"Yes, the firm of Belloc."

The old man did not speak, but a curious whiteness stole over his face.

"What makes you say that!" he exclaimed, anger in his eyes.

"Well, Fabian has to put money into something," she answered, "and the only business he knows is lumber business. Don't you think it's natural he should go to Belloc?"

"Did he ever say so?" asked the old man with savage sullenness. "Tell me. Did he ever say so?"

The girl shook back her brave head with a laugh. "Of course he never said so, but I know the way he'll go."

The old man shook his head. "I don't believe it. He's got no love for Belloc."

The girl felt like saying, "He's got no love for you," but she refrained. She knew that Fabian had love for his father, but he had inherited a love for business, and that would overwhelm all other feelings. She therefore said: "Why don't you get Carnac to come in? He's got more sense than Fabian--and he isn't married!"

She spoke boldly, for she knew the character of the man. She was only nineteen. She had always come in and gone out of Grier's house and office freely and much more since her sister had married Fabian.

A storm gathered between the old man's eyes; his brow knitted. "Carnac's got brains enough, but he goes monkeying about with pictures and statues till he's worth naught in the business of life."

"I don't think you understand him," the girl replied. "I've been trying to understand him for twenty-five years," the other said malevolently. "He might have been a big man. He might have bossed this business when I'm gone. It's in him, but he's a fly-away--he's got no sense. The ideas he's got make me sick. He talks like a damn fool sometimes."

"But if he's a 'damn fool'--is it strange?" She gaily tossed a kiss at the king of the lumber world. "The difference between you and him is

this: he doesn't care about the things of this world, and you do; but he's one of the ablest men in Canada. If Fabian won't come back, why not Carnac?"

"We've never hit it off."

Suddenly he stood up, his face flushed, his hands outthrust themselves in rage, his fingers opened and shut in abandonment of temper.

"Why have I two such sons!" he exclaimed. "I've not been bad. I've squeezed a few; I've struck here and there; I've mauled my enemies, but I've been good to my own. Why can't I run square with my own family?" He was purple to the roots of his hair.

Savagery possessed him. Life was testing him to the nth degree. "I've been a good father, and a good husband! Why am I treated like this?"

She watched him silently. Presently, however, the storm seemed to pass. He appeared to gain control of himself.

"You want me to have in Carnac?" he asked, with a little fleck of foam at the corners of his mouth.

"If you could have Fabian back," she remarked, "but you can't! It's been coming for a long time. He's got your I.O.U. and he won't return; but Carnac's got plenty of stuff in him. He never was afraid of anything or anybody, and if he took a notion, he could do this business as well as yourself by and by. It's all a chance, but if he comes in he'll put everything else aside."

"Where is he?" the old man asked. "He's with his mother at your home."

The old man took his hat from the window-sill. At that moment a clerk appeared with some papers. "What have you got there?" asked Grier sharply. "The Belloc account for the trouble on the river," answered the clerk.

"Give it me," Grier said, and he waved the clerk away. Then he glanced at the account, and a grim smile passed over his face. "They can't have all they want, and they won't get it. Are you coming with me?" he asked of the girl, with a set look in his eyes. "No. I'm going back to my sister," she answered.

"If he leaves me--if he joins Belloc!" the old man muttered, and again his face flushed.

A few moments afterwards the girl watched him till he disappeared up the hill.

"I don't believe Carnac will do it," she said to herself. "He's got the sense, the brains, and the energy; but he won't do it."

She heard a voice behind her, and turned. It was the deformed but potent

Denzil. He was greyer now. His head, a little to one side, seemed sunk in his square shoulders, but his eyes were bright.

"It's all a bad scrape--that about Fabian Grier," he said. "You can't ever tell about such things, how they'll go--but no, bagosh!"

CHAPTER IV

THE HOUSE ON THE HILL

John Grier's house had a porch with Corinthian pillars. Its elevation was noble, but it was rather crudely built, and it needed its grove of maples to make it pleasant to the eye. It was large but not too ample, and it had certain rooms with distinct character.

Inside the house, John Grier paused a moment before the door of the sitting-room where his wife usually sat. All was silent. He opened the door. A woman rose to meet him. She was dressed in black. Her dark hair, slightly streaked with grey, gave her distinction. Her eyes had soft understanding; her lips had a reflective smile. There was, however, uneasiness in her face; her fingers slightly trembled on the linen she was holding.

"You're home early, John," she said in a gentle, reserved voice.

He twisted a shoulder. "Yes, I'm home early," he snapped. "Your boy Fabian has left the business, and I've bought his share." He named the sum. "Ghastly, ain't it? But he's gone, and there's no more about it. It's a bad thing to marry a woman that can't play fair."

He noted the excessive paleness of his wife's face; the bright eyes stared and stared, and the lips trembled. "Fabian--Fabian gone!" she said brokenly.

"Yes, and he ain't coming back."

"What's he going to do?" she asked in a bitter voice.

"Join Belloc--fight his own father--try to do me in the race," growled the old man.

"Who told you that?" "Junia, she told me."

"What does she know about it? Who told her that?" asked the woman with faded lips.

"She always had sense, that child. I wish she was a man."

He suddenly ground his heel, and there was distemper in face and voice; his shoulders hunched; his hands were thrust down in his pockets. He

wheeled on her. "Where's your other boy? Where's Carnac?"

The woman pointed to the lawn. "He's catching a bit of the city from the hill just beyond the pear-tree."

"Painting, eh? I heard he was here. I want to talk to him."

"I don't think it will do any good," was the sad reply. "He doesn't think as you do."

"You believe he's a genius," snarled the other.

"You know he is."

"I'll go and find him."

She nodded. "I wish you luck," she said, but there was no conviction in her tone. Truth was, she did not wish him luck in this. She watched him leave by the French window and stride across the lawn. A strange, troubled expression was in her face.

"They can't pull it off together," she said to herself, and Carnac is too full of independence. He wants nothing from anybody. He needs no one; he follows no one--except me. Yes, he follows--he loves me.

She watched her husband till he almost viciously thrust aside the bushes staying his progress, and broke into the space by the pear-tree where Carnac sat with palette and brush, gazing at the distant roofs on which the sun was leaving its last kiss.

Carnac got to his feet with a smile, and with a courage in his eye equal to that which had ever been in his father's face--in the face of John Grier. It was strange that the other's presence troubled him, that even as a small child, to be in the same room for any length of time vexed him. Much of that had passed away. The independence of the life he lived, the freedom from resting upon the financial will of the lumber king had given him light, air and confidence. He loved his mother. What he felt for John Grier was respect and admiration. He knew he was not spoken to now with any indolent purpose.

They had seen little of each other of late years. His mother had given him the money to go to New York and Paris, which helped out his own limited income. He wondered what should bring his father to him now. There was interested reflection in his eye. With his habit of visualization, he saw behind John Grier, as he came on now, the long procession of logs and timbers which had made his fortune, stretch back on the broad St. Lawrence, from the Mattawan to the Madawaska, from the Richelieu to the Marmora. Yet, what was it John Grier had done? In a narrow field he had organized his life perfectly, had developed his opportunities, had safeguarded his every move. The smiling inquiry in his face was answered by the old man saying abruptly:

"Fabian's gone. He's deserted the ship."

The young man had the wish to say in reply, "At last, eh!" but he avoided it.

"Where has he gone?"

"I bought him out to-day, and I hear he's going to join Belloc."

"Belloc! Belloc! Who told you that?" asked the young man.

"Junia Shale--she told me."

Carnac laughed. "She knows a lot, but how did she know that?"

"Sheer instinct, and I believe she's right."

"Right--right--to fight you, his own father!" was the inflammable reply.

"Why, that would be a lowdown business!"

"Would it be lower down than your not helping your father, when you can?"

Somehow he yearned over his wayward, fantastic son. The wilful, splendid character of the youth overcame the insistence in the other's nature.

"You seem to be getting on all right," remarked Carnac with the faint brown moustache, the fine, showy teeth, the clean-shaven cheeks, and auburn hair hanging loosely down.

"You're wrong. Things aren't doing as well with me as they might. Belloc and the others make difficult going. I've got too much to do myself. I want help."

"You had it in Fabian," remarked Carnac dryly. "Well, I've lost it, and it never was enough. He hadn't vision, sense and decision."

"And so you come to me, eh? I always thought you despised me," said Carnac.

A half-tender, half-repellent expression came into the old man's face. He spoke bluntly. "I always thought you had three times the brains of your brother. You're not like me, and you're not like your mother; there's something in you that means vision, and seeing things, and doing them. If fifteen thousand dollars a year and a share in the business is any good to you--"

For an instant there had been pleasure and wonder in the young man's eyes, but at the sound of the money and the share in the business he shrank back.

"I don't think so, father. I'm happy enough. I've got all I want."

"What the devil are you talking about!" the other burst out. "You've

got all you want! You've no home; you've no wife; you've no children; you've no place. You paint, and you sculp, and what's the good of it all? Have you ever thought of that? What's there in it for you or anyone else? Have you no blood and bones, no sting of life in you? Look what I've done. I started with little, and I've built up a business that, if it goes all right, will be worth millions. I say, if it goes all right, because I've got to carry more than I ought."

Carnac shook his head. "I couldn't be any help to you. I'm not a man of action. I think, I devise, but I don't act. I'd be no good in your business no, honestly, I'd be no good. I don't think money is the end of life. I don't think success is compensation for all you've done and still must do. I want to stand out of it. You've had your life; you've lived it where you wanted to live it. I haven't, and I'm trying to find out where my duty and my labour lies. It is Art; no doubt. I don't know for sure."

"Good God!" broke in the old man. "You don't know for sure--you're twenty-five years old, and you don't know where you're going!"

"Yes, I know where I'm going--to Heaven by and by!" This was his satirical reply.

"Oh, fasten down; get hold of something that matters. Now, listen to me. I want you to do one thing--the thing I ought to do and can't. I must stay here now that Fabian's gone. I want you to go to the Madawaska River."

"No, I won't go to the Madawaska," replied Carnac after a long pause, "but"--with sudden resolution--"if it's any good to you, I'll stay here in the business, and you can go to the Madawaska. Show me what to do here; tell me how to do it, and I'll try to help you out for a while--if it can be done," he added hastily. "You go, but I'll stay. Let's talk it over at supper."

He sighed, and turned and gazed warmly at the sunset on the roofs of the city; then turned to his father's face, but it was not the same look in his eyes.

CHAPTER V

CARNAC AS MANAGER

Carnac was installed in the office, and John Grier went to the Madawaska. Before he left, however, he was with Carnac for near a week, showing the procedure and the main questions that might arise to be solved.

"It's like this," said Grier in their last talk, "you've got to keep a stiff hand over the foremen and overseers, and have strict watch of Belloc & Co. Perhaps there will be trouble when I've gone, but, if it

does, keep a stiff upper lip, and don't let the gang do you. You've got a quick mind and you know how to act sudden. Act at once, and damn the consequences! Remember, John Grier's firm has a reputation, and deal justly, but firmly, with opposition. The way it's organized, the business almost runs itself. But that's only when the man at the head keeps his finger on the piston-rod. You savvy, don't you?"

"I savvy all right. If the Belloc firm cuts up rusty, I'll think of what you'd do and try to do it in the same way."

The old man smiled. He liked the spirit in Carnac. It was the right kind for his business. "I predict this: if you have one fight with the Belloc lot, you'll hate them too. Keep the flag flying. Don't get rattled. It's a big job, and it's worth doing in a big way.

"Yes, it's a big job," said Carnac. "I hope I'll pull it off."

"You'll pull it off, if you bend your mind to it. But there won't be any time for your little pictures and statues. You'll have to deal with the real men, and they'll lose their glamour. That's the thing about business--it's death to sentimentality."

Carnac flushed with indignation. "So you think Titian and Velasquez and Goyot and El Greco and Watteau and Van Dyck and Rembrandt and all the rest were sentimentalists, do you? The biggest men in the world worship them. You aren't just to the greatest intellects. I suppose Shakespeare was a sentimentalist!"

The old man laughed and tapped his son on the shoulder.

"Don't get excited, Carnac. I'd rather you ran my business well, than be Titian or Rembrandt, whoever they were. If you do this job well, I'll think there's a good chance of our working together."

Carnac nodded, but the thought that he could not paint or sculp when he was on this work vexed him, and he only set his teeth to see it through. "All right, we'll see," he said, and his father went away.

Then Carnac's time of work and trial began. He was familiar with the routine of the business, he had adaptability, he was a quick worker, and for a fortnight things went swimmingly. There was elation in doing work not his regular job, and he knew the eyes of the commercial and river world were on him. He did his best and it was an effective best. Junia had been in the City of Quebec, but she came back at the end of a fortnight, and went to his office to get a subscription for a local charity. She had a gift in this kind of work.

It was a sunny day in the month of June, and as she entered the office a new spirit seemed to enter with her.

The place became distinguished. She stood in the doorway for a moment, radiant, smiling, half embarrassed, then she said: "Please may I for a moment, Carnac?"

Carnac was delighted. "For many moments, Junia."

"I'm not as busy as usual. I'm glad as glad to see you."

She said with restraint: "Not for many moments. I'm here on business. It's important. I wanted to get a subscription from John Grier for the Sailors' Hospital which is in a bad way. Will you give something for him?"

Carnac looked at the subscription list. "I see you've been to Belloc first and they've given a hundred dollars. Was that wise-going to them first? You know how my father feels about Belloc. And we're the older firm."

The girl laughed. "Oh, that's silly! Belloc's money is as good as John Grier's, and it only happened he was asked first because Fabian was present when I took the list, and it's Fabian's writing on the paper there."

Carnac nodded. "That's all right with me, for I'm no foe to Belloc, but my father wouldn't have liked it. He wouldn't have given anything in the circumstances."

"Oh, yes, he would! He's got sense with all his prejudices. I'll tell you what he'd have done: he'd have given a bigger subscription than Belloc."

Carnac laughed. "Well, perhaps you're right; it was clever planning it so."

"I didn't plan it. It was accident, but I had to consider everything and I saw how to turn it to account. So, if you are going to give a subscription for John Grier you must do as he would do."

Carnac smiled, put the paper on his desk, and took the pen.

"Make it measure the hate John Grier has to the Belloc firm," she said ironically.

Carnac chuckled and wrote. "Will that do?" He handed her the paper.

"One hundred and fifty dollars--oh, quite, quite good!" she said. "But it's only a half hatred after all. I'd have made it a whole one."

"You'd have expected John Grier to give two hundred, eh? But that would have been too plain. It looks all right now, and it must go at that."

She smiled. "Well, it'll go at that. You're a good business man. I see you've given up your painting and sculpting to do this! It will please your father, but are you satisfied?"

"Satisfied--of course, I'm not; and you know it. I'm not a money-

grabber. I'm an artist if I'm anything, and I'm not doing this permanently. I'm only helping my father while he's in a hole."

The girl suddenly grew serious. "You mean you're not going to stick to the business, and take Fabian's place in it? He's been for a week with Belloc and he's never coming back here. You have the brains for it; and you could make your father happy and inherit his fortune--all of it."

Carnac flushed indignantly. "I suppose I could, but it isn't big enough for me. I'd rather do one picture that the Luxembourg or the London National Gallery would buy than own this whole business. That's the turn of my mind."

"Yes, but if you didn't sell a picture to the Luxembourg or the National Gallery. What then?"

"I'd have a good try for it, that's all. Do you want me to give up Art and take to commerce? Is that your view?"

"I suggested to John Grier the day that Fabian sold his share that you might take his place; and I still think it a good thing, though, of course, I like your painting. But I felt sorry for your father with none of his own family to help him; and I thought you might stay with him for your family's sake."

"You thought I'd be a martyr for love of John Grier--and cold cash, did you? That isn't the way the blood runs in my veins. I think John Grier might get out of the business now, if he's tired, and sell it and let some one else run it. John Grier is not in want. If he were, I'd give up everything to help him, and I'd not think I was a martyr. But I've a right to make my own career. It's making the career one likes which gets one in the marrow. I'd take my chances of success as he did. He has enough to live on, he's had success; let him get down and out, if he's tired."

The girl held herself firmly. "Remember John Grier has made a great name for himself--as great in his way as Andrew Carnegie or Pierpont Morgan--and he's got pride in his name. He wants his son to carry it on, and in a way he's right."

"That's good argument," said Carnac, "but if his name isn't strong enough to carry itself, his son can't carry it for him. That's the way of life. How many sons have ever added to their father's fame? The instances are very few. In the modern world, I can only think of the Pitts in England. There's no one else."

The girl now smiled again. The best part in her was stirred. She saw. Her mind changed. After a moment she said: "I think you're altogether right about it. Carnac, you have your own career to make, so make it as it best suits yourself. I'm sorry I spoke to your father as I did. I pitied him, and I thought you'd find scope for your talents in the business. It's a big game, but I see now it isn't yours, Carnac."

He nodded, smiling. "That's it; that's it, I hate the whole thing."

She shook hands. As his hand enclosed her long slim fingers, he felt he wished never to let them go, they were so thrilling; but he did, for the thought of Luzanne came to his mind.

"Good-bye, Junia, and don't forget that John Grier's firm is the foe of the Belloc business," he said satirically.

She laughed, and went down the hill quickly, and as she went Carnac thought he had never seen so graceful a figure.

"What an evil Fate sent Luzanne my way!" he said.

Two days later there came an ugly incident on the river. There was a collision between a gang of John Grier's and Belloc's men and one of Grier's men was killed. At the inquest, it was found that the man met his death by his own fault, having first attacked a Belloc man and injured him. The Belloc man showed the injury to the jury, and he was acquitted. Carnac watched the case closely, and instructed his lawyer to contend that the general attack was first made by Belloc's men, which was true; but the jury decided that this did not affect the individual case, and that the John Grier man met his death by his own fault.

"A shocking verdict!" he said aloud in the Court when it was given.

"Sir," said the Coroner, "it is the verdict of men who use their judgment after hearing the evidence, and your remark is offensive and criminal."

"If it is criminal, I apologize," said Carnac.

"You must apologize for its offensiveness, or you will be arrested, sir."

This nettled Carnac. "I will not apologize for its offensiveness," he said firmly.

"Constable, arrest this man," said the Coroner, and the constable did so.

"May I be released on bail?" asked Carnac with a smile.

"I am a magistrate. Yes, you may be released on bail," said the Coroner.

Carnac bowed, and at once a neighbour became security for three thousand dollars. Then Carnac bowed again and left the Court with--it was plain--the goodwill of most people present.

Carnac returned to his office with angry feelings at his heart. The Belloc man ought to have been arrested for manslaughter, he thought. In any case, he had upheld the honour of John Grier's firm by his protest, and the newspapers spoke not unfavourably of him in their reports. They said he was a man of courage to say what he did, though it was improper, from a legal standpoint. But human nature was human nature!

The trial took place in five days, and Carnac was fined twenty-five cents, which was in effect a verdict of not guilty; and so the newspapers said. It was decided that the offence was only legally improper, and it was natural that Carnac expressed himself strongly.

Junia was present at the trial. After it was over, she saw Carnac for a moment. "I think your firm can just pay the price and exist!" she said. "It's a terrible sum, and it shows how great a criminal you are!"

"Not a 'thirty-cent' criminal, anyhow," said Carnac. "It is a moral victory, and tell Fabian so. He's a bit huffy because I got into the trouble, I suppose."

"No, he loathed it all. He's sorry it occurred."

There was no further talk between them, for a subordinate of Carnac's came hurriedly to him and said something which Junia did not hear. Carnac raised his hat to her, and hurried away.

"Well, it's not so easy as painting pictures," she said. "He gets fussed over these things."

It was later announced by the manager of the main mill that there was to be a meeting of workers to agitate for a strike for higher pay. A French-Canadian who had worked in the mills of Maine and who was a red-hot socialist was the cause of it. He had only been in the mills for about three months and had spent his spare time inciting well-satisfied workmen to strike. His name was Luc Baste--a shock-haired criminal with a huge chest and a big voice, and a born filibuster. The meeting was held and a deputation was appointed to wait on Carnac at his office. Word was sent to Carnac, and he said he would see them after the work was done for the day. So in the evening about seven o'clock the deputation of six men came, headed by Luc Baste.

"Well, what is it?" Carnac asked calmly.

Luc Baste began, not a statement of facts, but an oration on the rights of workers, their downtrodden condition and their beggarly wages. He said they had not enough to keep body and soul together, and that right well did their employers know it. He said there should be an increase of a half-dollar a day, or there would be a strike.

Carnac dealt with the matter quickly and quietly. He said Luc Baste had not been among them a long time and evidently did not know what was the cost of living in Montreal. He said the men got good wages, and in any case it was not for him to settle a thing of such importance. This was for the head of the firm, John Grier, when he returned. The wages had been raised two years before, and he doubted that John Grier would consent to a further rise. All other men on the river seemed satisfied and he doubted these ought to have a cent more a day. They were getting the full value of the work. He begged all present to think twice before they brought about catastrophe. It would be a catastrophe if John Grier's mills should stop working and Belloc's mills should go on as

before. It was not like Grier's men to do this sort of thing.

The men seemed impressed, and, presently, after one of them thanking him, the deputation withdrew, Luc Baste talking excitedly as they went. The manager of the main mill, with grave face, said:

"No, Mr. Grier, I don't think they'll be satisfied. You said all that could be said, but I think they'll strike after all."

"Well, I hope it won't occur before John Grier gets back," said Carnac.

That night a strike was declared.

Fortunately, only about two-thirds of the men came out, and it could not be called a complete success. The Belloc people were delighted, but they lived in daily fear of a strike in their own yards, for agitators were busy amongst their workmen. But the workers waited to see what would happen to Grier's men.

Carnac declined to reconsider. The wages were sufficient and the strike unwarranted! He kept cool, even good-natured, and with only one-third of his men at work, he kept things going, and the business went on with regularity, if with smaller output. The Press unanimously supported him, for it was felt the strike had its origin in foreign influence, and as French Canada had no love for the United States there was journalistic opposition to the strike. Carnac had telegraphed to his father when the strike started, but did not urge him to come back. He knew that Grier could do nothing more than he himself was doing, and he dreaded new influence over the strikers. Grier happened to be in the backwoods and did not get word for nearly a week; then he wired asking Carnac what the present situation was. Carnac replied he was standing firm, that he would not yield a cent increase in wages, and that, so far, all was quiet.

It happened, however, that on the day he wired, the strikers tried to prevent the non-strikers from going to work and there was a collision. The police and a local company of volunteers intervened and then the Press condemned unsparingly the whole affair. This outbreak did good, and Luc Baste was arrested for provoking disorder. No one else was arrested, and this was a good thing, for, on the whole, even the men that followed Luc did not trust him. His arrest cleared the air and the strike broke. The next day, all the strikers returned, but Carnac refused their wages for the time they were on strike, and he had triumphed.

On that very day John Grier started back to Montreal. He arrived in about four days, and when he came, found everything in order. He went straight from his home to the mill and there found Carnac in control.

"Had trouble, eh, Carnac?" he asked with a grin, after a moment of greeting. Carnac shrugged his shoulders, but said nothing.

"It's the first strike I ever had in my mills, and I hope it will be the

last. I don't believe in knuckling down to labour tyranny, and I'm glad you kept your hand steady. There'll be no more strikes in my mills--I'll see to that!"

"They've only just begun, and they'll go on, father. It's the influence of Canucs who have gone to the factories of Maine. They get bitten there with the socialistic craze, and they come back and make trouble. This strike was started by Luc Baste, a French-Canadian, who had been in Maine. You can't stop these things by saying so. There was no strike among Belloc's men!"

"No, but did you have no trouble with Belloc's men?"

Carnac told him of the death of the Grier man after the collision, of his own arrest and fine of twenty-five cents and of the attitude of the public and the Press. The old man was jubilant. "Say, you did the thing in style. It was the only way to do it. You landed 'em with the protest fair and easy. You're going to be a success in the business, I can see that."

Carnac for a moment looked at his father meditatively. Then, seeing the surprise in John Grier's face, he said: "No, I'm not going to be a success in it, for I'm not going on with it. I've had enough. I'm through."

"You've had enough--you're through--just when you've proved you can do things as well as I can do them! You ain't going on! Great Jehoshaphat!"

"I mean it; I'm not going on. I'm going to quit in another month. I can't stick it. It galls me. It ain't my job. I do it, but it's artificial, it ain't the real thing. My heart isn't in it as yours is, and I'd go mad if I had to do this all my life. It's full of excitement at times, it's hard work, it's stimulating when you're fighting, but other times it's deadly dull and bores me stiff. I feel as though I were pulling a train of cars."

Slowly the old man's face reddened with anger. "It bores you stiff, eh? It's deadly dull at times! There's only interest in it when there's a fight on, eh? You're right; you're not fit for the job, never was and never will be while your mind is what it is. Don't take a month to go, don't take a week, or a day, go this morning after I've got your report on what's been done. It ain't the real thing, eh? No, it ain't. It's no place for you. Tell me all there is to tell, and get out; I've had enough too, I've had my fill. 'It bores me stiff!'"

John Grier was in a rage, and he would listen to no explanation. "Come now, out with your report."

Carnac was not upset. He kept cool. "No need to be so crusty," he said.

CHAPTER VI

LUKE TARBOE HAS AN OFFER

Many a man behind his horses' tails on the countryside has watched the wild reckless life of the water with wonder and admiration. He sees a cluster of logs gather and climb, and still gather and climb, and between him and that cluster is a rolling waste of timber, round and square.

Suddenly, a being with a red shirt, with loose prairie kind of hat, knee-boots, having metal clamps, strikes out from the shore, running on the tops of the moving logs till he reaches the jam. Then the pike-pole, or the lever, reaches the heart of the difficulty, and presently the jam breaks, and the logs go tumbling into the main, while the vicious-looking berserker of the water runs back to the shore over the logs, safe and sound. It is a marvel to the spectator, that men should manipulate the river so. To him it is a life apart; not belonging to the life he lives -a passing show.

It was a stark surprise of the river which makes this story possible. There was a strike at Bunder's Boom--as it was called--between Bunder and Grier's men. Some foreman of Grier's gang had been needlessly offensive. Bunder had been stupidly resentful. When Grier's men had tried to force his hand also, he had resisted. It chanced that, when an impasse seemed possible to be broken only by force, a telegram came to John Grier at Montreal telling him of the difficulty. He lost no time in making his way northwards.

But some one else had come upon the scene. It was Luke Tarboe. He had arrived at a moment when the Belloc river crowd had almost wrecked Bunder's Boom, and when a collision between the two gangs seemed inevitable. What he did remained a river legend. By good temper and adroitness, he reconciled the leaders of the two gangs; he bought the freedom of the river by a present to Bunder's daughter; he won Bunder by four bottles of "Three Star" brandy. When the police from a town a hundred miles away arrived at the same time as John Grier, it was to find the Grier and Belloc gangs peacefully prodding side by side.

When the police had gone, John Grier looked Tarboe up and down. The brown face, the clear, strong brown eyes and the brown hatless head rose up eighteen inches above his own, making a gallant summit to a robust stalk.

"Well, you've done easier things than that in your time, eh?" John Grier asked.

Tarboe nodded. "It was touch and go. I guess it was the hardest thing I ever tried since I've been working for you, but it's come off all right, hasn't it?" He waved a hand to the workmen on the river, to the tumbling rushes of logs and timber. Then he looked far up the stream, with hand shading his brown eyes to where a crib-or raft-was following the eager stream of logs. "It's easy going now," he added, and his face had a look

of pleasure.

"What's your position, and what's your name?" asked John Grier.

"I'm head-foreman of the Skunk Nest's gang--that's this lot, and I got here--just in time! I don't believe you could have done it, Mr. Grier. No master is popular in the real sense with his men. I think they'd have turned you down. So it was lucky I came."

A faint smile hovered at his lips, and his eyes brooded upon the busy gangs of men. "Yes, I've had a lot of luck this time. There's nothing like keeping your head cool and your belly free from drink." Now he laughed broadly. "By gosh, it's all good! Do you know, Mr. Grier, I came out here a wreck eight years ago. I left Montreal then with a spot in my lungs, that would kill me, they said. I've never seen Montreal since, but I've had a good time out in the woods, in the shanties in the winters; on the rivers in the summer. I've only been as far East as this in eight years."

"What do you do in the winter, then?"

"Shanties-shanties all the time. In the summer this; in the Fall taking the men back to the shanties. Bossing the lot; doing it from love of the life that's been given back to me. Yes, this is the life that makes you take things easy. You don't get fussed out here. The job I had took a bit of doing, but it was done, and I'm lucky to have my boss see the end of it."

He smiled benignly upon John Grier. He knew he was valuable to the Grier organization; he knew that Grier had heard of him under another name. Now Grier had seen him, and he felt he would like to tell John Grier some things about the river he ought to know. He waved a hand declining the cigar offered him by his great chief.

"Thanks, I don't smoke, and I don't drink, and I don't chew; but I eat --by gosh, I eat! Nothing's so good as good food, except good reading."

"Good reading!" exclaimed John Grier. "Good reading--on the river!"

"Well, it's worked all right, and I read a lot. I get books from Montreal, from the old library at the University."

"At what University?" struck in the lumber-king. "Oh, Laval! I wouldn't go to McGill. I wanted to know French, so I went to Laval. There I came to know Father Labasse. He was a great man, Father Labasse. He helped me. I was there three years, and then was told I was going to die. It was Labasse who gave me this tip. He said, 'Go into the woods; put your teeth into the trees; eat the wild herbs, and don't come back till you feel well.' Well, I haven't gone back, and I'm not going back."

"What do you do with your wages?" asked the lumber-king.

"I bought land. I've got a farm of four hundred acres twenty miles from

here. I've got a man on it working it."

"Does it pay?"

"Of course. Do you suppose I'd keep a farm that didn't pay?"

"Who runs it?"

"A man that broke his leg on the river. One of Belloc's men. He knows all about farming. He brought his wife and three children up, and there he is--making money, and making the land good. I've made him a partner at last. When it's good enough by and by, I'll probably go and live there myself. Anybody ought to make farming a success, if there's water and proper wood and such things," he added.

There was silence for a few moments. Then John Grier looked Tarboe up and down sharply again, noting the splendid physique, the quizzical, mirth-provoking eye, and said: "I can give you a better job if you'll come to Montreal."

Tarboe shook his head. "Haven't had a sick day for eight years; I'm as hard as nails; I'm as strong as steel. I love this wild world of the woods and fields and--"

"And the shebangs and grog-shops and the dirty, drunken villages?" interrupted the old man.

"No, they don't count. I take them in, but they don't count."

"Didn't you have hard times when you first came?" asked John Grier. "Did you get right with the men from the start?"

"A little bit of care is a good thing in any life. I told them good stories, and they liked that. I used to make the stories up, and they liked that also. When I added some swear words they liked them all the better. I learned how to do it."

"Yes, I've heard of you, but not as Tarboe."

"You heard of me as Renton, eh?"

"Yes, as Renton. I wonder I never came across you till to-day."

"I kept out of your way; that was the reason. When you came north, I got farther into the backwoods."

"Are you absolutely straight, Tarboe?" asked John Grier eagerly. "Do you do these things in the Garden of Eden way, or can you run a bit crooked when it's worth while?"

"If I'd ever seen it worth while, I'd say so. I could run a bit crooked if I was fighting among the big ones, or if we were at war with--Belloc, eh!" A cloud came into the eyes of Tarboe. "If I was fighting Belloc,

and he used a weapon to flay me from behind, I'd never turn my back on him!"

A grim smile came into Tarboe's face. His jaw set almost viciously, his eyes hardened. "You people don't play your game very well, Mr. Grier. I've seen a lot that wants changing."

"Why don't you change it, then?"

Tarboe laughed. "If I was boss like you, I'd change it, but I'm not, and I stick to my own job."

The old man came close to him, and steadily explored his face and eyes. "I've never met anybody like you before. You're the man can do things and won't do them."

"I didn't say that. I said what I meant--that good health is better than everything else in the world, and when you've got it, you should keep it, if you can. I'm going to keep mine."

"Well, keep it in Montreal," said John Grier. "There's a lot doing there worth while. Is fighting worth anything to one that's got aught in him? There's war for the big things. I believe in war." He waved a hand. "What's the difference between the kind of thing you've done to-day, and doing it with the Belloc gang--with the Folsom gang--with the Longville gang--and all the rest? It's the same thing. I was like you when I was young. I could do things you've done to-day while I laid the base of what I've got. How old are you?"

"I'm thirty--almost thirty-one."

"You'll be just as well in Montreal to-morrow as you are here to-day, and you'd be twice as clever," said John Grier. His eyes seemed to pierce those of the younger man. "I like you," he continued, suddenly catching Tarboe's arm. "You're all right, and you wouldn't run straight simply because it was the straight thing to do."

Tarboe threw back his head and laughed and nodded. The old man's eyes twinkled. "By gracious, we're well met! I never was in a bigger hole in my life. One of my sons has left me. I bought him out, and he's joined my enemy Belloc."

"Yes, I know," remarked Tarboe.

"My other son, he's no good. He's as strong as a horse--but he's no good. He paints, he sculps. He doesn't care whether I give him money or not. He earns his living as he wants to earn it. When Fabian left me, I tried Carnac. I offered to take him in permanently. He tried it, but he wouldn't go on. He got out. He's twenty-six. The papers are beginning to talk about him. He doesn't care for that, except that it brings in cash for his statues and pictures. What's the good of painting and statuary, if you can't do the big things?"

"So you think the things you do are as big as the things that Shakespeare, or Tennyson, or Titian, or Van Dyck, or Watt, or Rodin do --or did?"

"Bigger-much bigger," was the reply.

The younger man smiled. "Well, that's the way to look at it, I suppose. Think the thing you do is better than what anybody else does, and you're well started."

"Come and do it too. You're the only man I've cottoned to in years. Come with me, and I'll give you twelve thousand dollars a year; and I'll take you into my business.--I'll give you the best chance you ever had. You've found your health; come back and keep it. Don't you long for the fight, for your finger at somebody's neck? That's what I felt when I was your age, and I did it, and I'm doing it, but I can't do it as I used to. My veins are leaking somewhere." A strange, sad, faded look came into his eyes. "I don't want my business to be broken by Belloc," he added. "Come and help me save it."

"By gosh, I will!" said the young man after a moment, with a sudden thirst in his throat and bite to his teeth. "By gum, yes, I'll go with you."

CHAPTER VII

"AT OUR PRICE?"

West of the city of Montreal were the works and the offices of John Grier. Here it was that a thing was done without which there might have been no real story to tell. It was a night which marked the close of the financial year of the firm.

Upon John Grier had come Carnac. He had brought with him a small statue of a riverman with flannel shirt, scarf about the waist, thick defiant trousers and well-weaponed boots. It was a real figure of the river, buoyant, daring, almost vicious. The head was bare; there were plain gold rings in the ears; and the stark, half-malevolent eyes looked out, as though searching for a jam of logs or some peril of the river. In the horny right hand was a defiant pike-pole, its handle thrust forward, its steel spike stabbing the ground.

At first glance, Carnac saw that John Grier was getting worn and old. The eyes were not so flashing as they once were; the lips were curled in a half-cynical mood. The old look of activity was fading; something vital had struck soul and body. He had had a great year. He had fought Belloc and his son Fabian successfully; he had laid new plans and strengthened his position.

Tarboe coming into the business had made all the difference to him.

Tarboe had imagination, skill and decision, he seldom lost his temper; he kept a strong hand upon himself. His control of men was marvellous; his knowledge of finance was instinctive; his capacity for organization was rare, and he had health unbounded and serene. It was hard to tell what were the principles controlling Tarboe--there was always an element of suspicion in his brown and brilliant eyes. Yet he loved work. The wind of energy seemed to blow through his careless hair. His hands were like iron and steel; his lips were quick and friendly, or ruthless, as seemed needed. To John Grier's eyes he was the epitome of civilization--the warrior without a soul.

When Carnac came in now with the statue tucked under his arm, smiling and self-contained, it seemed as though something had been done by Fate to flaunt John Grier.

With a nod, Carnac put the statue on the table in front of the old man, and said: "It's all right, isn't it? I've lifted that out of the river-life. That's one of the best men you ever had, and he's only one of a thousand. He doesn't belong anywhere. He's a rover, an adventurer, a wanton of the waters. Look at him. He's all right, isn't he?" He asked this again.

The timber-man waved the statue aside, and looked at the youth with critical eyes. "I've just been making up the accounts for the year," he said. "It's been the best year I've had in seven. I've taken the starch out of Belloc and Fabian. I've broken the back of their opposition--I've got it like a twig in iron teeth."

"Yes, Tarboe's been some use, hasn't he?" was the suggestive response.

John Grier's eyes hardened. "You might have done it. You had it in you. The staff of life--courage and daring--were yours, and you wouldn't take it on. What's the result? I've got a man who's worth two of Fabian and Belloc. And you"--he held up a piece of paper--"see that," he broke off. "See that. It's my record. That's what I'm worth. That's what you might have handled!" He took a cigar from his pocket, cut off the blunt end, and continued: "You threw your chance aside." He tapped the paper with the point of the cigar. "That's what Tarboe has helped do. What have you got to show?" He pointed to the statue. "I won't say it ain't good. It's a live man from the river. But what do I want with that, when I can have the original man himself! My boy, the great game of life is to fight hard, and never to give in. If you keep your eyes open, things'll happen that'll bring what you want."

He stood up, striking a match to light his cigar. It was dusk, and the light of the match gave a curious, fantastic glimmer to his powerful, weird, haggard face. He was like some remnant of a great life, loose in a careless world.

"I tell you," he said, the smoke leaking from his mouth like a drift of snow," the only thing worth doing is making the things that matter in the commerce and politics of the world."

"I didn't know you were a politician," said Carnac. "Of course I'm a politician," was the inflammable reply. "What's commerce without politics? It's politics that makes the commerce possible. There's that fellow Barouche--Barode Barouche--he's got no money, but he's a Minister, and he can make you rich or poor by planning legislation at Ottawa that'll benefit or hamper you. That's the kind of business that's worth doing--seeing into the future, fashioning laws that make good men happy and bad men afraid. Don't I know! I'm a master-man in my business; nothing defeats me. To me, a forest of wild wood is the future palace of a Prime Minister. A great river is a pathway to the palace, and all the thousands of men that work the river are the adventurers that bring the booty home--"

"That bring 'the palace to Paris,' eh!" interrupted Carnac, laughing.

"Paris be damned--that bring the forest to Quebec. How long did it take you to make that?" he added with a nod towards the statue.

"Oh, I did it in a day--six hours, I think; and he stood like that for three hours out of the six. He was great, but he'd no more sense of civilization than I have of Heaven."

"You don't need to have a sense of Heaven, you need to have a sense of Hell. That prevents you from spoiling your own show. You're playing with life's vital things."

"I wonder how much you've got out of it all, father," Carnac remarked with a smile. He lit a cigarette. "You do your job in style. It's been a great career, yours. You've made your big business out of nothing."

"I had something to start with. Your grandfather had a business worth not much, but it was a business, and the fundamental thing is to have machinery to work with when you start life. I had that. My father was narrow, contracted and a blunderer, but he made good in a small way."

"And you in a big way," said Carnac, with admiration and criticism in his eyes.

He realized that John Grier had summed him up fairly when he said he was playing with life's vital things. Somehow, he saw the other had a grip upon essentials lacking in himself; he had his tooth in the orange, as it were, and was sucking the juice of good profit from his labours. Yet he knew how much trickery and vital evasion and harsh aggression there were in his father's business life.

As yet he had never seen Tarboe--he had been away in the country the whole year nearly--but he imagined a man of strength, abilities, penetration and deep power. He knew that only a man with savage instincts could work successfully with John Grier; he knew that Grier was without mercy in his business, and that his best year's work had been marked by a mandatory power which only a malevolent policy could produce. Yet, somehow, he had a feeling that Tarboe had a steadying influence on John Grier. The old man was not so uncontrolled as in bygone days.

"I'd like to see Tarboe," Carnac said suddenly. "He ain't the same as you," snapped John Grier. "He's bigger, broader, and buskier." A malicious smile crossed over his face. "He's a bandit--that's what he is. He's got a chest like a horse and lungs like the ocean. When he's got a thing, he's got it like a nail in a branch of young elm. He's a dandy, that fellow." Suddenly passion came to his eyes. "You might have done it, you've got the brains, and the sense, but you ain't got the ambition. You keep feeling for a thousand things instead of keeping your grip on one. The man that succeeds fastens hard on what he wants to do--the one big thing, and he does it, thinking of naught else."

"Well, that's good preaching," remarked Carnac coolly. "But it doesn't mean that a man should stick to one thing, if he finds out he's been wrong about it? We all make mistakes. Perhaps some day I'll wish I'd gone with you."

Grimness came into the old man's face. Something came into his eyes that was strange and revealing.

"Well, I hope you will. But you had your chance with me, and you threw it down like a piece of rotten leather."

"I don't cost you anything," returned Carnac. "I've paid my own way a long time--with mother's help."

"And you're twenty-six years old, and what have you got? Enough to give you bread from day to day--no more. I was worth seventy thousand dollars when I was your age. I'm worth enough to make a prince rich, and if I'd been treated right by those I brought into the world I'd be worth twice as much. Fabian was good as far as he went, but he was a coward. You"--a look of fury entered the dark eyes--"you were no coward, but you didn't care a damn. You wanted to paddle about with muck of imagination--" he pointed to the statue on the table.

"Why, your business has been great because of your imagination," was the retort. "You saw things ahead with the artist's eye. You planned with the artist's mind; and brought forth what's to your honour and credit--and the piling up of your bank balance. The only thing that could have induced me to work in your business is the looking ahead and planning, seeing the one thing to be played off against the other, the fighting of strong men, the politics, all the forces which go to make or break your business. Well, I didn't do it, and I'm not sorry. I have a gift which, by training and development, will give me a place among the men who do things, if I have good luck--good luck!"

He dwelt upon these last words with an intensity which dreaded something. There was retrospection in his eyes. A cloud seemed to cross his face.

A strong step crunching the path stopped the conversation, and presently there appeared the figure of Tarboe. Certainly the new life had not changed Tarboe, had not altered his sturdy, strenuous nature. His brown eyes under the rough thatch of his eyebrow took in the room with

lightning glance, and he nodded respectfully, yet with great friendliness, at John Grier. He seemed to have news, and he glanced with doubt at Carnac.

John Grier understood. "Go ahead. What's happened?"

"Nothing that can't wait till I'm introduced to your son," rejoined Tarboe.

With a friendly look, free from all furtiveness, Carnac reached out a hand, small, graceful, firm. As Tarboe grasped it in his own big paw, he was conscious of a strength in the grip which told him that the physical capacity of the "painter-fellow," as he afterwards called Carnac, had points worthy of respect. On the instant, there was admiration on the part of each--admiration and dislike. Carnac liked the new-comer for his healthy bearing, for the iron hardness of his head, and for the intelligence of his dark eyes. He disliked him, however, for something that made him critical of his father, something covert and devilishly alert. Both John Grier and Tarboe were like two old backwoodsmen, eager to reach their goal, and somewhat indifferent to the paths by which they travelled to it.

Tarboe, on the other hand, admired the frank, pleasant face of the young man, which carried still the irresponsibility of youth, but which conveyed to the watchful eye a brave independence, a fervid, and perhaps futile, challenge to all the world. Tarboe understood that this young man had a frankness dangerous to the business of life, yet which, properly applied, might bring great results. He disliked Carnac for his uncalculating candour; but he realized that, behind all, was something disturbing to his life.

"It's a woman," Tarboe said to himself, "it's a woman. He's made a fool of himself."

Tarboe was right. He had done what no one else had done--he had pierced the cloud surrounding Carnac: it was a woman.

"I hear you're pulling things off here," remarked Carnac civilly. "He says"--pointing to John Grier--"that you're making the enemy squirm."

Tarboe nodded, and a half-stealthy smile crept across his face. "I don't think we've lost anything coming our way," he replied. "We've had good luck--"

"And our eyes were open," intervened John Grier. "You push the brush and use the chisel, don't you?" asked Tarboe in spite of himself with slight scorn in his tone.

"I push the chisel and use the brush," answered Carnac, smilingly correcting him.

"That's a good thing. Is it yours?" asked Tarboe, nodding and pointing to the statue of the riverman. Carnac nodded. "Yes, I did that one day.

I'd like to do you, if you'd let me."

The young giant waved a brawny hand and laughed. He looked down at his knee-boots, with their muddied soles, and then at the statue again on the table. "I don't mind you're doing me. Turn about is fair play.

"I've done you out of your job." Then he added to the old man: "It's good news I've got. I've made the contract with the French firm at our price."

"At our price!" remarked the other with a grim smile. "For the lot?"

"Yes, for the lot, and I've made the contracts with the ships to carry it."

"At our price?" again asked the old man. Tarboe nodded. "Just a little better."

"I wouldn't have believed those two things could have been done in the time." Grier rubbed his hands cheerfully. "That's a good day's work. It's the best you've done since you've come."

Carnac watched the scene with interest. No envy moved him, his soul was free from malice. Evidently Tarboe was a man of power. Ruthless he might be, ruthless and unsparing, but a man of power.

At that instant a clerk entered with a letter in his hand. "Mrs. Grier said to give you this," he remarked to Carnac, handing it to him.

Carnac took it and the clerk departed. The letter had an American postmark, and the handwriting on the letter brought trouble to his eyes. He composed himself, however, and tore off the end of the envelope, taking out the letter.

It was brief. It contained only a few lines, but as Carnac read them the colour left his face. "Good God!" he said to himself. Then he put the paper in his pocket, and, with a forced smile and nod to his father and Tarboe, left the office.

"That's queer. The letter seemed to get him in the vitals," said John Grier with surprise.

Tarboe nodded, and said to himself: "It's a woman all right." He smiled to himself also. He had wondered why Carnac and Junia Shale had not come to an understanding. The letter which had turned Carnac pale was the interpretation.

"Say, sit down, Tarboe," said John Grier. "I want to talk with you."

JOHN GRIER MAKES ANOTHER OFFER

"I've been keeping my eye on you, Tarboe," John Grier said presently, his right hand clutching unconsciously the statue which his boy had left with him.

"I didn't suppose you'd forget me when I was making or breaking you."

"You're a winner, Tarboe. You've got sense and judgment, and you ain't afraid to get your own way by any route."

He paused, and gripped the statue closely in his hands.

Tarboe nodded. In the backwoods he had been without ambition save to be master of what he was doing and of the men who were part of his world of responsibility. Then John Grier had pulled him back into industry and he had since desired to ascend, to "make good." Also, he had seen Junia often, and for her an aspiration had sprung up in him like a fire in a wild place.

When he first saw her, she was standing in the doorway through which Carnac had just passed. The brightness of her face, the wonder of her eyes, the glow of her cheek, had made his pulses throb as they had never throbbed before. He had put the thought of her away from him, but it had come back constantly until he had found himself looking for her in the street, and on the hill that led to John Grier's house.

Tarboe realized that the girl was drawn towards Carnac, and that Carnac was drawn towards the girl, but that some dark depths lay between. The letter Carnac had just received seemed to him the plumbline of that abyss. Carnac and the girl were suited to each other--that was clear; and the girl was enticing, provoking and bewildering--that was the modelling fact. He had satisfaction that he had displaced Carnac in this great business, and there was growing in him a desire to take away the chances of the girl from Carnac also. With his nature it was inevitable. Life to him was now a puzzle towards the solution of which he moved with conquering conviction.

From John Grier's face now, he realized that something was to be said affecting his whole career. It would, he was sure, alter his foot-steps in the future. He had a profound respect for the little wiry man, with the firm body and shrivelled face.

Tarboe watched the revealing expression of the old man's face and the motions of his body. He noticed that the tight grip of the hand on the little statue of the riverman had made the fingers pale. He realized how absorbed was the lumber-king, who had given him more confidence than he had given to anyone else in the world. As near as he could come to anyone, he had come to John Grier. There had been differences between them, but he, Tarboe, fought for his own idea, and, in nine cases out of ten, had conquered. John Grier had even treated Tarboe's solutions as though they were his own. He had a weird faith in the young giant. He

saw now Tarboe's eyes fixed on his fingers, and he released his grip.

"That's the thing between him and me, Tarboe," he said, nodding towards the virile bronze. "Think of my son doing that when he could do all this!" He swept his arm in a great circle which included the horizon beyond the doors and the windows. "It beats me, and because it beats me, and because he defies me, I've made up my mind what to do."

"Don't do anything you'd be sorry for, boss. He ain't a fool because he's not what you are." He nodded towards the statue. "You think that's pottering. I think it's good stuff. It will last, perhaps, when what you and I do is forgotten."

There was something big and moving in Tarboe. He was a contradiction. A lover of life, he was also reckless in how he got what he wanted. If it could not be got by the straight means, then it must be by the crooked, and that was where he and Grier lay down together, as it were. Yet he had some knowledge that was denied to John Grier. The soul of the greater things was in him.

"Give the boy a chance to work out his life in his own way," he said manfully. "You gave him a chance to do it in your way, and you were turned down. Have faith in him. He'll probably come out all right in the end.

"You mean he'll come my way?" asked the old man almost rabidly. "You mean he'll do the things I want him to do here, as you've done?"

"I guess so," answered Tarboe, but without conviction in his tone. "I'm not sure whether it will be like that or not, but I know you've got a son as honest as the stars, and the honest man gets his own in the end."

There was silence for some time, then the old man began walking up and down the room, softly, noiselessly.

"You talk sense," he said. "I care for that boy, but I care for my life's work more. Day in, day out, night in, night out, I've slaved for it, prayed for it, believed in it, and tried to make my wife and my boys feel as I do about it, and none of them cares as I care. Look at Fabian --over with the enemy, fighting his own father; look at Carnac, out in the open, taking his own way." He paused.

"And your wife?" asked Tarboe almost furtively, because it seemed to him that the old man was most unhappy in that particular field.

"She's been a good wife, but she don't care as I do for success and money."

"Perhaps you never taught her," remarked Tarboe with silky irony.

"Taught her! What was there to teach? She saw me working; she knew the life I had to live; she was lifted up with me. I was giving her everything in me to give."

"You mean money and a big house and servants and comfort," said Tarboe sardonically.

"Well, ain't that right?" snapped the other.

"Yes, it's all right, but it don't always bring you what you want. It's right, but it's wrong too. Women want more than that, boss. Women want to be loved--sky high."

All at once Grier felt himself as far removed from Tarboe as he had ever been from Carnac, or his wife. Why was it? Suddenly Tarboe understood that between him and John Grier there must always be a flood. He realized that there was in Grier some touch of the insane thing; something apart, remote and terrible. He was convinced of it, when he saw Grier suddenly spring up, and pace the room again like a tortured animal.

"You've got great influence with me," he said. "I was just going to tell you something that'd give you pleasure, but what you've said about my boy coming back has made me change what I was going to do. I don't need to say I like you. We were born in the same nest almost. We've got the same ideas."

"Almost," intervened Tarboe. "Not quite, but almost."

"Well, this is what I've got to say. You've got youth, courage, and good sense, and business ability, and what more does a man want in life, I ask you that?" Tarboe nodded, but made no reply.

"Well, I don't feel as strong as I used to do. I've been breaking up this last year, just when we've been knitting the cracks in the building. What was in my mind is this--to leave you when I die the whole of my business to keep it a success, and get in the way of Belloc, and pay my wife so much a year to live on."

"That wouldn't be fair to your wife or your sons."

"As for Carnac, if I left him the business it'd be dead in two years. Nothing could save it. He'd spoil it, because he don't care for it. I bought Fabian out. As for my wife, she couldn't run it, and--"

"You could sell it," interrupted Tarboe.

"Sell it! Sell it!" said Grier wildly. "Sell it to whom?"

"To Belloc," was the malicious reply. The demon of anger seized the old man.

"You say that to me--you--that I should sell to Belloc! By hell, I'd rather burn every stick and board and tree I've got--sweep it out of existence, and die a beggar than sell it to Belloc!" Froth gathered at the corners of his mouth, there was tumult in his eyes. "Belloc!

Knuckle down to him! Sell out to him!"

"Well, if you got a profit of twenty per cent. above what it's worth it might be well. That'd be a triumph, not a defeat."

"I see what you mean," said John Grier, the passion slowly going from his eyes. "I see what you mean, but that ain't my way. I want this business to live. I want Grier's business to live long after John Grier has gone. That's why I was going to say to you that in my will I'm going to leave you this business, you to pay my wife every year twenty thousand dollars." "And your son, Carnac?"

"Not a sou--not a sou--not a sou--nothing--that's what I meant at first. But I've changed my mind now. I'm going to leave you the business, if you'll make a bargain with me. I want you to run it for three years, and take for yourself all the profits over the twenty thousand dollars a year that goes to my wife. There's a lot of money in it, the way you'd work it."

"I don't understand about the three years," said Tarboe, with rising colour.

"No, because I haven't told you, but you'll take it in now. I'm going to leave you the business as though you were going to have it for ever, but I'll make another will dated a week later, in which I leave it to Carnac. Something you said makes me think he might come right, and it will be playing fair to him to let him run himself alone, maybe with help from his mother, for three years. That's long enough, and perhaps the thought of what he might have had will work its way with him. If it don't--well, it won't; that's all; but I want you to have the business long enough to baulk Belloc and Fabian the deserter. I want you for three years to fight this fight after I'm gone. In that second secret will, I'll leave you two hundred thousand dollars. Are you game for it? Is it worthwhile?"

The old man paused, his head bent forward, his eyes alert and searching, both hands gripping the table. There was a long silence, in which the ticking of the clock upon the wall seemed unduly loud and in which the buzz of cross-cut saws came sounding through the evening air. Yet Tarboe did not reply.

"Have you nothing to say?" asked Grier at last. "Won't you do it--eh?"

"I'm studying the thing out," answered Tarboe quietly. "I don't quite see about these two wills. Why shouldn't the second will be found first?"

"Because you and I will be the only ones that'll know of it. That shows how much I trust you, Tarboe. I'll put it away where nobody can get it except you or me."

"But if anything should happen to me?"

"Well, I'd leave a letter with my bank, not to be opened for three years, or unless you died, and it would say that the will existed, where it was, and what its terms were."

"That sounds all right," but there was a cloud on Tarboe's face.

"It's a great business," said Grier, seeing Tarboe's doubt. "It's the biggest thing a man can do--and I'm breaking up."

The old man had said the right thing--"It's a great business!" It was the greatness of the thing that had absorbed Tarboe. It was the bigness made him feel life could be worth living, if the huge machinery were always in his fingers. Yet he had never expected it, and life was a problem. Who could tell? Perhaps--perhaps, the business would always be his in spite of the second will! Perhaps, he would have his chance to make good. He got to his feet; he held out his hand.

"I'll do it."

"Ain't it worth any thanks?"

"Not between us," declared Tarboe.

"When are you going to do it?"

"To-night--now." He drew out some paper and sat down with a pen in his hand.

"Now," John Grier repeated.

CHAPTER IX

THE PUZZLE

On his way home, with Luzanne's disturbing letter in his pocket, Carnac met Junia. She was supremely Anglo-Saxon; fresh, fervid and buoyant with an actual buoyancy of the early spring. She had tact and ability, otherwise she could never have preserved peace between the contending factions, Belloc and Fabian, old John Grier, the mother and Carnac. She was as though she sought for nothing, wished nothing but the life in which she lived. Yet her wonderful pliability, her joyful boyishness, had behind all a delicate anxiety which only showed in flashes now and then, fully understood by no one except Carnac's mother and old Denzil. These two having suffered strangely in life had realized that the girl was always waiting for a curtain to rise which did not rise, for a voice to speak which gave no sound.

Yet since Carnac's coming back there had appeared a slight change in her, a bountiful, eager alertness, a sense of wonder and experiment, adding new interest to her personality. Carnac was conscious of this increased

vitality, was impressed and even provoked by it. Somehow he felt--for he had the telepathic mind--that the girl admired and liked Tarboe. He did not stop to question how or why she should like two people so different as Tarboe and himself.

The faint colour of the crimsoning maples was now in her cheek; the light of the autumn evening was in her eyes; the soft vitality of September was in her motions. She was attractively alive. Her hair waved back from her forehead with natural grace; her small feet, with perfect ankles, made her foothold secure and sedately joyous. Her brown hand--yet not so brown after all--held her hat lightly, and was, somehow, like a signal out of a world in which his hopes were lost for the present.

She was dearer to him than all the rest of the world; and he had in his hand what kept them apart--a sentence of death, unless he escaped from the wanton calling him to fulfil duties into which he had been tricked. Luzanne Larue had a terrible hold over him. He gripped the letter in his pocket as a Hopi Indian does the body of a poisonous snake. The rosy sunset gave the girl's face a reflected spiritual glamour; it made her, suddenly, a bewildering figure. Somehow, she seemed a great distance from him--as one detached and unfamiliar.

He suddenly felt she knew more than it was possible she should know. As she flashed an inquiry into his eyes, it was as though she said: "Why don't you tell me everything, and I will help you?" Or, was it: "Why don't you tell me everything and end it all?" He longed to press her to his breast, as he had once done in the woods when Denzil had been injured, but that was not possible. The thought of that far-off day made him say to her, rather futilely:

"How is Denzil? How is Denzil?"

There was swift surprise in her face. She seemed dumbfounded, and then she said:

"Denzil! He's all right, but he does not like your Mr. Tarboe."

"My Mr. Tarboe! Where do I come in?"

"Well, he's got what you ought to have had," was the reply. "What you would have had, weren't you a foolish fellow."

"I still don't understand how he is my Mr. Tarboe."

"Well, he wouldn't have been in your father's life if it weren't for you; if you had done what your father wished you to do, had--"

"Had sold myself for gold--my freedom, my health, everything to help my father's business! I don't see why he should expect that what he's doing some one else should do--"

"That Belloc would do, that Belloc and Fabian would do," said the girl.

"Yes, that's it--what they two would do. There's no genius in it, though my father comes as near being a genius as any man alive. But there's a screw loose somewhere. . . . It wasn't good enough for me. It didn't give me a chance--in things that are of the mind, the spirit--my particular gifts, whatever they are. They would have chafed against that life."

"In other words, you're a genius, which your father isn't," the girl said almost sarcastically.

A disturbed look came into Carnac's eyes. "I'd have liked my father to be a genius. Then we'd have hit it off together. I don't ever feel the things he does are the things I want to do; or the things he says are those I'd like to say. He's a strange man. He lives alone. He never was really near Fabian or me. We were his sons, but though Fabian is a little bit like him in appearance, I'm not, and never was. I always feel that--" He paused, and she took up the tale:

"That he wasn't the father you'd have made for yourself, eh!"

"I suppose that's it. Conceit, ain't it? Perhaps the facts are, I'm one of the most useless people that ever wore a coat. Perhaps the things I do aren't going to live beyond me."

"It seems as though your father's business is going to live after him, doesn't it?" the girl asked mockingly. "Where are you going now?" she added.

"Well, I'm going to take you home," he said, as he turned and walked by her side down the hill.

"Denzil will be glad to see you. He almost thinks I'm a curse."

Carnac smiled. "All genius is at once a blessing or a curse. And what does Denzil think of me?"

"Oh--a blessing and a curse!" she said whimsically.

"I don't honestly think I'm a blessing to anybody in this world. There's no one belonging to me who believes in me."

"There's Denzil," she said. "He believes in you."

"He doesn't belong to me; he isn't my family."

"Who are your family? Is it only those who are bone of your bone and flesh of your flesh? Your family is much wider, because you're a genius. It's worldwide--of all kinds. Denzil belongs to you, because you helped to save him years ago; the Catholic Archbishop belongs to you, because he's got brains and a love of literature and art; Barode Barouche belongs to you, because he's almost a genius too."

"Barouche is a politician," said Carnac with slight derision.

"That's no reason why he shouldn't be a genius."

"He's a Frenchman."

"Haven't Frenchmen genius?" asked the girl.

Carnac laughed. "Why, of course. Barode Barouche--yes, he's a great one: he can think, he can write, and he can talk; and the talking's the best that he does--though I've not heard him speak, but I've read his speeches."

"Doesn't he make good laws at Ottawa?"

"He makes laws at Ottawa--whether they're good or not is another question. I shouldn't be a follower of his, if I had my chance though."

"That's because you're not French."

"Oh yes, I'm as French as can be! I felt at home with the French when I was in France. I was all Gallic. When I'm here I'm more Gallic than Saxon.

"I don't understand it. Here am I, with all my blood for generations Saxon, and yet I feel French. If I'd been born in the old country, it would have been in Limerick or Tralee. I'd have been Celtic there."

"Yet Barode Barouche is a great man. He gets drunk sometimes, but he's great. He gets hold of men like Denzil."

"Denzil has queer tastes."

"Yes--he worships you."

"That's not queer, it's abnormal," said Carnac with gusto.

"Then I'm abnormal," she said with a mocking laugh, and swung her hat on her fingers like a wheel. Something stormy and strange swam in Carnac's eyes. All his trouble rushed back on him; the hand in his pocket crushed the venomous letter he had received, but he said:

"No, you don't worship me!"

"Who was it said all true intelligence is the slave of genius?" she questioned, a little paler than usual, her eye on the last gleam of the sun.

"I don't know who said it, but if that's why you worship me, I know how hollow it all is," he declared sullenly, for she was pouring carbolic acid into a sore.

He wanted to drag the letter from his pocket and hand it her to read; to tell her the whole distressful story: but he dared not. He longed for

her, and yet he dared not tell her so. He half drew the letter from his pocket, but thrust it back again. Tell this innocent girl the whole ugly story? It could not be done. There was but one thing to do--to go away, to put this world of French Canada behind him, and leave her free to follow her fancy, or some one else's fancy.

Or some one else's fancy? There was Tarboe. Tarboe had taken from him the place in the business which should be his; he had displaced him in his father's affections . . . and now Junia!

He held out a hand to the girl. "I must go and see my mother."

His eyes abashed her. She realized there was trouble in the face of the man who all her life had been strangely near and dear to her. With impulsiveness, she said "You're in trouble, Carnac. Let me help you."

For one swift instant he almost yielded. Then he gripped her hand and said: "No-no-no. It can't be done--not yet."

"Then let Denzil help you. Here he is," she remarked, and she glanced affectionately at the greyish, tousled head of the habitant who was working in the garden of her father's house.

Carnac was master of himself again. "Not a bad idea," he said. "Denzil! Denzil!" he called.

The little man looked up. An instant later the figure of the girl fluttered through the doorway of her home, and Carnac stopped beside Denzil in the garden.

CHAPTER X

DENZIL TELLS HIS STORY

"You keep going, Denzil," remarked Carnac as he lighted his pipe and came close to the old servant.

The face of the toiler lighted, the eyes gazed kindly, at Carnac. "What else is there to do? We must go on. There's no standing still in the world. We must go on--surelee."

"Even when it's hard going, eh?" asked Carnac, not to get an answer so much as to express his own feelings. "Yes, that's right, m'sieu'; that's how it is. We can't stand still even when it's hard going--but, no, bagosh!"

He realized that around Carnac there was a shadow which took its toll of light and life. He had the sound instinct of primitive man. Strangely enough in his own eyes was the look in those of Carnac, a past, hovering on the brink of revelation. His appearance was that of one who had

suffered; his knotted hands, dark with warm blood, had in them a story of life's sorrows; his broad shoulders were stooped with the inertia of long regret; his feet clung to the ground as though there was a great weight above them. But a smile shimmered at his mouth, giving to his careworn face something almost beautiful, lifting the darkness from his powerful, shaggy forehead. Many men knew Denzil by sight, few knew him in actual being. There was a legend that once he was about to be married, but the girl had suddenly gone mad and drowned herself in the river. No one thought it strange that a month later the eldest son of the Tarboe family had been found dead in the woods with a gun in his hand and a bullet through his heart. No one had ever linked the death of Denzil's loved one with that of Almeric Tarboe.

It was unusual for a Frenchman to give up his life to an English family, but that is what he had done, and of late he had watched Junia with new eager solicitude. The day she first saw Tarboe had marked an exciting phase in her life.

Denzil had studied her, and he knew vaguely that a fresh interest, disturbing, electrifying, had entered into her. Because it was Tarboe, the fifteen years younger brother of that Almeric Tarboe who had died a month after his own girl had left this world, his soul was fighting-- fighting.

As the smoke of Carnac's pipe came curling into the air, Denzil put on his coat, and laid the hoe and rake on his shoulder.

"Yes, even when it's hard going we still have to march on--name of God, yes!" he repeated, and he looked at Carnac quizzically.

"Where are you going? Don't you want to talk to me?"

"I'm going home, m'sieu'. If you'll come with me I'll give you a drink of hard cider, the best was ever made."

"I'll come. Denzil, I've never been in your little house. That's strange, when I've known you so many years."

"It's not too late to mend, m'sieu'. There ain't much in it, but it's all I need."

Carnac stepped with Denzil towards the little house, just in front of three pine-trees on the hill, and behind Junia's home.

"I always lock my door--always," said Denzil as he turned a key and opened the door.

They entered into the cool shade of a living-room. There was little furniture, yet against the wall was a kind of bunk, comfortable and roomy, on which was stretched the skin of a brown bear. On the wall above it was a crucifix, and on the opposite wall was the photograph of a girl, good-looking, refined, with large, imaginative eyes, and a face that might have been a fortune.

Carnac gazed at it for a moment, absorbed. "That was your girl, Denzil, wasn't it?" he asked.

Denzil nodded. "The best the world ever had, m'sieu'," he replied, "the very best, but she went queer and drowned herself--ah, but yes!"

"She just went queer, eh!" Carnac said, looking Denzil straight in the eyes. "Was there insane blood in her family?"

"She wasn't insane," answered Denzil firmly. "She'd been bad used--terrible."

"That didn't come out at the inquest, did it?"

"Not likely. She wrote it me. I'm telling you what I've never told anyone." He shut the door, as though to make a confessional. "She wrote it me, and I wasn't telling anyone--but no. She'd been away down at Quebec City, and there a man got hold of her. Almeric Tarboe it was--the older brother of Luke Tarboe at John Grier's." Suddenly the face of the little man went mad with emotion. "I--I--" he paused.

Carnac held up his hand. "No-no-no, don't tell me. Tarboe--I understand, the Unwritten Law. You haven't told me, but I understand. I remember: he was found in the woods with his gun in his hand--dead. I read it all by accident long ago; and that was the story, eh!"

"Yes. She was young, full of imagination. She loved me, but he was clever, and he was high up, and she was low down. He talked her blind, and then in the woods it was, in the woods where he died, that he--"

Suddenly the little man wrung his fingers like one robbed of reason. "He was a strongman," he went on, "and she was a girl, weak, but not wanton . . . and so she died, telling me, loving me--so she died, and so he died, too, in the woods with his gun in his hand. Yes, 'twas done with his own gun--by accident--by accident! He stumbled, and the gun went off. That was the story at the inquest. No one knew I was there. I was never seen with him and I've never been sorry. He got what he deserved--sacre, yes!"

There was something overwhelming in the face of the little resolute, powerful man. His eyes were aflame. He was telling for the first time the story of his lifelong agony and shame.

"It had to be done. She was young, so sweet, so good, aye, she was good--in her soul she was good, ah, surelee. That's why she died in the pond. No one knew. The inquest did not bring out anything, but that's why he died; and ever since I've been mourning; life has no rest for me. I'm not sorry for what I did. I've told it you because you saved me years ago when I fell down the bank. You were only fourteen then, but I've never forgotten. And she, that sweet young lady, she--she was there too; and now when I look at this Tarboe, the brother of that man, and see her and know what I know--sacre!" He waved a hand. "No-no-no,

don't think there's anything except what's in the soul. That man has touched ma'm'selle--I don't know why, but he has touched her heart. Perhaps by his great bulk, his cleverness, his brains, his way of doing things. In one sense she's his slave, because she doesn't want to think of him, and she does. She wants to think of you--and she does--ah, bagosh, yes!"

"Yes, I understand," remarked Carnac morosely. "I understand."

"Then why do you let her be under Tarboe's influence? Why don't--"

Carnac thrust out a hand that said silence. "Denzil, I'll never forget what you've told me about yourself. Some day you'll have to tell it to the priest, and then--"

"I'll never tell it till I'm on my death-bed. Then I'll tell it, sacre bapteme, yes!"

"You're a bad Catholic, Denzil," remarked Carnac with emotion, but a smile upon his face.

"I may be a bad Catholic, but the man deserved to die, and he died. What's the difference, so far as the world's concerned, whether he died by accident, or died--as he died. It's me that feels the fury of the damned, and want my girl back every hour: and she can't come. But some day I'll go to M'sieu' Luke Tarboe, and tell him the truth, as I've told it you--bagosh, yes!"

"I think he'd try and kill you, if you did. That's the kind of man he is."

"You think if he knew the truth he'd try and kill me--he!"

Carnac paused. He did not like to say everything in his mind. "Do you think he'd say much and do little?"

"I dunno, I dunno, but I'll tell him the truth and take my chance." Suddenly he swung round and stretched out appealing hands. "Haven't you got any sense, m'sieu'? Don't you see what you should do? Ma'm'selle Junia cares for you. I know it--I've seen it in her eyes often--often."

With sudden vehemence Carnac caught the wrists of the other. "It can't be, Denzil. I can't tell you why yet. I'm going away. If Tarboe wants her--good--good; I must give her a chance."

Denzil shrank. "There's something wrong, m'sieu'," he said. Then his eyes fastened on Carnac's. Suddenly, with a strange, shining light in them, he added "It will all come right for you and her. I'll live for that. If you go away, I'll take good care of her."

"Even if--" Carnac paused.

"Yes, even if he makes love to her. He'll want to marry her, surelee."

"Well, that's not strange," remarked Carnac.

CHAPTER XI

CARNAC'S TALK WITH HIS MOTHER

Carnac went slowly towards his father's house on the hill. Fixed, as his mind was, upon all that had just happened, his eye took fondly from the gathering dusk pictures which the artist's mind cherishes--the long roadway, with the maples and pines, the stump fences; behind which lay the garnered fields, where the plough had made ready the way for the Fall wheat; the robins twittering in the scattered trees; the cooing of the wood-pigeon; over all, the sky in its perfect purpling blue, and far down the horizon the evening-star slowly climbing. He noted the lizards slipping through the stones; he saw where the wheel of a wagon had crushed some wild flower-growth; he heard the far call of a milkmaid to the cattle; he caught the sweet breath of decaying verdure, and through all, the fresh, biting air of the new-land autumn, pleasantly stinging his face.

Something kept saying to his mind: "It's all good. It's life and light, and all good." But his nerves were being tried; his whole nature was stirred.

He took the letter from his pocket again, and read it in the fading light. It was native, naive, brutal, and unconsciously clever--and the girl who had written it was beautiful. It had only a few lines. It asked him why he had deserted her, his wife. It said that he would find American law protected the deluded stranger. It asked if he had so soon forgotten the kisses he had given her, and did he not realize they were married? He felt that, with her, beneath all, there was more than malice; there was a passion which would run risks to secure its end.

A few moments later he was in the room where his mother, with her strong, fine, lonely face, sat sewing by the window. The door opened squarely on her, and he saw how refined and sad, yet self-contained, was the woman who had given him birth. The look in her eyes warmly welcomed him. Her own sorrows made her sensitive to those of others, and as Carnac entered she saw something was vexing him.

"Dear lad!" she said.

He was beside her now, and he kissed her cheek. "Best of all the world," he said; and he did not see that she shrank a little.

"Are you in trouble?" she asked, and her hand touched his shoulder.

The wrong she had done him long ago vexed her. It was not possible this boy could fit in with a life where, in one sense, he did not belong. It

was not part of her sorrow that he had given himself to painting and sculpture. In her soul she believed this might be best for him in the end. She had a surreptitious, an almost anguished, joy in the thought that he and John Grier could not hit it off. It seemed natural that both men, ignorant of their own tragedy, believing themselves to be father and son, should feel for each other the torture of distance, a misunderstanding, which only she and one other human being understood.

John Grier was not the boy's father. Carnac was the son of Barode Barouche.

After a moment he said: "Mother, I know why I've come to you. It's because I feel when I'm in trouble, I get helped by being with you."

"How do I help, my boy?" she asked with a sad smile, for he had said the thing dearest to her heart.

"When I'm with you, I seem to get a hold on myself. I've always had a strange feeling about you. I felt when I was a child that you're two people; one that lives on some distant, lonely prairie, silent, shadowy and terribly loving; and the other, a vocal person, affectionate, alert, good and generous."

He paused, but she only shook her head. After a moment he continued: "I know you aren't happy, mother, but maybe you once were--at the start."

She got to her feet, and drew herself up.

"I'm happy in your love, but all the rest--is all the rest. It isn't your father's fault wholly. He was busy; he forgot me. Dear, dear boy, never give up your soul to things only, keep it for people."

She was naturally straight and composed; yet as she stood there, she had a certain lonely splendour like some soft metal burning. Among her fellow-citizens she had place and position, but she took no lead; she was always an isolated attachment of local enterprises. It was in her own house where her skill and adaptability had success. She had brought into her soul misery and martyrdom, and all martyrs are lonely and apart.

Sharp visions of what she was really flashed through Carnac's mind, and he said:

"Mother, there must be something wrong with you and me. You were naturally a great woman, and sometimes I have a feeling I might be a great man, but I don't get started for it. I suppose, you once had an idea you'd play a big part in the world?"

"Girls have dreams," she answered with moist eyes, "and at times I thought great things might come to me; but I married and got lost."

"You got lost?" asked Carnac anxiously, for there was a curious note in her voice.

She tried to change the effect of her words.

"Yes, I lost myself in somebody else's ambitions I lost myself in the storm."

Carnac laughed. "Father was always a blizzard, wasn't he? Now here, now there, he rushed about making money, humping up his business, and yet why shouldn't you have ranged beside him. I don't understand."

"No, that's the bane of life," she replied. "We don't understand each other. I can't understand why you don't marry Junia. You love her. You don't understand why I couldn't play as big a part as your father-- I couldn't. He was always odd--masterful and odd, and I never could do just as he liked."

There was yearning sadness in her eyes. "Dear Carnac, John Grier is a whirlwind, but he's also a still pool in which currents are secretly twisting, turning. His imagination, his power is enormous; but he's Oriental, a barbarian."

"You mean he might have had twenty wives?"

"He might have had twenty, and he'd have been the same to all of them, because they play no part, except to make his home a place where his body can live. That's the kind of thing, when a wife finds it out, that either kills her slowly, or drives her mad."

"It didn't kill you, mother," remarked Carnac with a little laugh.

"No, it didn't kill me."

"And it didn't drive you mad," he continued.

She looked at him with burning intensity. "Oh, yes, it did--but I became sane again." She gazed out of the window, down the hillside. "Your father will soon be home. Is there anything you want to say before that?"

Carnac wanted to tell his tragic story, but it was difficult. He caught his mother's hand.

"What's the matter, Carnac? You are in trouble. I can see it in your eyes--I feel it. Is it money?" she asked. She knew it was not, yet she could not help but ask. He shook his head in negation.

"Is it business?"

She knew his answer, yet she must make these steps before she said to him: "Is it a woman?"

He nodded now. She caught his eyes and held them with her own. All the silence and sorrow, all the remorse and regret of the past twenty-six years gathered in her face.

"Yes and no," he answered with emotion. "You've quarrelled with Junia?"

"No," he replied.

"Why don't you marry her?" she urged. "We all would like it, even your father."

"I can't."

"Why?" She leant forward with a slight burning of the cheek. "Why, Carnac?"

He had determined to keep his own secret, to hide the thing which had vexed his life, but a sudden feeling overcame his purpose. With impulse he drew out the letter he had received in John Grier's office and handed it to her.

"Read that, and then I'll tell you all about it--all I can."

With whitening face, she took the letter and read its few lines. It was written in French, with savage little flourishes and twists, and the name signed at the end was "Luzanne." At last she handed it back, her fingers trembling.

"Who is Luzanne, and what does it mean?" What she had read was startling.

He slowly seated himself beside her. "I will tell you."

When Carnac had ended his painful story, she said to him: "It's terrible --oh, terrible. But there was divorce."

"Yes, but they told me I couldn't get a divorce. Yet I wish now I'd tried for it. I've never heard a word from the girl till I got that letter. It isn't strange she hasn't moved in the thing till now. It was I that should have acted; and she knew that. She means business, that's clear, and it'll be hard to prove I didn't marry her with eyes wide open. It gets between me and my work and my plans for the future; between--"

"Between you and Junia," she said mournfully. "Don't you think you ought to get a divorce for Junia's sake, if nothing else?"

"Yes, of course. But I'm not sure I could get a divorce--evidence is so strong against me, and it was a year ago! If I can see Luzanne again perhaps I can get her to tear up the marriage-lines--that's what I want. She isn't all bad. I must go again to New York; and Junia can wait. I'm not much, I know--not worth waiting for, maybe, but I'm in earnest where Junia's concerned. I could make a little home for her at once, and a better one as time went on, if she would marry me."

After a moment of silence, Carnac added: "I'm going to New York. Don't you think I ought to go?"

The gaunt, handsome face of the woman darkened, and then she answered:
"Yes."

There was silence again for a moment, deep and painful, and then Carnac spoke.

"Mother, I don't think father is well. I see a great change in him. He hasn't long to travel, and some day you'll have everything. He might make you run the business, with Tarboe as manager."

She shuddered slightly. "With Tarboe--I never thought of that--with Tarboe! . . . Are you going to wait for--your father? He'll be here presently."

"No, I'm off. I'll go down the garden, through the bushes," he said....
"Mother, I've got nearer you to-night than in all the rest of my life."

She kissed him fondly. "You're going away, but I hope you'll come back in time."

He knew she meant Junia.

"Yes, I hope I'll come back in time."

A moment later he was gone, out of the sidedoor, through the bushes, and down the hill, running like a boy. He had for the first time talked to his mother about the life of their home; the facts she told him stripped away the curtain that hid the secret things of life from his eyes.

John Grier almost burst upon his wife. He opened and shut the door noisily; he stamped into the dusky room.

"Isn't it time for a light?" he said with a quizzical nod towards her.

The short visit of Carnac had straightened her back. "I like the twilight. I don't light up until it's dark, but if you wish--"

"You like the twilight; you don't light up until it's dark, but if I wish--ah, that's it! Have your own way.... I'm the breadwinner; I'm the breadwinner; I'm the fighter; I'm the man that makes the machine go; but I don't like the twilight, and I don't like to wait until it's dark before I light up. So there it is!"

She said nothing at once, but struck a match, and lit the gas.

"It's easy to give you what you want," she answered after a little.
"I'm used to it now."

There was something animal-like in the thrust forward of his neck, in the anger that mounted to his eyes. When she had drawn down the blinds, he said to her: "Who's been here?"

For an instant she hesitated. Then she said: "Carnac's been here, but that has naught to do with what I said. I've lived with you for over thirty years, and I haven't spoken my mind often, but I'm speaking it now."

"Never too late to mend, eh!" he gruffly interposed. "So Carnac's been here! Putting up his independent clack, eh? He leaves his old father to struggle as best he may, and doesn't care a damn. That's your son Carnac."

How she longed to say to him, "That's not your son Carnac!" but she could not. A greyness crossed over her face.

"Is Carnac staying here?"

She shook her head in negation.

"Well, now I'll tell you about Carnac," he said viciously. "I'm shutting him out of the business of my life. You understand?"

"You mean--" She paused.

"He's taken his course, let him stick to it. I'm taking my course, and I'll stick to it."

She came close and reached out a faltering hand. "John, don't do what you'll be sorry for."

"I never have."

"When Fabian was born, you remember what you said? You said: 'Life's worth living now.'"

"Yes, but what did I say when Carnac was born?"

"I didn't hear, John," she answered, her face turning white.

"Well, I said naught."

CHAPTER XII

CARNAC SAYS GOOD-BYE

Fabian Grier's house was in a fashionable quarter of a fashionable street, the smallest of all built there; but it was happily placed, rather apart from others, at the very end of the distinguished promenade. Behind it, a little way up the hill, was a Roman Catholic chapel.

The surroundings of the house were rural for a city habitation. Behind it were commendable trees, from one of which a swing was hung. In a

corner, which seemed to catch the sun, was a bird-cage on a pole, sought by pigeons and doves. In another corner was a target for the bow and arrow-evidence of the vigorous life of the owners of the house.

On the morning after Carnac told his mother he was going away, the doors of the house were all open. Midway between breakfast and lunch, the voices of children sang through the dining-room bright with the morning sun. The children were going to the top of the mountain-the two youngsters who made the life of Fabian and his wife so busy. Fabian was a man of little speech. He was slim and dark and quiet, with a black moustache and smoothly brushed hair, with a body lithe and composed, yet with hands broad, strong, stubborn.

As Junia stood by the dining-room table and looked at the alert, expectant children, she wished she also was going now to the mountain-top. But that could not be--not yet. Carnac had sent a note saying he wished to see her, and she had replied through Denzil that her morning would be spent with her sister. "What is it?" she remarked to herself. "What is it? There's nothing wrong. Yet I feel everything upside down."

Her face turned slowly towards the wide mountain; it caught the light upon the steeple of the Catholic chapel. She shuddered slightly, and an expression came into her shadowed eyes not belonging to her personality, which was always buoyant.

As she stood absorbed, her mind in a maze of perplexity, a sigh broke from her lips. She suddenly had a conviction about Carnac; she felt his coming might bring a crisis; that what he might say must influence her whole life. Carnac--she threw back her head. Suddenly a sweet, appealing, intoxicating look crossed her face. Carnac! Yes, there was a man, a man of men.

Tarboe got his effects by the impetuous rush of a personality; Carnac by something that haunted, that made him more popular absent than present. Carnac compelled thought. When he was away she wanted him; when he was near she liked to quarrel with him. When they were together, one moment she wanted to take his hands in her hands, and in the next she wanted to push him over some great cliff--he was so maddening. He provoked the devil in her; yet he made her sing the song of Eden. What was it?

As she asked the question she heard a firm step on the path. It was Carnac. She turned and stood waiting, leaning against the table, watching the door through which he presently came. He was dressed in grey. His coat was buttoned. He carried a soft grey hat, and somehow his face gave her a feeling that he had come to say good-bye. It startled her; and yet, though she was tempted to grip her breast, she did not. Presently she spoke.

"I think you're a very idle man. Why aren't you at work?"

"I am at work," Carnac said cheerfully.

"Work is not all paint and canvas of course. There has to be the

thinking beforehand. Well, of what are you thinking now?"

"Of the evening train to New York."

His face was turned away from her at the instant, because he did not wish to see the effect of his words. He would have seen that apprehension came to her eyes. Her mouth opened in quick amazement. It was all too startling. He was going--for how long?

"Why are you going?" she asked, when she had recovered her poise.

"Well, you see I haven't quite learned my painting yet, and I must study in great Art centres where one isn't turned down by one's own judgment."

"Ananias!" she said at last. "Ananias!"

"Why do you say I'm a liar?" he asked, flushing a little, though there was intense inquiry in his eyes. "Because I think it. It isn't your work only that's taking you away." Suddenly she laughed. "What a fool you are, Carnac! You're not a good actor. You're not going away for work's sake only."

"Not for work's sake only--that's true."

"Then why do you go?"

"I'm in a mess, Junia. I've made some mistakes in my life, and I'm going to try and put one of them right."

"Is anybody trying to do you harm?" she asked gently.

"Yes, somebody's trying to hurt me."

"Hurt him," she rejoined sharply, and her eyes fastened his.

He was about to say there was no him in the matter, but reason steadied him, and he said:

"I'll do my best, Junia. I wish I could tell you, but I can't. What's to be done must be done by myself alone."

"Then it ought to be done well."

With an instant's impulse he moved towards her. She went to the window, however, and she said: "Here's Fabian. You'll be glad of that. You'll want to say good-bye to him and Sibyl." She ran from him to the front door. "Fabian--Fabian, here's a bad boy who wants to tell you things he won't tell me." With these words she went into the garden.

"I don't think he'll tell me," came Fabian's voice. "Why should he?"

A moment afterwards the two men met.

"Well, what's the trouble, Carnac?" asked Fabian in a somewhat challenging voice.

"I'm going away."

"Oh--for how long?" Fabian asked quizzically. "I don't know--a year, perhaps. I want to make myself a better artist, and also free myself."

Now his eyes were on Junia in her summer-time recreation, and her voice, humming a light-opera air, was floating to him through the autumn morning.

"Has something got you in its grip, then?"

"I'm the victim of a reckless past, like you." Something provocative was in his voice and in his words.

"Was my past reckless?" asked Fabian with sullen eyes.

"Never so reckless as mine. You fought, quarrelled, hit, sold and bought again, and now you're out against your father, fighting him."

"I had to come out or be crushed."

"I'm not so sure you won't be crushed now you're out. He plays boldly, and he knows his game. One or the other of you must prevail, and I think it won't be you, Fabian. John Grier does as much thinking in an hour as most of us do in a month, and with Tarboe he'll beat you dead. Tarboe is young; he's got the vitality of a rhinoceros. He knows the business from the bark on the tree. He's a flyer, is Tarboe, and you might have been in Tarboe's place and succeeded to the business."

Fabian threw out his arms. "But no! Father might live another ten years--though I don't think so--and I couldn't have stood it. He was lapping me in the mud."

"He doesn't lap Tarboe in the mud."

"No, and he wouldn't have lapped you in the mud, because you've got imagination, and you think wide and long when you want to. But I'm middle-class in business. I've got no genius for the game. He didn't see my steady qualities were what was needed. He wanted me to be like himself, an eagle, and I was only a robin red-breast."

Suddenly his eyes flashed and his teeth set. "You couldn't stand him, wouldn't put up with his tyranny. You wanted to live your own life, and you're doing it. When he bought me out, what was there for me to do but go into the only business I knew, with the only big man in the business, besides John Grier. I've as good blood as he's got in his veins. I do business straight."

"He didn't want me to do it straight. That's one of the reasons we fell out. John Grier's a big, ruthless trickster. I wasn't. I was for

playing the straight game, and I played it."

"Well, he's got his own way now. He's got a man who wouldn't blink at throttling his own brother, if it'd do him any good. Tarboe is iron and steel; he's the kind that succeeds. He likes to rule, and he's going to get what he wants mostly."

"Is that why you're going away?" asked Fabian. "Don't you think it'll be just as well not to go, if Tarboe is going to get all he wants?"

"Does Tarboe come here?"

"He's been here twice."

"Visiting?"

"No. He came on urgent business. There was trouble between our two river-driving camps. He wanted my help to straighten things out, and he got it. He's pretty quick on the move."

"He wanted you to let him settle it?"

"He settled it, and I agreed. He knows how to handle men; I'll say that for him. He can run reckless on the logs like a river-driver; he can break a jam like an expert. He's not afraid of man, or log, or devil. That's his training. He got that training from John Grier's firm under another name. I used to know him by reputation long before he took my place in the business--my place and yours. You got loose from the business only to get tied up in knots of your own tying," he added. "What it is I don't know, but you say you're in trouble and I believe you." Suddenly a sharp look came to his face. "Is it a woman?"

"It's not a man."

"Well, you ought to know how to handle a woman. You're popular with women. My wife'll never hear a word against you. I don't know how you do it. We're so little alike, it makes me feel sometimes we're not brothers. I don't know where you get your temperament from."

"It doesn't matter where I got it, it's mine. I want to earn my own living, and I'm doing it." Admiration came into Fabian's face. "Yes," he said, "and you don't borrow--"

"And don't beg or steal. Mother has given me money, and I'm spending my own little legacy, all but five thousand dollars of it."

Fabian came up to his brother slowly. "If you know what's good for you, you'll stay where you are. You're not the only man that ought to be married. Tarboe's a strong man, and he'll be father's partner. He's handsome in his rough way too, is Tarboe. He knows what he wants, and means to have it, and this is a free country. Our girls, they have their own way. Why don't you settle it now? Why don't you marry Junia, and take her away with you--if she'll have you?"

"I can't--even if she'll have me."

"Why can't you?"

"I'm afraid of the law."

An uneasy smile hung at Carnac's lips. He suddenly caught Fabian's shoulder in a strong grip. "We've never been close friends, Fabian. We've always been at sixes and sevens, and yet I feel you'd rather do me a good turn than a bad one. Let me ask you this--that you'll not believe anything bad of me till you've heard what I've got to say. Will you do that?"

Fabian nodded. "Of course. But if I were you, I wouldn't bet on myself, Carnac. Junia's worth running risks for. She's got more brains than my wife and me together, and she bosses us; but with you, it's different. I think you'd boss her. You're unexpected; you're daring; and you're reckless."

"Yes, I certainly am reckless."

"Then why aren't you reckless now? You're going away. Why, you haven't even told her you love her. The other man--is here, and--I've seen him look at her? I know by the way she speaks of him how she feels. Besides, he's a great masterful creature. Don't be a fool! Have a try . . . Junia--Junia," he called.

The figure in the garden with the flowers turned. There was a flicker of understanding in the rare eyes. The girl held up a bunch of flowers high like a torch.

"I'm coming, my children," she called, and, with a laugh, she ran forward through the doorway.

"What is it you want, Fabian?" she asked, conscious that in Carnac's face was consternation. "What can I do for you?" she added, with a slight flush.

"Nothing for me, but for Carnac--" Fabian stretched out a hand.

She laughed brusquely. "Oh, Carnac! Carnac! Well, I've been making him this bouquet." She held it out towards him. "It's a farewell bouquet for his little journey in the world. Take it, Carnac, with everybody's love--with Fabian's love, with Sibyl's love, with my love. Take it, and good-bye."

With a laugh she caught up her hat from the table, and a moment later she was in the street making for the mountain-side up which the children had gone.

Carnac placed the bouquet upon the table. Then he turned to his brother.

"What a damn mess you make of things, Fabian!"

ETEXT EDITOR'S BOOKMARKS:

All genius is at once a blessing or a curse
Do what you feel you've got to do, and never mind what happens
Had got unreasonably old
How many sons have ever added to their father's fame?
Never give up your soul to things only, keep it for people
We do what we forbid ourselves to do
We suffer the shames we damn in others

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