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The Log of The "Jolly Polly"

by Richard Harding Davis

May, 1999 [Etext #1808]

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#### THE LOG OF THE "JOLLY POLLY"

Temptation came to me when I was in the worst possible position to resist it.

It is a way temptation has. Whenever I swear off drinking invariably I am invited to an ushers' dinner. Whenever I am rich, only the highbrow publications that pay the least, want my work. But the moment I am poverty-stricken the MANICURE GIRL'S MAGAZINE and the ROT AND SPOT WEEKLY spring at me with offers of a dollar a word. Temptation always is on the job. When I am down and out temptation always is up and at me.

When first the Farrells tempted me my vogue had departed. On my name and "past performances" I could still dispose of what I wrote, but only to magazines that were just starting. The others knew I no longer was a best-seller. All the real editors knew it. So did the theatrical managers.

My books and plays had flourished in the dark age of the historical-romantic novel. My heroes wore gauntlets and long swords. They fought for the Cardinal or the King, and each

loved a high-born demoiselle who was a ward of the King or the Cardinal, and with feminine perversity, always of whichever one her young man was fighting. With people who had never read Guizot's "History of France," my books were popular, and for me made a great deal of money. This was fortunate, for my parents had left me nothing save expensive tastes. When the tastes became habits, the public left me. It turned to white-slave and crook plays, and to

novels true to life; so true to life that one felt the author must at one time have been a masseur in a Turkish bath.

So, my heroines in black velvet, and my heroes with long swords were "scrapped." As one book reviewer put it, "To expect the public of to-day to read the novels of Fletcher Farrell is like asking people to give up the bunny hug and go back to the lancers."

And, to make it harder, I was only thirty years old.

It was at this depressing period in my career that I received a letter from Fairharbor, Massachusetts, signed Fletcher Farrell. The letter was written on the business paper of the Farrell Cotton Mills, and asked if I were related to the Farrells of Duncannon, of the County Wexford, who emigrated to Massachusetts in 1860. The writer added that he had a grandfather named Fletcher and suggested we might be related. From the handwriting of Fletcher Farrell and from the way he ill-treated the King's English I did not feel the ties of kinship calling me very loud. I replied briefly that my people originally came from Youghal, in County Cork, that as early as 1730 they had settled in New York, and that all my relations on the Farrell side either were still at Youghal, or dead. Mine was not an encouraging letter; nor did I mean it to be; and I was greatly surprised two days later to receive a telegram reading, "Something to your advantage to communicate; wife and self calling on you Thursday at noon. Fletcher Farrell." I was annoyed, but also interested. The words "something to your advantage" always possess a certain charm. So, when the elevator boy telephoned that Mr. and Mrs. Farrell were calling, I told him to bring them up.

My first glance at the Farrells convinced me the interview was a waste of time. I was satisfied that from two such persons, nothing to my advantage could possibly emanate. On the contrary, from their lack of ease, it looked as though they had come to beg or borrow. They resembled only a butler and housekeeper applying for a new place under the disadvantage of knowing they had no reference from the last one. Of the two, I better liked the man. He was an elderly, pleasant-faced Irishman, smooth-shaven, red-cheeked, and with white hair. Although it was July, he wore a frock coat, and carried a new high hat that glistened. As though he thought at any moment it might explode, he held it from him, and eyed it fearfully. Mrs. Farrell was of a more sophisticated type. The lines in her face and hands showed that for years she might have known hard physical work. But her dress was in the latest fashion, and her fingers held more diamonds than, out of a showcase, I ever had seen.

With embarrassment old man Farrell began his speech. Evidently it had been rehearsed and as he recited it, in swift asides, his wife prompted him; but to note the effect he was making, she kept her eyes upon me. Having first compared my name, fame, and novels with those of Charles Dickens, Walter Scott, and Archibald Clavering Gunter, and to the disadvantage of those gentlemen, Farrell said

the similarity of our names often had been commented upon, and that when from my letter he had learned our families both were from the South of Ireland, he had a premonition we might be related. Duncannon, where he was born, he pointed out, was but forty miles from Youghal, and the fishing boats out of Waterford Harbor often sought shelter in Blackwater River. Had any of my forebears, he asked, followed the herring?

Alarmed, lest at this I might take offense, Mrs. Farrell interrupted him.

"The Fletchers and O'Farrells of Youghal she exclaimed, "were gentry. What would they be doing in a trawler?"

I assured her that so far as I knew, 1750 being before my time, they might have been smugglers and pirates.

"All I ever heard of the Farrells," I told her, begins after they settled in New York. And there is no one I can ask concerning them. My father and mother are dead; all my father's relatives are dead, and my mother's relatives are as good as dead. I mean," I added, "we don't speak!"

To my surprise, this information appeared to afford my visitors great satisfaction. They exchanged hasty glances.

"Then," exclaimed Mr. Farrell, eagerly; "if I understand you, you have no living relations at all--barring those that are dead!"

"Exactly!" I agreed.

He drew a deep sigh of relief. With apparent irrelevance but with a carelessness that was obviously assumed, he continued.

"Since I come to America," he announced, "I have made heaps of money. "As though in evidence of his prosperity, he flashed the high hat. In the sunlight it coruscated like one of his wife's diamonds. "Heaps of money," he repeated. "The mills are still in my name, he went on, "but five years since I sold them-- We live on the income. We own Harbor Castle, the finest house on the whole waterfront."

"When all the windows are lit up," interjected Mrs. Farrell, "it's often took for a Fall River boat!"

"When I was building it," Farrell continued, smoothly, "they called it Farrell's Folly; but not NOW." In friendly fashion he winked at me, "Standard Oil," he explained, "offered half a million for it. They wanted my wharf for their tank steamers. But, I needed it for my yacht!"

I must have sat up rather too suddenly, for, seeing the yacht had reached home, Mr. Farrell beamed. Complacently his wife smoothed an



imaginary wrinkle in her skirt.

"Eighteen men!" she protested, "with nothing to do but clean brass and eat three meals a day!"

Farrell released his death grip on the silk hat to make a sweeping gesture.

"They earn their wages," he said generously.

"Aren't they taking us this week to Cap May?"

"They're taking the yacht to Cape May! corrected Mrs. Farrell; "not ME!"

"The sea does not agree with her," explained Farrell; "WE'RE going by automobile." Mrs. Farrell now took up the wondrous tale

It's a High Flyer, 1915 model," she explained; "green, with white enamel leather inside, and red wheels outside. You can see it from the window."

Somewhat dazed, I stepped to the window and found you could see it from almost anywhere. It was as large as a freight car; and was entirely surrounded by taxi-starters, bellboys, and nurse-maids. The chauffeur, and a deputy chauffeur, in a green livery with patent-leather leggings, were frowning upon the mob. They possessed the hauteur of ambulance surgeons. I returned to my chair, and then rose hastily to ask if I could not offer Mr. Farrell some refreshment.

"Mebbe later," he said. Evidently he felt that as yet he had not sufficiently impressed me.

"Harbor Castle," he recited, "has eighteen bedrooms, billiard-room, music-room, art gallery and swimming-pool." He shook his head. "And no one to use 'em but us. We had a boy." He stopped, and for an instant, as though asking pardon, laid his hand upon the knee of Mrs. Farrell. "But he was taken when he was four, and none came since. My wife has a niece," he added, "but----"

"But," interrupted Mrs. Farrell, "she was too high and mighty for plain folks, and now there is no one. We always took an interest in you because your name was Farrell. We were always reading of you in the papers. We have all your books, and a picture of you in the billiard-room. When folks ask me if we are any relation--sometimes I tell 'em we ARE."

As though challenging me to object, she paused.

"It's quite possible," I said hastily. And, in order to get rid of them, I added: "I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll write to Ireland and----"

Farrell shook his head firmly. "You don't need to write to Ireland," he said, "for what we want."

"What DO you want?" I asked.

"We want a SON," said Farrell; "an adopted son. We want to adopt YOU!"

"You want to WHAT?" I asked.

To learn if Mrs. Farrell also was mad, I glanced toward her, but her expression was inscrutable. The face of the Irishman had grown purple.

"And why not?" he demanded. "You are a famous young man, all right, and educated. But there's nothing about me I'm ashamed of! I'm worth five million dollars and I made every cent Of it myself--and I made it honest. You ask Dun or Bradstreet, ask----"

I attempted to soothe him.

"THAT'S not it, sir, " I explained. "It's a most generous offer, a most flattering, complimentary offer. But you don't know me. I don't know you. Choosing a son is a very----"

"I've had you looked up," announced Mrs. Farrell. "The Pinkertons give you a high rating. I hired 'em to trail you for six months."

I wanted to ask WHICH six months, but decided to let sleeping dogs lie. I shook my head. Politely but firmly I delivered my ultimatum.

"It is quite impossible!" I said firmly.

Mrs. Farrell continued the debate. She talked in a businesslike manner and pronounced the arrangement one by which both sides would benefit. There were thousands of other Farrells, she pointed out, any one of whom they might have adopted. But they had selected me because in so choosing, they thought they were taking the least risk. They had decided she was pleased to say, that I would not disgrace them, and that as a "literary author " I brought with me a certain social asset.

A clever, young businessman they did not want. Their business affairs they were quit able to manage themselves. But they would like as an adopted son one who had already added glory to the name of Farrell, which glory he was willing to share.

"We wouldn't tie you down," she urged "but we would expect you to live at Harbor Castle a part of your time, and to call us Ma and Pa. You would have your own rooms, and your own servant, and there is a boat-house on the harbor front, where you could write your novels."

At this, knowing none wanted my novels, I may have winced, for, misreading my discontent, Farrell hastily interrupted.

"You won't have to work at all," he protested heartily. "My son can afford to live like a lord. You'll get all the spending money you want, and if you're fond of foreign parts, you can take the yacht wherever you please!"

"The farther the better," exclaimed Mrs. Farrell with heat. "And when you get it there, I hope you'll SINK it!"

"Maybe your friends would come and visit You," suggested Farrell, I thought, a trifle wistfully. "There's bathing, tennis, eight... bedrooms, billiard-room, art gallery----"

"You told him that!" said Mrs. Farrell.

I was greatly at a loss. Their offer was preposterous, but to them, it was apparently a perfectly possible arrangement. Nor were they acting on impulse. Mrs. Farrell had admitted that for six months she had had me "trailed." How to say "No" and not give offense, I found difficult. They were deeply in earnest and I could see that Farrell, at least, was by instinct generous, human, and kind. It was, in fact, a most generous offer. But how was I to tell them tactfully I was not for sale, that I was not looking for "ready-to-wear" parents, and that if I were in the market, they were not the parents I would choose. I had a picture of life at Harbor Castle, dependent upon the charity of the Farrells. I imagined what my friends would say to me, and worse, what they would say behind my back. But I was not forced to a refusal.

Mr. Farrell rose.

"We don't want to hurry you," he said. "We want you to think it over. Maybe if we get acquainted----"

Mrs. Farrell smiled upon me ingratiatingly.

"Why don't we get acquainted now?" she demanded. "We're motoring down to Cape May to stay three weeks. Why don't you come along--as our guest--and see how you like us?"

I assured them, almost too hastily, that already was deeply engaged.

As they departed, Farrell again admonished me to think it over.

"And look me up at Dun's and Bradstreet's," he advised. "Ask 'em about me at the Waldorf. Ask the head waiters and bellhops if I look twice at a five spot!"

It seemed an odd way to select a father, but I promised.

I escorted them even to the sidewalk, and not without envy watched them sweep toward the Waldorf in the High Flyer, 1915 model. I caught myself deciding, were it mine, I would paint it gray.

I was lunching at the Ritz with Curtis Spencer, and I looked forward to the delight he would take in my story of the Farrells. He would probably want to write it. He was my junior, but my great friend; and as a novelist his popularity was where five years earlier mine had been. But he belonged to the new school. His novels smelled like a beauty parlor; and his heroines, while always beautiful, were, on occasions, virtuous, but only when they thought it would pay.

Spencer himself was as modern as his novels, and I was confident his view of my adventure would be that of the great world which he described so accurately.

But to my amazement when I had finished he savagely attacked me.

"You idiot!" he roared. "Are you trying to tell me you refused five million dollars-- just because you didn't like the people who wanted to force it on you? Where," he demanded, "is Cape May? We'll follow them now! We'll close this deal before they can change their minds. I'll make you sign to-night. And, then," he continued eagerly, "we'll take their yacht and escape to Newport, and you'll lend me five thousand dollars, and pay my debts, and give me back the ten you borrowed. And you might buy me a touring-car and some polo ponies and--and--oh, lots of things. I'll think of them as we go along. Meanwhile, I can't afford to give luncheons to millionaires, so you sign for this one; and then we'll start for Cape May."

"Are you mad?" I demanded; "do you think I'd sell my honor!"

"For five million dollars?" cried Spencer. "Don't make me laugh! If they want a REAL novelist for a son they can adopt me!"

I replied with dignity that I would not disgrace the memory of my parents.

"You have disgraced them!" retorted Spencer, "with your Musketeer novels for infants. You need money. To get it you may be tempted to write more novels. Here's your chance! Stop robbing the public, and lead an honest life. Think of all the money you could give to the poor, think of all the money you and I could lose at Monte Carlo!"

When he found I would not charter an auto-mobile and at once pursue the Farrells he changed his tactics. If I would not go to Cape May, then, he begged, I would go to Fairharbor. He asked that I would, at least, find out what I was refusing. Before making their offer, for six months, the Farrells had had me "looked up, " but, without knowing anything of them, after a talk of ten minutes I had turned

them down. "Was that," he asked, "intelligent? Was it fair to the Farrells?" He continued to tempt me.

"They told you to think it over," he persisted. "Very well, then, think it over at Fairharbor! For the next three weeks the Farrells will be at Cape May. The coast is clear. Go to Fairharbor as somebody else and be your own detective. Find out if what they tell you is true. Get inside information. Get inside Harbor Castle. Count the eighteen bedrooms and try the beds. Never mind the art gallery, but make sure there is a wine cellar.

You can't start too soon, and I WILL GO WITH YOU!"

I told him where he could go.

We then tossed to see who should pay for the lunch and who should tip the head waiter. I lost and had to tip the head waiter. We separated, and as I walked down the Avenue, it seemed as though to the proprietor of every shop I passed I owed money. Owing them the money I did not so much mind; what most distressed me was that they were so polite about it. I had always wanted to reward their patience. A favorite dream of mine was to be able to walk down Fifth Avenue, my pockets stuffed with yellow bills, paying off my debts. Compared with my steadily decreasing income, how enormous my debts appeared; but when compared with the income of a man worth--say-five million dollars, how ridiculous! I had no more than reached my apartment, than a messenger-boy arrived with an envelope. It contained a ticket for a round trip on the New Bedford Line boat leaving that afternoon, a ticket for a stateroom, and a note from Curtis Spencer. The latter read: "The boat leaves at six to-night. You arrive at New Bedford seven to-morrow morning. New Bedford and Fairharbor are connected by a bridge. CROSS IT!"

I tore the note in tiny fragments, and tossed them through the open window. I was exceedingly angry. As I stood at the window adding to the name of Curtis Spencer insulting aliases, the street below sent up hot, stifling odors: the smoke of taxicabs, the gases of an open subway, the stale reek of thousands of perspiring, unwashed bodies. From that one side street seemed to rise the heat and smells of all New York. For relief I turned to my work-table where lay the opening chapters of my new novel, "The White Plume of Savoy." But now, in the light of Spencer's open scorn, I saw it was impudently false, childish, sentimental. My head ached, the humidity sapped my strength, at heart I felt sick, sore, discouraged. I was down and out. And seeing this, Temptation, like an obsequious floorwalker, came hurrying forward.

"And what may I show you to-day?" asked Temptation. He showed me the upper deck of the New Bedford boat feeling her way between the green banks of the Sound. A cool wind swept past me bearing clean, salty odors; on the saloon deck a band played, and from the darkness the lighthouses winked at me, and in friendly greeting the stars smiled. Temptation won. In five minutes I was feverishly

packing, and at five-thirty I was on board. I assured myself I had not listened to Temptation, that I had no interest in Fairharbor. was taking the trip solely because it would give me a night's sleep on the Sound. I promised myself that on the morrow I would not even LOOK toward Harbor Castle; but on the evening following on the same boat, return to New York. Temptation did not stop to argue, but hastened after another victim.

I turned in at nine o'clock and the coolness, and the salt air, blessed me with the first sleep I had known in weeks. And when I woke we were made fast to the company's wharf at New Bedford, and the sun was well up. I rose refreshed in body and spirit. No longer was I discouraged. Even "The White Plume of Savoy" seemed a perfectly good tale of romance and adventure. And the Farrells were a joke. Even if I were at Fairharbor, I was there only on a lark, and at the expense of Curtis Spencer, who had paid for the tickets. Distinctly the joke was on Curtis Spencer. I lowered the window screen, and looked across the harbor. It was a beautiful harbor. At ancient stone wharfs Jay ancient whalers with drooping davits and squared yards, at anchor white-breasted yachts flashed in the sun, a gray man-of-war's man flaunted the week's laundry, a four-masted schooner dried her canvas, and over the smiling surface of the harbor innumerable fishing boats darted. With delight I sniffed the odors of salt water, sun-dried herring, of oakum and tar. The shore opposite was a graceful promontory crowned with trees and decorous gray-shingled cottages set in tiny gardens that reached to the very edge of the harbor. The second officer was passing my window and I asked what the promontory was called.

"Fairharbor," he said. He answered with such proprietary pride and smiled upon Fairharbor with such approval that I ventured to guess it was his home.

"That's right," he said; "I used to live at the New York end of the run-in a flat. But never again! No place for the boy to play but in the street. I found I could rent one of those old cottages over there for the same money I paid for the flat. So I cut out New York. My boy lives in a bathing suit now, and he can handle a catboat same as me. We have a kitchen garden, and hens, and the fishermen here will give you all the fish you can carry away--fish right out of the water. I guess I've smashed the high cost of living problem all right. I wouldn't go back to living in New York now--not if they gave me the PILGRIM.

As though trying to prod my memory, I frowned. It was my conception of the part of a detective. "Hasn't Fletcher Farrell," I asked, "a house in Fairharbor?"

"Harbor Castle," said the mate promptly. "It's on the other side of the point I'd as soon live in a jail!"

"Why?" I exclaimed.

But he was no longer listening. He pointed at the shore opposite.

"See that flag running up the staff in that garden?" he cried.

"That's my boy signalling. I got to get to the boat deck and wave back!"

I felt as a detective. I had acquired important information. The mate, a man of judgment, preferred Fairharbor to New York. Also, to living in Harbor Castle, he preferred going to jail.

The boat on which I had arrived was listed to start back at six the same evening on her return trip to New York. So, at the office of the line I checked my valise, and set forth to explore New Bedford.

The whaling vessels moored to a nearby wharf, I inspected from hatches to keels, and by those on board was directed to a warehouse where were stored harpoons, whalebone, and wooden figure-heads. My pleasure in these led to my being passed on to a row of "antique" shops filled with relics of the days of whaling and also with genuine pie-crust tables, genuine flint-lock muskets, genuine Liverpool pitchers. I coveted especially old-time engravings of the whalers, and was told at Hatchardson's book-store on the main street others could be found in profusion.

Hatchardson's proved to be a place of great delight. As you entered there were counters for magazines and post-cards, popular music, and best-selling novels, while in the rear of the shop tables and shelves were stocked with ancient volumes, and on the wall surrounding them hung engravings, prints and woodcuts of even the eighteenth century. Just as the drugstore on the corner seemed to be a waiting station for those of New Bedford who used the trolley-cars, so for those who moved in automobiles, or still clung to the family carriage, Hatchardson's appeared to be less a shop than a public meeting-place. I noticed that the clerks, most of whom were women, were with the customers on a most friendly footing, addressing them, and by them being addressed by name. Finding I was free to wander where I pleased, I walked to the rear of the shop and from one of the tables picked up a much-worn volume. It was entitled "The Log of the JOLLY POLLY, and was illustrated with wood cuts showing square-rigged ships and whales Spouting. For five minutes, lost to my Surroundings, I turned the pages; and then became conscious that across the table some one was watching me. I raised my eyes and beheld a face of most surprising charm, intelligence and beauty. It was so lovely that it made me wince. The face was the fortune, and judging from the fact that in her hand she held a salesbook, the sole fortune, of a tall young girl who apparently had approached to wait on me. She was looking toward the street, so that, with the book-shelves for a back-ground, her face was in profile, and I determined swiftly that if she were to wait on me she would be kept waiting as long as my money lasted. I did not want "The Log of the JOLLY POLLY," but I did want to hear the lovely lady speak, and especially I desired that the one to whom she spoke should be myself.

"What is the price of this?" I asked. With magnificent self-control I kept my eyes on the book, but the lovely lady was so long silent that I raised them. To my surprise, I found on her face an expression of alarm and distress. With reluctance, and yet within her voice a certain hopefulness, she said, "Fifty dollars."

Fifty dollars was a death blow. I had planned to keep the young lady selling books throughout the entire morning, but at fifty dollars a book, I would soon be owing her money. I attempted to gain time.

"It must be very rare!" I said. I was afraid to look at her lest my admiration should give offense, so I pretended to admire the book.

"It is the only one in existence," said the young lady. "At least, it is the only one for sale! "

We were interrupted by the approach of a tall man who, from his playing the polite host and from his not wearing a hat, I guessed was Mr. Hatchardson himself. He looked from the book in my hand to the lovely lady and said smiling, "Have you lost it?"

The girl did not smile. To her, apparently, it was no laughing matter. "I don't know--yet," she said. Her voice was charming, and genuinely troubled.

Mr. Hatchardson, for later I learned it was he, took the book and showed me the title-page.

"This was privately printed in 1830," he said, "by Captain Noah Briggs. He distributed a hundred presentation copies among his family and friends here in New Bedford. It is a most interesting volume."

I did not find it so. For even as he spoke the young girl, still with a troubled countenance, glided away. Inwardly I cursed Captain Briggs and associated with him in my curse the polite Mr. Hatchardson. But, at his next words my interest returned. Still smiling, he lowered his voice.

"Miss Briggs, the young lady who just left us," he said, is the granddaughter of Captain Briggs, and she does not want the book to go out of the family; she wants it for herself." I interrupted eagerly.

"But it is for sale?" Mr. Hatchardson reluctantly assented.

"Then I will take it," I said.

Fifty dollars is a great deal of money, but the face of the young lady had been very sad. Besides being sad, had it been aged, plain, and ill-tempered, that I still would have bought the book, is a



question I have never determined.

To Mr. Hatchardson, of my purpose to give the book to Miss Briggs, I said nothing. Instead I planned to send it to her anonymously by mail. She would receive it the next morning when I was arriving in New York, and, as she did not know my name, she could not possibly return it. At the post-office I addressed the "Log" to "Miss Briggs, care of Hatchardson's Bookstore," and then I returned to the store. I felt I had earned that pleasure. This time, Miss Briggs was in charge of the post-card counter, and as now a post-card was the only thing I could afford to buy, at seeing her there I was doubly pleased. But she was not pleased to see me. Evidently Mr. Hatchardson had told her I had purchased the "Log" and at her loss her very lovely face still showed disappointment. Toward me her manner was distinctly aggrieved.

But of the "Log" I said nothing, and began recklessly purchasing post-cards that pictured the show places of New Bedford. Almost the first one I picked up was labelled "Harbor Castle. Residence of Fletcher Farrell." I need not say that I studied it intently. According to the post-card, Harbor Castle stood on a rocky point with water on both sides. It was an enormous, wide-spreading structure, as large as a fort. It exuded prosperity, opulence, extravagance, great wealth. I felt suddenly a filial impulse to visit the home of my would-be forefathers.

"Is this place near here?" I asked.

Miss Briggs told me that in order to reach it I should take the ferry to Fairbarbor, and then cross that town to the Buzzards Bay side.

"You can't miss it," she said. "It's a big stone house, with red and white awnings. If you see anything like a jail in ruffles, that's it."

It was evident that with the home I had rejected Miss Briggs was unimpressed; but seeing me add the post-card to my collection, she offered me another.

"This," she explained, "is Harbor Castle from the bay. That is their yacht in the foreground."

The post-card showed a very beautiful yacht of not less than two thousand tons. Beneath it was printed "HARBOR LIGHTS; steam yacht owned by Fletcher Farrell." I always had dreamed of owning a steam yacht, and seeing it stated in cold type that one was owned by "Fletcher Farrell," even though I was not that Fletcher Farrell, gave me a thrill of guilty pleasure. I gazed upon the post-card with envy.

"HARBOR LIGHTS is a strange name for a yacht," I ventured. Miss Briggs smiled.

"Not for that yacht," she said. "She never leaves it."

I wished to learn more of my would-be parents, and I wished to keep on talking with the lovely Miss Briggs, so, as an excuse for both, I pretended I was interested in the Farrells because I had something I wanted to sell them.

"This Fletcher Farrell must be very rich," I said. "I wonder," I asked, "if I could sell him an automobile?" The moment I spoke I noticed that the manner of Miss Briggs toward me perceptibly softened. Perhaps, from my buying offhand a fifty-dollar book she had thought me one of the rich, and had begun to suspect I was keeping her waiting on me only because I found her extremely easy to look at. Many times before, in a similar manner, other youths must have imposed upon her, and perhaps, also, in concealing my admiration, I had not entirely succeeded.

But, when she believed that, like herself, I was working for my living, she became more human.

"What car are you selling?" she asked. "I am TRYING to sell," I corrected her, "the Blue Bird, six cylinder."

"I never heard of it," said Miss Briggs.

"Nor has any one else," I answered, with truth. "That is one reason why I can't sell it. I arrived here this morning, and," I added with pathos, "I haven't sold a car yet!"

Miss Briggs raised her beautiful eyebrows skeptically. "Have you tried?" she said.

A brilliant idea came to me. In a side street I had passed a garage where Ptoiax cars were advertised for hire. I owned a Phoenix, and I thought I saw a way by which, for a happy hour, I might secure the society of Miss Briggs.

"I am an agent and demonstrator for the Phoenix also," I said glibly; "maybe I could show you one?"

"Show me one?" exclaimed Miss Briggs. "One sees them everywhere! They are always under your feet!"

"I mean," I explained, "might I take you for a drive in one?"

It was as though I had completely vanished. So far as the lovely Miss Briggs was concerned I had ceased to exist. She turned toward a nice old lady.

"What can I show you, Mrs. Scudder?" she asked cheerily; "and how is that wonderful baby? "

I felt as though I had been lifted by the collar, thrown out upon a hard sidewalk, and my hat tossed after me. Greatly shaken, and mentally brushing the dust from my hands and knees, I hastened to the ferry and crossed to Fairharbor. I was extremely angry. By an utter stranger I had been misjudged, snubbed and cast into outer darkness. For myself I readily found excuses. If a young woman was so attractive that at the first sight of her men could not resist buying her fifty-dollar books and hiring automobiles in which to take her driving, the fault was hers. I assured myself that girls as lovely as Miss Briggs were a menace to the public. They should not be at large. An ordinance should require them to go masked. For Miss Briggs also I was able to make excuses. Why should she not protect herself from the advances of strange young men? If a popular novelist, and especially an ex-popular one, chose to go about disguised as a drummer for the Blue Bird automobile and behaved as such, and was treated as such, what right had he to complain? So I persuaded myself I had been punished as I deserved. But to salve my injured pride I assured myself also that any one who read my novels ought to know my attitude toward any lovely lady could be only respectful, protecting, and chivalrous. But with this consoling thought the trouble was that nobody read my novels.

In finding Harbor Castle I had no difficulty. It stood upon a rocky point that jutted into Buzzards Bay. Five acres of artificial lawn and flower-beds of the cemetery and railroad-station school of horticulture surrounded it, and from the highroad it was protected by a stone wall so low that to the passerby, of the beauties of Harbor Castle nothing was left to the imagination. Over this wall roses under conflicting banners of pink and red fought fiercely. One could almost hear the shrieks of the wounded. Upon the least thorny of these I seated myself and in tender melancholy gazed upon the home of my childhood. That is, upon the home that might-have-been.

When surveying a completed country home, to make the owner thoroughly incensed the correct thing to say is, "This place has great possibilities!"

Harbor Castle had more possibilities than any other castle I ever visited. But in five minutes I had altered it to suit myself. I had ploughed up the flower-beds, dug a sunken garden, planted a wind screen of fir, spruce, and Pine, and with a huge brick wall secured warmth and privacy. So pleased was I with my changes, that when I departed I was sad and downcast. The boat-house of which Mrs. Farrell had spoken was certainly an ideal work-shop, the tennis-courts made those at the Newport Casino look like a ploughed field, and the swimming-pool, guarded by white pillars and overhung with grape-vines, was a cool and refreshing picture. As, hot and perspiring, I trudged back through Fairharbor, the memory of these haunted me. That they also tempted me, it is impossible to deny. But not for long. For, after passing through the elm-shaded streets to that side of the village that faced the harbor, I came upon the cottages I had seen from the New Bedford shore. At close range they

appeared even more attractive than when pointed out to me by the mate of the steamboat. They were very old, very weather-stained and covered with honeysuckle. Flat stones in a setting of grass led from the gates to the arched doorways, hollyhocks rose above hedges of box, and from the verandas one could look out upon the busy harbor and the houses of New Bedford rising in steps up the sloping hills to a sky-line of tree-tops and church spires. The mate had told me that for what he had rented a flat in New York he had secured one of these charming old world homes. And as I passed them I began to pick out the one in which when I retired from the world I would settle down. This time I made no alterations. How much the near presence of Miss Briggs had to do with my determination to settle down in Fairharbor, I cannot now remember. But, certainly as I crossed the bridge toward New Bedford, thoughts of her entirely filled my mind. I assured my self this was so only because she was beautiful. I was sure her outward loveliness advertised a nature equally lovely, but for my sudden and extreme interest I had other excuses. Her independence in earning her living, her choice in earning it among books and pictures, her pride of family as shown by her efforts to buy the family heirloom, all these justified my admiration. And her refusing to go joy-riding with an impertinent stranger, even though the impertinent stranger was myself, was an act I applauded. The more I thought of Miss Briggs the more was I disinclined to go away leaving with her an impression of myself so unpleasant as the one she then held. I determined to remove it. At least, until I had redeemed myself, I would remain in New Bedford. The determination gave me the greatest satisfaction. With a light heart I returned to the office of the steamboat line and retrieving my suit-case started with it toward the Parker House. It was now past five o'clock, the stores were closed, and all the people who had not gone to the baseball game with Fall River were in the streets. In consequence, as I was passing the post-office, Miss Briggs came down the steps, and we were face to face.

In her lovely eyes was an expression of mingled doubt and indignation and in her hand freshly torn from the papers in which I had wrapped it, was "The Log of the JOLLY POLLY." In action Miss Briggs was as direct as a submarine. At sight of me she attacked. "Did you send me this?" she asked.

I lowered my bag to the sidewalk and prepared for battle. "I didn't think of your going to the post-office," I said. "I planned you'd get it to-morrow after I'd left. When I sent it, I thought I would never see you again."

"Then you did send it!" exclaimed Miss Briggs. As though the book were a hot plate she dropped it into my hand. She looked straight at me, but her expression suggested she was removing a caterpillar from her pet rosebush.

"You had no right," she said. "You may not have meant to be impertinent, but you were!"

Again, as though I had disappeared from the face of the earth, Miss Briggs gazed coldly about her, and with dignity started to cross the street. Her dignity was so great that she glanced neither to the left nor right. In consequence she did not see an automobile that swung recklessly around a trolley-car and dived at her. But other people saw it and shrieked. I also shrieked, and dropping the suit-case and the "Log," jumped into the street, grabbed Miss Briggs by both arms, and flung her back to the sidewalk. That left me where she had been, and the car caught me up and slammed me head first against a telegraph pole. The pole was hard, and if any one counted me out I did not stay awake to hear him. When I came to I was conscious that I was lying on a sidewalk; but to open my eyes, I was much too tired. A voice was saying, "Do you know who he is, Miss?"

The voice that replied was the voice of the lovely Miss Briggs. But now I hardly recognized it. It was full of distress, of tenderness and pity.

"No, I don't know him," it stammered. "He's a salesman--he was in the store this morning--he's selling motor-cars." The first voice laughed.

"Motor-cars!" he exclaimed. "That's why he ain't scared of 'em. He certainly saved you from that one! I seen him, Miss Briggs, and he most certainly saved your life!"

In response to this astonishing statement I was delighted to hear a well-trained male chorus exclaim in assent.

The voices differed; some spoke in the accents of Harvard, pure and undefiled, some in a "down East" dialect, others suggested Italian peanut vendors and Portuguese sailors, but all agreed that the life of Miss Briggs had been saved by myself. I had intended coming to, but on hearing the chorus working so harmoniously I decided I had better continue unconscious.

Then a new voice said importantly: "The marks on his suitcase are 'F. F., New York.'"

I appreciated instantly that to be identified as Fletcher Farrell meant humiliation and disaster. The other Fletcher Farrells would soon return to New Bedford. They would learn that in their absence I had been spying upon the home I had haughtily rejected. Besides, one of the chorus might remember that three years back Fletcher Farrell had been a popular novelist and might recognize me, and Miss Briggs would discover I was not an automobile agent and that I had lied to her. I saw that I must continue to lie to her. I thought of names beginning with " F," and selected " Frederick Fitzgibbon." To christen yourself while your eyes are shut and your head rests on a curb-stone is not easy, and later I was sorry I had not called myself Fairchild as being more aristocratic. But then it was too late. As Fitzgibbon I had come back to life, and as

Fitzgibbon I must remain.

When I opened my eyes I found the first voice belonged to a policeman who helped me to my feet and held in check the male chorus. The object of each was to lead me to a drink. But instead I turned dizzily to Miss Briggs. She was holding my hat and she handed it to me. Her lovely eyes were filled with relief and her charming voice with remorse.

"I--I can't possibly thank you," she stammered. "Are you badly hurt?"

I felt I had never listened to words so original and well chosen. In comparison, the brilliant and graceful speeches I had placed on the lips of my heroines became flat and unconvincing,

I assured her I was not at all hurt and endeavored, jauntily, to replace my hat. But where my head had hit the telegraph pole a large bump had risen which made my hat too small. So I hung it on the bump. It gave me a rakish air. One of the chorus returned my bag and another the "Log." Not wishing to remind Miss Briggs of my past impertinences; I guiltily concealed it.

Then the policeman asked my name and I gave the one I had just invented, and inquired my way to the Parker House. Half the chorus volunteered to act as my escort, and as I departed, I stole a last look at Miss Briggs. She and the policeman were taking down the pedigree of the chauffeur of the car that had hit me. He was trying to persuade them he was not intoxicated, and with each speech was furnishing evidence to the contrary.

After I had given a cold bath to the bump on my head and to the rest of my body which for the moment seemed the lesser of the two, I got into dry things and seated myself on the veranda of the hotel. With a cigar to soothe my jangling nerves, I considered the position of Miss Briggs and myself. I was happy in believing it had improved. On the morrow there was no law to prevent me from visiting Hatchardson's Bookstore, and in view of what had happened since last I left it, I had reason to hope Miss Briggs would receive me more, kindly. Of the correctness of this diagnosis I was at once assured. In front of the hotel a district messenger-boy fell off his bicycle and with unerring instinct picked me out as Mr. Fitzgibbon of New York. The note he carried was from Miss Briggs. It stated that in the presence of so many people it had been impossible for her to thank me as she wished for the service I had rendered her, and that Mrs. Cutler, with whom she boarded, and herself, would be glad if after supper I would call upon them. I gave the messenger-boy enough gold to enable him to buy a new bicycle and in my room executed a dance symbolizing joy. I then kicked my suit-case under the bed. I would not soon need it. Now that Miss Briggs had forgiven me, I was determined to live and die in New Bedford.

The home of Mrs. Cutler, where Miss Briggs lodged and boarded, was in a side street of respectable and distinguished antiquity. The street itself was arched with the branches of giant elms, and each house was an island surrounded by grass, and over the porches climbed roses. It was too warm to remain indoors, so we sat on the steps of the porch, and through the leaves of the elms the electric light globe served us as a moon. For an automobile salesman I was very shy, very humble.

Twice before I had given offense and I was determined if it lay with me, it would not happen again. I did not hope to interest Miss Briggs in myself, nor did I let it appear how tremendously I was interested in her. For the moment I was only a stranger in a strange land making a social call. I asked Miss Briggs about New Bedford and the whaling, about the books she sold, and the books she liked. It was she who talked. When I found we looked at things in the same way and that the same things gave us pleasure I did not comment on that astonishing fact, but as an asset more precious than gold, stored it away. When I returned to the hotel I found that concerning Miss Briggs I had made important discoveries. I had learned that her name was Polly, that the JOLLY POLLY had been christened after her grandmother, that she was an orphan, that there were relatives with whom she did not "hit it off," that she was very well read, possessed of a most charming sense of humor, and that I found her the most attractive girl I had ever met.

The next morning I awoke in an exalted frame of mind. I was in love with life, with New Bedford, and with Polly Briggs. I had been in love before but never with a young lady who worked in a shop, and I found that loving a lady so occupied gives one a tremendous advantage. For when you call she must always be at home, nor can she plead another engagement. So, before noon, knowing she could not deny herself, I was again at Hatchardson's, purchasing more postal-cards. But Miss Briggs was not deceived. Nor apparently was any one else. The BEDFORD MERCURY had told how, the previous evening, Frederick Fitzgibbon, an automobile salesman from New York, had been knocked out by an automobile while saving Miss Polly Briggs from a similar fate; and Mr. Hatchardson and all the old ladies who were in the bookstore making purchases congratulated me. It was evident that in Miss Briggs they took much more than a perfunctory interest. They were very fond of her. She was an institution; and I could see that as such to visitors she would be pointed out with pride, as was the new bronze statue of the Whaleman in Court House Square. Nor did they cease discussing her until they had made it quite clear to me that in being knocked out in her service I was a very lucky man. I did not need to be told that, especially as I noted that Miss Briggs was anxious lest I should not be properly modest. Indeed, her wish that in the eyes of the old ladies I should appear to advantage was so evident, and her interest in me so proprietary, that I was far from unhappy.

The afternoon I spent in Fairharbor. From a real estate agent I obtained keys to those cottages on the water-front that were for

rent, and I busied myself exploring them. The one I most liked I pretended I had rented, and I imagined myself at work among the flower-beds, or with my telescope scanning the shipping in the harbor, or at night seated in front of the open fire watching the green and blue flames of the driftwood. Later, irresolutely, I wandered across town to Harbor Castle, this time walking entirely around it and coming upon a sign that read, "Visitors Welcome. Do not pick the flowers."

Assuring myself that I was moved only by curiosity, I accepted the invitation, nor, though it would greatly have helped the appearance of the cemetery-like beds, did I pick the flowers. On a closer view Harbor Castle certainly possessed features calculated to make an impecunious author Stop, look, and listen. I pictured it peopled with my friends. I saw them at the long mahogany table of which through the French window I got a glimpse, or dancing in the music-room, or lounging on the wicker chairs on the sweeping verandas. I could see them in flannels at tennis, in bathing-suits diving from the spring-board of the swimming pool, departing on excursions in the motor-cars that at the moment in front of the garage were being sponged and polished, so that they flashed like mirrors. And I thought also of the two-thousand-ton yacht and to what far countries, to what wonderful adventures it might carry me.

But all of these pictures lacked one feature. In none of them did Polly Briggs appear. For, as I very well knew, that was something the ambitions of Mrs. Farrell would not permit. That lady wanted me as a son only because she thought I was a social asset. By the same reasoning, as a daughter-in-law, she would not want a shop-girl, especially not one who as a shop-girl was known to all New Bedford. My mood as I turned my back upon the golden glories of Harbor Castle and walked to New Bedford was thoughtful.

I had telegraphed my servant to bring me more clothes and my Phoenix car; and as I did not want him inquiring for Fletcher Farrell had directed him to come by boat to Fall River. Accordingly, the next morning, I took the trolley to that city, met him at the wharf, and sent him back to New York. I gave him a check with instructions to have it cashed in that city and to send the money, and my mail, to Frederick Fitzgibbon. This ALIAS I explained to him by saying I was gathering material for an article to prove one could live on fifty cents a day. He was greatly relieved to learn I did not need a valet to help me prove it.

I returned driving the Phoenix to New Bedford, and as it was a Saturday, when the store closed at noon, I had the ineffable delight of taking Polly Briggs for a drive. As chaperons she invited two young friends of hers named Lowell. They had been but very lately married, and regarded me no more than a chauffeur they had hired by the hour. This left Polly who was beside me on the front seat, and myself, to our own devices. Our devices were innocent enough. They consisted in conveying the self-centred Lowells so far from home that they could not get back for supper



and were so forced to dine with me. Polly, for as Polly I now thought of her, discovered the place. It was an inn, on the edge of a lake with an Indian name. We did not get home until late, but it had been such a successful party that before we separated we planned another journey for the morrow. That one led to the Cape by way of Bourne and Wood's Hole, and back again to the North Shore to Barnstable, where we lunched. It was a grand day and the first of others just as happy. After that every afternoon when the store closed I picked up the Lowells; and then Polly, and we sought adventures. Sometimes we journeyed no farther than the baseball park, but as a rule I drove them to some inn for dinner, where later, if there were music, we danced, if not, we returned slowly through the pine woods and so home by the longest possible route. The next Saturday I invited them to Boston. We started early, dined at the Touraine and went on to a musical comedy, where I had reserved seats in the front row. This nearly led to my undoing. Late in the first act a very merry party of young people who had come up from Newport and Narragansett to the Coates-Islip wedding filled the stage boxes and at sight of me began to wave and beckon. They were so insistent that between the acts I thought it safer to visit them. They wanted to know why I had not appeared at the wedding, and who was the beautiful girl.

The next morning on our return trip to New Bedford Polly said, "I read in the papers this morning that those girls in that theatre party last night were the bridesmaids at the Coates-Islip wedding. They seemed to know you quite well.

I explained that in selling automobiles one became acquainted with many people.

Polly shook her head and laughed. Then she turned and looked at me.

"You never sold an automobile in your life," she said.

With difficulty I kept my eyes on the road; but I protested vigorously.

"Don't think I have been spying," said Polly; "I found you out quite by accident. Yesterday a young man I know asked me to persuade you to turn in your Phoenix and let him sell you one of the new model. I said you yourself were the agent for the Phoenix, and he said that, on the contrary, HE was, and that you had no right to sell the car in his TERRITORY." I grinned guiltily and said:

Well, I HAVEN'T sold any, have I?"

That is not the point," protested Polly. "What was your reason for telling me you were trying to earn a living selling automobiles?"

"So that I could take you driving in one," I answered.

"Oh!" exclaimed Polly.

There was a pause during which in much inward trepidation I avoided meeting her eyes. Then Polly added thoughtfully, "I think that was a very good reason."

In our many talks the name of the Fletcher Farrells had never been mentioned. I had been most careful to avoid it. As each day passed, and their return imminent, and in consequence my need to fly grew more near, and the name was still unspoken, I was proportionately grateful. But when the name did come up I had reason to be pleased, for Polly spoke it with approval, and it was not of the owner of Harbor Castle she was speaking, but of myself. It was one evening about two weeks after we had met, and I had side-stepped the Lowells and was motoring with Polly alone. We were talking of our favorite authors, dead and alive.

"You may laugh," said Polly, and she said it defiantly, "and I don't know whether you would call him among the dead or the living, but I am very fond of Fletcher Farrell!"

My heart leaped. I was so rattled that I nearly ran the car into a stone wall. I thought I was discovered and that Polly was playing with me. But her next words showed that she was innocent. She did not know that the man to whom she was talking and of whom she was talking were the same. "Of course you will say," she went on, "that he is too romantic, that he is not true to life. But I never lived in the seventeenth century, so I don't know whether he is true to life or not. And I like romance. The life I lead in the store gives me all the reality I want. I like to read about brave men and great and gracious ladies."

I never met any girls like those Farrell write about, but it's nice to think they exist. I wish I were like them. And, his men, too--they make love better than any other man I ever read about."

"Better than I do?" I asked.

Polly gazed at the sky, frowning severely. After a pause, and as though she had dropped my remark into the road and the wheels had crushed it, she said, coldly, "Talking about books----"

"No," I corrected, "we were talking about Fletcher Farrell."

"Then," said Polly with some asperity, "don't change the subject. Do you know," she went on hurriedly, "that you look like him --like the pictures of him--as he was."

"Heavens!" I exclaimed, "the man's not dead!"

"You know what I mean," protested Polly. "As he was before he stopped writing."

"Nor has he stopped writing," I objected; "his books have stopped selling." Polly turned upon me eagerly.

"Do you know him?" she demanded. I answered with caution that I had met him.

"Oh!" she exclaimed, "tell me about him!"

I was extremely embarrassed. It was a bad place. About myself I could not say anything pleasant, and behind my back, as it were, I certainly was not going to say anything unpleasant. But Polly relieved me of the necessity of saying anything.

"I don't know any man," she exclaimed fervently, "I would so like to meet!"

It seemed to me that after that the less I said the better. So I told her something was wrong with the engine and by the time I had pretended to fix it, I had led the conversation away from Fletcher Farrell as a novelist to myself as a chauffeur.

The next morning at the hotel, temptation was again waiting for me. This time it came in the form of a letter from my prospective father-in-law. It had been sent from Cape May to my address in New York, and by my servant forwarded in an envelope addressed to Frederick Fitzgibbon."

It was what in the world of commerce is called a "follow-up" letter. It recalled the terms of his offer to me, and improved upon them. It made it clear that even after meeting me Mr. Farrell and his wife were still anxious to stand for me as a son. They were good enough to say they had found me a "perfect gentleman." They hoped that after considering their proposition I had come to look upon it with favor.

As his son, Mr. Farrell explained, my annual allowance would be the interest on one million dollars, and upon his death his entire fortune and property he would bequeath to me. He was willing, even anxious, to put this in writing. In a week he would return to Fairharbor when he hoped to receive a favorable answer. In the meantime he enclosed a letter to his housekeeper.

"Don't take anything for granted," he urged, "but go to Fairharbor and present this letter. See the place for yourself. Spend the week there and act like you were the owner. My housekeeper has orders to take her orders from you. Don't refuse something you have never seen!"

This part of the letter made me feel as mean and uncomfortable as a wet hen. The open, almost too open, methods of Mr. Farrell made my own methods appear contemptible. He was urging me to be his guest and I was playing the spy. But against myself my indignation did not last. A letter, bearing a special delivery stamp which

arrived later in the afternoon from Mrs. Farrell turned my indignation against her, and with bitterness. She also had been spying. Her letter read:

The Pinkerton I employed to report on you states that after losing you for a week he located you at New Bedford, that you are living under the name of Fitzgibbon, and that you have made yourself conspicuous by attentions to a young person employed in a shop. This is for me a great blow and disappointment, and I want you to clearly understand Mr. Farrell's offer is made to you as an unmarried man. I cannot believe your attentions are serious, but whether they are serious or not, they must cease. The detective reports the pair of you are now the talk of Fairharbor. You are making me ridiculous. I do not want a shop-girl for a daughter-in-law and you will either give up her acquaintance or give up Harbor Castle!

I am no believer in ultimatums. In attaining one's end they seldom prove successful. I tore the note into tiny pieces, and defiantly, with Polly in the seat beside me, drove into the open country. At first we picked our way through New Bedford, from the sidewalks her friends waved to her, and my acquaintances smiled. The detective was right. We had indeed made ourselves the talk of the town, and I was determined the talk must cease.

We had reached Ruggles Point when the car developed an illness. I got out to investigate. On both sides of the road were tall hemlocks and through them to the west we could see the waters of Sippican Harbor in the last yellow rays of the sun as it sank behind Rochester. Overhead was the great harvest moon.

Polly had taken from the pocket of the car some maps and guide-books, and while I lifted the hood and was deep in the machinery she was turning them over.

"What," she asked, "is the number of this car? I forget."

As I have said, I was preoccupied and deep in the machinery; that is, with a pair of pliers I was wrestling with a recalcitrant wire. Unsuspectingly I answered: "Eight-two- eight"

A moment later I heard a sharp cry, and raised my head. With eyes wide in terror Polly was staring at an open book. Without appreciating my danger I recognized it as "Who's Who in Automobiles." The voice of Polly rose in a cry of disbelief.

"Eight-two-eight," she read, "owned by Fletcher Farrell, Hudson Apartments, New York City." She raised her eyes to mine.

"Is that true?" she gasped. "Are you Fletcher Farrell?" I leaned into the car and got hold of her hand.

"That is not important," I stammered. "What is important is this:

Will you be Mrs. Fletcher Farrell?"

What she said may be guessed from the fact that before we returned to New Bedford we drove to Fairharbor and I showed her the cottage I liked best. It was the one with the oldest clapboard shingles, the oldest box hedge, the most fragrant honeysuckles, and a lawn that wet its feet in the surf. Polly liked it the best, too.

By now the daylight had gone, and on the ships the riding lights were shining, but shining sulkily, for the harvest moon filled the world with golden radiance. As we stood on the porch of the empty cottage, in the shadow of the honeysuckles, Polly asked an impossible question. It was:

"How MUCH do you love me?"

"You will never know," I told her, "but I can tell you this: I love you more than a two-thousand-ton yacht, the interest on one million dollars, and Harbor Castle!"

It was a wasteful remark, for Polly instantly drew away.

"What DO you mean?" she laughed.

"Fletcher Farrell of Harbor Castle," I explained, "offered me those things, minus you. But I wanted you."

"I see," cried Polly, "he wanted to adopt you. He always talks of that. I am sorry for him. He wants a son so badly." She sighed softly, "Poor uncle!"

"Poor WHAT!" I yelled.

"Didn't you know," exclaimed Polly, "that Mrs. Farrell was a Briggs! She was my father's sister."

"Then YOU," I said, "are the relation who was 'too high and mighty!'" Polly shook her head.

"No," she said, "I didn't want to be dependent."

"And you gave up all that," I exclaimed, "and worked at Hatchardson's, just because you didn't want to be dependent!"

"I like my uncle-in-law very much," explained Polly, "but not my aunt. So, it was no temptation. No more," she cried, looking at me as though she were proud of me, "than it was to you."

In guilty haste I changed the subject. In other words, I kissed her. I knew some day I would have to confess. But until we were safely married that could wait. Before confessing I would make sure of her first. The next day we announced our engagement and Polly consented that it should be a short one. For, as I pointed out,

already she had kept me waiting thirty years. The newspapers dug up the fact that I had once been a popular novelist, and the pictures they published of Polly proved her so beautiful that, in congratulation, I received hundreds of telegrams. The first one to arrive came from Cape May. It read:

My dear boy, your uncle elect sends his heartiest congratulations to you and love to Polly. Don't make any plans until you hear from me--am leaving to-night. FLETCHER FARRELL.

In terror Polly fled into my arms. Even when NOT in terror it was a practice I strongly encouraged.

"We are lost!" she cried. "They will adopt us in spite of ourselves. They will lock us up for life in Harbor Castle! I don't WANT to be adopted. I want YOU! I want my little cottage!"

I assured her she should have her little cottage; I had already bought it. And during the two weeks before the wedding, when I was not sitting around Boston while Polly bought clothes, we refurnished it. Polly furnished the library, chiefly with my own books, and "The Log of the JOLLY POLLY." I furnished the kitchen. For a man cannot live on honeysuckles alone. My future uncle-in-law was gentle but firm.

"You can't get away from the fact," he said, that you will be my nephew, whether you like it or not. So, be kind to an old man and let him give the bride away and let her be married from Harbor Castle."

In her white and green High Flier car and all of her diamonds, Mrs. Farrell called on Polly and begged the same boon. We were too happy to see any one else dissatisfied; so though we had planned the quietest of weddings, we gave consent. Somehow we survived it. But now we recall it only as that terrible time when we were never alone. For once in the hands of our rich relations the quiet wedding we had arranged became a royal alliance, a Field of the Cloth of Gold, the chief point of attack for the moving-picture men.

The youths who came from New York to act as my ushers informed me that the Ushers' Dinner at Harbor Castle--from which, after the fish course, I had fled--was considered by them the most successful ushers' dinner in their career of crime. My uncle-in-Law also testifies to this. He ought to know. At four in the morning he was assisting the ushers in throwing the best man and the butler into the swimming-pool.

For our honeymoon he loaned us the yacht. "Take her as far as you like," he said. "After this she belongs to you and Polly. And find a better name for her than Harbor Lights. It sounds too much like a stay-at-home. And I want you two to see the world." I thanked him, and suggested he might rechristen her the JOLLY POLLY.

"That was the name," I pointed out, "of the famous whaler owned by Captain Briggs, your wife's father, and it would be a compliment to Polly, too."

My uncle-in-law-elect agreed heartily; but made one condition:

"I'll christen her that," he said, "if you will promise to write a new Log of the JOLLY POLLY." I promised. This is it.

End of Project Gutenberg Etext of The Log of the Jolly Polly, by Davis

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