

THE LOVE CHASE

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*** START OF THIS PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE LOVE CHASE ***

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THE LOVE CHASE

BY
FELIX GRENDON

Author of

"Will He Come Back?", "Nixola of Wall Street," etc.

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THE LOVE CHASE

"But who, alas! can love and still be wise?"

LORD BYRON

"The right to rebellion is the right to seek a higher rule
and not to wander in mere lawlessness."

GEORGE ELIOT

PART I REBELLION

CHAPTER ONE

I

A young man of twenty-seven, a dashing Count d'Orsay type, was sitting astride a chair in flat number fifteen, one of the three-room flats in the Lorillard model tenement houses. He was alone in the room but evidently not in the flat, for he was directing animated remarks at one of two closed doors that flanked a projecting china cupboard.

"It's to be a masked ball, Cornelia," he was saying, "and I'm going as the head of John the Baptist."

Two feminine voices, one from behind the door, laughed merrily. Much pleased, the young man continued:

"Or I might go as a Spanish cavalier. The costume in Whistler's painting of 'Henry Irving as Philip II' would suit me to a T."

"Claude, I know what you're thinking of," returned a well-pitched voice behind the right door. "You're not thinking of the part of Philip II, but of the part of Don Juan, in which you expect to be irresistible."

"Gee," added kittenish tones behind the door. "It'd be a good sight better if he went as a penitent friar."

"Leading you attired as Salome, I dare say."

"Oh, no, I mean to go as St. Cecilia."

Claude burst into mocking laughter.

"You'd need seven and seventy veils for that part, Mazie," he said.

When he subsided, the same languid, purring tones replied from the left.

"Say, Claude, you *have* got a head. But so has a pin."

"Naughty kitten, showing its claws in company!"

"Lothario!" cried Cornelia, from the right. "No quarreling before supper."

"Oh, I need a little excitement to give me an appetite," said Claude.

He got up, walked around the room several times and then stopped in front of the left door.

"I wish you'd hurry up, Mazie."

"Mary, I'm on my fourth step," purred her voice in reply.

"I can fairly see you dressing."

Through Mazie's door came a coloratura shriek.

"In my mind's eye, that is," added Claude, after a pause.

Resuming his seat he addressed the right door again.

"Cornelia, shall we go to the Turk's or to the Spaniard's?"

"I'm sorry, Lothario, but I've got a date with 'Big Burley' for tonight."

"Hutchins Burley? Then have a good time!"

As his skeptical inflection belied his words, Cornelia asked for an explanation.

"Hutch is in a devil of a temper," declared Claude grimly, "because Rob covered him with ridicule at the Outlaw Club."

"Leave it to Robert Lloyd!"

This exclamation from the right door was followed by a peremptory command from the left.

"Say, wait a moment—I can't hear you, Claude—and I can't find my garter."

Ignoring Mazie's cries of distress, Claude proceeded to explain to the right door that Burley's temper had been ruffled that afternoon at a meeting of the Outlaws, a club for young radical and artistic people which they all belonged to, and which, since the recent signing of the armistice, had more than trebled its membership. Friction had arisen from the contact of two facts: the need of money to provide the club with larger quarters, and the proposal to hold a public masked ball as an easy means of raising the money.

Hutchins Burley, who had organized the Outlaws, sponsored this proposal, but some of the members opposed it on the ground that, in the existing state of public opinion, a radical club might get a black eye from the improprieties or the hooliganism that outsiders could practice under cover of the masks. "Big Burley" had flattened out most of the opposition with his usual steam-rollering bluster, the Outlaws, like more timid gentry, being victims of a popular superstition that a noisy debater is always in the right.

Leading the minority, Claude had moved the substitution of a restricted

costume ball for the free and easy masquerade. He was ably seconded by his friend Robert Lloyd, whose short satiric speech won over many supporters, so many that "Big Burley" fairly swelled with the venom of frustration. Claude assured Cornelia that, if a narrow majority had not finally declared itself in favor of the masked ball, Burley would certainly have exploded. As it was—

II

Further explanations were cut short by the opening of the door on the left.

"Mary, I'm on my last step," announced the occupant, standing on the threshold.

Mazie Ross was taller and slenderer than her purring tones foreshadowed. Her intimates knew that, in addition to being extremely pretty, she was extremely bad. Young as she was, her looks were already enameled with cruelty. A long procession of lovers had left her wholly incapable of tenderness or shame.

With the cadenced poses of a Ziegfield "Follies" girl, she walked to Claude's chair and stood beside him invitingly. He opened his arms and drew her on his lap. She struggled just enough to put zest into the embraces he immediately engaged her in.

"You haven't invited me yet," she said, pouting. "Do you think I don't eat or drink?"

"Goddesses and sylphs live on nectar and ambrosia, you know."

"Now you're talking, old dear. But let me give you a tip. Those dishes don't figure on the menu of a cheap Turkish restaurant in the gas house district. I do believe you can get them at the Plaza or the Ritz, though."

Claude's reply to this hint was to launch into caresses so daring that Mazie took alarm. She was in the habit of giving much less than she received, and she had not as yet received very much from Claude. Therefore she wriggled, with some difficulty, out of his grasp. Perhaps she also desired to anticipate the entrance of her chum. At any rate, Cornelia just then opened the door on the right.

III

"Time I came in," she remarked; glancing significantly from one to the other.

"Yes," replied Mazie, looking the picture of wounded innocence. "Since Claude came back from the firing line in France—or was it gay Paree?—liberty and license look alike to him. All the same, my beamish boy, there's a boundary between the two."

"Boundaries exist only to be extended," chanted Claude, delighted with his own audacity.

"I don't know which of you is the more incorrigible flirt," said Cornelia, half in reproach.

"Listen to the pot calling the kettle black," cried the "Follies" girl. "Somebody pass me a whiff of brandy to uplift me."

"Don't be vulgar, Mazie."

Mazie's answer was to tango to Cornelia's cupboard, singing provocatively:

"I learnt more from Billy,
On the day I stayed from school,
Than teacher could have taught me in a week."

She would have said and done much more than this to annoy Cornelia. But

she remembered in time that her sayings or doings might offend Claude Fontaine who, in the words of a fellow Outlaw, was "rich, but refined." She never knowingly gave offence to any form of wealth whilst there was hope of exploiting its owner even on the smallest scale. Besides, she was more than a little afraid of Cornelia.

After helping herself to an undiluted drink, she pranced back to the studio couch and flung herself upon it, face downwards, with the abandon of a Russian ballet dancer.

"Thank the Lord it's to be a masked affair," she called out to the others. "What'd be the good of a regular look-and-see ball? Nowadays men are that timid, you can't have a lark with them unless they don't see what they're doing, nor who they're doing it with."

"Are you throwing stones at me?" asked Claude.

"No, at Robert Lloyd. What's he doing in these diggings, anyhow? Why, he's a regular pale-face. If he's the new man—you know the kind—the kind that won't kiss a girl in the dark without first asking her permission—then give me the old Nick."

"Don't blame it all on poor Cato," Cornelia intervened.

Cornelia Covert was about thirty, blonde, loose-framed and of medium height. Her rich golden hair sounded a dominant note of which her pupils and her

eyebrows were overtones. A firm, square chin heightened an illusion of strength with which her form invested her, but which her pale coloring and listless eye did not support.

"Claude sided with the strait-laced party, too," she reminded Mazie.

"Oh, well," said Claude, flushing slightly, "I'm really quite glad that the minority lost. To tell the truth, what I chiefly objected to was Hutchins Hurley's cockiness. Personally I prefer a masked ball. I haven't got Robert's interest in backing the radicals or keeping their reputation spotless. Let's risk it, I say. It's a case of nothing venture, nothing have, isn't it?"

"So Robert was the real leader of the rumpus all the time," said Cornelia, sweetly. "I thought so. Still, I'm free to say that I admire his courage in defying 'Big Burley.' Especially when I think how afraid of Hutch all the Outlaws are."

Claude rose to his full stature and walked to the head of the couch where he stood, handsome and commanding.

"Am I afraid of him?" he asked, amused.

"Well, you generally agree with him, Lothario."

He received this jab with a smile. He supposed Cornelia to be speaking only of bodily fear, and as his physical courage and strength were unusual, the shaft glanced off.

"I mean," said Cornelia, "that, like Big Burley, you are an anarchist at heart, only not such a wicked one. You work within the law, he works without."

Claude was preparing a vigorous assault on any theory that placed Burley and himself in the same class, when a ring at the outer door took the opportunity away.

CHAPTER TWO

I

That part of the city of New York which the older charts describe as Kips Bay, now encompasses the East Thirties, Forties, and Fifties. It is a section of Manhattan famous in song and story. Here in 1635 came Jacobus Kip, the learned Dutch patroon and, with bricks brought from Holland, built a farmhouse on land where St. Gabriel's Park and an astonishingly well-stocked library now flourish. Here Washington had another site for his movable headquarters while, on the

heights of Murray Hill hard by, he rallied his troops against the redcoats. Here in Artillery Park (at First Avenue and Forty-fifth Street), Nathan Hale was executed. And here at Turtle Bay (where the East Forties now end) the "Quality" had a fashionable bathing beach in the early eighteen-hundreds.

Of these historic memories the average Kipsian is ignorant, quite contemptuously ignorant. Far livelier realities occupy his thoughts. In the heart of modern Kips Bay there are slums, stables, hospitals, asylums, and model tenement houses, five features ranged in an ascending order of precedence from the neighborhood's point of view. Kips Bay is keen on this order of precedence. No lady of the White House giving her first State Ball could well be keener.

Slums rank lowest in the neighborhood's appraisal because they are the natural or routine habitat of the human species there. Stables go a peg higher, not because they are dirtier, or because artists frequently turn them into studios but because they serve as club houses for professional gangsters, and because a crack gunman is at once the pride and the terror of his district. Hospitals outclass the stables by the same law of human nature that makes an extra holiday outclass a Sunday. For the hospital is a sort of haven in which the true-born Kipsian expects, now and then, to spend a furlough from the ravages of alcohol, from undernourishment, or merely from the wear and tear of the industrial machine.

In their turn, the hospitals yield the palm to the several asylums which, adjoining the hovels of the destitute, provide the infirm, the defective, or the insane with all the comforts and luxuries of the rich. Easily the handsomest buildings in the neighborhood, the asylums stand unrivalled in aristocratic prestige. And this is not due to a Kipsian gratitude for charity, nor to the growing artistic cultivation of the masses. It is due to an inborn respect for plutocracy, a respect that persists in the heart of every Kipsian, no matter how loudly he may applaud the labor agitator who assures him that an asylum is at once a monument to the uneasy consciences of donors and a sepulchre for those soldiers of industry who do not perish in active service.

It would be as difficult for the Kipsian to explain to the outside world why his model tenements outrank asylums as for the outside world to explain to the Kipsian why a civilian Secretary of the Navy can give orders to the uniformed Admiral of the Fleet. In either case, the simplest course the perplexed brain can pursue is to accept the facts on faith.

This is precisely what the Kipsian has done—he has accepted both the civilian Secretary and the model tenements on faith. Nevertheless, the facts quite pass his understanding. The model tenement, he has heard, was built in his midst for the likes of himself, for toilers at the border line of pauperism. It was built, moreover, to accustom him to habits of cleanliness and thrift. Unfortunately, the rooms are too small to hold his furniture, or the furniture is too bulky to leave

room for cleanliness. In any case, the rents are so high that only the "aristocrats of labor" can afford to pay them, and the "aristocrats of labor" are not so low as to merge their fortunes with the denizens of Kips Bay.

Because their habits, their pocketbooks, and their pride are thus offended, native-born Kipsians have unanimously fought shy of the model tenements. And these evidences of concern for the welfare of the masses might have proven a poor investment for public benefactors, had not the situation been saved by sundry artists, writers, actors, singers, promoters, efficiency engineers, socialists, anarchists and dynamitards who promptly rented every available apartment besides filling up a long waiting list of impatient applicants.

To the simple-minded natives of Kips Bay, the model tenementers stand clean beyond the bounds of everyday belief. Here are people who plainly hail from comfortable homes, and yet voluntarily set up housekeeping in the slums; who neither work by day nor sleep by night; who flirt with riches and coquet with poverty; and who go to and from their abodes, one day in rags, the next in motor cars. By such contradictions respectable Kipsians are completely mystified. But having grown accustomed to their mystery, they have ceased to hate it. They have even begun to pay it the compliment which idolatrous man usually pays the unfathomable: they worship it above all the things that they can fathom.

And thus it has come to pass that, within the confines of Kips Bay, the model tenement lords it over the asylum for the insane.

The model tenementers affect a lofty indifference to this high rank; also to the slum-dwellers who confer it. They affect an even loftier indifference to the existence of the newer model tenements in the East End Avenue and John Jay Park neighborhoods. When comparisons are instituted between these more modern, more luxurious structures and their own, the Lorillarders smile superiorly and say: "Let Kips Bay renegades with a sneaking preference for uptown respectability migrate to John Jay Park, or better still, to Hell Gate! We want no truck with them. The one and only Lorillard speaks for itself."

If you probe further they will ask you to lift up your eyes at night to their electrically lighted pagoda roof and then tell them why they should not be content to be "a twinkling model set in a sea of slums." No. Impossible to get them excited by sly disparagements or open comparisons.

Impossible, that is, unless your comparison brings in Greenwich Village. Dare to assert that the model tenement district reminds you of Greenwich Village or the Latin Quarter of Paris, and you will encounter an explosion. You will learn to your sorrow that the cold model tenement is not cold at all, that he is a volcano covered with a very little snow.

He will bombard you with: "Greenwich Village me eye! Liken us to a fake Bohemia, to a near-beer substitute for the Parisian Latin Quarter! Say, where

did you get that stuff? We don't imitate the Latin Quarter or any other foreign quarter. We are an American quarter. We are the Kips Bay model tenement quarter—and that is all there is to it.”

He will swear that the differences between Greenwich Village and Kips Bay are too numerous to record. He will challenge you to scour the Village for a parallel to the Kips Bay Outlaw Club with its professional news-faker for president, its one-legged gunman for sergeant-at-arms, and its purser-of-a-pirate-ship for treasurer.

True, he may admit a superficial resemblance in the matter of devotion to art. But he will point out that the artistic set in Greenwich Village is almost the whole village, whereas the artistic set in the model tenements is but a small part of Kips Bay. He will assure you that: “The Village takes up *Love for Love's Sake* and *Art for Art's Sake*. We have no use for that kind of bunk. We take up Art and Love for the sake of anything and everything but Love and Art; for the sake of politics or money, or just for the sake of excitement.”

The way the purser-of-the-pirate-ship expresses the difference is: “We go in more for powder than for paint.”

By powder he means gunpowder.

II

It was in these Lorillard tenements (named after Westing Lorillard, the well-known brewer and philanthropist who endowed them) that Cornelia Covert and Mazie Ross occupied apartment number fifteen, (two bedrooms, kitchen and bath). And it was by a ring of number fifteen's bell that Claude Fontaine was cut short.

While Cornelia went to the door, Mazie transformed the kitchen as if by magic. She wafted a heap of soiled dishes into a basin in the cupboard, deftly concealed the stove behind a Japanese screen, and then converted the washtubs into a table by covering them with a pretty denim cloth. Tubs, in a sitting-room, offended her sense of propriety, even when they were porcelain tubs, as these were, with fine zinc tops. But the denim cover blotted out iniquity, on the principle that what the eye can't see, the heart don't grieve! Fortunately. For the limitations of a three-room apartment left no choice but to employ the one fair-sized room in the triple capacity of kitchen, dining-room and sitting-room.

Tapping her dainty hands against each other to brush away the dust, Mazie

faced the newcomer, a young man about Claude's age.

"Why, it's only Rob!" she exclaimed.

"By which Mazie means to say, Cato, that we trembled for fear you were Hutchins Burley."

"Do you expect him?" asked Robert, turning to Cornelia.

"Burley's going to take me to supper."

"That man foils me at every turn," said Robert with mock gravity. "I wanted to take you to supper myself. Cornelia, you have no intuition whatever."

"Well, how do you do!"

Cornelia had a whimsical way of using this salutation as a mild rebuke.

Mazie, who was perched on the quondam tubs so that Claude could get the full benefit of a very shapely pair of legs, made a grimace at Robert Lloyd.

"If that isn't the third invite this evening! Cornelia, you're a perfect pig. Rob, pale face never won fair lady."

"Mazie, your ignorance of human nature is appalling," said Robert. "What you really ought to say is that pale faces never count their chickens till they're hatched."

"Is that so, Mr. Cleverdick? Well, listen to me. Cornelia likes her men in three dimensions, not in two. That's why she's going out with Hutch."

"Well, if Rob is two dimensions," said Claude, "Hutch is eight or ten."

Robert joined in the general laughter; Mazie's manner was really very friendly to him, although the banter sounded spiteful. Cornelia now insisted that they were all to join her and Burley at supper; and Robert, under pressure, consented to make a fifth.

Robert was by no means as unprepossessing as Mazie's brusque remarks might have led one to infer. True, he was not handsome, dashing, and meteoric like Claude Fontaine. He was of medium height and slender, with a figure touched by poetry and grace. Women described him as "so nice" until, scorched by his flaming spirit, they learnt that ideas, and ideas alone, could make him incandescent.

"Lucky you left after Hutchins bowled us over," he said to Claude. "The rest of the meeting was dry as dust."

"I thought as much," said Claude. "What happened?"

"It was voted to supplement the main affair of the ball with a few side features."

"Like what?"

"Like a raffle, a fish pond, and—several other things that I fear I paid no attention to. All I remember is that I was deputed to get some one to act as a fortune-teller."

"Cornelia's the girl for that," cried Mazie. "She's a regular clip at reading

palms, men's palms especially. Oh, she can do it slick. Why, she can give you a worse character than Chiro."

"What luck. The fact is, Cornelia, the committee had you in mind. May I count on you? You shall be mistress of a gypsy tent."

"No, *Robert le Diable*, a thousand times, no! Don't you know my habits better than to invite me to a ball?"

It had pleased Cornelia to "live in seclusion" as she called it, for some time past.

"I know you don't go to dances, Cornelia. Neither do I. But think of the opportunity we'll have of talking undisturbed and finding out what other dislikes we have in common. While the rest go on with the dance, our joy will be unconfined."

"Indeed! And in return for your improving conversation, I'm to make up characters for silly people who never had any? No, thank you. I don't propose to spend half an evening letting tiresome people bore me, and the other half watching the fine art of dancing degraded into an orgy of fox-trots and jazz steps."

Mazie stuck her tongue out when Cornelia wasn't looking, and Claude responded with a sympathetic wink.

"Don't be a spoil-sport, Cornelia!" said Mazie, hitting the nail on the head. "What is Rob to do?"

"Yes, what is poor Robin to do, poor thing?" echoed Claude.

Cornelia plainly enjoyed the sensation her blank refusal created. But her elation subsided when she caught a glimpse of Mazie and Claude in a stealthy interchange of grimaces.

"Do nothing," she replied tartly. "Or ask Mazie. She'd make a capital gypsy with her dark hair and velvet paws. And she could eke out her fortune-telling with her monkeyshines."

"Thanks, old girl. But I'll take Claude's tip and go as Salome, and I'll dance my feet off just to tantalize you. If the boys want me to, I'll do the dance of the seven veils for them."

"All seven?" asked Claude, affecting an air of seasoned rakishness.

"All *but* the seventh will be one too many if Big Burley is present," said Cornelia.

"Just so, Cornelia," said Claude. "A good reason for you to come and see that Mazie behaves herself. And that Big Burley does likewise. As the Gypsy Queen you may be able to keep him in order by predicting dire disasters for him. For he's a regular old screen villain: he fears nothing but the fictitious."

"Lothario, in the present state of my own fortunes, I'm not keen to tell other people their fortunes."

"Oh, but come anyhow. If not as a gypsy, then as a ballet dancer or a

columbine. Or anything else that takes your fancy. We won't let you stay at home, so get that out of your head."

"Silly boy," said Cornelia, with a prolonged, musical laugh. "A ballet dancer's dress calls for the most cast iron of corsets. Do you see me putting on those abominations? No. Not even for love of you, dear."

She was fond of drawing to the attention of her men friends the fact that a corset was an article she rigorously abjured.

"Oh, the boys know you never wear the iron maiden," said Mazie tartly. "All the Outlaws know it by heart. But they won't treat you any the worse for it, Corny. Men like a girl to be squashy—"

"Provided there's not too much to squash," Claude thrust in.

"Your remarks are all highly illuminating," said Robert Lloyd addressing the company. "But they don't help me out of my box. Remember, I promised the committee to get Cornelia for the gypsy act."

"What, my frisky youth," exclaimed Mazie. "Expect Cornelia to hide her golden coiffure under a shopworn wig! Guess again."

"Mazie's shot is a good one," said Robert. "Cornelia, you can't refuse on no better ground than that helping us would put you out of countenance."

"Out of hair," corrected Claude.

"Out of spite," added Mazie.

"Well," replied Cornelia, reluctantly yielding to this concentrated fire, "I won't go myself. But I'll get you some one else. I have a dear little girl in mind who is as charming as she is original."

"Who is this paragon?" interrupted Claude.

"She's a Brooklyn girl. Her name is Janet Barr."

"Janet Barr!" exclaimed Robert. "Why, you can't get *her* to come to an affair like this."

"Indeed!"

"Yes. I know her family well. She lives in an atmosphere of Puritan blue laws perfumed with brimstone and sulphur. Her mother—"

"She'll come," interrupted Cornelia, with supreme confidence. "But Claude is bored, Mazie is making sheep's eyes, and I'm hungry—let's go to supper."

"What about Big Burley," protested Mazie. "Aren't you going to wait for him?"

"No. But *you* may if you like. I'm too hungry."

When Cornelia saw a chance of tormenting some one, she could move with celerity. Her coat and hat were on in a twinkling, and she was ready to go while Robert and Claude were still fumbling for their hats and coats, and Mazie sat irresolute on the washtubs.

"But really, Cornelia, if somebody doesn't wait for Burley—"

"Bother Burley! He should have been here a quarter of an hour ago. If it'll quiet you, however, I'll tack a note outside the door, telling him to follow us to the Asia Minor Cafeteria."

Secretly gloating over the prospect of Burley's chagrin, she suited the action to the word. While she was writing the note, Claude said to Robert:

"I fear Big Burley will chalk up another black mark against you. He's your boss on the *Evening Chronicle*, isn't he?"

"Yes. His word is law there since he wrote up the Montana dynamite trial."

"Nonsense," said Cornelia. "He won't take it out on Robert. I'll see to that. He has vicious bursts of temper, but he's not bad to the core."

"Cornelia, every tiger-tamer thinks his pets are full of the milk of human kindness. You must excuse a layman for taking a more cautious view. Rob's bread and butter depend on the *Evening Chronicle*."

Robert cut him short.

"Don't worry, Claude," he said. "I've nothing to lose but my chains, and I've you and the girls and a merry evening to gain."

"Good, Cato, good!" cried Cornelia. "I like your spirit. You shall go with me. You, Claude, for being saucy, may stay behind and tarry till your bonnie Mazie's ready. Or you may wait for Hutchins Burley and, if possible, avert the wrath to come. Meet us at the restaurant, Mazie."

With these words, Cornelia took Robert by the sleeve and marched out, leaving Claude staring blankly after her.

"Upon my word!" said the young man, as much amused as he was vexed. "Look sharp, Mazie, will you?" he added, after a moment's pause. "We may yet catch up to them, if you don't put too fine a point—on your complexion."

III

But despatch was not Mazie's forte. And so, while she was still prinking in the bedroom, and Claude was cooling his heels in the kitchen, Hutchins Burley arrived. When Claude opened the door, the hulking Falstaffian form entered, puffing and panting, overheated with liquor as well as with climbing the stairs.

"Haven't kept the old girl waiting, have I?" he gasped, between breaths.

"Oh, no," said Claude, evasively. "She has gone ahead."

Burley, who had evidently not seen the note Cornelia had tacked on the door, acted as if he had not heard Claude's remarks either. He tramped to the

door of the first bedroom, opened it unceremoniously and, when he found it empty, stalked noisily to the second.

"Where the devil is Cornelia?" he demanded, turning to Mazie.

"She was hungry and went on to the Asia Minor."

"Alone?"

"Well, Robert Lloyd happened to be here. He went too."

A sulphurous explosion of oaths testified to "Big Burley's" feelings.

Hutchins Burley was a sinister personage both in newspaper and in radical circles. Among artists who eked out their scanty talents with alcoholic inspiration and took a serious view of the Bohemianism of the Lorillard tenements, he cut a considerable figure. Others dreaded or avoided him.

Curious conclusions might have been drawn from the fact that, though he hung out with parlor anarchists of the Outlaw type and was reputed to be a close friend of real anarchists like Emma Goldman, he was an all-important member of the staff of the sham-liberal *Evening Chronicle*.

But no one bothered to draw these conclusions.

In truth, few people cared to think long or deeply about Hutchins Burley. A great hulk of a man, with a pitted face and shifty eyes, he was a dreadful and repellant figure, yet one that chained the attention. Some said offhand that he knew more about Charles Edward Strong, the editor and owner of the *Evening Chronicle*, than was good for either of them. Others believed that his influence had been won by the sensational hits he had made in "covering" the Lawrence strike and other big labor outbreaks.

One thing was certain. Newspaper Row hated and yet feared him; the Kips Bay model tenementers eyed him askance and yet elected him to high office in the Outlaw Club. A few shrewd observers troubled the placid waters in both camps by enquiring from time to time: "Can Hutchins Burley serve both Park Row and the Radicals?"

Wine was not one of Burley's weak points: he could stand any quantity of it. But women touched his Achilles' heel. On this point he was like Falstaff, "corrupt, corrupt, and tainted in desire."

Hence his explosion at Claude's news. The picture of Cornelia gallivanting off with Robert made his great frame shake with rage.

"What does she mean by going off with that puppy?" he snarled, ejecting the words from the left side of his mouth. "Don't she know better than to break an engagement without so much as a by-your-leave?"

Mazie tried to coax him into a good humor. But the sweeter her advances, the blacker grew his passion.

"Oh, get over it, Hutch," said Claude at last. "After all, if you make an appointment for seven, you can't expect Cornelia to wait until eight."

"She'd have waited but for that thundering young cad," shouted Burley.

"Don't go on like that, Hutch," begged Mazie in a panic. "You know he's Claude's friend."

"Oh, that's nothing," said Claude urbanely. "Names won't hurt Rob. If it relieves your feelings, Hutch, swear at me, too, from the bottom of your heart."

Claude had a temper of his own. But the chief instinct of his social existence was to stave off the disagreeable—except where his own desires were thwarted.

"Ready, Mazie?" he continued. "Well, then, we might as well go. Calm down, Hutch, and come along with us."

"I'll be damned if I do. I won't eat with a girl that breaks an engagement, or prefers a snorting, bouncing, snapping little cur to me. Just wait till he comes snivelling along for the next assignment. I'll show him what's what!"

"Oh, cool off!" exclaimed Claude, whose patience was thoroughly exhausted.

For a second it looked as if Burley would hurl himself upon the younger man. But as Claude's athletic frame seemed fully prepared for the contingency, he picked up his hat, glared himself past Mazie, and fumed his way to the door. He stopped at the threshold.

"Just let the beggar sneak in tomorrow!" he shouted, his left jaw moving with a grotesque, machine-like rhythm. "I'll kick him into kingdom come!"

Claude smiled disdainfully, turned his back on Burley, and went to comfort Mazie, who was making the most of the pose of Dulcinea in distress.

CHAPTER THREE

I

One morning a letter addressed to Miss Janet Barr was delivered at a house in the Park Slope section of Brooklyn. The writing was legible enough, but a new and somewhat flustered servant placed the letter next to Miss Emily Barr's plate. This young lady, Janet's older sister, was the first member of the family to reach the breakfast table. She was one of those well-filled-out single women who abound in the better districts of Brooklyn, and who look more matronly than a great many married women, perhaps because their figures have not been pared down by wedlock in middle-class circumstances.

Casually she picked up the envelope and opened it. She laid the enclosure down before she had read very far, took it up again, laid it down a second time, and then surveyed it with painful indecision. Finally she rang for the maid.

"Laura, have you called Miss Janet?"

"Not yet, Miss Emily. She told me not to call her before half past eight this morning. She said—"

"Never mind. Don't call her until I tell you to."

"Very well, ma'am."

After the girl had gone, Emily took the letter and went upstairs to the back sitting room. She did not allow the turmoil within her to disturb her dignity or quicken her pace. She found her mother seated in a rocking chair and musing over a passage from the Bible that lay open on her lap.

"Good morning, my child," said Mrs. Barr, as her daughter entered. "You must have made short work of breakfast. Are you late?"

"No, mother, I've brought you a letter I opened by mistake. It is directed to Janet."

"Oh, well, just lick it together again," she said, with arid humor, "and lay it beside Janet's plate. She'll never know the difference. You know Janet."

Mrs. Barr's levity appeared to distress Emily.

"That's not what's troubling me, mother. I—"

She hesitated and held out the envelope with a good imitation of helplessness. Her mother stopped rocking and looked in some astonishment from Emily to the letter.

Mrs. Barr was a tall, well-set woman, whose rigid bearing was but little softened by her refined surroundings. She was neither thin nor fleshy; there was something solid and conservative about her that suggested the Chinese wall. Solidity was her pronounced characteristic, solidity of soul no less than solidity of body. Her face was hard; it was full of lines that looked like razor edges drawn in gall.

Mrs. Barr had been beautiful in her youth and might still have been so had she not sacrificed everything—everything but her love of comfort—to a greed for power. Experience had taught her that a fit of sickness was a right royal prop to domestic tyranny. Thus she had cultivated ill-health until nothing saved her from being a professional invalid but her naturally strong constitution and an inherited playfulness which still occasionally emerged between long fits of bad temper.

She was the president of the King's Daughters' Society in a local Presbyterian church, and, as she was preparing for a meeting that day, she cut Emily short.

"Well, Emily, what do you want me to do?" she said, less amiably than

before. "I'll explain it to Janet if you like."

"You don't understand, mother. I not only opened the letter, I read part of it before I realized my mistake."

"That's not a crime, dear."

"No—But what I read amazed me. It seemed all of a piece with Janet's strange behavior of late."

"Indeed? Who is the letter from?"

Emily flushed slightly.

"Mother, I told you I didn't read as far as that. I couldn't help seeing the first line, however. And that confirmed the suspicion we have both had, that Janet has been falling under bad influences."

"Emily, is some man corrupting her?"

"It looks like a woman's hand to me. What do you think?"

Emily gave the letter to her mother, who scrutinized the handwriting for a moment.

"Well," she said at length, "there can be no harm in your repeating to me what you inadvertently saw."

"I don't like to say anything that may turn out to Janet's disadvantage," said Emily, with an effect of reluctance that deceived even herself. "It will seem almost like betraying a confidence."

"Nonsense, Emily. If evil threatens Janet, it is your duty as a sister to warn me, and my duty as a mother to protect her. Our consciences would reproach us if we failed in this."

"But Janet and I were such good friends—would be still, if she had never met those Lorillard tenement people."

Emily said this with the bitterness of outraged feelings.

It was in a studio in one of the model tenements in Kips Bay, three weeks before, that Janet had met Cornelia and other people of radical tendencies. Emily had once enjoyed a monopoly of Janet's heroine worship. The friendship between the sisters had cooled some time ago, but Emily had chosen, rather arbitrarily, to look upon the Lorillard incident as the turning point.

"I can understand your feelings, my dear," said Mrs. Barr. "Their delicacy does you credit. But if these people you mention—anarchists and Bohemians, I think you called them—are trying to lure my Janet into wicked ways, it is time for a mother to interfere."

In spite of these words, she hesitated to read Janet's letter, open though the envelope was. Her domestic tyranny had its humanly illogical side, and there were certain rules of good breeding which she observed as scrupulously as she imposed them. Not once since her two girls entered High School had she opened their letters or so much as read them by stealth.

"You are sure that it comes from one of those tenement persons?" she asked, picking up the letter again.

"Oh, yes. I'm sure I recognize the handwriting. But, mother, do you think we ought to read it?"

This was the very point Mrs. Barr had been mentally debating. Emily's feeble protest had the effect of stimulating her to a quick decision.

"Nothing could be further from my mind than any wish to pry into Janet's legitimate private affairs," she said magisterially. "But here is a letter opened by mistake. From what you read by accident we may infer that it throws a light on those recent actions of your sister's that have caused us all great pain. I shall never let considerations of delicacy or etiquette deter me from an action that my conscience tells me is right."

A look of sanctified resignation passed over Emily's face as her mother took out the enclosure and read the following:

Friday morning.

Dear Araminta:

Have you heard me speak of the Outlaws? They are artists and writers who live beyond the pale of convention, and in an atmosphere painful to the wealthy, purse-proud darlings of our nation. In order to enjoy their outlawry unmolested, they wish to produce club quarters from which artistic elegance is by no means to be banished. Such quarters cost money. To raise the necessary funds a masked ball will take place two weeks from today, and those who come to dance to the tunes must help to pay the piper.

This means that it has been proposed to add one or two tributary features to the main function. Remembering your wizardry at palm reading, I concluded that your raven locks and appealing eyes would be a perfect match for a gypsy costume, and that a dear little gypsy who could tell wise people their virtues and foolish people their fortunes would be a priceless asset. I know you don't believe in palmistry any more than I do, but isn't it your very scepticism that enables you to practice the art with a dash of diablerie that carries conviction?

If you won't accept, I may be obliged to play the gypsy myself. Can you picture my straw-colored plaits in such an Oriental role? But I know your artistic sense will not permit me to do with amateurish bungling what you can do with professional skill. Besides, two peerless young gentlemen, whom I could name if I chose, will pine away with melancholy if you refuse.

Before you answer "yes" or "no," come and spend Wednesday afternoon

with

Yours devotedly, Cornelia.

Mrs. Barr turned the letter over to Emily, who read it while her mother grimly closed the Bible and waited.

"I thought as much!" cried the young lady, as she reached the signature. "It's from Cornelia Covert."

"Who is she, pray?"

"Don't you remember the girl who created a scandal by running away with Percival Houghton, the English artist?"

"Who already had a wife and children in England?"

"Yes, that was Cornelia Covert. You may recall that she was one of my school friends, when we lived in McDonough Street."

"Don't remind me of her past," said Mrs. Barr curtly. "Her present is bad enough. Ring for Laura, please. How did Janet come to know her? Through Robert Lloyd, perhaps. Has she been meeting him again, too?"

"No. It came about in this way. Cornelia left Mr. Houghton not long after their elopement. Or, more likely, he left her. At all events she returned to New York. She was brazen enough to celebrate the occasion. She invited Janet—Janet, though I was her classmate—to a big party in the Lorillard tenements."

"If I remember aright, Janet asked you to go with her?"

"Yes. But I declined as soon as I heard that tenement artists, movie actors and other queer people like Robert Lloyd were to be present at the affair."

"The party was given, so Janet assured me at the time, by some society woman."

"It was held in Miss Lucy Chandler Duke's studio. I did not know then that the Chandler Dukes were radicals as well as millionaires. And, as Janet begged me very hard not to tell you the particulars, I kept the matter a secret."

Mrs. Barr tingled with irritation at what she chose to view as Janet's deceit.

"She said a great deal about the Chandler Dukes!" she exclaimed bitterly, "and nothing at all about Cornelia Covert or Robert Lloyd."

"I did not think Janet would misuse the occasion to form a fast and furious friendship with a person like Cornelia Covert," said Emily, insidiously fanning the flame.

"If she gave less thought to the pomps and vanities of the world, Emily, she could have declined, as you did. But you should not have promoted her deceit. See what comes from walking in the ways of ungodly people. Janet hobnobs with

unbelievers, you are deprived of a sister's companionship, and I must give up an important meeting at the church. That is how the flesh and the devil waste the Lord's time. I pray God to help me bear with the weaknesses of your father and the sinfulness of his daughters."

Laura, the maid, came in just then and was despatched with an urgent summons for Miss Janet.

Mrs. Barr's resources of anger were so considerable that when one member of the family displeased her, everyone else received a share of the overflow of her wrath. The weaker the member the more generous the share. Mr. Barr, by all odds the weakest member of the family of which he was the Biblical head, usually bore the brunt of every domestic storm.

But he was in the fairly safe haven of his own room on the top floor. In his absence Emily almost regretted the part she had just played. Being the only available victim for the moment, she had to act as lightning conductor, much against her will.

The maid had not gone very far in her quest of Janet before that young lady herself burst somewhat incontinently into the sitting room. Her slender mobile body with the lustrous black hair and the gray eyes full of life and intelligence, made her a striking contrast to her two inflexible relations.

"Good morning, children," she cried, without paying the atmosphere any special attention. "How's this for the role of the early bird? Spare your praises, Emily. It's papa's doing. He's getting up now. And I suppose he's anxious to advertise the unearthly hour."

The two petrified figures quite chilled her prattling.

"Is anything the matter? You haven't swallowed a sour plum, Emily, have you?" she asked, facing them both.

"Janet," said Mrs. Barr, in a tone that would have frozen quicksilver, "I wish to speak to you for a minute."

"What have I done now?" asked Janet, sitting down and looking speculatively from her mother to her sister.

"By mistake Emily opened a letter addressed to you. Laura had put it beside her plate."

"Is that why you're so glum, Emily? How silly. Don't give, the matter another thought, please."

Emily looked very uncomfortable.

"It's from Cornelia Covert," she said, averting her eyes from Janet's, and the mother added with asperity:

"It invites you to mingle with certain persons who call themselves Outlaws."

"Really? You and Emily have the advantage of me. I haven't read the letter yet. May I?"

Emily silently relinquished the missive and Janet calmly read it, while the others looked on, keeping their vexation warm. Mrs. Barr spoke as soon as Janet had finished.

"Yes, I *have* read the letter," she declared with emphasis.

"Really, mother, you may read all my letters if you wish to. But I think I might be allowed to see them first. I am twenty-four, old enough, therefore, to get my correspondence uncensored."

"You are my daughter, Janet, and if you were forty-four instead of twenty-four, it would still be my duty to guard you against evil influences, and to look after your spiritual welfare."

"I don't see how your spiritual guardianship affects my legal right to my own letters." She added scornfully: "Am I to consider Emily as one of my moral guardians, too?"

Janet was not easily aroused. When she was, she spoke in low cold tones that irritated her listeners more than the sharpest abuse.

"I read the first sentence accidentally—" began Emily indignantly. Mrs. Barr interrupted her.

"You know quite well that I have made it a rule not to interfere with your correspondence," she said, acridly. "But I consider that what Emily saw by chance justified me in making this case an exception, especially as you have been so diligent lately in wasting the Lord's time."

This was a pet phrase of Mrs. Barr's.

"I don't understand the charge," said Janet, like a prisoner in the dock.

"I refer to your recent godless behavior."

"Godless!"

"You know quite well what I mean: your flagrant absence from services, your irreverent remarks when a religious topic is discussed, your readiness to put frivolous pleasures before church duties, and your studied avoidance of all the friends of the family."

"Except Robert Lloyd," interjected Emily, pointedly.

"Why drag in Robert?" said Janet, flashing a look at her sister. "You got mamma to forbid him the house a whole month ago."

"I had every reason to believe Mr. Lloyd to be an atheist," said Mrs. Barr, who thus concisely classified all disbelievers in revealed creeds. "That is why I requested you not to invite him here again."

"Leaving me to the edifying companionship of Emily's stuffy pedagogue friends," said Janet, in a white heat.

"We needn't pursue that matter now, Janet. What I wish to say at present is merely that a masked ball is out of the question. A masked ball! What are you thinking of, my child? Not to say that the invitation comes from people who are

perfectly impossible.”

”Impossible!” cried Janet, bursting out under terrible pressure. ”They’re quite possible for me. Do you expect me to chum up with Emily’s high school cats, or the old maids from the King’s daughters, or the decrepit old ladies from your missionary club?”

Her mother fairly reeled at the impudence of the attack.

This from Janet, of all people! The girl had always been a mild-tempered and tractable child. That is, she had been entirely tractable except for half a dozen fits of rebellion so scattered in point of time and so completely suppressed in point of fact that they could conveniently be overlooked. But a face-to-face defiance of a maternal decree was a new and startling departure. It was an unheard of act, such as Mrs. Barr could ascribe only to the promptings of the Evil One, inducted into Janet’s acquaintance by her Kips Bay friends.

Mrs. Barr came of an old New England family with Puritan traditions reaching back beyond Cotton Mather and the witch huntings. It was inconceivable to her that a daughter should be allowed to address a mother as Janet had just addressed her. It was inconceivable to her even in the spring of 1919, when the civil war between parents and children (or rather, the uncivil war between the young and the old), though raging furiously in the dynamic centers of New York, London, Paris and Berlin, had not produced so much as a ripple amongst the Barrs of Brooklyn or the Barrs anywhere in the wide world.

”That will do, Janet,” she said, rising to her full stature and assuming an expression that gave every line of her face its crudest edge. ”Your language confirms my worst fears. I shall say no more.”

Janet wished that this were true, but she knew it was a mere euphemism. And, indeed, her mother continued with icy piety:

”I shall pray that understanding may be given you to realize that happiness comes from the spirit, not from the flesh, from an exaltation of the heart, not from the pleasures of dances and parties. As for this Cornelia Covert, her reputation is such that you should shrink from linking your name with hers. A woman who has lived in an unholy alliance with a man is no friend for an innocent girl.”

”Innocent! Am I more innocent than she is, or simply more ignorant?”

”Janet!” remonstrated Emily, ”how can you speak in this way—when our sole object is to help you—”

”Help me! Please don’t make me laugh, Emily,” Janet cut in, bitterly. ”A little more of this help of yours and mother will have no difficulty whatever in arguing me down to the ground.”

”I don’t propose to argue with you, my dear,” said Mrs. Barr, motioning to Emily, who flounced angrily upstairs. ”I simply say that I don’t approve of this masked ball. One thing more. I wish you to promise not to go.”

Janet was really terrified at her mother's icy tone, but as her convictions were deeply involved, she replied with obstinate defiance:

"I'm sorry, but I see no reason for giving such a promise."

"Very well," said her mother, adding, with a veiled menace in the harmless words: "Remember, you don't go with my approval."

"Then I'll go without," muttered Janet under her breath, as her mother majestically left the room.

III

Janet stood alone, her hands clenched in nervous tension. How passionately she resented her mother's domestic tyranny! In the narrow, intolerant religious atmosphere of Brooklyn, she had endured it long enough, endured it since childhood as one of the mysterious dispensations of Providence.

Her mind was flooded with hatred of the Barrs and all that they stood for.

The Barrs were a characteristic product of the American environment. Mrs. Barr belonged to a decadent branch of an old Mayflower stock connected with the Bradleys, the Saltonstalls, and other well-known New England names. She had married the American born son of a Scotch immigrant; but, as she ruled him with a rod of iron, few traces of his gentler European parentage had slipped into the household or stayed there long if they had. For Mrs. Barr charged the family atmosphere to its full capacity with all the narrowness, harshness, and spitefulness of her own Puritan inheritance.

Robert Lloyd had assured Janet that her family was as typical an American family as could be found east of the Alleghanies. Its Puritan (or rather, Impuritan) tradition was depressed still further (if that were possible) by contact with the low standard of living introduced during a century of reckless and promiscuous immigration. Its leading tradition was the enforcement of an absolute veto upon all social experiments, a veto springing not from love of life or regard for the community but from hatred of life and contempt for the individual.

It was Robert, too, (in their brief acquaintance) who had pointed out that families like the Barrs were to be found everywhere in the wide world. But it was in backwater places like Brooklyn that they congregated densely enough to work mischief. It was from such points of concentration, all too numerous in America, that their outstanding traits spread like an infectious miasma upon all surrounding efforts at progress.

Janet did not need to be told that one of these outstanding traits was a devotion to the cult of doing nothing. Doing nothing with a restless intermittency and an extravagant expenditure of undirected force.

Doing nothing! Janet had learned that this was not the same as having nothing to do. It was a religion of serried "thou shalt nots" applied with passionate rigor to all adventurous departures from the routine of everyday life. Doing nothing meant the avoidance of actions contrary to custom, law, or the supposed requirements of comfort. As regards herself, it meant a studied observance of restrictions, which your own interpretation of law, or custom, or abstinent *appetite* (with a light accent on the *appetite*) prescribed for you. As regards your fellow man, it meant his rigid observance of restrictions which not his, but your, interpretation of law, or custom, or *abstinent* appetite (with a heavy accent on the *abstinent*) prescribed for *him*.

It meant an aggressive policy of wholesale and indiscriminate prohibition.

Janet had often listened, at first unwillingly, later receptively, to Robert's elaboration of the idea. His views had shaped themselves in some such way as this.

The tradition in which Janet's childhood was moulded was that baser, narrower, lower class American tradition which has always been at grips with the heroic patrician spirit of the Declaration of Independence. It was a tradition of negation, restriction, deprivation; of deprivation for yourself within reasonable limits, and of deprivation for your neighbor within no reasonable limits at all. It was a tradition that rallied opposition to Sunday newspapers, Sunday novels, Sunday theatres, and Sunday sports, besides minutely networking itself through a thousand insidious channels into all sorts of social behavior every day of the week. It was a tradition, not of the magnificent *no* of self-control but of the demoralizing *no* of compulsory rectitude.

In short, it was the tradition from which the successive prohibition movements—beer, sex, manners, and what not—have drawn their ethical backing.

Families like the Barrs were the moral backbone of a strong section of American public opinion. Their prejudices, jealousies and pruderies pitched the tone of national manners, fixed the standard of public taste, curbed the flight of the country's artistic genius, and gave an American the same cultural standing as against a European that a citizen of Boonville held as against a full-fledged New Yorker.

The same causes erected an Anthony Comstock into a national figure better known than the President's cabinet, gave rise to episodes like that of Maxim Gorky, and made a raid on the women bathers at Atlantic City a topic of serious discussion throughout the country.

In Robert's view, the Barrs of America prided themselves on the cast-iron

taboos they had laid on all decent and civilized manifestations of sex. They had eliminated every natural, healthy and spontaneous expression of the sex instinct from American books, music, pictures and daily intercourse. This was their first contribution to Western culture.

Their second contribution—and they frankly gloried in it, too—was that they had morally sandbagged all dissenters and almost completely crushed the spirit of dissent.

For they believed—these Barrs of America did—that force is the only effective form of moral propaganda in the world. They believed this with all the fanaticism of intolerance and stupidity. Force and repression were the only two things they did sincerely believe in, though they would have died sooner than acknowledge this. Not theirs the aim of replacing lower forms of enjoyment by higher ones, baser religions by nobler ones. Theirs was the modest if unavowed mission of improving on the example of Jesus Christ. In a moment of divine (and regrettable) weakness, Christ had suffered torture for his enemies. The Barrs undertook the pious duty of counteracting this weakness by making *their* enemies suffer torture for Christ.

In this atmosphere of moral taboos and sex repression, Janet had grown up like an alien spirit in a foreign land. From the very first stirrings of intelligence, some independent strain in her had set her in antagonism to her environment. She had not been fully conscious of this antagonism, much less of the issues involved, and she had seldom given battle directly to her mother's despotism. But even when she had bowed her head to the force of argument or to the argument of force, her heart had remained untouched. She had knuckled under time and again, but her service had been lip service and her homage the homage only of the knee.

It was a situation she had but dimly realized when she first met Robert Lloyd. His sensible views and galvanic realism had startled her out of her half-hearted acceptance of a decrepit tradition and carried her at one bound from the shadowy Brooklyn existence of the age of Praise-God-Barebones to the vivid actuality of the age of the airplane. The first novelty of contemporary life had been overwhelming. She felt as though she had lost consciousness in the seventeenth century and, like the fabled princess, had lain in a twilight sleep until Robert Lloyd had awakened her to the throb and stir of the twentieth century.

Her friendship with Robert had begun shortly after the end of the war, the great World War from which the Barrs had learnt as much as a blind man learns from a mirror.

Chance had next thrown her into the arms of Emily's classmate, Cornelia Covert. Cornelia had taken her in hand and brought her into the free and easy atmosphere of the Lorillard model tenements in Kips Bay. Her furtive visits to Cor-

nelia's flat had led her by gradual stages into the stress and clash of the metropolis until, what with one new experience and another, she began to distinguish the trumpet-tongued voices of her own generation and to feel in her soul the resurgent willfulness of the modern age.

IV

And now, here she stood, the fire of life stirring her blood, the long arm of her mother's power fettering her movements. If only she were in Emily's shoes! Emily had been sent to college and had later achieved economic independence in the profession of high school teacher. But Emily had always had an instinct for taking care of herself. Janet wished she had half her sister's practical sense, and bitterly reproached herself for having been fool enough to yield to her mother's hankering after gentility. It was Mrs. Barr's belief that the family prestige would fall irrecoverably below the rarified heights where the Cabots or the Saltonstalls were presumed to move, unless one daughter, at least, was kept free from the lower class stigma of earning her own living.

Thus, under pressure, Janet had stayed home to become a fine lady, although the limited circumstances of the Barrs obliged her, in effect, to become a domestic servant. For a year past, however, she had been laying desperate plans for going out on her own.

"Hello, little girl, good morning!" interrupted a cheery voice at her side.

"Good morning, father," replied Janet, to a tall, well-preserved, stately man who kissed her very affectionately.

"Your mother sent for me, Janet," said Mr. Barr anxiously. "What's the matter?"

"I'm the matter. She has been pitching into me for receiving an invitation to a masked ball. *I've been wasting the Lord's time!*"

"Did she blow you up?"

"Down, father, down. I feel very small, I can tell you."

Janet was of too cheerful a temperament to be sad very long. She and her father habitually exchanged death-cell jests, and even her present gloom was not too thick to be dispelled with a quip. Her father burst into a loud and hearty laugh which he moderated considerably on remembering that he still had his wife to face. His camel-like virtues, which had carried him tolerably far in business—he was manager of a small branch of the Wheat Exchange Bank—had not saved him

from being a thorough nincompoop at home.

Mr. Barr had the form of a patrician but the spirit of an obedient slave. Janet despised him for his complete submission to his wife, yet she had one bond of sympathy with him. Though he dared not raise hand or voice against the system of vetoes and taboos under which the Barr family lived, he disliked the system and understood her hatred of it. Janet often wondered whether he was not the passive carrier of some rebellious British strain which, in herself, took the shape of active insurgency against Mrs. Barr's American passion for denying the body and mortifying the soul.

"Mother is waiting for you upstairs," she said, trying to feel sorry for him. "She means to give you a scathing address on the moral failings of your youngest daughter."

"I suppose *I'll* get a piece of her mind, too."

"Depend upon it. The same old *piece* that passeth understanding."

"Well, it's all in the day's work—it's family life," said the old gentleman, trying to keep up a brave front.

He shuffled off with a rueful smile.

Janet almost felt ashamed of her malice as she watched his reluctant steps and pictured his terror of her mother. His kindness and good nature had once endeared him to her. But she could not check a growing contempt for his weakness of character. It was clearer to her every day that her mother's cruel bigotry had not been half so fraught with tragic consequences as her father's spinelessness and moral cowardice.

"Family life—all in the day's work!" she repeated to herself with a trembling lip. "Well, I don't mean to have a lifetime of days like this."

Then she went upstairs to her own room and wrote Cornelia Covert a note of acceptance.

CHAPTER FOUR

I

"There, isn't she sweet?" said Cornelia to Robert, as she put the last touch to a pomegranate sash.

She was referring to Janet, whom she had costumed with all her artistic

cunning as a sort of gypsy Carmen. The night of the Outlaws' ball was at hand; and Cornelia's flat, number fifteen of the Lorillard model tenements, was the rendezvous for several of the maskers.

"Isn't she *beautiful*?" insisted Cornelia, pitching her languid voice high. She pointed proudly to her handiwork (rather than to its wearer), for she was determined to have it admired by all who stood near.

"She is charming, and her voice is beautiful," said Robert, in cool dispassionate appraisal.

"No one ever called my voice beautiful before!" said Janet, with unfeigned delight, in spite of the scientific detachment of Robert's tone.

"I shall make you conscious of *all* your attractions, if you'll give me time," added Robert, with much more fervor than before.

"Ought we to be conscious of our attractions?" asked Janet dubiously, for in the Barr environment it was bad form to call attention to anything but detractions.

The immemorial Barr practice bound members of the same family to make the worst of one another's good qualities.

"Decidedly," answered Robert. "A wise man should take care to know his good points no less than his bad points, precisely as he takes care to know his assets as well as his liabilities."

"Yes, leave it to Cato," cried Cornelia mockingly. She had a nickname for each of her friends. "He'll tell you all about yourself, until your soul will cease to seem your own. He'll beautify you—"

"Oh, if he only will!" cut in Janet, with one of her fluent graceful gestures which it was a rare delight merely to see. "I can stand no end of that."

"He'll beautify you—morally, my dear," concluded Cornelia. "His conversation is so improving. He re-creates people in his own image. It's his specialty." Janet's fine gray eyes narrowed to a hostile glance.

"It's my mother's specialty, too," she said, coldly.

"Now, look here—" cried Robert, springing up from his chair in impetuous protest.

He had good reason to know how unflattering the comparison was. Before he had a chance to say more, Cornelia hurriedly interposed.

"There's one important difference, Araminta," she said. "Your mother believes that beauty is simply goodness; Cato believes that goodness is simply wisdom. He'll turn you into a likeness of Minerva, with your wonderful raven locks metamorphosed into hissing feminist serpents."

The outer door opened and Mazie Ross burst in attired as Salome and looking as wicked and tempting as if she were a bacchante straight from the Venusberg.

"Hello, hasn't Carmen got her war paint on yet?" she called out, frowning on the group.

It was a pretty tableau she beheld. Robert, with folded arms, stood before the two young women, posed for a tremendous vindication. Cornelia, kneeling at her charge's feet, was absorbed in a final adjustment of the skirt; Janet, with outstretched arms, had just wheeled a full circle in response to her friend's touch. The two women were a picturesque pair, Cornelia's golden hair and alabaster skin, vitalized by the excitement, forming a vivid contrast to Janet's darker coloring.

"Please page the olive complexion and the Castilian nose," continued Mazie, in a merciless illumination of the favorite's two weak points.

Janet certainly lacked the challenging physical beauty that makes men forget the mental limitations of an Emma Hamilton or a Mme. de Recamier. Not that she was poor in physical charm. Far from it. She was straight and slender, with waving black hair, an exquisite complexion, and expressive gray eyes. Hers was a face that sobered naturally into thoughtful sympathy and softened readily into merriment or gentleness. True, her features lacked a chiseled perfection, (if that is perfection). But it was not for her body but for her spirit that she both craved and inspired love.

"Well, what's the big delay?" asked Mazie, flouncing somewhat impatiently to the covered washtubs on which she perched herself in such a way as to advertise extensively her new and pretty underthings.

"Cato is about to exalt us to rare moral heights," said Cornelia, resuming her scrutiny of the costume of Carmen.

"She thinks I'm a hard-shelled Puritan," said Robert, appealing to Mazie for support. "Do you agree with her?"

"Oh, give us a cigarette and stop your spoofing," said Mazie, who had a dread of high-flown talk. "I'm surprised that Rob's parson poses take you in, Cornelia. Believe me, he's just like other men when you get him alone on a starry night."

Robert blushed, Janet's two rows of long lashes parted wider, and Cornelia gave a queer coloratura laugh. But Mazie's satisfaction at securing the spotlight was short lived; somehow or other, Janet speedily became the center of attention again.

II

Other Lorillarders bound for the Outlaws' ball now began to pass in and out of Cornelia's flat. They were mostly young men and women who represented the various social strata found in the Kips Bay tenements. They brought with them gayety, laughter and high spirits, and spent their time circulating boisterously through the apartment, gossiping on the coming event, and comparing notes on the glamor and glitter of costumes modeled upon every conceivable suggestion of history, legend or myth.

Janet was thrilled with the excitement, the infectious spirits and the easy camaraderie. She noticed that there was no chaperonage or standing on ceremony whatever, and she was struck with the entire absence of self-consciousness between the sexes. Young men and women went in and out as they pleased, helped themselves to Cornelia's ice box and piano as fancy dictated, and bantered, flirted, kissed, or exchanged partners without stint or scruple. On the face of it, all concerned seemed in full accord with the scheme of "what's mine is yours, and what's yours is everybody's."

Nor could she help contrasting these cheerful faces, this genial abandon, this entire lifting of social constraint, with the gloomy looks, circumscribed permissions, and moral strait-jacketings of her Brooklyn home. With all their faults, Cornelia Covert and Mazie Ross appeared to suggest happiness and freedom as much as Mrs. Barr and Emily suggested gloom and repression. And the model tenements lost nothing in the comparison by having all the attraction of novelty. If at that minute, Janet had had to choose between a Paradise of Barrs on the one hand, and the flesh, the devil and the model tenements on the other, it is not to the Paradise of Barrs that she would have given the palm.

While Janet met Cornelia's friends in turn, and gave the men amongst them a new sensation on account of her artless candor, Mazie coquetted freely with the successive males that fluttered around her and displayed unlimited skill in extricating herself from sundry intemperate advances. Growing tired of this sport, she pushed her last admirer brutally off the tubs and said:

"Cornelia, what's the matter with Claude? He should have shown up ages ago."

"Oh, Lothario rang me up about half past eight," said Cornelia sweetly. "He isn't coming."

"Isn't coming! Why, he promised to be my escort," Mazie cried out in a harsh strident voice.

Mazie's voice was not her strong point. Whenever she opened her pretty mouth, she shattered many illusions.

"Oh, he's going to the ball. But he has changed his mind about coming here first. I suppose he doesn't want any of you to know him by his costume."

Mazie's irritation was unbounded.

"None of our crowd are keeping each other in the dark," she said. "What's struck him? There'll be plenty of strangers to play the devil with. If Claude has backed out, who's to take us, old girl?"

"Well, Robert's here."

"Robert! *He* can't keep Hutchins Burley from persecuting me."

"Or you from persecuting Hutchins Burley?"

"Don't be nasty, Cornelia," said Mazie, jumping angrily down. "You take the cinnamon bun, anyway. Why didn't you pipe up sooner with the news that Claude had rung up?"

"I quite forgot to," said her friend, calmly.

"Forgot to!" said Mazie, not concealing either her incredulity or her vexation. "A fat lot you did. It's your spite. Your refusing to come to the ball is spite, too. Just spite. I suppose you think that since you can't have Claude, nobody else shall have him, either."

"I don't think about Lothario at all," said Cornelia, demurely placid, as she could afford to be in view of the infuriated state in which Mazie burst from the room.

The silence which had fallen on the scene during this conflict was soon broken, and gaiety was gradually restored.

"Who is Lothario?" asked Janet, recovering her spirits more slowly than the others.

"That's Claude Fontaine, the son of Fontaine the jeweler. You know Fontaine's, the big jewelry and art establishment on Fifth Avenue?"

"Oh, yes."

"Well, he's *that* Fontaine. Very good looking as well as very rich. All the Lorillard girls are dippy about him. So am I. And so will you be."

"Do you think so?" asked Janet, hopefully, for she was thirsting for any new experience.

"I'm sure of it. But I hope you won't dream of marrying Lothario. Chiefly for the reason that it would be useless. He comes here too well armed and well seasoned against matrimonial schemes."

She added that, in spite of this obvious fact, nearly all the Lorillard girls of the Outlaw brand had their caps set at the young millionaire.

"On principle, they're all opposed to marriage," she proceeded. "But they're all ready to sacrifice this principle in such a very profitable cause."

This bitter remark was the first hint Janet received of a cleavage between Cornelia's theories and the theories or practices of the other model tenementers.

"And Mazie wants to marry him, too?" she asked.

"Marry him?—Well, *get* him," answered Cornelia languidly. "Mazie has the mating instincts of a pussy cat and the brains of a pigeon. Hello, where's Robert?"

she added, missing him. "He slips away the moment one's eyes are taken off him."

As if in answer to her call, Robert came back, bringing Mazie in tow. Shortly after her wrathful exit, he had unobtrusively gone out to smooth down her ruffled feelings. An explosion of Mazie's temper was like the backfire of a motor car; there was a loud report and much smoke, but no damage done or permanent hard feeling caused—at least, not to herself. Thus, a good dose of flattery, which Robert skillfully administered, had set her going equably again; for, besides being dependent on Cornelia, Mazie was too much occupied with the satisfaction of her desires to prolong a quarrel in support of her rights.

A symphony of cooings re-established peace and good will amongst the three young ladies; and these dulcet sounds blended easily with the mirth of the other masqueraders in the flat. In an access of joy, Mazie took Janet romping through the rooms. Robert used this occasion to whisper in Cornelia's ear:

"I satisfied Mazie that you weren't staying home to meet Claude, by convincing her that you had an engagement with me," he said.

"Have I?" She tried to hide her pleasure, immense as it was.

"I hope so," he replied, using far less tact with her than he had with Mazie. "These entertainments don't interest me at all. And, as I'm pledged to bring the girls home, it will be much more fun to spend the interval chatting with you than being bored at the ball."

Cornelia's face fell. With admirable self-control she said she meant to stay up for the girls, and would be glad of his company, though he might feel free to change his mind if he chose.

Janet now detached herself from Mazie, put her arm through Robert's, and begged him to hasten and join the merry-makers who were already filing out. This was her first ball, anticipation had cast a glamor over everything that was or was to be, and excitement had set all her nerves a tingle.

There was a last concerted effort to dissuade Cornelia from remaining alone. It was unsuccessful.

Then Janet drew Robert through the doorway and, as she joined the procession of celebrants, her heightened senses quite transfigured her. This fact was not lost on Cornelia or Mazie.

"What a pretty pair!" said the latter mockingly. "Just watch them doing that snappy stuff with the eyes."

Mazie had stayed behind for a moment to give Cornelia a parting shot.

"You'd better change your mind, Corny. A swell chance there is of Robert coming back here now that Janet's got him hooked. Come along, dearie, do. See here, I'll give you a tip. You can rile a good many more people by going to the ball than you can by staying here."

Cornelia shook her head disdainfully at this satire on her motives. Yet dis-

dain was not her strongest emotion, Mazie's shaft having struck too deep for an answer.

III

Towards midnight, the Outlaws' Ball in the old Murray Hill Lyceum on 34th Street had almost hit its stride. Two bands, an Hawaiian Jazz and the Kips Bay Roughnecks, furnished the music, and what with the crash and blare of instruments, the dazzle of costumes, the clouds of confetti, and the swirl of dancers, masked and unmasked, the dense motley crowd appeared to be squeezing the last ounce of pleasure out of its mad adventure in search of "a good time."

Janet's appearance in her Spanish robes with the genuine Castilian mantilla, the high tortoise shell comb, and the silk Andalusian shawl flaming brilliantly against her dark hair, was one of the sensations of the evening. Robert's somber monk's cowl at her side subtracted nothing from this sensation. He conducted her through the mazes of the upper dancing floor and then brought her back to the gorgeous gypsy tent that had been set up on the floor below.

There she began to play the gypsy fortune teller with as much subtlety as the professional exertions of the musical Roughnecks permitted.

Robert stood near the tent as a sort of self-constituted watchman and body-guard extraordinary. As John Barleycorn was being liberally dispensed in the refreshment room, a number of tipsy masqueraders soon turned up, and some of these roistered into Janet's tent despite Robert's efforts to fend them off.

Hutchins Burley was among those who presently appeared on the scene. It was after Mazie Ross had repeatedly toyed with his erotic instincts and incited his hot pursuit only to defeat him at a point just short of possession. In a fury of frustration, he had descended to the first floor to inflame his passions further at the public bar. Thus inspirited, he propelled his Falstaffian proportions into the gypsy tent and requested Janet to read his palm.

His breath alone would have decided Janet to refuse. But when he interrupted her first sentence by tearing off her mask and importuning a closer acquaintance with the face behind it, she pushed abruptly past him and, running outside the tent, waited for him to leave it.

With surprising alacrity Hutchins Burley bundled after her.

"You're a lively little kipper," he shouted, filled with liquor and desire. And he wildly reached out one arm to clasp her around the waist. But Janet, uttering a

low cry, dodged and slipped past him, while Burley's flopping arms were caught firmly by two men who had sprung forward for this purpose.

One of these was Robert. The other was a tall, unobtrusive man who had quietly but deftly detached himself from the throng.

The attention of several people had been arrested by Janet's cry and flight, and these now pressed forward to learn what the trouble was. A confusion of queries, blusterings and exclamations followed, during which the Roughnecks struck up the "Nobody Home" rag.

Hutchins Burley had recovered some of his wits under the compulsion of several menacing faces around him. Seeing him become tractable, Robert contemptuously flung off the arm he held and walked away towards Janet. Burley followed his receding steps with a malevolent glare, and then turned savagely on the tall quiet stranger who was still holding his other arm in a grip of steel.

"Leggo my arm," he bellowed.

"A word in your ear, Mr. Burley," said the quiet one, relaxing his grip. "Plain clothes men are in the crowd. If you kick up a shindy, you'll be giving them what they're looking for."

"And who the devil are you?" sputtered Burley, with the air of a man who is not to be easily frightened.

"Oh, nobody in particular," said the quiet man in a low voice. And, before he could be questioned further, he had melted unobtrusively into the crowd.

IV

A little later, Robert led three jovial young maskers into the gypsy tent. The foremost was dressed as *Charles Surface* and had quite enough gay confidence to do justice to the part.

"So here's the Outlaws' piece of resistance," he called out merrily. "We'll see whether she can do half as much justice to my palm as to her lovely gypsy shawl."

He sat down at Janet's little table and held out his hand. She took it, examined it gravely for some seconds, and then, in her fine clarinet tones she reported swiftly, without a pause, and getting almost breathless towards the end:

"You are handsome, graceful, false and cruel. You've been a good soldier, but you'll become a poor poet. I see you divided into three parts: part one—Charles Surface; part two—Joseph Surface; part three—Sir Peter Teazle. What

a pity your name isn't Henry! For you are as dashing as Henry the Fifth, as amorous as Henry of Navarre, and as kind to women as Henry the Eighth. You will be married twice, but how many hearts you will break I dare not reveal. Your own heart is a safe deposit vault, fireproof and loveproof both. Hapless and witless damsels without number will try to blow it up or melt it—without success. One girl alone will refrain from the attempt, realizing the utter uselessness of piercing this too, too solid flesh—”

”Here,” cried the young man, drawing away his hand, the laughter and jibbing endorsements with which his comrades greeted the several revelations, proving too much for him. ”I don't call this a fortune: I call it a raw deal.”

”No use abusing the cards,” said Janet, still affecting the utmost gravity. ”The cards never lie.”

”Oh, don't they, Miss Gypsy? That's where your professional prejudice blinds you. Take your discovery that I'm a poor poet, for instance. Well, the fact is, I'm no poet at all. I never so much as wrote a couplet to a girl in all my life.”

”I said: you *will become* a poet,” remarked Janet, gently correcting him.

”And when will that be, pray?”

Janet hastily cut the cards anew, dealt out five cards, and held out the Queen of Spades to the onlookers.

”When a dark lady enters your life,” she said.

”A dark lady *has* entered my life,” he said, his voice vibrating seductively. ”Entered it with a very poor opinion of me, it seems. But I shouldn't call her the Queen of Spades. I should call her Janet, the Queen of Clubs.”

”Clubs, because I scored so many good hits?”

”No, because a Queen of Spades must have lustrous black eyes, and yours are heavenly gray. Come, let's unmask, and see who's the better fortune teller of the two.”

Claude pulled off his mask and stood, handsome and challenging, waiting for her to follow suit.

He was very good to look upon. Handsome, graceful and proud, there was just enough disdain in his perfect manner to make every woman adore him and long to enslave his flawless form. He had wonderful blue eyes, a delicate mouth, a fine nose and a penetrating sympathetic voice. Great ease, great daring and great energy of animal passion gave him a hundred opportunities to show his fine points to excellent advantage. To qualities that almost made riches superfluous, riches were added. No wonder he seemed to be a darling of the gods.

Janet's pulse was distinctly quickened by the telling exterior of this dazzling young man. And when she unfastened her domino and met his glance with her fearless gray eyes, his thrilling moment came. He was not greatly impressed with her looks, his social training having biased him towards more fashionable types

of beauty. Yet a magnetic ecstasy set him on fire and sent rapturous messages throbbing along his nerves.

It was an enthralling moment, one that seemed mysteriously to link up his being with other blissful moments in previous existences. Strange! Each time that he experienced this emotion anew, he was sure it was unique, sure it was not in this life that he had experienced it before. Stranger still, though it was as deep as the full flooded river of life itself, it was as transitory as an electric spark or a flash of lightning. The moment was poignant, intoxicating, miraculous; yet by no fraction of an instant could it be prolonged.

Indeed, within a second or two, Claude and Janet were chatting about a good many matters which did not bear in the remotest way upon this magnetizing spark. Still, they chatted with an excited recklessness, and as if their essences were held together by a subtle force, a force whose irresistible urgency they would neither have dared to acknowledge nor wished to dispute.

V

Steeped in the enjoyment of the moment, Janet hardly noticed that Robert had tacitly resigned his watchful care of her to Claude Fontaine. She began to neglect her fortune telling duties as one result of this displacement, for Claude's appropriation of her time grew as his visits became more frequent. Nor did he share her compunction on this score. Far from doing so, he cajoled her into dancing with him again and again. In the intervals, he escorted her from one end of the reception floor to the other, introducing her to the groups he considered worth while. Thus she shared (much more fully than she desired to) the curiosity which his brilliant presence excited and the gossip which it was everywhere a signal for.

"Here's an interesting stunt," said Claude to his partner.

He indicated a group of young people amongst whom she instantly recognized Robert and Mazie. Two others claimed her attention. In the center of the group was a young woman with a high color and a very energetic manner, who had adopted an unusual plan for swelling the box office receipts. She was making impromptu busts in putty of all who could afford a contribution, no reasonable sum being refused.

When Claude and Janet came up, the sculptress had just finished modelling a head of Robert; and a remarkably spirited likeness it was. Robert was greatly taken with it, but his satisfaction was mild beside that of the artist, who handled

the fragile image as though it were the apple of her eye.

Two thoughts struck Janet. One was that Charlotte Beecher's fuss over the statuette of Robert Lloyd was excessive. The other was that she now, for the first time, missed the living model. But this discovery, as well as her criticism of the sculptress, was promptly swallowed up in the kaleidoscopic whirl of meeting still other characters belonging to the strange new society into which she had been flung.

Nevertheless, she contrived to recall Robert to her side.

"What a wonderful head Robert has!" Miss Beecher was rhapsodizing, while she glanced sentimentally from the statue to the living model. "I declare, it's all brain."

"It sure is!" echoed Mazie, mockingly. "But it's not a patch on his wonderful heart."

She laid her hand on the spot where she supposed this organ to be, and added, without crediting the epigram to Cornelia who had originated it:

"That's all brain, too!"

Everybody laughed, Robert no less heartily than his neighbors. Everybody, that is, save Charlotte Beecher, whose sharp glance at Mazie softened to tenderness as it swept on towards Robert.

The second person to fascinate Janet was a youngish woman in a Syrian dress of many boldly brilliant color clashes. Contrasts as startling were achieved by her coal black hair, her pale olive skin, and the gorgeous green pendants attached to her ears. She had the barbaric picturesqueness of a White African Queen straight out of Rider Haggard, and about as much credibility. But she posed with unlimited self-confidence.

So speculated Janet. The next moment she reminded herself of the necessity of keeping an eye (and perhaps a string) on Robert Lloyd.

But he was nowhere to be seen. In his usual insidious fashion, he had taken French leave while the circle of spectators was absorbed in the ritual of weaving gossip amongst themselves or blessing Miss Beecher's next putty statuette with lavish adjectives and exclamations.

His disappearance piqued Janet. But the exhilaration caused by all the enchantments of the ball and all the thrills of Claude's gallantry and charm, did not permit her to allow any one emotion more than a fleeting hospitality.

Claude watched his chance of enticing her to another novelty. On the way, she begged him to enlighten her about the people she had just met.

"Tell me all about the sculptress and about the Rider Haggard lady with the earrings," she said.

Claude explained that these ladies were both considered freaks even among the Outlaws: Charlotte Beecher, because she was an heiress who wore a working

girl's clothes and toiled harder with the sculptor's chisel than a day laborer with a pickaxe; Lydia Morrow, not so much because she had a flair for spectacular dresses, Leon Bakst colors and startling jewelry, as because her authorship of half a dozen best sellers had given her almost unlimited means to gratify these vagaries.

"Lydia Morrow? I don't seem to know the name," said Janet.

"Lydia Dyson, her maiden name, is the name she writes under."

This name Janet knew well enough. It was a familiar name wherever American magazines flourished; even among the Barrs of Brooklyn it was a household fixture. The stupendous fact was that Lydia Dyson's novels of approximated naughtiness, sensual slush and disembowelled passion, appeared serially and simultaneously in magazines with as different a clientele as the *Saturday Morning Post*, the *Purple Book*, *Anybody's* and the *Women's Bazaar*.

Claude added that he had his own reasons for calling the two young women freaks.

"All these people are loony on the subject of love," he said, with a wave of the hand that appeared to include the whole membership of the ball. "Some because they've had too much of it, but more because they've had too little. Mazie is one of a small group that is suffering from surfeit. But Charlotte and Lydia belong to the other class. Charlotte wants a husband without a whole lot of love, and Lydia wants a whole lot of love without a husband. As for Mazie, there's nothing left for her to want but a rich protector, with as little love in the bargain as possible."

This offhand analysis set Janet to wondering what Claude's own conception of love might be. He went blithely on:

"The difficulty with Charlotte is that she's too particular; with Lydia, that she's not particular enough. Not one-tenth particular enough for Gordon Morrow, her husband, who lives on her money but won't be kept in his place. He actually presumes to be furiously jealous. But, however comic a figure he may cut, who can blame him for drawing the line at a blackguard like Hutchins Burley? Here's Hutch staggering this way, now. After you, the impudent beggar!"

Naturally, in this quarter, Burley had little luck. Janet shrank away from him, and Claude froze him off as he had already done two or three times that night. Envenomed, but nothing daunted, Hutchins Burley careered, none too steadily, over to the circle around the sculptress. Claude watched him disgustingly.

"If Morrow catches him pawing all over his wife, there'll be trouble. And Lydia Dyson's not the woman to lift her little finger to avert it. She has a theory that 'Big Burley' is a sort of twentieth century edition of the Cave Man, a theory she is not above putting to the proof. Husband or no husband, a big scene is

nectar and ambrosia to her.”

He looked anxiously back at Charlotte Beecher’s group. “Let’s go away from here,” he said, taking her arm with protective tenderness.

”Shall we go back to the tent?”

”I’d like to take you much further than that. You are too wonderful and genuine to fit into this hothouse crowd.”

Janet liked his pretty speeches, but she had not yet had her fill of the carnival of pleasure.

Claude’s fears were only too speedily realized. Hardly had he returned Janet to her gypsy tent, than shouts and screams ascended from the sculptress’ quarter. Claude hastened to the spot and found two knots of men pulling Burley away from Lydia’s husband and heightening the disorder in the act.

The commotion now took a new turn. Burley had not forgotten the man who had cold-shouldered him out of Janet’s way several times. As soon as he laid eyes on Claude and observed him assisting Charlotte Beecher in a feverish effort to save her putty models, his rage reached its climax. Every ounce of his bulky weight was put into a titanic pull that jerked him loose from those who restrained him. Using his momentary freedom to snatch up the little bust of Robert, he flung it at Claude’s head.

”No diamond shark can come butting in here,” he shouted, in a purple fury.

The bust went far wide of its mark. But not the taunt. It stung Claude into sudden violence, so that he sprang towards Burley with the object of thrashing him. Thirty or forty people having now been drawn into the melee, however, he was saved the ignominy of a public brawl.

At the height of the turmoil Claude’s arm was clasped by an iron hand. It was the hand of a tall immaculate man who spoke to him in a low calm voice.

”A word of warning, Mr. Fontaine,” he said, urging him away from the fracas. ”Get your friends out of here at once! Detectives are about to raid the place.”

”Detectives! Are you one?” asked Claude, more or less bewildered.

”No, not particularly,” was the whimsical reply of the stranger, who then moved decisively away and evaporated as suddenly as he had turned up.

As soon as Claude rallied his wits, he acted swiftly. He persuaded Charlotte Beecher, who happened to be near, to follow him; and then took the shortest cut to the gypsy tent, where Janet greeted his return with a happy cry of relief. Excitedly he warned her of the raid, and urged her to lose no time in preparing to leave with him.

She obeyed, not without a pang of regret.

Regret? It was not parting with the musical Roughnecks, though they were better than their names; it was not turning her back on the dancing, though this

had intoxicated her; and it was not saying farewell to the riot of color, costume and confetti, though these had put her in an ecstasy of delight. At least, it was not an extravagant hunger for these pleasures. And she certainly had nothing but measureless disgust for a crowd of brawling, shouting, turbulent men.

Why regret then?

It was merely because of the obvious difference between her joyless home and this night's experience. Beside the deathlike stagnation of the Barrs of Brooklyn, the movement, intensity and go of the Outlaws had what she cheerfully accepted as the quality and flavor of reality. "This is life," a still, small voice cried within her, meaning that this was at least a fairly good imitation of life on its gayer side. And she revelled unblushingly in the enchantment that her ignorance of pleasure and her natural high spirits had cast around Kips Bay, the model tenements, Cornelia, Robert and Claude.

Ah yes, and Claude! With Claude at her side she doubted whether she should mind even a raid. Indeed, wouldn't it be rather fun to be caught in one? And so, while Claude was preoccupied with piloting his charges to safety, Janet half hoped that she might not be cheated of a practical answer to her question.

VI

Meanwhile the quiet stranger had contrived to get into one of the twisting, struggling whirlpools of men in the fracas, and to insinuate his immaculate person next to Hutchins Burley.

"Have a care," he said, in Burley's ear. "In another minute this rough-house will be cleaned up by plain-clothes men.

"Who in hell *are* you?" yelled Burley, none too pleased with the features of the man who had warned him before.

"Why, nobody in particular," answered the stranger coolly, and beginning to edge rapidly away. Burley tramped after him, his befuddled wits somewhat cleared by the recent pummelling.

"Then how the devil did *you* spot the cops?" he said, ploughing his way ruthlessly through human obstructions. "Do they whisper the secrets in your beautiful ears?"

"Oh, secrets are always coming my way," was the nonchalant answer.

The mysterious one halted as soon as he had put several yards between himself and the mob. Cool and self-contained, he was a striking contrast to

Hutchins Burley as the latter, dishevelled, muttering and out of breath, bore down upon him.

"Mr. Burley, you'd better go, while the going's good! Here's an emergency exit. Good night. I'll look you up in the morning."

While the stranger's unobtrusive figure merged into the environment, Burley took the hint with loud Falstaffian clatter. He had barely passed through the door, when the lights went out and the raid actually began.

CHAPTER FIVE

I

During the Outlaws' Ball, Cornelia sat alone in the Lorillard apartment. Had she dressed for the masquerade she had declined to attend? One might have been pardoned for thinking so. To a piece of black satin, draped around her in sensuous lines, a girdle of tangerine velvet added the sole touch of color. It also served to draw her dress in high above the waist and to bring out the burnished gold of her hair. The fabric was ingeniously held together by pins, Cornelia being an advocate of a mode of dressing or draping that dispensed with sewing as much as possible.

One handsome shoulder was bare; and this arrangement detracted nothing from the garment's look of insecurity. Cornelia's men friends were apt to be on tenterhooks lest her pinned dresses should suddenly come to pieces. It was an emotion she was not altogether unconscious of, or wholly displeased with.

To the very last she had persisted in her refusal to take part in the festivity, and had held out firmly against the friendly blandishments with which Janet, Robert, Mazie, and Hutchins Burley had successively tried to shake her determination. She defended her position by declaring that dancing bored her to distraction, not to mention that the current dance forms, the fox trot, the jazz steps and the glide, seemed to her to be unspeakable profanations of a fine art.

With this explanation her friends had to be content, while they guessed at the true reason for her refusal. Claude hazarded the view that her real motive was a dread of emerging in public while her affair with Percival Houghton, the artist, was still fresh in everybody's memory. Mazie repeated her laconic opinion that Cornelia could spite more people and attract more attention by being missed

than by being present.

About eleven o'clock some one rang. When Cornelia opened the door, she was confronted by an athletic young man whom she recognized as the occupant of apartment number thirteen, the one next to her own. Mistaking her dress for negligee, he apologized profusely and then explained that the gas in his room having suddenly given out he needed a twenty-five-cent piece to set the meter in action again. Cornelia observed that whereas his form was the form of the roaring lion, his voice was the voice of the cooing dove.

"I always keep an extra quarter on the mantelpiece," he said, coloring with embarrassment, "but the light went down all of a sudden, and in the dark I couldn't locate the pesky coin."

Cornelia hastened to get the necessary money. Returning, she sympathized with him upon the fickleness of quarter meters.

"Horrid, mercenary things! I'd give them 'no quarter,' if I dared, wouldn't you?"

"Yes—the light always goes out in the dark," he said, quaintly.

He was obviously anxious to make a good impression, and ill at ease because of this anxiety.

"Just wait a second, will you, Miss," he said, as she handed him the money. "I'll give it back right away."

As his door was only a few feet away from hers, she waited in the hall and looked curiously into his room after he had lighted up. She noticed that the place was filled with gymnastic paraphernalia—clubs, dumb-bells, weights, and a boxing bag apparatus. Meanwhile, he rummaged through the articles on the mantelpiece until he discovered the missing money tucked snugly away in an empty match-box.

"I don't know how it got there," he said, ruefully. "I guess I meant to put it underneath, but slipped it into the box absent-mindedly."

She smiled. "You have a complete pocket gymnasium," she commented.

"Yes, I'm pretty well rigged out," he replied, delighted at her show of interest.

He was very much impressed with her appearance, which mirrored a world socially more elevated and more beautiful than his own. He racked his wits for an excuse to detain her.

"Is this how you keep in trim?" asked Cornelia, indicating the apparatus.

"I—I'm a professional wrestler and a physical culture expert," he went on, fumbling in his pocket for a visiting card.

"Ah, I see. It's business, not pleasure." She did not look at the card, but flashed eloquent glances at his figure.

"That's it," he replied, emboldened by her mute flattery. "Will you come

in and let me show you around? Young ladies aren't always interested in these things."

"Another time. It's too late now."

Her phrases emerged so curtly and her relapse into frigid conventional-ity was so abrupt that the young man stammered a hurt good night, and rather hastily closed his door.

Cornelia gained her sexual gratification in diluted but frequent doses. Without being a deliberate flirt like Mazie, she instinctively tried out the subtler weapons of sex on every man she liked and, since her appearance was both striking and agreeable and her likings fairly far flung, men often responded to her charm with a crudeness that gave her great offence. She seemed unconscious of the incitement in her manner; when, on one occasion, Robert pointed it out, she denied the charge with mingled passion and surprise.

And it was quite true that she took no pleasure in arousing a man's desire. All her pleasure was derived from baffling it. Curiously enough, an enamored man was an object which aroused in her only a feeling of distaste. And the presence of this feeling satisfied her that she was the innocent victim of his condition rather than the responsible author.

Perhaps it was this attitude of Cornelia's that Robert had in mind when he said that there was an indefinable suggestion of latent wickedness about her, of wickedness she had neither the vitality nor the courage to live up to. How much her luckless amour had to do with her inverted sex emotions, it would be hard to say. Robert's private view was that it had thrown her into the society of people like the Kips Bay tenementers who, by all current moral standards, were not "respectable." He also held that it had inspired her with a passion for respectability, as secret and as strong as the drunkard's longing to be considered a sober man.

After her neighbor's retirement, Cornelia looked at his card. In the middle was inscribed the name "Harry Kelly" and underneath appeared: "The Harlem Gorilla, Champion of the Mat."

II

It was an hour or more before the doorbell of suite number fifteen rang again. This time the visitor was Robert Lloyd. His entrance drove Cornelia's languor away. But she concealed her immense delight and received him neutrally enough.

"I couldn't endure the monotony of the ball another minute," he declared. "You've no idea what a relief it is to be able to come here."

"What was so monotonous, Cato?"

"What wasn't!" said Robert, taking off his overcoat and revealing the black friar's hood and gown that had served him during the evening. "The music, the dancing, the ogling, the drinking, the sickening coquetry, the silly speeches to and from brainless companions—in short, everything!"

"My dear!" exclaimed Cornelia. "At a ball, what can you expect?"

"Oh, I know I'm a fool for my pains," said Robert, laughing off the vexation he felt at having frittered away a whole evening.

He began to undo the girdle of his gown.

"Stop!" she cried. "I haven't had a really good look at your costume."

"Nor I at yours," he said, noticing how her dress lapped and caressed her form. He praised the effect freely.

Pleased, she went to his side, pulled his hood over his head, set his girdle and gown aright, and then stepped back to inspect the result, clapping her hands in approval as she did so.

"When the devil is sick of the world, the devil a monk would be!"

"The devil a monk am I!" said Robert, "unless an unholy rage at the world is a first-class qualification for monastic honors."

"Robert, the part fits you to perfection. It's astonishing how neatly you manage to blend the temper of a devil with the austerity of a monk."

"Not astonishing at all," said Robert, divesting himself of the costume. "Like most young men I have a craving for pleasure, excitement and female society. That's what you call the devil in me. But my observation is keen enough to show me that, under present social conditions, I can't give this craving either a temperate or an honorable satisfaction. So I repress it as much as common sense allows, and you call that repression austerity."

"Cato, you ought to be writing tracts for the Ethical Culture Society instead of newspaper articles for Hutchins' wicked *Evening Chronicle*. What are you doing among the Outlaws instead of in a goody-goody Sunday School?"

He took her raillery in good part.

"Every journalist is a patcher-up of unconsidered trifles," he said. "He makes a crazy quilt of them as orderly and coherent as he can. Well, where can I get the raw material I need in greater supply than in this little community of criminality and sentimentality, of Radicalism and bad debts? Kips Bay is an inexhaustible mine of police news and town talk."

"Well, I can't say that your kind stay among us has broadened you out much, Rob!"

"No?" he replied, amused at the shot. "I suppose I do grow more squeamish

every day. Nothing like a steady diet of police episodes for purifying purposes. It acts the way some nauseous drugs do.”

”You’re perfectly detestable,” she cried. She didn’t like anybody but herself to disparage Kips Bay. ”You’ve put your mind in a prison, Rob. Your symptoms require a drastic remedy. If I were a physician of the soul, I should prescribe marriage.”

”Don’t be a Job’s comforter, Cornelia. I said I wanted female society, not female satiety. And, by the way, since when did you begin to advocate marriage as the door to freedom? You have always denounced it as the trapdoor to slavery.”

”I don’t advocate it for women, and even for men I recommend it only in the most desperate cases.”

”Well, mine isn’t desperate. But Hutchins Burley’s is, judging from his conduct at the ball tonight. You might prescribe for him.”

”Oh, he’s past all treatment. What do you think he told me in strict confidence yesterday? That he’s weighed down by a great sorrow; too many women find him irresistible, and persecute him to death with their lovesick attentions.”

”I call that a new form of persecutorial mania.”

”He was in dead earnest, Rob. He called himself a martyr to love, fancy that!”

”Well, he seemed to be a remarkably willing martyr tonight. He buzzed like a huge wasp from one pair of lips to another. When he got to Mazie, who unfolds her petals so alluringly, he became quite intoxicated.”

”Which means that Mazie acted in a perfectly shameless way, as usual.”

”Whose mind is a prison now?”

”I don’t know what you mean,” said Cornelia acridly. ”Please don’t assume that, because I no longer believe in marriage, I’ve turned my back on decency and good manners.”

”This is breaking a butterfly on a wheel, Cornelia. The fact is, Mazie doesn’t have to *act* to produce the peculiar behavior in men which I described. You know that quite well. She is what Joseph Conrad calls ’one of the women of all time.’ I’d call her a throw-back with the emotions and appetites of a cave woman and the thoughts and looks of a Ziegfield chorus girl. It’s not by acting shamelessly, or by acting at all, but by just passively being herself that she sets a man’s blood boiling.”

”A man’s blood boils so easily—like a kettle on a mountain!”

”Be fair, Cornelia. Some men’s blood does, yes. Men on Mazie’s own level. Burley’s one of them.”

”Well,” said Cornelia, waiving the point, ”what did Hutchins do, or rather undo?”

”I’d better not go into details. He played several questionable pranks. Once,

it looked as though he were on the point of seizing Mazie by her locks and dragging her, stone-man fashion, to his lair. Even Mazie had to act then, really to *act*, for she was after bigger game.”

”You mean, Claude?”

”Yes. But Claude had no eyes for the woman of all time. His gaze was absolutely absorbed by a new star of the first magnitude, a star not charted in the heavens before.”

”And this starry wonder?”

”Was Janet Barr.”

He tried to say the name casually, but Cornelia’s jealous ear detected a caressing tone.

”Hard on Mazie, wasn’t it?” he pursued.

”On Mazie least of all,” she said pointedly.

The shaft missed.

”Yes, Burley got the worst end of it,” he went on innocently. ”I dare say Mazie consoled herself easily enough. But Burley’s aspirations have met more than one jolt to-night. When he made a dead set at Janet—that was another rebuff.”

Robert described the riotous scene outside the gypsy tent.

”Then, as I’ve already told you, Mazie gave him the slip; with the result that I’ve never seen Burley more completely divested of his first-prize bumptiousness. However, he soon pulled himself together.”

”Goodness knows there must have been plenty of Outlaw girls ready to lay balm on the big scamp’s wounds.”

”Yes. And I needn’t remind you that many of these young ladies believe in free speech, free men and free love. Well, Hutchins made the rounds of those he knew and publicly challenged them to live up to their pretensions. His proposals were brutally frank.”

”The girls received them with amusement, I suppose?”

”They received them with scornful resentment—just like ordinary conventional creatures. That was what was so surprising. For Hutchins was simply a man who took their professed opinions at face value. ’Darling,’ he would say bluntly, to one of his pets, ’Darling, I like you and your ruby lips. If you like me and are not otherwise engaged, suppose we go off to Paradise.’ It was raw, of course. But you can’t say it wasn’t what is called ’free love.’”

”Really, Rob!”

”Exactly. They were every bit as scandalized as you are. After gasping for breath, they called for their escorts. Whereupon I concluded that instinct is mightier than opinion and that the beliefs we inherit are vastly stronger than the beliefs we acquire.”

Cornelia ignored this piece of satire. And Robert then told how Burley had resumed his pursuit of Janet.

"Luckily, Claude held him off," he said.

"Another champion! Little Janet must be quite the belle of the ball."

"She's been much in demand. There was the gypsy tent, remember. When it comes to innocent credulity, a radical's capacity is just as great as any honest man's. So what with examining scores of palms and eluding Hutchins Burley, Janet might have died from exhaustion but for Claude's gallant interference."

"Just like Claude's knight-errantry," she said. "He has always had a passion for novelties."

"And the novelties have usually returned the passion!"

Cornelia felt a twinge of jealousy. But as Janet had evidently not been very attentive to Robert, and had even hurt his feelings, she was hardly conscious of the emotion.

"Janet is young, impressionable and fresh from a Puritan home," she said, with a languid air of detachment. "Small wonder if Lothario's dash and distinction have captivated her."

They fell to talking of Janet's history, and Robert spoke of the surprising change in her sphere of interests.

"A month ago she was demure enough to have stood model for the heroine of *Miles Standish*. She could hardly be induced to drink at a soda-water fountain on a Sunday. Now she is full of 'equal pay for equal work.' And she appears to have a voice as well as a vote. I'm told that she reads the *Liberator* and that she broke the last Sabbath by attending a meeting of the new Labor Party in Madison Square Garden."

"She's been under my wing for several weeks," said Cornelia, proudly.

III

Cornelia's assumption that she was entirely responsible for the change in Janet's outlook on life was without warrant. Yet she was so self-satisfied as scarcely to suspect that Robert had anything to do with the matter; and it was interest in the man rather than curiosity about the girl that caused her to question him about his previous acquaintance with Janet.

She learnt that Robert's mother was not a very distant cousin of Mrs. Barr, and that both ladies had spent their girlhood in the same Connecticut town,

where they had been friends until Mrs. Lloyd married and went out West. When Robert left Los Angeles, he bore this relationship in mind and, on the strength of it, paid his respects to the Barrs soon after settling in New York.

Cornelia inferred that the young man's acquaintance with the Barrs had continued on a very superficial footing. Robert knew better than to deceive her. As a matter of fact, he had repeated his visits to the Barr household for the simple reason that there had sprung up between himself and Janet a mental fellowship which the hostility of her mother, the timid aloofness of her father and the envy of her sister had been able to obstruct but not to destroy.

Janet had more than repaid him for the inhospitality of her relatives. She in turn amused, puzzled, inspired and electrified him. So much unsophistication in the midst of a guileful city, so much candor surrounded by pious make-believe, above all, so much eagerness for experience held in leash by a vegetating family routine, had filled Robert with the hope that he might play Pygmalion to her Galatea.

Galatea, however, did not exactly go into raptures over Pygmalion. Though her insurgent nature was full of silent sympathy with Robert, her instincts were so much under the bondage of the Barr atmosphere as to prevent her from fully estimating his worth. Still, she conscientiously followed up the leads he gave her. She made her first bewildered acquaintance with the new paintings, the new music and the new social sciences. She began to look forward to copies of the *Republic*, the *Nation*, the *London Statesman*; and she joined him in reading the great contemporary writers: Bernard Shaw, H. G. Wells, Anatole France, Romain Rolland. In short, she ranged with silent delight through the new world of modernity that he opened up to her, though it had to be explored in an obstinate little way of her own.

As her unofficial pilot Robert was very happy and might long have held the post but for a fatal blunder. Mrs. Barr learned one day that he had tempted Janet to attend a performance of Shaw's "Blanco Posnet," given on a Sunday by the Stage Reform Players. According to Emily, her informant, this play was immoral, not to say blasphemous, as was proved by the refusal of the British censor to license its performance.

Such a flagrant breach of holy writ, family propriety and the Sabbath, raised a domestic tempest to which Janet deemed it wise to bend. Robert was forced to discontinue his visits. What he did not tell Cornelia was that, during the last two months, he had regularly met Janet at Brentano's, where she had formed the habit of browsing through the new books and magazines every Friday afternoon.

CHAPTER SIX

I

These facts Robert had his own reasons for hiding from Cornelia. To cut the cross-examination short, he walked up to a miniature portrait that hung on the wall over Cornelia's desk.

"Why do you keep this picture of Percival Houghton enshrined here?"

"Why not?" asked Cornelia, taken by surprise.

"It is the only picture in the room," replied Robert, evasively. "The face is that of an esthete under the influence of paranoia. It positively stares one out of countenance. Whenever I enter the room, I feel as if I mustn't take a seat until I've bowed before it thrice."

"I'm not responsible for other people's erratic feelings." Cornelia would have spoken with less acerbity if jealousy had prompted Robert's remark. But his cool sardonic tone eliminated the theory of a jealous motive.

"Pardon the explosion, Cornelia. But why must this man of all men be the presiding genius of your room?"

"You know the reason very well, Robert."

"Unfortunately, yes. You won't let your friends forget it. By keeping this portrait in evidence, you actually force the reason on people's attention. Do take him down, Cornelia, swathe him in incense, and lay him away amongst your most cherished souvenirs. Replace him, if you must replace him, with a picture of Saint Francis or Savonarola."

She bristled up under his ironic words. Her craving for admiration vanished in her resentment of disapproval.

"I am proud to have known Percival Houghton, and to have been his friend. Thanks for your recommendation, though I'm not aware of having asked for it."

"Don't be angry. You must own that you constantly remind your visitors of this Houghton affair, though what advantage it is to your position and influence, Heaven only knows. Let sleeping dogs lie. Believe me, Cornelia, half the tragedies in life result from forgetting what we ought to remember; the other half from remembering what we ought to forget."

"I'm not ashamed of the Houghton affair, as you call it," said Cornelia coldly. "Why should I be? It was one of those rare friendships that are quite beyond the perception of vulgar-minded, low-thoughted souls. What other people think of it concerns me very little."

She really believed this, although it was very wide of the mark.

"I know," she went on melodramatically, "of the spiteful gossip behind my

back. I know of the scarlet colors in which my relations with Percival Houghton are painted by my enemies. Let them declaim against me! To a few real friends I have told the truth. They believe me, and that is all I ask.”

She had in fact taken more than one friend into her confidence. It was a common saying in the Lorillard tenements that the token of admission to Cornelia’s inner circle was the almost sacramental rite of receiving her account of the Houghton episode.

The corner stone of this account—the supreme article of faith!—was the point that she and Percival Houghton had rigorously abstained from sexual intimacy throughout their voyage together in the same stateroom. Not from moral scruples, be it noted, but from a desire to prove to the world that free love and the severest tax on self-restraint were perfectly compatible.

Cornelia held passionately to the delusion that her account was accepted in every jot and tittle. Robert knew that behind her back, most of her friends greeted it with a cynical smile and pronounced it a pardonable but much too elaborate invention. When some one referred to Cornelia’s assertion that the voyage to England had involved no infraction of the seventh commandment, the women would say contemptuously: “If you’re going to be killed for a lamb, you might as well be killed for a sheep.” The men, more vulgarly, would exclaim: “What a shame if they wasted a chance like that!”

Hutchins Burley, in one of his most egregious moments, wagered any amount that Cornelia wasn’t half as big a fool as her story made her out to be.

It was owing to these and other coarse pleasantries circulating at her expense that Robert wished he could make Cornelia look the facts in the face.

What he regretted most of all, however, was that she seemed entirely to misconstrue the visits of the many men who sauntered in and out of her rooms. They came with the expectation voiced by Oscar Wilde, that “she who had sinned once and with loathing, would sin again many times, and with joy.” Clearly, they hoped to profit by the repetition. But this was a truth to which Cornelia was obstinately blind.

“You, Robert,” she said, aggrieved at his silence, “used to be counted among those who believed.”

“And I am still. Good Heavens, Cornelia, why should I, of all people, doubt your words? Think of my situation. Here am I, alone after midnight in an apartment with a young and interesting martyr in the cause of free marriage. And what do we do? We discuss the subject of sex affinities, with a complete suspension of conventional reserve. Yet I couldn’t so much as kiss you.”

“Oh, couldn’t you?” said Cornelia, in a half mocking, half challenging voice.

This tremendous talk, all about herself, had completely revitalized her spirits. She sat forward intent on Robert’s every word, the movement causing her

dress to fall low in front and show all her languid beauty at its best.

"No!" he said, gazing at her and striving hard to steady himself.

"How do you know?" she murmured, in scarcely audible tones.

"I know," asserted Robert firmly, returning to an almost inhuman perfection. "If I began to make love to you, I'd be turned out in a twinkling. But who would believe this? Not a soul. If you were to tell the facts to our fellow tenementers, they would laugh you to scorn, and if *I* were to tell them, they would send me to the Bloomingdale Asylum. Yet my virtue is quite safe with you, Cornelia."

"You hardly do yourself justice, Cato," she said, biting her lips, and adjusting the neck of her dress.

"Oh, men are more or less passive agents in these matters. I'm safe with you because your radicalism, with all its offshoots into free love, free thought and free religion is only skin deep. You are a fascinating instance in the flesh of the great modern feminist dilemma: the demand for independence and respectability coupled with the fatal longing to be a Cleopatra, 'one of the women of all time.'"

Piqued at his innuendoes, Cornelia was getting ready to launch an acrid retort, when the door bell rang. It was one of those vicious jangles with which only a policeman or a pedlar ventures to announce himself.

But the man who roistered into the apartment was Hutchins Burley.

II

It was difficult to think of this corpulent, bullying brawler as one of the leading newspaper men of the metropolis; he looked so very much more like a shoddy loafer from the underworld. His legs were still fairly steady, although his head was quite the reverse. His alcoholic exertions had been so ardent, however, that he sank on the couch with a loud snort of satisfaction.

"Where's Janet Barr?" he demanded, after getting his breath. "I followed her to Charlotte's flat, but she wasn't there. That's where Lydia Dyson said she was going to, the little liar."

Cornelia shook her finger at him in mock remonstrance.

"You have seen quite enough of Janet for one night, Hutch, judging from reports that have reached me. I'd be doing no more than was good for you if I put Mrs. Burley on your trail."

"What d'ye think Lizzie'd do?" he roared. "She'd scratch your eyes out for

your pains!”

He gave himself up to a burst of horrible guffaws. As Robert looked at the man’s gross, overheated, pitted face and at the Falstaffian neck and trunk, he was overcome with intense disgust.

This disgust was only in part shared by Cornelia. True, she did not relish Burley in his present drunken condition, but ordinarily she confessed to a curious weakness for him. “There’s something about the brute that I like,” she once frankly said.

She found his grossness and animal passion a relief from the refinement and fastidiousness of men like Robert. There was a certain quantitative satisfaction in the spectacle of his enormous bulk at her feet. Anyhow, all male slaves looked alike to her, the fact being that her appetite for attention or devotion was at once indiscriminating and insatiable.

Meanwhile Burley had turned to Robert.

“Listen, my boy,” he said, clamorously, “when you marry, get a good stupid dray horse like my dame. One that’ll believe in you even if God Almighty’s against you. A good plodding dray horse. That’s the best recipe I know for marital felicity.”

In an explosion of repellent laughter he roared out his self-applause.

“You know as much about women as about this tunic I’m cutting out,” said Cornelia, rebuking him mildly with her voice, but not at all with her eye.

“Well, Corny,” said Hutchins, in high excitement, “I’ll tell you what I *do* know about them.” He rose from the lounge and dumped himself amorously on one of the arms of her easy chair. “There are only three things a man need do to make a hit with women: give ’em food, give ’em clothes, give ’em hugs. It’s a sure-fire rule for managing them, too.”

He roared louder than ever. Robert wished Cornelia wouldn’t encourage him under a pretense of doing the reverse.

“Now, Hutch, go home, please,” she said, prompted by his silent disapproval. “You’ll wake up all the neighbors with your loud laughter. Remember, the walls here are as thin as cardboard.”

By way of answer, the irrepressible roisterer put his arm familiarly around her waist and tried to draw her back into the chair.

“Be human, Corny, old girl,” he said. “Don’t be a psychic adventuress. I’ve got to stay somewhere tonight, and I might as well stay here.”

Cornelia wrenched herself from his grasp and, opening the outer door with a tempestuous gesture, told him to leave at once.

“You’d better go, Hutchins,” said Robert, quietly. “Cornelia will be more than a match for you.”

Burley began to abuse him at the top of his lungs.

"For a penny, I'd break every bone in your body," he shouted.

"I'll give you twice that sum to refrain," said Robert coolly.

Burley's latent bestiality was now thoroughly aroused. Breathing threatenings and slaughter, he advanced towards Robert, working himself into a greater passion and shaking his fist more savagely every step of the way. Cornelia screamed and threw herself in the huge man's path. After a tussle of a few seconds, during which her cries rang through the open door, he shoved her forcibly aside. Robert's slim stature was already poised for the uneven combat, when a tall, agile, coatless figure dashed in from the adjoining apartment and deftly arrested the fist that Burley was sending with considerable momentum towards Robert's pale face.

"This way out!" exclaimed the newcomer in a voice almost ludicrously gentle.

But there was nothing gentle about his strength. The thwarted man sputtered abusive, incoherent indecencies. In vain. His expletives were cut short by two hands of steel that whirled his lumbering hulk forward, steered him past Cornelia with professional adroitness, and escorted him irresistibly into the corridor. A moment later an inchoate mass of humanity was torpedoed, with projectile swiftness, down the first flight of stairs. To make doubly sure, the direct actionist followed his missile.

Rumblings, sputterings and groans ascended discordantly up the stairway. Presently the noise grew fitful and then more and more subdued, as if some one had damped Vesuvius or banked its fires for the night. At length came silence.

Cornelia had sunk into a chair over which Robert was solicitously bending when Burley's subjugator returned. In reply to Cornelia's thanks he blushed like a boy and hid his embarrassment by edging towards the door.

In the hall outside he deprecated Robert's warm words.

"Just practice work," he said, in the same mild voice and Manhattan accent. "A little trick of concentration. A man brings all his muscular power to bear on a few weak points. *And* joints. The Japs can teach you. So can I."

He drew a card from his waistcoat pocket. Meanwhile, Cornelia, who had followed Robert to the door, chanted:

"You are wonderful, Mr. Gorilla, wonderful! How *do* you accomplish it?"

"Ah, Miss, a child could do it. The main thing is to be a powerful breather; you can't do much if you're only a powerful eater or drinker. You've got to fill your lungs and your bel—your abdomen, with good fresh wind; then you travel on velvet."

He gave Robert his card.

"Come in and I'll show you," he said cordially.

His eyes meeting Cornelia's again, the vanquished victor withdrew in evi-

dent confusion to his retreat in number thirteen.

Robert looked at the card and turned it over to Cornelia. She recognized with a smile the legend about Harry Kelly, the Harlem Gorilla and Champion of the Mat.

PART II

LOVE AMONG THE OUTLAWS

CHAPTER SEVEN

I

When Janet awoke at eleven, it took her several moments to recollect that she was in Cornelia's apartment in Kips Bay, where Claude had left her before dawn. She could hear Cornelia bustling about in the living room, but she stayed in bed a little longer to luxuriate in memories of the preceding night.

She got lightly out of bed and stood before the mirror over the chiffonier. But she was less preoccupied with the image in the looking glass than with mental pictures of the night before.

In the bright light of day, the glamour of some of these pictures took on the effect of tinsel. But Janet could still thrill to the excitement of the raid on the Lyceum, the pell-mell escape, the violent dispersal of the mobs in Murray Hill and the hurried collection of a troop of Outlaw refugees and their nocturnal march through Kips Bay streets under the leadership of Claude Fontaine. It had been a very festive troop, swelled by stragglers all the way to the Lorillard tenements, where the party camped in Charlotte Beecher's double flat.

Of the long merrymaking that followed, Janet cared to remember only the occasions when Claude Fontaine was at her side and at her service. How vividly she could picture him in the dashing part of Charles Surface, his handsome face tinted with rich, young blood, and his eyes of such brightness and depth that surely no infamy could ever dull them!

A knock cut this day dreaming short.

"How do you do, Araminta?" said Cornelia, entering melodramatically.

"And what does the Sleeping Beauty want for breakfast?"

"I'm hungry enough to eat sticks and stones and puppy-dog's bones," replied Janet. "But I won't murmur if you have gentler fare."

As Cornelia insisted that dressing should be deferred until after the meal, Janet tripped to the breakfast table in her nightgown, her curly hair hanging down to her shoulders. Cornelia, her figure lapped precariously in a simple dress, which she had made and pinned together at a cost of fifty cents all told, sat down opposite her young guest.

"This is a picnic!" exclaimed Janet. She was filled with glee at the wrapping paper neatly spread out in place of a table cloth, at the cups, saucers and dishes all made of agateware, and at the compressed paper plates for the slices of bread.

"Well, it isn't a Barmecide's feast, by any means," said Cornelia, who was amused at Janet's artless joy. "The plates may be made of paper, but they are fresh and so are the eggs and bacon."

She set these articles on the table.

"All the principal dishes are of agateware," she said, in answer to a question of Janet's. "I've got four of everything necessary—four cups, four saucers, four glasses, four knives, four spoons, and so on. But don't imagine that we have wrapping paper for a table cloth every day. Dear, no! That's only for guests of honor and on Sundays. On week days we use newspapers."

"That's a novel way of taking one's newspaper with one's meal."

"Oh, it's old news. I always use the newspaper of a week ago. And it's curious how often I run across some interesting bit of politics or scandal that escaped me a week before. Sometimes, while devouring a roll, I catch myself in the midst of a slobbery article by Hutchins Burley in the *Evening Chronicle*. The wretch is running a series of articles called: 'The Soul of Woman under Freedom.'"

She gave Janet a circumstantial report of the encounter with Burley during the night. Janet followed this narrative with sympathetic interest, and wished that she and Claude had arrived in time to prevent the occurrence.

"But then your knight-errant would have missed his opportunity," she said.

"Think of the loss! By the way, I met him this morning, Araminta."

"In ambush at the door?"

"No, in the hallway downstairs. I had gone out for some cream. On my way back I ran right into his arms."

"With what result?"

"Very little. He exhausted his eloquence in stammers and deaf mute lingo. And when I thanked him again for last night's service, he promptly took to his heels. It was cruel."

"The course of true love always is, Cornelia."

Cornelia, pleased at the implied assumption that she had inspired a ro-

mance, dwelt with gusto on the hero's exploit. For the fiftieth time she described the skill and celerity with which "the physical culture expert" had propelled Burley from the apartment.

"At the Outlaws' Ball, Mr. Burley called Claude a diamond smuggler," said Janet, by way of changing the subject. "What did he mean? Do people accuse the Fontaines of smuggling?"

"I never heard of such a thing," replied Cornelia. "Merchant princes like the Fontaines would hardly stoop to that. Besides, it wouldn't pay them. Did Claude notice?"

"Yes, and he seemed to mind it very much. His whole appearance changed as if he had been stung into sudden fury. But he controlled himself bravely."

"What else could he do with the belle of the ball at his side? He's always a man of the world—when in the world."

"But not in private?" asked Janet, anxious to get to the bottom of this veiled aspersion. Cornelia's reply was evasive.

"A fine summer's day will often end in a burst of terrifying thunder and lightning," she said. "Lothario has plenty of good looks and plenty of temper. A man who is accustomed to find people submitting to his will, easily gets indignant when he meets with opposition."

She sighed as if she could tell much more about Claude Fontaine if she chose.

"Well, I don't blame him for getting enraged at the abuse of that horrible man," said Janet, sturdily defending him.

"Nor do I. Once in a while a thunderbolt will strike the wicked as well as the good, won't it? Claude was quite justified this time, no doubt."

"How does he happen to come among the Outlaws, Cornelia? He doesn't seem to belong to them exactly."

"He doesn't pretend to. He walks among us humble tenementers like a god among his creatures. Distinctly Like a god, Araminta. That's the footing on which he associates with mere human beings."

"Yet he's hail fellow well met with Robert and Mazie and the others," protested Janet.

"Ah, yes, but don't let that deceive you. Jupiter was hail fellow well met with many a mortal, especially with many a mortal maiden. You remember that he visited one earthly princess in a shower of gold. That is what Claude does. He visits the model tenements in—or perhaps I should say with—a shower of gold. I mean," she added, "he doesn't think of marriage with a girl on Mazie's level. Nor with a girl on yours or mine."

This shaft did not miss its mark. But it perplexed Janet more than it wounded her.

"I thought that made no difference to you," she said, for she had already been favored with some of Cornelia's destructive criticism of the institution of marriage.

"It makes no difference to *me*," said Cornelia. "But in this stifling room I can't explain myself as I'd like to. The spacious blue skies and the free pure air of the Hudson will be a more fitting background for the story I'd like to tell you. Put on your things, Araminta, and we'll go for a charming ride."

Janet dressed with promptness and pleasure. She appeared to have forgotten that Robert Lloyd had particularly said that he was coming about noon in order to take her home. Her friend did not remind her. The knowledge that Robert would go away in bitter disappointment robbed the outing of none of its zest, so far as Cornelia was concerned.

Claude, too, had promised to drop in at Number Fifteen. This promise Janet bore well in mind. But as his visit was not to take place until late in the afternoon and there was thus no danger of missing him, she joined Cornelia with enthusiasm.

II

At the corner of Thirty-fourth Street and Second Avenue, where Kips Bay edges its dingy little proletarian stores into bourgeois respectability, the two young women entered a car bound for the West Twenty-third Street ferry. It proceeded at a jog trot along Second Avenue to Twenty-third Street where it struck the cross-town line west.

Janet felt no annoyance at the snail's pace from which the car never departed. Manhattan was still a novelty to her, and this section of the East Side was wholly new.

But Cornelia made unflattering comparison between the surface conveyances in Manhattan and the bus transportation which Londoners and Parisians enjoyed. She was annoyed by the complacency that New Yorkers displayed toward their street-car service and the petty provincialism that actually led them to believe this service to be the fastest in the world, when in fact it was the slowest. At the climax of her irritation she gave Janet the benefit of one of Robert Lloyd's epigrams. Robert had once said that New York "rapid transit," as it was optimistically called, was the organized effort of the local traction magnates to annihilate the specific advantages of modern electrical machinery. Cornelia

did not doubt that in this effort they had triumphed.

The jolts with which the car came to a standstill at each successive street crossing, and the jerks with which it resumed its languid pace again, would ordinarily have frazzled her nerves for the day. This time, however, she bore the ordeal much more composedly. For one thing, Janet's calm spirit had a soothing influence upon her. For another, it amused her mightily to have so unsophisticated a companion to point out the sights to. She caused Janet to observe the Italian district with its macaroni dens along the cross streets, the Armenian district with the Eastern restaurants parading strange Greek-lettered names, and Kips Bay's fashionable western fringe with its Madison Avenue hotels, stores and residential palaces.

Janet drank it all in thirstily. Not for a moment did she regret the defiance she had flung at her mother's wishes by going to the Outlaws' Ball. On the contrary, this act of insurgency appeared to have heightened her perception as much as it had strengthened her self-esteem. She saw things with different eyes, or believed she did. The people and the shops fairly brandished a life and reality totally new to her experience. She longed to be more than a mere spectator in the tumultuous scene unfolded before her. She would have given anything to be even a cog—an active cog—in this giant metropolis whose roar and grime possessed an immense attraction.

At the North River they left the car. Three big ferry houses confronted them and Cornelia was undecided which to take. It was a grave question in her mind, for she staged the big scenes of her life with as much care as a play producer. The artist in her at once eliminated the Erie ferry.

"The Erie boats are too dinky," she said. "Shall we take the Jersey Central or the Lackawanna?"

"Let's take the one that gives the longest ride," said Janet, for whom the smell of the river quickly cut such minor esthetic knots.

Cornelia's first and invariable impulse towards any proposal made by another person was to turn it down. The reasons she gave for doing so were usually quite plausible, though sometimes cast in a rather theatrical style.

"The Jersey's trip is a little longer," she said, "but the difference is slight. The Lackawanna appeals to me more. Lackawanna! Don't you love the music in that name? Besides, Araminta, the Jersey boats are painted a sickly gray, while the Lackawanna boats are maroon. A wonderful maroon! And they have a glorious seat on the upper deck, directly facing the bow."

"Very well, let's take the Lackawanna," said Janet, to whom it was all one.

They were soon ensconced in the very seat on the top deck which Cornelia coveted.

But if Janet had any hopes of hearing a great deal more about Claude

Fontaine, she was soon disillusioned. She did not yet understand her friend, to whom the world was an audience at a stage play in which Cornelia Covert had the star part. She speedily learned that Cornelia had not gone to all this trouble to analyze the love affairs of other people. No. The moment had been chosen and the stage had been set to make Janet the recipient of the sacred narrative of Cornelia's experience with Percival Houghton.

The tale did not begin until the boat was well under way, so that Janet had an opportunity to revel in the swell of the mighty Hudson and to contrast the differing aspects of the two banks. The Palisaded Jersey side was almost hidden by huge ocean steamers, except at the spot where the Castle Point Terrace of Stevens Institute rose serenely above a forest of quivering masts.

Janet thought the heights of Hoboken quite dwarfed by the towering office structures of lower Manhattan. Cornelia interrupted her ineffable story long enough to repeat another opinion of Robert's without acknowledgment. It was to the effect that the commercial skyscrapers on the Hudson were as grimly symbolic of ownership as the castles that overlooked the Rhine. Did Janet realize that the lords of these skyscraping fortresses were the masters of the river and thus of the country on which the river's port had a strangle hold? In each of the big business edifices, thousands of mercantile retainers served their liege lords with pen or typewriter as industriously as ever men-at-arms flourished crossbow or arquebus in the brave days of old. Only, the economic factor in the comparison was all in favor of the industrial barons of today. Their armies, opulence and power were of a magnitude that would have caused the robber barons of the Rhine to expire with envy.

III

With these brief interruptions, Cornelia pursued the even tenor of the story whose narration was the seal and token of her friendship. What moved her to tell it to Janet was not the idea of self-defence, or the hope of softening the shock a friend might receive on learning the details from a hostile critic. Quite the contrary. She was inordinately proud of her intimate connection with a man as famous as Percival Houghton; and she was altogether anxious that her friends should know of this connection in the form in which she wished it to be known and hoped to make it remembered.

Two years had passed, she told Janet, since Percival Houghton came to the

United States. He was a young Englishman, well connected, who had gained an immense vogue as an illustrator. He was said to have "isolated" several rare types of French and English female beauty, and fabulous sums had been paid for his portrait studies in pastel. His press agent having in advance widely advertised the artist's announced purpose of adding the American girl to his pictorial conquests, his arrival was extremely good copy for the newspapers.

Hutchins Burley, with an eye to the *Evening Chronicle's* large feminine clientele, did not let the opportunity slip by. He assigned Cornelia, then attached to his paper, to interview the ambitious Englishman. In her own words, "she went, she saw, she conquered."

After the flattering notice in the *Chronicle*, Percival Houghton sought her out and attended her devotedly. Cornelia dwelt on the warm friendship that sprang up between them and on her own quick subjection to his great personal charm.

"He was a wonderful man, Araminta. He had a great leonine head with wild flowing locks; there was fire in his eye and music in his voice; and he had that imperious way with him that opens a path straight to a woman's heart."

The week before his departure, he made an avowal of his passion. And she was in a paradise of ecstasy until the next day, when he sent her by mail a piece of information he had not had the courage to give her in person. He confessed to a wife and two children living in England. In a moment of impetuous boyish idealism—like Shelley's, he said—he had married a girl who was intellectually (though not financially) his inferior. Worst of all, she shared none of his tastes or aspirations. He assured Cornelia that every day of his married existence had been a lifetime of exquisite torture.

This confession, Janet heard, was the prelude to many hours of bitter torment. Cornelia said that the one good outcome of this evil period was that she began to think of the realities of life for the first time. She was led to question the moral conventions which she had always taken for granted and which, she now saw, encrusted the conduct of most of the people around her. Under the tutelage of Percival Houghton, who proclaimed himself a free thinker, as well as a free lover, she became alive to the absurdity of regarding the conventions of an age as immutable laws for all time.

Naturally, at this time, her logic was concentrated on the convention of marriage.

Percival read out many passages from the great writers of today—continued Cornelia—from Galsworthy, H. G. Wells, Havelock Ellis and Gilbert Cannan; and these passages exposed the unalterable belief of the writers that marriage, in its existing form, was wrong, conclusively and crushingly wrong.

Wrong, she hastened to explain, in so far as it was a contract that was held

to be binding even after the death of the love on which the contract was based.

She developed the logic of the situation at some length in arguments with which Janet was greatly impressed.

"You own mother and father hate each other, Janet," she pointed out. "The result is the cat-and-dog, bite-one-another's-head-off relationship that passes for family life in your home. Do you see?";

Janet saw, or thought she saw. Anything that could plausibly be shown to be responsible for family life among the Barrs was sure to receive her cordial detestation. Cornelia, certain of her auditor's sympathy, continued her story. Percival Houghton's solution of the difficulty caused by his rash attachment was a highly quixotic one. He proposed that Cornelia accompany him to England, so that they might together lay the facts before his wife and beg her to sue for a divorce after he had furnished her with funds and with technical grounds for the suit. They were to be open and aboveboard in urging the right of true lovers to be free from all the shackles of law and tradition. His wife was not ungenerous, he declared. Moreover, she had never really loved him; and he persuaded himself and Cornelia that, face to face with an overwhelming passion, she would readily consent to an act that was to liberate three lives.

This, he insisted was the only honorable course to pursue. It had the precedent of such great names as Ruskin and Millais. Besides it was the only course that would not seriously affect his career or completely cut him off from his children.

What could Cornelia do but yield? He engaged passage to England for two, and—she emphasized this detail again and again—though they occupied the same stateroom, their union was a union of two souls and nothing more.

Without giving Janet time to grasp the logic of this behavior or of its explanation, she continued:

"Percival said it behooved us to show that free love could rise above the lustful impulses of the flesh. We were to come to each other clean, so as not to do the cause of free love an injury."

England had been the Paradise of her hopes, but it proved their sepulchre. Scarcely had they docked in the Mersey when reporters representing news associations accosted them for information about their "elopement." The news had been cabled from New York, where they were featured as "elective affinities." In London, too, they found themselves headliners in the yellow journals. Needless to say, the most extreme construction was put on their journey together. And the escapade of "affinity Houghton" became an international sensation.

"How did it leak out, Cornelia?" exclaimed Janet. "Had you told anyone you were going together?"

"Not a soul. But my connection with a newspaper was fatal. A woman

journalist is subject to more gossip than an actress. Every time she's seen with a new man, she's reported to have ensnared a new lover."

As a result of this glaring notoriety, Cornelia went on, Houghton's manner toward her underwent a radical change. He remained kind and courteous, but his manner grew cool. He urged one pretext after another for postponing what was to have been a historic interview with his wife. In London he took her to a hotel and left her there alone.

Two days later she received a letter from him, in which he said that his wife was unalterably resolved to contest a divorce on any ground, and that the newspaper gossip had almost irretrievably injured his prospects. He added that he was as devoted to her as ever. He was, in fact, broken-hearted, but his clear duty to his family, his children and his career demanded that they should never meet again.

In spite of this note she made several attempts to see him once more. She confessed to Janet that she had been ready to accept any terms he might make, if only he agreed not to part from her forever. It was for love and not for marriage that she had sacrificed herself. It was not marriage but love that she demanded. But he sustained his pitilessly inflexible attitude. Almost prostrated by the notoriety which the experience had thrust upon her, she made a heart-broken return to the United States.

"I landed in New York without hope, without health, and without a home," said Cornelia, dramatically. "But I had vindicated my belief that love should be free."

To forestall a social boycott, she had proudly decided to shun all her former friends. To this end she rented a flat in the Lorillard tenements. And here she had remained in eclipse, and in receipt of a small allowance from a brother who was a leading politician in a Western State.

Latterly, old friends of hers, members of the fellowship of Outlaws, had drifted into her rooms in Kips Bay; and so she had been dragged—unwillingly, she alleged—from her retirement.

She asserted that she had no ill-will for Percival Houghton, who would always be the one man in the world for her. After all, he had sold his birthright for a marriage of convenience, and he might well feel that he ought to stick to his bargain, cost what it might. She was persuaded that his coldness to her in London was merely an iron vizor clamped upon his real feelings by the ruthless institution of matrimony. She also appeared to derive some comfort from the thought that though he was "a soul pirate," though he had "stolen her soul," his own had been damned in the process.

"Yet I shall always love him," she said, with tragic resignation. "I shall never love anyone else. And I shall never marry. I've suffered enough from marriage

as it is.”

The ferryboat docked at the Lackawanna Station. Janet, who had been lost in a reverie, mechanically followed her companion’s suggestion that they take the same boat back. Cornelia’s story—the vivid story of one of the principals—had a very different coloring from the account of the “affinity Houghton” scandal which had filled the front pages of the evening newspapers two years ago. Janet could still recollect the headlines, the pictures, and the expansive gossip; also the strange mixture of curiosity and pious disgust with which she had followed the reports.

Could the horrified Janet Barr of that dimly remembered time be the same girl who was now sitting in the closest intimacy beside the leading female in the case?

On the return across the river, Janet had several questions on the tip of her tongue, but Cornelia’s manner seemed to discourage inquiries of a too personal kind. However, Janet did get in:

”What was Percival Houghton’s excuse for refusing to see you once more?”

”He said we could meet only in secret; but that any continuation of the secrecy was more than he could endure.”

”Do you think that excuse rings true?”

”Why not? I suppose I should say it rings falsely true, as faith unfaithful always does.”

”I think it was the evasion of a coward.”

”Perhaps. But, Araminta, *all* men are cowards, moral cowards, I mean. They face bullets sublimely, but they shiver and shake before an argument. They gayly lose their lives for a hunting trophy or a football triumph, but they can’t bear to lose their dinners for a belief.”

Janet, thinking of her father, was inclined to agree with this view.

”Is that why men let women keep up the marriage system?”

”My dear, it isn’t the women who keep up the marriage system. It’s the men! Women just fall into a system that’s ready made for them. Most women are all body and no soul. Give them the choice between marriage, which provides for the body while starving the soul, and some other condition which provides for the soul while starving the body, and of course they’ll choose marriage. They prefer to hold a man by his lusts rather than by his spiritual impulses. But the men keep the system up, my dear. Because of the children they want.”

”But, Cornelia, I thought it was the women who wanted children!”

”So we do. We want them because life demands them through us; for are we not the mothers of the race? But that is not the men’s reason. It isn’t the race that is calling through them for immortality. Heavens no! It’s their boundless male egotism. And since they know that they can’t live forever in their own

selfish little bodies, they hope to get a new lease of life in the bodies of their sons. That is why they have built up an institution in which they can keep their women wedlocked and can make sure that their children are their own."

"But perhaps marriage is necessary for the children, Cornelia. They are the better off for it, at least when they are very young."

"Are you so sure? Remember, loveless marriages seldom result in healthy offspring. Look at Percival Houghton's two children. One is a girl with hip disease, the other is a feeble-minded, flabby anæmic boy. Yet the parents are both physically sound. Do you think *I* would have had such children?"

Her vehemence was over-awing, almost over-bearing.

"I'm not sure I can judge from one case, Cornelia," said Janet, her firm voice and clear distinct utterance betraying a will of her own. "But I'm sure that people who marry and find that they are mistaken in each other, ought to be able to rectify the mistake. It's horrible to think that they can't."

"Ah! Now you've come to it. If people find that they are mistaken in their butchers or grocers, they experiment until they find the right one. They won't go on eating bad steaks forever because luck or inexperience landed them in a poor shop at the first try. But do they take as much trouble to get the right husband or wife as they do to get the right mutton chop? They don't. Whatever partner luck or inexperience hands them at the altar, they put up with for the rest of their lives."

"I wonder why we don't experiment in marriage as in all other matters?" asked Janet thoughtfully.

"My dear, it's been proposed often enough. By men, of course. You are too young to remember the furor that followed when George Meredith proposed trial marriages. It's an easy thing for the men to propose, since it's the women who must risk the beginning. The question is, who is to begin? The plain women daren't, because the risk is too great; and the fascinating women needn't, because they get what they want anyway, within the law or beyond it. Now if ever girls like you, Araminta, on whom the eye rests with delight, began to experiment—"

"What then?"

"Oh, I've no right to urge my views on individuals. Besides, you are far too young and inexperienced, my dear, to be one of the first. Though I'm sure nothing would suit men like Claude Fontaine better."

"There, Cornelia, you're making innuendos about Mr. Fontaine again," said Janet. "It isn't fair. If you mean to take me into your confidence at all, you might do it all the way through."

"Not another word will you get out of me now, Araminta," replied Cornelia, with one of the queer laughs she gave whenever she blocked people's wishes.

However, fearing to weaken the hold she had upon Janet, she added:

"I'm too famished to talk. Here we are, landing at last. Come, we'll get a nice lunch. I know you're dying to talk about the irresistible Claude. I promise to tell you Lothario's whole history over our cups of tea."

Janet begged to be taken to the Y.W.C.A. Cafeteria, whose good food, self-service and picturesque quarters she had heard Cornelia extol. When they reached the restaurant, they saw a very long line of waiting customers.

"This will never do," said Cornelia, disgustedly. And, quite unwilling to sacrifice comfort in the cause of self-service, she dragged the reluctant Janet to a French pastry restaurant on Fifth Avenue.

"I *do* like a waiter and a table cloth," said Cornelia, as she contentedly resigned herself to these dubious luxuries. "And I *don't* like to scramble for my napkin and my glass of ice water."

"What a strange thing for you to say," said Janet, puzzled. "It sounds as though, in spite of your advanced views, you might at heart be thoroughly in love with conventional ways."

"Don't put such ideas into your head, silly!" said Cornelia, giving a high-pitched, self-conscious, stagy laugh, with which she shut off further personal questions.

During lunch, Cornelia contrived to say curiously little about Claude Fontaine, Janet learning hardly anything she did not already know. Claude was heir to the great Fontaine jewelry establishment. He was a social swell. He was very handsome. And he was trying equally hard to dabble in modern paintings and not to dabble in modern amours.

His success in both attempts was dubious, according to Cornelia. Particularly in the matter of the amours. He was, of course, the greatest catch of his day. In his own circle, every mother had marked him for her daughter. And it was to escape the conspiracies of matchmakers that he had taken up with the Outlaws in the model tenements. In their unconventional atmosphere, he had hoped to move and breathe more freely. But if every girl in his own set was willing to become his wife, every girl in the Lorillard tenements seemed willing to become his mistress.

It appeared that Mazie Ross had been particularly shameless in setting herself to catch Claude. Somehow or other, the conversation pivoted chiefly on Mazie, her selfishness, her neglect of her fair share of the work in flat number fifteen, and her willingness to sell herself. This last was the fault which Cornelia proposed to take most exception to.

"I wish I could get rid of her," she said. "Then you could come and live with me, Araminta. It would be like exchanging a room that smelled of last night's stale flowers for a garden perfumed by fresh roses."

CHAPTER EIGHT

I

No sooner were they back in their Lorillard tenement, than Robert Lloyd came in.

"Well, Cato, where did you drop from?" said Cornelia, who was lazily tidying up the rooms while Janet was doing the breakfast dishes.

"From the Harlem Gorilla in the flat next door."

"Really! And what did *he* have to say?"

"Not much. He isn't a talker like me. He's a doer. He tried to explain a few tricks in gymnastics to me. But every second sentence or so the word 'Cornelia' crept into the explanation. It was decidedly confusing."

"Pray what has the word 'Cornelia' to do with the subject of gymnastics?" asked the owner of the name.

"Ah, what! I asked the Gorilla that question myself. But he simply repeated the name adoringly and looked all sorts of unutterable things. Beware, Cornelia. He thinks the sun rises in one of your eyes and sets in the other. I believe he is planning to carry you off by main force to his cave, his gymnasium cave."

"A lot he is! He couldn't carry off a buttercup against its wishes. Really, Araminta, he's the gentlest and shyest 'wild man' you ever laid eyes on. How he ever came to take Gorilla for a nickname, I can't imagine."

"Nor I," said Robert. "But don't forget that he has learnt the art of concentrating his enormous strength on one or two crucial points. Certainly he treated Hutchins Burley to a good exhibition of his mastery, didn't he? For all that, he's a very singularly gentle sort of Hercules. If I had to provide one for you, Cornelia, I'd get a much more ferocious specimen, if only to pay you out for kiting away with Janet, after promising me you'd both stay in. I've been waiting for you since noon."

"Poor Cato, I'm terribly sorry. In the excitement of having Janet here, I clean forgot you were coming. Waiting since noon, were you, poor boy! There's devotion for you, Araminta. Never mind, Rob. Here she is, now. And all's well that ends well, I hope."

"I thought you'd like company on your way home, Janet," said Robert to her directly.

"Thanks very much," said Janet, not wishing to lose Robert and yet not caring to say that Claude had promised to call for her, if he could possibly get away from business. Before she could say more, Cornelia interposed. She had not expected Robert to wait and had not quite swallowed her chagrin over this

surprise.

"How do you happen to be off duty, Rob?" she asked. "Does the *Evening Chronicle* stop work for you on Saturdays?"

"No. I've stopped work for the *Evening Chronicle* on Saturdays and all other days."

"What! Don't tell me Hutchins has discharged you!"

Cornelia gave up the last pretense of working, and sank aghast into an armchair.

"I didn't give him a chance. I discharged myself."

"If he had—" she began, setting her teeth vindictively.

"Exactly. In his sober moments, Cornelia, you are apparently the only mortal soul he stands in some fear of. It was only because of a sneaking affection he has for you that he hesitated to fire me."

"Well, why throw a good bargain away?"

"A nice position it would have left me in. That of an understrapper for Burley to play cat and mouse with. Not if I know it! Burley likes to torture the people in his power as much as you do, the only difference being that his weapon is coarse brutality while yours is insidious charm."

"Your comparisons, Cato, have the merit of being as unambiguous as they are rude. I trust you gave Hutchins Burley the benefit of a few of them."

"Oh, no, I always forgive my enemies. Nothing enrages them more. I left Hutchins stunned. But I've no doubt he recovered in time to appoint the successor that I sent him."

"That you sent him?"

"Yes. You don't know him, but Janet does. Janet, do you remember the tall, thin, aristocratic chap who was always mysteriously turning up and who stopped Burley at the tent?"

"Of course I do. He wore a quaint stand-up collar with two points sticking into his neck. It was he who warned Claude about the raid."

"Oh, did he? Well, when I was on my way up the stairs here at noon, he suddenly appeared, like a ghost stepping out of the stone wall. It gave me quite a start. I asked him where he was bound for. 'Nowhere in particular,' was his answer."

Robert had got to talking with the mysterious one, who confessed that he had just rented a flat in the model tenements. On Robert's alluding to the severance of his connection with the *Evening Chronicle*, his new acquaintance had asked permission to apply for the vacant place. He claimed to have an ear for news and remarked casually that information was always drifting his way.

"As if I had any permission to give!" continued Robert. "I warned him what he'd be up against in the person of Hutchins Burley, and bade him Godspeed."

"He's either a detective or the Prince of Zenda in disguise," said Janet. "Which do you think, Robert?"

"From the speed and completeness with which he obliterates himself, I should favor the detective theory. On the other hand, there's his get-up! That melancholy, drooping mustache, that semi-clerical collar, and that comical tip-tilted chin! The fellow's simply unforgettable. He must be a prince incognito."

"Yes, we'll have him a prince!" exclaimed Janet, who, at twenty-four, had a normal craving for romantic illusion. "But I should like him in any part."

"A prince! Nonsense, children!" interjected Cornelia, in her most languid cadences. "He's probably a burglar."

"A burglar!"

"Certainly not a detective. Detectives don't obliterate themselves. They don't know how to. And they never look like princes in disguise. They're not clever enough. All the detectives I ever saw looked like butchers on a strike. The only man, rich, skillful and bold enough to take his fellow man at a right royal disadvantage is a first-class burglar. A Raffles, for instance, might be a prince 'incognito.'"

Cornelia's wits could work brilliantly under the stimulus of a new friend like Janet.

The door had opened while she was speaking.

"Here's a prince, Araminta!" she continued, in the same musical vein. "Not incognito, either, to judge by his handsome motor coat."

Claude Fontaine came in, and the sheer sweep of his personal attractiveness made Cornelia's slightly ironic phrasing sound quite empty. Janet thought that many a titular prince might be glad to exchange his coat of arms for Claude's conquering air.

II

Her heart beat faster for more reasons than this. How was she to let Robert down gracefully and without hurting his feelings, after having more than half accepted his offer to accompany her home?

As if in total ignorance of her dilemma, Cornelia, who had begun sketching a design for a new dress, intoned:

"Admirers never come singly. Choose your escort, my dear. Which is it to be? Cato and the subway or Lothario and a limousine?"

They all dissembled very poorly.

Claude, who had not expected rivalry, looked displeased; Robert, though he had already made up his mind to withdraw, felt uneasy; and Janet stood up between the two young men, embarrassed and confused.

Cornelia alone seemed wholly unmoved. She went on sketching imperturbably. But Robert was quite certain that she was not unconscious of the tableau. Janet broke the painful silence.

"Let's all three go together," she said, with one of her quick graceful gestures, half conciliatory, half pleading in its effect.

"Certainly, if Robert would like to come," said Claude, politely, but without enthusiasm.

Robert declined promptly. He explained that he had really been free only for the morning, and that, as long as Claude was to see Janet home, he had better utilize the late afternoon to hunt up another position. There were newspaper offices at which he ought to call. Before supper, he had a speech to rehearse. Perhaps Cornelia would be good enough to let him say it over to her.

"What kind of a speech am I letting myself in for?" asked Cornelia, half flattered, half nettled.

"Wait till you hear it."

"A sermon, I'll be bound," chanted this languid lady.

Yet, not at all languidly, she put her sketch aside and rose, adding:

"A sermon from Cato is as sweet as a *billet-doux* from any other man. Come, Araminta, let's show these men how quickly we can get ready."

They went into Cornelia's bedroom, leaving the two men alone. Claude said:

"What's this about hunting up a new position?"

Robert recounted his farewell interview with Hutchins Burley.

"You're well rid of him," said Claude. "What do you think the swine called me at the ball? A diamond smuggler. In front of everybody, mind you!"

He paced the room indignantly.

"I tell you, Rob, if these were the good old days of duelling, I'd have run his fat carcass through with a rapier half a dozen times before this. And done it with relish, too. Nowadays, worse luck, it isn't even good form to give him a thrashing, though Heaven knows he's the sort of brute that understands no argument but a blow."

"Blows would only sharpen his wits against you, Claude. Curs bite, as bees sting, by force of nature. The only thing to do is to get out of their way."

"I'm not in the habit of getting out of any man's way," said Claude, haughtily. "However, don't let's talk about the beast. I'm extremely sorry you're out of a job. Tell you what, Rob. Come up to my office on Monday, and we'll talk the

situation over and see what can be done. You'll find me in the galleries on the top floor."

"Thanks, Claude, but Monday is impossible," said Robert, glad of the excuse, for he scented patronage in his friend's manner. "I'm giving a talk on 'Unemployment under the National Guild System' before the Guild Study Club. When I arranged to speak on Unemployment I had no idea I should do so as an experienced hand."

Possibly Claude was dimly conscious of his friend's sensitiveness. At all events, he said:

"Well, come on your first free day. I'm always there afternoons. You *must* come, if only to see my two new Cezannes. I've just induced father to buy them. By the way, old chap, what on earth are National Guilds?"

The return of the ladies cut off a reply. Janet's natural grace redeemed the hang of a not too well-tailored suit. Cornelia was all aglow over a mandarin coat she had put on. It was a wonderful dark green silk with dull gold embroidery. Her clothes had a remarkable effect of clinging to her contours. "Look at me," her body seemed to call out through its vestments, "did you ever see anything so ravishing?"

Janet walked over to Robert's side and sought forgiveness without asking for it. And he forgave her without saying so. Her soft, flexible, thrilling voice disturbed him sorely, and he wondered whether its sustained riches were as illusory as he judged the mysterious depths of her gray eyes to be.

Meanwhile, Claude was telling Cornelia in all sincerity that she had never looked more enchanting.

"Flatterer!" she said. "To how many girls have you said that today?"

"Facts don't flatter, Cornelia. They simply cry out the truth."

"Lothario, it's all a matter of the science of pinning and the art of dressing. Or rather, of *not* dressing."

For the hundredth time, she assured Claude and Robert that she never wore corsets or underwear, and didn't believe in these accoutrements.

"What, nothing?" exclaimed Claude, perhaps to see Janet blush.

"We are an art-hating people with ugly ideas," continued Cornelia, unheeding his interruption, "and so we grow ugly, unsightly bodies. That is why modern fashionable dressmaking has but one aim: to conceal deformities. But dresses that conceal women's bad points are sure to conceal their good points, too. A tragic loss! Janet is young and charming; she can stand this loss. I'm on the wrong side of thirty; I can't."

"Are you poking fun at my Brooklyn clothes again?" asked Janet. "If you go on like this, I shall have to ferret out all the secrets of your art, in pure self defence."

"We must all take a hand in educating you," said Cornelia, grandly. "My part will be to make you see life as a world of beautiful lines, rhythms, and colors."

"What will mine be?" asked Claude.

"Yours? To make her see life as a vale of Cashmere—all roses and wine."

"And Rob's?"

"Rob will make her see it as a vale of tears—all sermons and social problems. He'll be a necessary corrective to you."

"And to you, too," said Robert, quickly, amidst a general laugh.

Janet was now ready to go. As she and Claude left, Cornelia kissed her tenderly and said:

"Remember, if anything serious happens at home, *I* want you, Araminta."

III

Claude instructed his chauffeur to drive across Manhattan Bridge through Prospect Park and along the Coney Island Road until the signal should be given to turn back to Janet's home in the Park Slope section. Then he took his seat in the closed car beside his companion.

It was a warm spring day, and an agreeable wind from the bay blew upon them through the open windows as they crossed the East River. The breeze, the river, and the motion joined to chase from Janet's mind the shadow of the scene that awaited her at home.

Besides, there was the god at her side. Nearness did not rob him of his divinity, it did not make him grow commonplace. And although some of the glamor of his strangeness wore away, she liked him all the better for being a human god and for having human weaknesses that caused his diviner side to seem all the more real. Janet never gushed, and even her most fervent adorations were shot through with a cool streak of matter-of-fact perception.

Claude was very happy, too. Philandering had few new sweets to offer him. Yet Janet was a novelty in every way. What was unique in her was her disinterestedness, a quality he did not consciously credit her with, however, since he did not believe that any woman possessed it. All the young ladies he had ever known had either struck attitudes at his social position or groveled more or less openly before his wealth. According to his view of women, their one aim in life was to get money out of him; by marriage if possible, by fouler means if not.

But Janet was different.

She might have fawned upon him, or thrown herself unblushingly at his head, or used a frigid hauteur to emphasize the point that her station in life was better than appearances indicated. The girls he knew invariably pursued one of these courses. But Janet didn't. Her whole bearing permeated the atmosphere with a suggestion that Claude was a very wonderful being, dashing, handsome, divine. A most agreeable suggestion! But, since it takes a goddess to detect a god, it was clear that she was quite a wonderful being, too. And what is a matter of divinity among the gods on Olympus. It is like a title among peers of the realm.

It was her simple, natural, unaffected behavior, in short, that kept his fancy intrigued. Without knowing it, his suspicion of women was almost completely disarmed.

Cornelia's parting words to Janet had given him some concern.

"You're not thinking of going to live with Cornelia?" he said.

"I may soon be glad of the chance."

"Why?"

"Because my mother threatens to put me out of her house."

"But what for?" he said, looking at her in amazement.

"I don't look like an incorrigible, do I?" she said smiling. "But my mother thinks me one for associating with people like you."

"With people like me?"

"Well, like you and the other model tenementers."

"But I'm *not* like them," he said, half amused, half annoyed.

"No? Do you know what I've noticed? All the people in the model tenements say they are 'not like them.' Cornelia says so, Robert says so, and now you say so. Each one thinks *he* is different, unique."

"Well, I'm sure that *you* are," he said, rather seriously. He added, lightly. "That's why it would be fatal if you went to live there. Do try to patch it up with your mother, Janet, and give up this plan of Cornelia's."

"Patching it up with my mother means complete submission. Her motto is, 'bend or break.' And I've bent long enough."

She tried briefly to give him an idea of her mother's domestic tyranny and of her own rebellion against it.

"You don't know what it is to live in my mother's house," she said.

"I've heard what it is to live in Cornelia's house," he retorted. "She casts a spell over young girls before they know her well. But she is selfish and moody. Her friendships always end in violent quarrels. She is now on the verge of a break with Mazie Ross."

"She may have very good grounds for the break."

"Oh, she's never at a loss for grounds. That isn't the point."

"What *is* the point?"

"The atmosphere of the Lorillard tenements. It isn't made for you to breathe in. Have you any idea what the people there are like? Gangsters, anarchists and fake artists or writers, with a very small sprinkling of well-meaning idealists, most of whom are cracked on social questions. The men are all out of business, the women all out of marriage. On the loose, every one of them, either in their actions, or in their beliefs."

"You mean they don't believe in marriage? Well, after all I've seen of family life, I don't believe in marriage either."

This was a confession which, by way of bait, many another girl had made to him.

"That's the sort of thing for a girl like Mazie to say," he said coldly, "but not for a girl like you."

Concern for himself had rapidly taken the place of concern for her.

"Mazie's way doesn't impress me any more than the way of all wives," she said, with a delightful gesture of candor. "I think she is more of a slave to men than most married women are. I want to be mistress of myself."

His doubts were allayed again. The spring sunshine and Janet's subtle charm were too strong a team for suspicion to hold out against. As the car sped on through Prospect Park, a delicious breeze, laden with the perfume of flowers and the rising sap of trees, cooled their faces, and fanned their senses warm.

"You are a dear little theorizer," he said in a tender vibrating tone. "But theories have no interest for me now. I'm too happy to think about them. I want to think only about you."

"Impossible. You don't know enough about me. We've only just met."

"Absurd," he said, taking hold of her hands. "We met when the wood nymphs first danced to the pipes of Pan, when the starlight first threw its enchantment on youth, when lovers first threaded their way over wild hills and woodlands by the rays of the crescent moon. We have known each other for ages."

"As long as that? Dear me! What an experienced person I must be."

Had her acknowledged objection to marriage affected him, after all?

"All experiences are nothing to this experience," he said, putting his arms around her and trying to kiss her.

She resisted him with a quick, firm movement. All he could do was to seize her hands and give them the rapturous embraces intended for her lips.

"Claude!" she called out, more in shyness than reproach.

"But I love you!" he cried, retaining her hands by main force.

"Since yesterday?"

"Yesterday! A million years ago. The moment in which I felt I loved you, Janet, was a world-without-end moment. That is love's way."

"Don't profane the word love," she said, her voice rich and thrilling. "You can't love a girl you don't know."

"Who ever loved that loved not at first sight?" he said, quoting the line reproachfully, and releasing her hands as he did so.

"Do you believe that love always happens at first sight? What about the feeling that takes hold of us as we slowly learn to know another's splendid character? The feeling of tenderness and adoration. Isn't that love, too?"

"No, a thousand times, no! Call it friendship, comradeship, esteem, if you like. Call it glorified toleration. But don't call it love. Love doesn't come like that. It comes like the swift lightning that embraces a cloud."

"How I should love to love like that!" she exclaimed, with a mischievous imitation of rhapsody.

"Then you don't love me?" he demanded.

She refused to admit that she did. He pressed her for an answer.

"Don't, Claude," she said at last, disturbed. "I must keep my wits about me today, or I shall be as putty in my mother's hands."

He was bitterly disappointed. Her use of his name was some solace, however; for, as her soft, flexible tones prolonged it, the sound was music to his ears.

"Is that why you won't let me kiss you?" he pursued hopefully.

"No. I'm not used to it yet," she said, quite simply.

"Not used to it! You mean you haven't been kissed by men before?"

"Nothing so silly. I haven't been kissed by you before."

"Ah, I might have known the reason wasn't inexperience," he said, with incipient jealousy. "Then why balk at me?" he went on, seizing her hands again.

"As I said," she replied, calmly matter-of-fact. "I haven't had time to think of it. At least, not much nor for long," she added impishly. "I must first see whether I can get used to the idea."

"Indeed! But getting used to the idea won't get you used to the thing itself. Only practice makes perfect."

"A rehearsal in dumb show is not to be despised," was her response.

And so they bantered on and made pretty speeches, while Claude's car bucked the wind until they turned into President Street and stopped at the corner of her own block.

As Janet got out, she was hard put to it to conceal her sense of loss.

At parting, all her matter-of-factness deserted her; for a few seconds she felt like a prisoner half awakened from an idyllic dream.

The car drove away with Claude less triumphant yet more satisfied than he had ever felt towards a charming girl before. He was profoundly stirred by the magic of Janet's genuineness, and her rich, clarinet tones lingered disturbingly in his mind.

CHAPTER NINE

I

Thoughts of home had flitted intermittently through Janet's mind during the afternoon's ride. But her faculty for living securely in the present had been strong enough to send the omens flying as fast as they came. A domestic crisis now confronted her, however, and she knew it could not be evaded. As she crossed the threshold, there was a sudden bristling of her nerves, a parching and aching of her throat, and a sense of utter misery.

From Laura, the maid, she learned that her mother had been ill all day, and had kept to her bed. As this was Mrs. Barr's invariable practice when any member of the family displeased her, Janet was not surprised. She crept quietly upstairs to her room at the top of the house. On the second floor she passed her sister's room. Through the open door Janet could look into a mirror which reflected an image of Emily, dressing for the evening. She called to her sister with an assumed cheeriness. Emily answered stiffly and without stirring an inch.

Janet, catching the unfriendly glance from the mirror, continued on her way, hot indignation kindling her blood. She could invent excuses for her mother's hostility, unreasonable as she considered it, but Emily's censorious manner was altogether intolerable.

In her own room she changed her costume to a simple black skirt and a plain white blouse. Claude and Kips Bay receded to another world while she nerved herself for the coming ordeal.

In about half an hour, the maid came up with a message that Mr. Barr wished to see Janet in the back parlor. She promptly went downstairs and discovered her father pacing the floor in agitation. It was hard to believe that this tall, imposing man was a moral weakling or that his eagle's bearing concealed a pigeon's heart.

"Jenny," he said, on the thinnest fringe of reproach, "thank Heaven you're back!"

The mere sight of his favorite daughter cooled his phantom anger. All he wanted now was to see his wife placated at any price. For he, poor man, always became the scapegoat, no matter who the criminal was.

"How could you give us such a fright, Jenny?" he continued, referring to her absence.

"Really, father, I can't send you hourly bulletins of my whereabouts, can I? It's not my fault that I've outgrown childhood. It's a law of nature."

"You don't consider your mother," he said, plaintively. "You know how it

upsets her to be disobeyed.”

”I’m sorry, father. But mother will have to get reconciled to the facts of biology. When the young of animals grow up, instinct makes them follow their own bent, even at the cost of disobliging their parents.”

Janet felt rather proud and a little surprised at hearing herself talk in this bold, scientific style. She wished she could repeat it to her mother, but secretly doubted her ability.

”That may be,” said Mr. Barr, on whom her biological views were completely thrown away. ”But remember that she has been sick all day, sick with worry over your escapade!”

”Nonsense,” replied Janet, unmoved. ”My escapade had nothing to do with it. Her bad temper has made her ill. It always does, and nobody knows better than she how useful the weapon is. When everything else fails, she gets sick with rage, and takes to her bed until she gets her own way to the last dot. We cringe and cower before her sham illnesses—”

”Janet! You mustn’t speak of your mother like that. She *is* ill. She lay awake the whole night and didn’t touch a morsel of food all day.”

”No doubt she enjoyed tormenting herself and blaming the result on me. But I don’t believe that my absence was really a source of worry to anyone.”

”Janet, I stayed up until three o’clock for you. And that was after leaving the bank late and stopping at the Montague Library to get the books you wanted.”

”Of course, you did, you foolish old dear,” said Janet, in an access of remorse. She put her arms affectionately round his neck. It was not easy to get over her childhood idolatry of him.

”Kindness is a bad habit of yours, papa,” she said. ”You take to good deeds as some men take to gambling or to drink.”

He smiled and patted her cheek tenderly. Her remark was not far from the truth. His morbid (and never wholly gratified) passion for approval made him intemperately anxious to please, and caused his good nature to be freely exploited by unscrupulous people, who repaid him with nothing but their contempt.

”That’s like my own little Jenny. Now go up to Emily’s room and make your peace with mother.”

”Is that in my power?” said Janet, flaring up again and disengaging her arms from him.

Mr. Barr was torn between fear of his wife and affection for his daughter.

”Simply keep quiet and don’t answer her back when she speaks to you,” he urged pacifically. ”After all, she’s your mother, she has a right to criticize you.”

”I refuse to acknowledge the right.”

”Now, don’t be obstinate, girlie. She can’t help lecturing people. It’s a habit she acquired in her missionary society. Doesn’t she lecture me? If I submit, surely

you can.”

”I’m neither a heathen nor a husband.”

”There now,” he said, pleading with her. ”Don’t spoil everything by standing on your pride. What will you gain by defying her? Nothing! Then why do so? I tell you, Jenny, your mother may be a little hasty, but she’s a very clever, strong-minded woman. In the long run, she is always in the right.”

”How can you cringe to her even when her back is turned,” cried Janet, revolted. ”You know the truth as well as I do. She has terrorized all of us as cruelly as ever her Puritan ancestors terrorized Roger Williams and Anne Hutchinson.”

”Now, that shows how unfair you are,” said Mr. Barr, eagerly, in a vibrant voice, as rich as Janet’s own. ”Only two nights ago, your mother was reading to me from John Fiske’s colonial history. She came across this very case you mention, the case of Anne Hutchinson. And I distinctly recall that she condemned the persecution severely.”

Disdaining to reply, Janet walked away from his side. In that moment, she hated him. It was incredible that he could be such a willing, subservient dupe.

She looked hostilely at his magnificent exterior. He had also inherited a lively wit and considerable mental dexterity. Had he possessed any force of character he might have been a great financier or statesman instead of a petty manager of a small branch bank. And Mrs. Barr’s temper might have been kept within bounds, and the Barrs might have enjoyed a happy home, instead of becoming a phantom replica of a bigoted Boston family in the high and palmy days of Cotton Mather.

He misinterpreted her silence.

”You need merely say that you are sorry,” he urged, ”and that you’ll never stay out again without her approval. That will patch up everything.”

”Father,” she cried, exploding. ”I can’t say that. Because I simply don’t mean it. From now on, I’m going to have my own way about some things, even if I have to leave the family. Mother may grind you to the very dust. Marriage seems to give her that right, and you seem to enjoy the process. But she shan’t do so to me.”

”Good Lord, what will happen next?” exclaimed the unhappy man, appalled at the collapse of his plan of conciliation. ”The house has been like a funeral all day. Would to Heaven *I* were the corpse.”

But his daughter did not hear this pathetic wish, for she was already on her way upstairs.

II

In Emily's bedroom above the parlor, Mrs. Barr was reclining in an invalid's chair. Illness had not softened the rigidity of that too, too solid flesh. She was pale, but her pallor merely accentuated the iron lines of her face.

Emily, more matronly than ever, hovered about her mother in unctuous solicitude, while Laura, the maid, busied herself setting chairs and knick-knacks wrong, in order to set them right again. Mrs. Barr disliked to have anyone about her unoccupied.

When Janet entered, her mother greeted her coldly, and then dismissed Laura with studied sweetness. She was actually much kinder to her domestics than to members of the family. Servants were hard to get and harder to keep.

"I'm sorry you have been ill," said the impenitent, politely.

"Sit down, my child. I'm getting better now, thanks in part to Doctor Hervey."

"What did the doctor say?"

"That it was to be expected under the circumstances," interposed Emily. "He thought it better for mother not to go to the missionary society tonight."

This was ominous news. Janet recollected that her mother had not missed a missionary meeting in two years.

The pause was filled with a battery of silent criticism. Usually Janet dispersed these terrible silences with a torrent of impromptu apologies. Today, however, she held her peace. Though every muscle in her body was taut, she felt care-free.

Yes, at this supreme inquisitorial moment, she felt surprisingly care-free. Except that, in response to Emily's allusion to missionaries, an old jingle ricocheted weirdly through her mind. It ran:

Oh, to be a cassowary,
On the plains of Timbuctoo,
Chewing up a missionary—
Skin and bone, and hymn book, too.

Outwardly, she was as impassive as a Chinese joss.

"Well, Janet?" said Mrs. Barr, outfought with one of her own weapons.

"Yes, mother?" replied Janet, demurely interrogative. She folded her hands innocently in her lap, and looked with a show of impersonal interest at Emily's

new pumps.

"Have you nothing to tell me?"

"Not unless you wish to learn about the ball I went to yesterday. Are you interested in that?"

Emily gave a scornful laugh.

"I'm not interested in the ball," said Mrs. Barr, "and no one knows it better than you. What I am interested in is your attending the ball against my express wishes."

"Mother, in the twentieth century—"

"Are the ways of God less valid in the twentieth century than in the tenth?"

In disputes with her children, Mrs. Barr always invoked God first. This failing, she took stronger measures.

"Why do you always make poor God responsible for your severity, mother," said Janet. "It is not His way you want me to follow, but your own. Indeed, whenever you accuse me of disobeying the will of God, it is because I have really disobeyed your will, which you identify with God's. I wonder whether He likes it?"

"I don't propose to discuss the Deity with you. You have studied your Bible so little that you are apparently unable to give any opinion on the subject which is not blasphemous."

"As far as I know, the Bible does not prohibit dancing," said Janet, shifting the defensive attack so as to bring matters to a head.

"The Bible *does* say, however, that a child must obey its parents. I don't wish to be harsh, Janet. I believe that you have no just ground for accusing me of severity. I say now, as I have said before, that if you must dance, you may go to the affairs that are given at the church."

"Thank you!" cried Janet, ironically. "But I don't like a Sunday School atmosphere or a Sunday School man."

"I thought as much!" said Mrs. Barr, her eyes like points of steel. "You prefer to associate with unprincipled men who, having no religion, lead lives of pleasure and dance the lascivious dances of the time."

"Mother, I don't dance anything but thoroughly ancient and respectable dances. I've never had a chance to learn the modern steps. I dance very rarely, anyhow."

"Emily *never* dances," said her mother, cuttingly.

"No, she is rather heavy and men are so lazy nowadays, and so tender about their toes."

Some demon had made Janet spring up and stop reflectively in front of Emily. The latter's podgy bulk became a size larger by contrast with Janet's mobile slenderness.

"Oblige me by not arguing," said Mrs. Barr, coming to her elder daughter's rescue. "I tell you I won't tolerate anyone in my house that openly flouts her mother, spends whole nights with a woman of evil reputation, and deliberately wastes the Lord's time."

In her agitation she rose halfway from her chair. But rage and lack of food had so weakened her that she sank back limply. Emily, looking unutterable things at Janet, implored her mother to be calm in tones that invited her to be just the contrary.

Mrs. Barr hardly needed this spur. She sincerely believed that she was fighting the evil one for the possession of Janet's soul. Revived by this conviction she bravely returned to her task.

"See the condition to which you've brought me," she said, the angry tears welling up in her eyes. "What with watching and waiting and praying for you all night, and fretting about your safety—"

She instinctively followed a religious appeal with a sentimental one. But her speech had so much anger mixed with the pathos, that it left Janet cold.

"I hope you won't get upset about me again, mother," she said, unemotionally. "I'm quite old enough to take care of myself—"

"You'd better go to your room, Janet!" exclaimed Emily, "before you kill mother with your cruel selfishness."

"I'm not aware that I'm under orders to you, Emily, or that you've the right to play the Pharisee because you're content to lead a stagnant, hole-in-the-corner life. If you wanted anything you'd disobey mother fast enough. Only you happen to *have* no wants. And you make a virtue of your necessity. I have plenty of wants. And you persuade mother that my necessity is a vice."

"Be as theatrical as possible, Janet!" said Emily. "Why don't you add that I poisoned mother's mind against you?"

"You didn't have to carry coals to Newcastle, Emily. You merely had to fan the flame in your own sweet, sisterly way."

Mrs. Barr checked them both with an autocratic wave of her hand.

"You need not abuse Emily, or me either," she decreed, black-browed. "There is absolutely nothing more to be said. Either you respect my wishes about your comings and goings, or you leave my house."

"Mother, do you really propose to put me out for refusing to submit to an arbitrary wish?"

"I should think I had fallen far short of my duty, if I did not guard my children against sensual folly—"

"By showing them the door?"

"If you leave your home, it will be by your own choice and not by your mother's command," said Mrs. Barr, emphatically. "This is your home. It will

remain yours so long as you keep Christian precepts. But a mother must hold the family hearth inviolate against evil doing. I cannot condone a wicked waste of the Lord's time simply because you describe the practice as a wish to be free. If you don't value a good home, you are certainly quite free to choose another."

"Why must I adopt the habits that suit your tastes and Emily's, but that are hateful to mine?"

"My child, you are flesh of my flesh—"

"All the laws and all the prophets can't justify the narrow, friendless, joyless, medieval life that you wish me to lead," cried Janet, in a passion of insurgency. "When you were young you led no such life yourself. Aunt Mary, your own sister, told me that you were the flightiest girl in the family. Your girlhood was a perpetual round of balls, theatres, parties and flirtations. Do I ask for a life of pleasure like that? No. I simply want to choose my own friends, trust to my own instincts, and follow my own bent."

This reference to her mother's youth was not a happy one. Mrs. Barr looked back on her younger days as a period of godless frivolity for which she had largely atoned by enduring with a contrite heart the double affliction of a weak husband and a wilful daughter. Her duty, as she saw it, was to keep Emily and Janet out of the primrose paths which she herself had trodden with such levity and with such disastrous results. Accordingly, Janet's presumptuous allusion merely stirred her fanaticism to its iciest depths.

"You either obey me or go," she said, with pitiless brevity.

"Oh, very well," said Janet, affecting a blitheness she was far from feeling, "I'll go."

Without another word, Mrs. Barr, weak as she was, rose and walked with a firm step to her own room. Emily, not altogether pleased with this climax, followed her immediately, giving a flabby imitation of her mother's really magnificent exit.

Janet stood nonplussed for a few seconds. Then she went upstairs to the inward refrain of:

"Chewing up a missionary
Skin and bones and hymn book, too."

Her inveterate evenness of spirit amounted almost to a failing; but now, for the first time, she became conscious of latent impulses of a vindictive and murderous kind.

Back in her own room, she hastily packed a suit-case with her most necessary belongings.

CHAPTER TEN

I

About a week later, a tall, thin, immaculate gentleman, in a suit of neutral taupe, entered the offices of the *Evening Chronicle*. A stand-up collar slightly tip-tilted his chin. But his expression was a friendly, not a haughty one. His small roving gray eyes looked around with a humorous inquisitiveness, as if they wondered what their immaculate owner could possibly hope to find in such a sloppy, disorderly place.

In due time, a slovenly office boy stopped pounding on a typewriter and showed the stranger to an inner office. Here Hutchins Burley penned those inimitable effusions on "the ethereal feminine" which gave the Saturday special half a million female and male readers. It was an army that ran the *Saturday Evening Post* brigade a close second, and rendered Burley's professional position unassailable.

The roving gray eyes saw the swollen bulk of Mr. Hutchins Burley, squatting like a giant toad behind a roll-top desk and pawing over a visiting card.

"Well, Mr. Pryor?" said the pillar of the *Evening Chronicle*, with no waste of civility. "What d'you want?"

"Frankly, I want Mr. Robert Lloyd's job."

"How do you know it's vacant? Are you a friend of his?"

"Hardly that. The information just drifted my way."

"You handed me that stuff at the Outlaws' Ball. Who the devil are you, anyway?"

Whenever Burley spoke vehemently, he shoved the words from the left side of his mouth, a process that contorted his face into the exact likeness of a cartoon by Briggs.

"You might be a spy," he added, putting a cigar in his mouth and scowling horribly at his visitor.

The latter replied in a quiet and dignified but judiciously injured tone.

"Mr. Burley, you have my card. Go into my personal history all you like. But first, let me refer to the service I did you at the ball. It was a small matter—"

"Don't get puffed up about it then," growled Burley, with much less hostility, however.

"No fear," continued Mark Pryor, as terse as his host and much more urbane. "I mention it only because an ounce of action is worth a ton of talk. Or a cartload of stuffy introductions. The point is this. Having learned that you had discharged Mr. Lloyd—"

"Who says I discharged him?" Burley noisily cut in. "He discharged himself."

"Oh, did he?"

"Yes, damn him. I wasn't good enough for him, I suppose. You know his kind, brains, fatted brains. But no guts! Sticks his nose up at everything and hangs out with a lot of super-highbrows—New Republic gas-bags."

"The sort that cut a pie from the periphery to the center?"

"Yah! That's their lingo. Still, Lloyd's got a head on his shoulders. I'll say that for him. And I don't fire a man that's worth his salary. Why should I?"

"You believe in keeping your grudges out of your business?"

"That's me. I could have given him his walking papers for a hundred good reasons. But I didn't. And what thanks did I get? He left me in the lurch. That's what he did. Left me on his own hook at a damn critical time."

"A case of bad conscience, perhaps."

"You said it! He'd done me all the harm he could. He and Claude Fontaine who put him up to it."

Burley enlarged on his two-fold grievance. First, Robert and Claude had circulated a malicious story about Harry Kelly (a professional bruiser) making a punching bag of him; this story had ruined his prestige among the Outlaws of Kips Bay. Then, they had freely slandered him in Cornelia Covert's inner circle, with the result that Cornelia's friend, Janet Barr, had conceived an insane and utterly baseless dislike of him.

His story was full of evasions and suppressions. Thus he forgot to tell Mark Pryor that he had twice waylaid Janet on the street and had been coldly repulsed each time. It was clear that these repulses had added fuel to his hatred of Claude and Robert, the two men who found favor in her eyes. Against them, rather than against her, he vented his spleen. When he spoke of her, his diatribe degenerated into a whine.

"I know," said Pryor, laconically, cheering him up. "You have that 'nobody loves me,' feeling. Nastiest feeling in the world. We all get it once in a while. I find there's only one remedy for it, and that's to stop bullying people."

"Bullying people!" shouted Burley, jumping up and glaring at his visitor. "Say that again, if you dare."

Mr. Pryor smiled faintly and sat unmoved, save that his neck seemed to rise a very little out of his stand-up collar, as the eye-piece of a microscope rises out of the tube.

"I'm a plain man, Mr. Burley," he said, imperturbably. "And I speak plainly. If you don't like plain speaking, I'd better withdraw my application."

"The hell you'd better!"

Mr. Pryor got up, everything quiet about him except his eyes.

Burley looked as if he were about to launch a thunderbolt. But the roving eyes of his visitor were now fixed upon him like points of steel.

"Sit down," said Burley, suddenly limp.

Mr. Pryor sat down very quietly, without taking his eyes off Hutchins Burley, who sat down, too, almost as if mesmerized.

"Tell you what," he said, after a while. "I need a sort of confidential assistant. A man who can keep his eyes and ears on the jump, and his pen and tongue under lock and key. Get me?"

He went on to tell Mr. Pryor that he was willing to try him out and that faithful service would meet with very big rewards and with increasingly confidential commissions. For the present, his newspaper duties were to be subordinated to the one task of keeping track of the Lorillard tenements.

"Trust me," said Mark Pryor.

He did not think it necessary to explain that keeping track of the Lorillard tenements was precisely what he had been doing for purposes of his own.

"And glue an eye on that fellow Fontaine," added Burley.

"To get a line on the diamond smuggling?" asked Pryor, with the most casual air imaginable.

Burley straightened up with a yell of suspicion.

"What in blazes are you talking about?" he said.

"Merely what you yourself talked about, my dear sir," said Pryor soothingly. "At the ball you called Mr. Fontaine a diamond smuggler. More than one person will remember that remark."

Burley's suspicions were disarmed.

"Forget it, my friend, forget it," he said. "A man says a good many things under the influence of liquor that he has no call to say. I don't suppose the Fontaines are less on the square about their importations than the other big jewelers are. That's no business of mine or yours, however, is it?"

He declared emphatically that his interest in Claude Fontaine's doings had a totally different basis. On three occasions Fontaine had come between him and a woman. He did not hesitate to name the ladies. One was Lydia Dyson, another was Cornelia Covert, the third was Janet Barr. He had said nothing about the first two. He was not a greedy man. Anyhow, according to the ethics of Kips Bay, Lorillard females were nobody's property. That was no blasted secret, was it?

"But this Janet Barr's no Lorillard female," he said, bringing his fist down heavily on the desk. "Any fool can see that. And I'm man enough, to refuse to stand by while Fontaine dirties her good name."

"You don't mean to say that he has—"

"He'll do it, all right. Or why did he pick the girl up, when he's just got

engaged to Armstrong's daughter?"

"Armstrong, the financier?"

"Yes. And Dupont Armstrong won't stand for a man who isn't on the level with his girl. Just put that in your pipe and smoke it."

"I know a safer place," said Mr. Pryor, gently tapping his head. "Where it won't go up in smoke."

He rose and, after coming to a few necessary understandings with Burley, took his leave.

As he walked rapidly along Broadway towards the subway, he felt that he had done a very good morning's work. He was satisfied that Hutchins Burley knew more about the diamond smuggling than he cared to admit. The puzzle was that, although Burley obviously connected Claude Fontaine with the smuggling operations, he was unwilling to give the connection away. What was the motive that restrained him from exposing a man he bitterly hated? Clearly, either a lack of proof, or some consideration of a more personal kind.

Reminding himself of his maxim that two and two never make four except in vulgar mathematics, Mark Pryor left the subway at Thirty-fourth Street, the Kips Bay station nearest the Lorillard tenements. Then he went directly to his flat.

II

Incoming or outgoing denizens made barely a ripple on the surface of Kips Bay. The district was used to a shifting population. Even the colonization of Sutton and Beekman Places by Pierian millionaires "cut no ice." Honest men and thieves, artists, criminals and Bohemians, idle paupers and rich idlers, all these floated in and floated out, but the net hodge podge was much the same. Bomb makers might come and gunmen might go, but Kips Bay went on forever.

The Lorillard tenements, the hub of the district, had experienced their fair share of changes during the week of Mark Pryor's advent. Robert and Janet were among the newcomers. Robert, thrown on his own scant resources, had secured a nook in Kelly's flat, Number Thirteen, his berth there being the fruit of Cornelia's good offices. And Janet had come to live with Cornelia in flat Number Fifteen.

This last event was at once followed by a break in Cornelia's partnership with Mazie Ross. The three small rooms and kitchenette were not large enough for more than two people. And pretty, slovenly Mazie, her early enthusiasm for

Cornelia cooled, had lately spent more and more time on her own appearance and less and less on her companion's wants.

Cornelia always got rid of a companion the moment a better one turned up. A "better one" usually meant one who could do more of Cornelia's housework, or could look after her creature comforts more diligently, or could give her more of that flattering attention of which she never had her fill. Whenever the time came to change partners, Cornelia would send the old one flying without the smallest compunction. Nor was she ever at a loss for a good excuse.

Janet's first day in Number Fifteen was Mazie's last. When Mazie came home that night, "instead of poppies, willows waved o'er her couch."

The crash came after supper, while Janet was out shopping with Harry Kelly, who had quickly become a steady visitor at his next-door neighbor's flat. As a pretext, Cornelia chose the matter of Mazie's easy friendship with Hutchins Burley, a friendship reported to have gone as far as was possible, since the recent ball.

There was nothing new in the charge that Mazie practiced principles of varietism about which Cornelia simply theorized. The only novelty was that Cornelia now declared the charge to be a good excuse for parting company. Mazie thought it a poor excuse. On this difference of opinion there sprang up a tempestuous scene. Words flew high, and the checks that polite society imposes on candid criticism of one's friends went completely by the board.

The climax was reached when Cornelia offered the opinion that if Mazie wanted to become a vulgar little copy of Camille, that was her affair; but flat Number Fifteen was not the place in which to practice the part. In vain did Mazie reply with an unexpurgated review of Cornelia's history. Cornelia was unmoved. And her languid, cadenced retorts floated serenely above Mazie's torrent of invective like a violin obligato above the crashing brasses.

It did not take Mazie long to pack her most necessary articles into a bag and go. On her way out, she said, with a good imitation of Cornelia's sweetest tone:

"Good bye, Cornelia. I'd like to stay long enough to tell your next dupe what a fraud you are. But what's the use? She won't thank me for it, as I suppose she has a crush on you, like I had once. Well, it'll do her good to learn by experience. Finding you out, my dear, is such a complete education."

By the time Janet and Harry Kelly returned, all was quiet along the Potomac.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

I

For the next few weeks, Janet lived excitedly in the glamor of the Lorillard tenements. She could not well have imagined a bigger difference than that between the complete orthodoxy of the Barrs of Brooklyn and the complete heterodoxy of the model tenementers of Kips Bay.

Her impression of the new life was put into words for her by Lydia Dyson, the author of "Brothers and Sisters," (then in its twenty-fifth big printing). Lydia, whose tall, thin form and pale olive skin lost none of their spectacular qualities by the snake-like movements she affected, the huge jet earrings she wore, or the gold-tipped cigarettes she smoked, assured Janet, in a rich Kentucky drawl:

"We obey only one custom here, and that is to disobey all customs; we hold only one belief, and that is to hold no beliefs."

Janet was fully persuaded that the first part of this statement was true and that the second part was a vast improvement upon the Barr regime.

In truth, she found the Lorillardian absence of formality, constraint and regulated behavior a decided relief after her long course of Calvinistic repression at home. And, active though she was by nature, she did not at first notice how the days slipped by with great ado, but with very little done.

The Lorillard tenementers were not exactly lazy. They were merely idle. Like the idle rich and the idle poor they were ceaselessly occupied—in killing time.

Cornelia was in the habit of getting up somewhere between nine and eleven. After breakfast, the two friends would set out to look for a job. The spirit in which they proceeded was the spirit in which young people go skylarking. Hunting for a job was an old pastime of Cornelia's. If she ever came up to a job's requirements, the job never came up to hers. Or if by chance it did, she discovered a bewildering array of reasons for not taking it, or for speedily leaving it, when taken.

At noon, the day's duty was considered fully done. After lunch, there was another jaunt; this time to an art gallery, concert hall, theatre or movie. Free tickets from Cornelia's theatrical friends were reasonably plentiful, and when these failed, there were return calls to pay.

Thus, Charlotte Beecher's studio was a favorite stopping place, as Janet soon discovered. Charlotte possessed a million dollars or more in her own right, and she had three or four studios in totally different parts of the city. She did her hardest work in her double Lorillard flat every morning; her evenings were

spent warding off fortune-hunting suitors like Denman Page, who besieged her Fifth Avenue apartment; on certain afternoons she served an "intellectual tea" in a studio sumptuously fitted up in Washington Mews.

Janet was always taken to the studio *de luxe* in the Mews. Cornelia, invariably busy, would be sketching some new design of a hat, or pinning together a one-piece dress, whilst she luxuriated happily amidst the rich Chinese rugs and the soft silken cushions of Charlotte's show room. The serpent in this garden of Eden was the "little group of serious thinkers" (an element alien to Kips Bay) that met in the Mews by virtue of Charlotte's encouragement.

"These intellectuals!" Cornelia would say scornfully to Janet on the way home. "Did you ever hear such bumptious talk?"

"I find them rather amusing," Janet would perhaps reply.

"Araminta, what nonsense! They positively put the furniture on edge. But that's Charlotte all over. There's a nigger in every woodpile, and there's a jarring note in every one of Charlotte's rooms. My dear, it bores me cruelly."

Still, Cornelia went on visiting the Mews, intellectuals, cruel boredom, and all. It puzzled Janet for a time. She had still to learn that a perfect Kipsite is prepared to suffer no end of martyrdom in the sacred cause of luxury.

Every evening was like a new party to Janet, flat Number Fifteen being one of the chief rendezvous in the tenements. After supper, visitors of both sexes dropped in unannounced and uninvited, until by midnight, a dozen people, more or less, were sure to be occupying the whole flat.

Generally, the guests split up into small groups and spent the time in play. Some played at dancing or at music, others at clever repartee or giddy flirting. To this play, the counterpoint was enthusiasm. A magnificent enthusiasm for self. In a rapturous torrent of words, each Kipsite painted a roseate future that led by startling steps to a supreme moment in which the world lay prostrate at the enthusiast's feet.

It was a cosmopolitan gathering. All the arts and sciences and occupations, all the moral and immoral standards, and all the races and nationalities of New York were represented. A dancer from the Hindoo Kush, several would-be Fokines or Stravinskys, two or three imitation Oscar Wildes, Theodore Dreisers or Frank HARRISES—these were sure to be there. Even the solid banker (or aspiring Pierpont Morgan), who kept a quiet flat and a lady in it, was an occasional visitor. No one was excluded who was piquant or picturesque.

Cornelia's specially privileged guests were a scanty handful. Among the men were Claude Fontaine, Robert Lloyd, Denman Page, and Harry Kelly, the "Harlem Gorilla." Soon after Janet's coming, Mark Pryor, immaculate and unobtrusive, joined the ultimate circle and began mysteriously to appear and to disappear.

Still fewer were the women admitted to the inner ring. Of these the chief were Lydia Dyson, the spectacular, and Charlotte Beecher, the industrious. The novelist came in silks, the heiress in calicos. Charlotte's cheap but natty working costume was looked upon among the Outlaws as an affectation. Her blouses and skirts gave Cornelia the horrors.

So did her marked preference for Robert Lloyd.

Janet had an idea that these evening visitors came chiefly to admire Cornelia or to be admired by her. She assumed that Cornelia was "the whole show." It was a pardonable assumption. Cornelia sat in a rocking chair in the central room and was feline, and languid, and observant, while the excitement eddied and swirled around her. To all appearances she held the reins of her party with the masterly skill of the Borax man who drives the celebrated twenty mule team.

Robert would have it that Cornelia was neither the star nor the manager of the nightly performance in Number Fifteen. According to him, the only management she displayed was in the skill with which she focused attention upon herself. The cadenced laugh, the sugary stab, the artful question—these were not the subtle devices of a clever hostess; they were merely the centripetal pulls of an egomaniac against the centrifugal interests of her guests.

Janet dismissed this explanation lightly and begged Robert not to analyze every joy until its very essence had been probed—and destroyed. She laughed at his attempt to convince her that these gay evenings of Cornelia's were a kind of renaissance. His theory was that the light of Cornelia's splendor had been getting dim of late, as it had got dim on several previous occasions. But the impact of a new partner against her, like the impact of an astral visitor against a dying sun, now as always gave her a new lease of brilliance.

In short, Robert asserted that it was the replacement of Mazie by Janet which had caused a tremendous revival of interest in Cornelia's flat. Everybody in the inner ring of the Outlaws or in the outer ring of the tenements, everybody indeed, that had any shadow of a claim to an entree, had come trooping in to sun themselves in the restored glory of Number Fifteen.

To most of Robert's remarks, Janet paid little attention. But she carefully treasured up one of them.

This was that never before had Claude Fontaine been such a constant visitor.

II

Yet for a few days after the Outlaws' Ball, Claude had behaved as if his confession of love had never been made, or had merely been the expression of an impulse, for which he disclaimed responsibility. There had been no return to the intimacy that instantly abolishes all the formulas of mere politeness and all the prescriptions of mere etiquette; there had been no recurrence of that world-without-end moment at the ball or of that other moment in the limousine next day.

At the ball he had treated her as he would have treated any respectable middle-class girl who might take his fancy. That is, he had stretched the conventions as far as an impressionable young woman will usually allow a dashing young man to stretch them, but not further.

After she joined Cornelia, however, his attitude changed. He treated her with a certain wariness of manner by which he appeared to convey the following:

"I took you to be a girl who strictly observed the moral customs established and honored in Brooklyn, but long fallen into disuse in certain parts of Manhattan, and nowhere less respected than in Kips Bay. It amused me to tempt you to violate these customs, especially as I had little hope of meeting with success. But now that you have become a Lorillard girl, what spice is there in tempting you? Either you never were the girl I took you for; or, at any rate, you soon won't be.

"At all events I shall be on my guard. You are the first girl to work upon me so mightily with a single glance. But you are not the first girl who has looked as innocent as a dove and acted as subtly as a serpent. Be warned! Neither your innocent subtlety nor subtle innocence can make me forget that a Claude Fontaine is in the habit of forming but one sort of friendship with a girl in the Lorillard tenements."

Janet, always very sensitive to atmosphere, got the effect of this train of thought, and in consequence kept Claude at as great a distance as her naturally cordial nature would let her.

In one of the evening gatherings at Cornelia's the talk turned on marriage, and it came out that Janet had adopted Cornelia's views on the wickedness of marriage in its modern form. Claude, with the common failing of lovers, promptly referred her action to himself.

Was this Janet's way of announcing that she meant to make no greater demands on a rich man than any other girl in the Lorillard environment? At first, it seemed so to Claude, and he felt relieved. But, on second thoughts, another question occurred to him. Might not Janet's conversion to Cornelia's beliefs in free love be a mere blind? A pretended dislike of wedlock was a recognized bait for landing a man at the altar. Was her conversion of this type or was it of the franker type of Mazie Ross, who asked all that was due to a Lorillard tenement girl but asked no more?

On the whole, it seemed fairly safe to treat Janet on the Mazie Ross plane,

and this he proceeded to do.

Mazie, by the way, had returned as a visitor to Number Fifteen within a week of her spectacular exit. Her doll-like face had recovered its pretty smile and her baby blue eyes gave no clue to whether she was seeking vengeance or merely currying favor again. No one asked or cared, hatred, like love, being a very fluctuating stock in the model tenements.

Janet had not failed to notice that Claude made little difference between his manner to her and his manner to Mazie. She did not like it, but she had to wait some time for the chance of showing how much she scorned his judgment.

III

The opportunity came at one of Cornelia's gayest parties given at the end of Janet's second week in Kips Bay. It was really a sort of "coming out" party for Janet. All the Outlaws, both of the inner and the outer ring turned out to hail the new favorite. Even Mark Pryor put in an appearance and actually remained on deck until the end, perhaps because the trio of Cornelia's friends who provided the music played Lehar, Straus, and more recent dance tunes without the customary sentimental whine.

Contemptuous of the fitness of things, Claude did his best to monopolize Janet. When the gayety was at its highest and the music at its most intoxicating, he danced her into a room which, for the moment, proved to be nearly but not quite empty.

Pushed out of the way against a corner stood a screen. Behind this he whirled her, and then swiftly took her in his arms and kissed her passionately. As swiftly, she pushed him away with an expression of extreme distaste.

"I don't like my friends to imitate Hutchins Burley," she said, her voice quiet and cool, her gray eyes full of life and scorn.

The others in the room laughed in mockery or applause. For an instant, Claude's all-conquering look was replaced by a crestfallen one. But he quickly regained his poise and spirits.

"Just a kiss to try," he said jauntily, as he attempted to recapture her arm.

"It's much too trying for gentle Janet," blithely chirped Mazie, who had danced into the room and taken in the situation, as Janet again turned away from Claude.

AS a matter of fact, it was Janet's sense of propriety in public that was

offended more than anything else. As for Claude, he was only less mortified by the affront to his vanity than by the haunting fear that Janet's rebuff came from genuine dislike.

No girl had ever given the brilliant, impetuous Claude Fontaine a glance of undisguised repugnance.

Janet spent the rest of the evening chiefly in conversation with Robert Lloyd and Mark Pryor. Meanwhile, Claude affected a complete indifference to her actions. He threw himself into the party with a mad abandon, and whipped up the conviviality with a riotous, headstrong wildness until everybody voted it the merriest evening in years. Amongst the other sex, he exploited to the utmost his patrician graces and masculine daring, and was so much the center of the occasion that the party might have been his rather than Janet's.

The women thought him magnificent, graceful, cruel—in a word, irresistible; the men laughed at his impudence, and envied or admired his readiness, effrontery and ease.

And yet, as he showed his fine points triumphantly now to this adoring girl and now to that, his voice vibrated towards Janet.

Janet took it all in, and continued talking to Robert with undisturbed satisfaction. She saw Claude pass recklessly from one favorite to another, and guessed easily that none of these was his real aim.

When the party broke up, Claude induced Janet to listen to him alone for a moment. He was suddenly all contrition. To his whispered plea for forgiveness, she said, in a not unkindly tone:

"Forgiveness for what? For advertising your emotions?"

"For the kiss," he said, his voice full of sensuous charm. And he added, on a more audacious note: "I wish I could take it back."

"Oh, do you? You'd better begin with the publicity."

"Please forgive the kiss *and* the publicity, Janet."

"I'll forgive the second when I forget the first," she replied, much more gaily than she intended, thus proving that Claude was not the only one in the grip of a resistless passion.

Claude went home, satisfied that his daring had once again enabled him to snatch victory out of the arms of defeat.

CHAPTER TWELVE

I

And so it had. None the less, the experience had taught Claude a lesson which, for once, he took to heart. He never again supposed that Janet's friendship was to be had on the same terms as Mazie's or even Cornelia's.

True, he remained in the dark as to what precisely her idea of self-respect was. Conflicting and irreconcilable inferences were the only ones he could draw from the conduct of a girl who lived in the Lorillard tenements, moved in the Outlaws' circle, professed to be hostile to marriage, yet stood on her dignity withal, in quite a traditional womanly way.

But Claude was not the man to waste time on psychological conundrums. Besides, he was too happy to be critical. He was back in the good graces of Janet, or rather, as he soon paraphrased the case, she was back in his. He flattered himself that he was the dominant influence over a girl who was a piquant, if puzzling, amalgam of Brooklyn and Bohemia.

In the next two weeks, his position as Janet's particular friend was established beyond dispute. Few afternoons passed in which his motor car did not drive up to the Lorillard and whirl her away to a place of gayety or recreation. The chief rival claimant upon her time was Robert Lloyd. But as Claude, in point of social advantages and personal graces, far outdistanced him, this rivalry was not taken seriously by any of the three persons concerned, least of all by Claude.

One day, to Cornelia's astonishment, Janet announced that she had planned to spend the afternoon, not with Claude, but with Robert. She made the announcement from a tuffet on which she sat soberly, while reading a book by Mrs. Beatrice Webb.

"Is this your pensive day?" asked Cornelia, ironically.

"Yes," replied Janet. "Robert complains that I'm neglecting him, and consequently my education. I think I ought to give him a chance to prove both assertions. So I've asked him to come here this afternoon. I can't spend all my days in sky-larking, can I?"

"My dear, 'youth's a stuff will not endure.' If you choose Mrs. Sidney Webb and Robert Lloyd rather than Claude Fontaine, the choice is your own. Of course, Robert is very entertaining. He pledges you with facts and figures. But when I was a rosebud like you, Araminta, I preferred a man who drank to me only with his eyes."

"Cornelia, I adore being made love to; yet I get horribly tired of it—even of Claude's love making—when it's kept up too long. And I hate facts and figures; yet Robert's never bore me."

"What a morbid symptom, my dear!"

"Oh, don't say that. I feel sure it's quite a natural condition, in my case. But perhaps there's a quality left out of me, a quality that other women possess."

Janet was clearly eager to carry on her self-analysis, but Cornelia gave no

sign of sharing this eagerness.

Cornelia, in fact, was far from pleased. Her unconscious game was to keep Robert revolving in an orbit around herself. He was such an excellent drawing card! For had he not the rare power of raising the value of any object or person he admired? Not that people ever credited him with unusual discernment or insight. Yet the fact remained that Robert had only to praise a human being or a work of art hitherto undervalued or overlooked, and presto, the article or the person instantly became subject to an urgent popular demand. This was one of the reasons why Cornelia (who felt that she had been handsome enough in surrendering Claude without a murmur) did not wish Robert as well to gravitate from her stellar system to Janet's.

But, seeing no way of cancelling Robert's visit, she determined not to be a spectator of it.

"I must run in next door, Janet," she said, "and ask the Gorilla to do an errand for me."

She left, omitting her customary lyrical phrases of affection. Janet did not suspect the jealousy behind this omission. But she was undeniably disappointed because Cornelia had not encouraged her to discuss her friendships with Claude and Robert about whom her heart and her thoughts were brimful.

Thus quickly did Cornelia damp down the fire of intimacy by treating the exchange of self-revelation as a strictly one-sided transaction. She had (so it struck Janet) a very low opinion of all confidences—other than her own.

II

When the bell rang, Janet opened the door wondering why Robert had come an hour before the appointed time.

But it was Claude who entered! He came in, like the god of the glorious spring without, in his gayest, most engaging mood.

"What luck, to find you in!" he cried. "Janet, I've come in an open car on the chance of taking you for a spin to Mineola to see the start of the great Cross-Continental airplane race."

"Oh, Claude, how nice of you. But—I'm afraid I can't go."

"Why not?"

"Well—you see—I've promised to go out with Robert this afternoon."

His face clouded.

"And you never told me!" escaped from him.

"You are not my diarist," she said, faintly ironical.

"Please forgive me, Janet," he said, dropping his possessive tone, as he reminded himself how touchy she was about her independence. "But I'm disappointed, bitterly disappointed. I planned the excursion as a surprise for you. And how I've counted on it!"

"Not more than I long to go, Claude. But what can I do?"

He took her hands in his, and said eagerly:

"*Must* you keep the engagement? Can't you think of some excuse? Where on earth was he going to take you to?"

"To the Japanese Industrial Exhibition at the Grand Central Palace."

He made a contemptuous grimace.

"A stuffy exhibition!" he exclaimed. "Good Heavens, Janet, why hesitate to change your plans? It isn't as if Robert wanted you for himself, as I do. He'll understand."

Janet wondered whether Claude would understand if she confessed that she was actually more interested in the Japanese Exhibition than in the cross-continent air race. But though she kept silent on this point, because she really wanted greatly to go with Claude, she was rather troubled. It was not easy for her to gratify a private desire at the expense of a social obligation.

"I don't like to hurt Robert's feelings," she said, turning away in her indecision.

"Oh, very well, if you don't wish to come with me!"

He flung himself sulkily into a chair.

Janet was astonished at his complete change of mood. She might have felt hurt, had she not had a woman's instinctive weakness for spoiling the man she was fond of.

She sat down irresolutely, and reflected that this would be the second time she had broken an engagement with Robert.

"It's idiotic," he said, rising, with a sense of deep injury. "Here is the most sensational race in a century, on a perfectly glorious day. And I'm mad to be with you."

"Perhaps Robert is, too," she said, a merry light dancing in her eyes.

"Of course, he's no fool. He'd rather be with a wonderful girl than an ordinary one. But what he wants more even than a wonderful girl is a chopping-block, any chopping-block, for his sociological theories. Why on earth did you leave your home, if all you crave is more instruction, and if the only freedom you want is the freedom to stand on more ceremony than before?"

"That has nothing to do with the matter, Claude," said Janet, refusing to ignore the truth simply because it was disagreeable. "Robert may not be offended

at finding me away, but he is sure to be offended at finding me rude.”

”It seems to me that you are far more concerned with Robert’s feelings than with mine,” said Claude, changing to a tone of melancholy reproach.

”But I really haven’t a good excuse, Claude,” she said, troubled, but still indecisive.

”I know girls who wouldn’t take two minutes to find an excellent one,” he said, with a return of his superior authoritative air.

Janet’s temptation was great; greater yet when Claude, in his most handsome and daring manner, drew her out of the chair and put an arm around her waist.

”It’s an occasion in a million, Janet. I’ve set my heart on this ride with you. What does it matter what Robert may think, or what anyone may think, as long as we two want so much to be together? You must come. I shall believe you don’t care a straw for me, if you don’t.”

His flawless form and vibrant voice annihilated argument. With a happy heart but a guilty conscience, Janet dismissed her scruples.

On the way out, she stopped in at Number Thirteen to beg Cornelia to smooth matters over with Robert.

Cornelia, serene and all smiles again, promised to do her best.

III

Robert came home soon after and, getting no response from Number Fifteen, went to his own room in Kelly’s suite next door.

He got all the news from Cornelia, who politely tried not to gloat over his disappointment. She professed to see no reason for finding fault with Janet’s easy submission to the force of an irresistible attraction.

As it was fairly plain that Robert would have preferred to be alone, Cornelia perversely lost no time in proposing that he carry out his original intention of visiting the Japanese Industrial Exhibition, she, of course, to take Janet’s place as his companion.

She had another reason for inviting herself out with Robert. This reason was the Harlem Gorilla. He, though almost superstitiously devoted to her, sometimes had to be ”managed,” in accordance with Cornelia’s view that love makes the most constant of men uncertain, coy, and hard to please. Luckily, the treatment that Harry Kelly’s case required was not a subtle one, and so it

was Cornelia's practice to alternate a little encouraging discouragement, with a little discouraging encouragement. On this occasion, by accompanying Robert who didn't want her, and deserting Kelly who wanted her very much, she neatly killed two birds with the same stone.

On the way to the exhibition, Robert gave Cornelia an account of his latest occupation. He had been made organizing secretary of a body called the League of Guildsmen. Was this a fanciful name for another set of Outlaws? No, the Guildsmen were servers of the community, the Outlaws were spongers on it.

"You have golden opinions of us," said Cornelia, theatrically. "I marvel that you soil your garments by staying in our midst."

"It's nothing to marvel at, Cornelia. I had to learn what Kips Bay and its slum population were at first hand before I could desire in earnest to destroy them, root and branch. Familiarity, which sometimes breeds contempt, often breeds homicidal mania. Do you recollect how Caesar spent a short vacation among a band of desperate pirates and how the experience filled him with a conviction that it was his duty to exterminate them? Well, I am filled with the same conviction about Kips Bay."

"What a passion you have for reforming everybody and everything, Cato! I am sure it is a very noble passion, though it does include poor me in its program of extermination. Still, I wonder whether reform, like charity, oughtn't to begin at home?"

"I used to think so," replied Robert, unmoved by her sarcasm. "In my school-days, my elders obliged me to hack my way through obsolete French tragedies or the differential calculus instead of allowing me to gain a working knowledge of current English plays or of modern political economy. And when I made a fearful hash of their instruction, they voted me a miserable failure. Whereupon, I determined to reform myself in order that I might reform the world. I am wiser now. I know that I must reform the world before I can hope to reform myself."

"Cato, you are a perfectly gorgeous mixture of building air castles and of seeing things upside down! One can never tell whether your head is in the clouds or on the ground."

Robert indulgently proceeded to say that the Guildsmen were young people of like sentiments with his own. In a general way, their aim was to advance the idea that the producers and servers of society, being the rightful possessors of the earth, must eliminate the profiteers and the parasites who have usurped possession.

"If that is your aim, Robert, I predict that your league and your secretaryship will have a short life and a merry one."

Robert laughed and admitted that he did not expect a long tenure of office. The Guild plan was a European idea for which America was by no means ripe.

"I fancy we are as progressive in industrial matters as the Europeans are," said Cornelia, on her mettle.

"Oh, more so," replied Robert, drily. "Our giant industries lead the world in maximizing the production of things of a mediocre quality and the creation of human life of a contemptible quality. Yes, in crude capacity, we are ahead of our European competitors. But in political capacity, we still lag far behind. Hence the difficulty of transplanting to our soil a high-class social policy like that of the Guildsmen."

"But when this Guild plan dies a natural death, what forlorn hope will you champion next?"

"I fear there'll be nothing left but to throw myself on the mercy of a rich uncle."

"What, an uncle in a fairy tale?"

"No, an uncle in California, a real live one."

Cornelia evinced little more than a languid interest in Robert's information. Fabulously rich relatives—who were cast for the parts of *Deus ex machina*, but who never materialized in flesh or cash—made a golden splash in the 'scutcheon of too many veteran Lorillard inhabitants. She preferred a conversation dealing with more tangible personages. Truth to tell, she rather hoped that Robert would try to undo the painful impression he had made on her by his recent criticism of her affair with Percival Houghton.

All the greater was her chagrin when he brought the talk around to the subject of Janet.

IV

He began adroitly enough by complimenting her on the success with which she had made Janet alive to the galvanic interests of contemporary life. It was a miracle of education, he assured her, and he begged her not to spoil the achievement by converting Janet to her favorite theory of free love. He hoped she would rather warn her friend of the folly of contracting a free union under existing social sanctions.

"Like the majority of men, you believe love and sex emotion to be one and the same thing," she retorted, cuttingly. "That's why you have no understanding of what freedom in love means."

"Now, Cornelia, I won't be drawn into a controversy on the merits of free

love.”

”Then don’t sneer at it.”

”I don’t. In fact, like every healthy young human being, I am by nature something of a varietist myself. But, as a civilized member of society, I’m bound to take the institutions of my country and generation as I find them. I believe Janet will be better off, if she does so too. Let her set out to alter or revolutionize our institutions, but not to defy them.”

”My poor Cato! Don’t you know that numbers of the young women of today are quietly doing what numbers of the young men have always done?”

”Living in illicit relations, you mean?”

”That is what a ridiculous man-made custom calls it.”

”But, Cornelia, although many of the Lorillard girls have admittedly flung a glove in the face of social conventions—”

”I’m not talking of Lorillard girls, Robert. I’m talking of teachers, lawyers, stenographers—the ‘respectable’ girls who remain in their schools and offices without any loss of self-respect or public esteem, and who merely do what the ‘respectable’ men do, that is, pay a mock tribute to outward appearances, and go scot free.”

”Exactly, Cornelia,” said Robert, triumphantly. ”They pay a tribute to appearances. They quietly disobey existing conventions. But they don’t defy them, much less try to alter them. They are frequently their staunchest supporters.”

”Just like the men.”

”Just like the men. But you are wrong when you say they go scot free. You are wrong again when you say that the tribute they pay is a mock tribute. It is anything but that. It is an endless payment by installments, a payment in degrading stealth and harassing secrecy.”

”What are you driving at?”

”Janet is not the girl to pay a tribute of this kind,” he said, with emphasis. ”If she champions the cause of free love, she won’t do so merely to experience the ups and downs of an underground existence. She will do so, believing it to be a wise or progressive departure. And she will defend her championship in the teeth of the whole world, regardless of its effect on her future.”

Cornelia received this speech unmoved.

”Well, why shouldn’t she?” she said. ”Others have endured much more for their beliefs. To be candid, I really don’t see how Janet’s behavior concerns you, any way.”

”You forget, Cornelia, that I, too, talked modernism in a blue streak to her before she broke with her people. And so I feel that I share with you the responsibility for her present course.”

”Oh, do you?”

"Yes. There's a lot of moonshine in Kips Bay that passes for modernity. I think the least we can do is to show Janet that modernity is not simply a new watchword for moonshine. We ought to prevent her from being taken in by the illusion which the Outlaws produce of easy, satisfying intimacies between the sexes."

A stream of silvery laughter escaped Cornelia. Then, in a studied tone of superiority, she replied:

"My dear boy, the love relation between two individuals is strictly their own private affair. It is nobody else's business whatever. I have no right to interfere in Janet's intimacies, and neither have you. Anyhow, I believe she is quite competent to stand on her own feet."

"I'm not so sure, Cornelia. Janet is utterly different from the Lorillard Outlaw girl, or the Greenwich Village Bohemian girl. The effect of Greenwich Villageism is to make irregularity (what regularity so often is) a bore. The purpose of Lorillardism is to make irregularity pay. But Janet is not likely to adopt a radical creed merely as a pose or with an eye to its profit. She will adopt it in a spirit of sheer blind self-sacrifice. And every advantage will be taken of her, precisely because she's not a sex profiteer."

"Cato, the beginning of wisdom is self-knowledge. Have you ever heard of any gain in self-knowledge without some loss of happiness? No. It is a law of life which neither you, nor I, nor Janet can escape."

"But," he urged, "you must admit that Janet's case is a special one. She has just left a home where purely private gratifications dictate which conventions shall be *kept*; and she has entered this model tenement life where, again, purely private gratifications dictate which conventions shall be *broken*. She may not grasp this difference all at once. Are we to let her inexperience cause her unnecessary suffering?"

"I, too, have suffered for my convictions, Robert!" she said, with a conclusive gesture of impatience.

Robert felt like telling her that, at this moment, she reminded him forcibly of the fox that had its tail cut off. But he didn't quite dare.

Naturally, under the circumstances, the visit to the Grand Central Palace was a complete failure. Cornelia, loathing the exhibition, seized the first available excuse for asking to be taken home.

The resentment she harbored was too strong to be hidden beneath the ordinary civilities of polite intercourse. Her affection for Robert, which had long been hanging by a slender thread, was now sharply snapped through the complete revulsion of feeling she experienced towards him.

From her point of view, the fault was entirely his. She had always hated what she termed his moralistic nature. But never before had he shown such a

callous want of sympathy with her past misfortunes or such a frank hostility to her present outlook on life. What she did not acknowledge to herself was that his concern for Janet had given her *amour propre* a mortal wound for which she could never forgive him.

On their return to the Lorillard tenements, she promptly called Harry Kelly into Number Fifteen. The Harlem Gorilla (renicknamed Hercules as a mark of favor) was highly flattered and only too willing to be a listener and a comforter.

"Robert is getting to be quite impossible!" she exclaimed, with a lurid Belasco intonation. "I can't imagine what has come over him, or why he continues to honor the Outlaws with his presence, seeing that he is now an enemy of freedom and not a friend of it. Hercules, will you believe it, he cannot hear the word Lorillard so much as mentioned without showing the cloven hoof."

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

I

While Robert and Cornelia were going to and from the Grand Central Palace, Claude's car was carrying its occupants through pleasant stretches of Long Island country to the Mineola aerodrome. The day, the air, the landscape, and the man conspired to make the occasion an intoxicating one for Janet.

Claude's gayety and personal charm were fully matched by his perfect ease. This was the quality that magnetized her, it was so new in her experience of American men. The men she had known in Brooklyn, struggling professional and business men, wore their manners as they did their Sunday clothes, with a painful effect of unfamiliarity. Their behavior was as different from Claude's as a sputtering torch is from an arc light.

In the company of women, these men were nearly always ill at ease. Sometimes they acted obtrusively protective or aggressively possessive, more frequently they were apprehensive, timid or even pitifully afraid. Whatever they did, they did with constraint. And they never seemed able to forget the towering fact that their manhood had an economic value. They were as painfully conscious of this asset as an elderly maiden is of her chastity—and they guarded it with the same zeal.

Janet was inexpressibly thankful that Claude had never treated her as if she

belonged to an unknown or unclassified species, and that he was not constantly filled with a nervous dread that she might at any moment begin picking his soul, if not his pocket.

They talked of everything under the sun; she of her childhood, her school days, her aspirations; he of social or artistic doings in and about New York, with the more notable and distinctive of which he had a first-hand familiarity. But no matter how sober or philosophic the topic chosen, it was sure, in some mysterious way, to be sidetracked into the catechism of love.

Janet had all she could do to keep matters from taking too amorous a turn. It was delicious to be made love to as audaciously as only Claude could. It was great fun to tremble on the quicksilver margin between how much he dared and how little she permitted. And it was her native mother wit rather than her instinct that set a limit to his impetuous wooing.

As soon as they reached the aerodrome, Claude became a more conventionally courteous cavalier again. And Janet got a glimpse of a section of his life to which she had hardly given any thought.

II

The Trans-Continental Air Race had been widely advertised, and the gigantic aerodrome was jammed with excited crowds. Claude at once plunged his companion into the thick of things. Anybody and everybody appeared to know him, and he knew everybody who was anybody. In swift succession Janet was introduced to the superintendent of the grounds, the president of the Aero Club, the chief contestants of the day, several foreign aviators of renown, the naval officer who commanded the first "blimp" across the Atlantic, and to so many other notabilities that her head began to whirl.

Once or twice Claude left her to pay special homage to some lady, frequently an elderly one and a personage of uncommon account. In these intervals, while standing a little away from the throbbing, bewildering spectacle around her, she attempted to give some perspective to her impressions.

It was gradually clear to her that the spectators resolved themselves into two classes: first, the *hoi polloi* whose teeming throngs pushed along the common passageways and packed the benches in the stands to the point of suffocation; and then a small, compact group of men and women whose breeding, dress and carriage would have differentiated them from the other spectators even if

the weather-beaten air of superiority with which they promenaded within the fenced-off and sacrosanct places, had not sufficiently done so.

Superficially, the attitude of these chosen ones towards the gallery was the attitude of actors towards an audience: they affected to be oblivious of its existence, and yet it was patent that they were greedily conscious of the snobbish admiration and flattering envy which the crowd radiated collectively and in its component parts.

Janet watched these bankers and railroad directors and senators with their wives and daughters urbanely encircling the placid airplanes, the restive airmen and the little extra demonstrations for the elect. And it seemed to her that they appropriated the special privileges inseparable from the governors of a democracy with an affably paternal air which was as much as to say: "What a very democratic ruling-class it is that runs this very democratic nation."

Of course she knew that they were not really thinking this. Seeing that they were the ruling class, they ought to have weighty, superior problems of finance, transportation or statesmanship at the back of their minds. Had they? Or were they merely thinking that unless they were on the *qui vive* they might be caught in an awkward pose by one of the brigade of camera men who were photographing celebrities for the Sunday pictorial supplements and the cinema current topics.

Janet perceived also that the faces of the ladies and gentlemen of the plutocracy, though set in hard lines and wreathed in hard smiles, were, on the whole, much less hard than the faces of the poorer middle-class people among whom she lived and moved and had her being. Their complexions were far better, too. And they were healthier and robusiter and decidedly cleaner and politer.

Politer, but not better mannered. Temporarily, Janet might have been deceived by the surface courtesy with which the men approached one another and the ceaseless vehemence with which the women talked and smiled, or rather, exhibited the whole of a fine set of front teeth from the top of the upper row to the tip of the nether gum. But when she had mingled with them at Claude's side, these same ladies that paraded their toothful smiles so amiably for the photographer's benefit, had politely but uncannily looked her through and through in the most literal sense of the words. To put it bluntly, they had instantly sized her up as an intruder from a sphere they had no personal contact with. True, they murmured the necessary courteous phrases, but they did so to a creature whose common humanity with themselves their glances insolently and emphatically denied.

Had Claude sensed this, and left her alone to spare her (and perhaps himself) embarrassment? The question made her feel uneasy and disconcerted. It also made her wish him back, in the hope that his presence would restore her

confidence. What was keeping him so long this time? By way of finding an answer, her eyes searched him out among the machines.

She saw him, not very far away, in the midst of a group of three other people: a couple in the prime of life, who were obviously the parents of a young lady of about Janet's own age. The attention of the daughter was fixed detainingly on Claude; that of the parents was fastened proudly on their daughter.

Thanks to a fine eyesight, Janet was enabled to get an excellent view of the young lady's appearance.

She was a tall, light brunette, and her frock, her sulky discontented mouth and her affectation of stateliness were all highly fashionable. So was her face, which had a tolerably clear skin and otherwise neither a noticeable blemish nor a spark of fire. It was the kind of standard feminine face just common enough in America to fit the popular conception of beauty and just enough above the common to be in constant request by illustrators as a model for the covers of monthly magazines.

It struck Janet that she was making some demand upon Claude which was taxing his charm and diplomacy to the utmost. Eventually, as he took leave of the group, she abruptly turned away from him, the back of her shoulders expressing the most intense vexation.

III

Soon thereafter he was at Janet's side again, looking somewhat harassed.

"Those were the Armstrongs and their daughter, Marjorie," he said, in answer to her look of curiosity.

"Who are the Armstrongs?"

Claude was taken aback by this question. In his world, where everybody knew everybody else, the bare name of Armstrong had a very definite and compact meaning.

"Dear little ignoramus! The Dupont Armstrongs, of course."

This addition meant very little more to Janet, although it rekindled a vague memory that she had seen the name somewhere in the newspapers. Politely concealing his wonderment, Claude explained more at length.

He said that Colonel Dupont Armstrong came of an old Southern family, and was the active head of the great firm of Harmon, Armstrong & Co., the international bankers whose financial power had built golden bridges between conti-

nents. His wife had a passion for collecting exquisite jewels; he had a mania for hoarding Chinese vases. But the operation of his esthetic taste being unreliable, he had struck up an intimacy with Claude's father soon after he discovered this gentleman to be a thoroughly dependable guide. In time, he became a regular patron of the Fontaine galleries and his purchases of diamonds, necklaces and porcelains had contributed appreciably to Mr. Fontaine's fortune.

Janet's curiosity in respect of worldly matters was much more quickly satisfied than her curiosity in respect of people.

"Is Mr. Armstrong's daughter as charming as she looks?" she asked Claude at the end of his explanation.

"Well, most men think so," said Claude, smiling. "Marjorie is undoubtedly very beautiful and fully conscious of the fact. You may have seen her portrait by Ben Ali Haggin in the last Academy exhibition? It was a tone poem in russet brown, quite the stir of the season."

"Oh, I'm sorry I missed it. I've never been to an Academy exhibition, Claude."

"How amazing! Not even to one?"

"Not even to one. Imagine how hopelessly ignorant I am of art!"

"Art! People don't go to the Academy in quest of art, you dear innocent. It would be a waste of effort. They go as a compliment to their friends whose portraits have been painted, not as a tribute to the men who painted them."

But Janet was not to be deflected from her purpose.

"I played the spy whilst your back was turned," she said, "and watched your pretty friend closely. She was evidently displeased with you. What had you done?"

"Absolutely nothing. That's just Marjorie's way when she can't have all she wants—which seldom happens."

"Then she wanted *you*?"

"Yes, for some party or other. But I'm not going to leave you merely to gratify a passing whim of hers. Anyhow, it isn't so much a case of wanting me to be with her, as of wanting me not to be with anybody else."

"Rather dog-in-the-mangerish, isn't it?"

"Oh, all the tyrants of the earth are like that, especially the fascinating feminine tyrants," replied Claude, in an attempt to recapture his good spirits.

But it was plain that his mood had radically changed. For the remainder of their stay he was preoccupied and his gayety was forced.

The cloud that this cast over their outing was not fully lifted that day. Outwardly Claude recovered his equipoise and, on the way home, tried to make up for his earlier abstraction by a deepened tenderness towards his companion. But something was manifestly weighing on his mind. Janet herself was in a pensive

mood. She had been quick to discern that in Claude's manner towards Marjorie Armstrong and the other young women of his own set there was an inexpressible something which was absent from his manner towards her.

This troubled and dissatisfied her. True, Claude no longer ventured to treat her as flippantly as he treated Mazie Ross. But neither did he treat her as finely as he treated Marjorie Armstrong. Why was this? Did Claude still misinterpret her considered expression of disbelief in marriage? She had a passionate longing to give love and to receive love on a plane worlds above material considerations. Could no masculine mind grasp the reality of this simple passion in a modern girl's heart? Was it possible that her freedom from the vulgar commercial associations of love was precisely what cheapened her to such as Claude?

The thought was ironic, it was maddening, it burrowed into one's soul. But it did not rob Janet of her self-approval. She set a high value on her integrity, and she was secretly resolved that by no mere man should this value lightly be set aside.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

I

The Fontaine galleries occupied a conspicuous building on Fifth Avenue above the Forties. It was one of the show places in New York's principal show street, and it received a daily stream of visitors as much for the sumptuousness of its interior appointments as for the worth of its stock and its exhibitions.

Mr. Rene Fontaine had inherited the business from his father, who had left France in his boyhood and had begun in a small way as a jeweler on lower Sixth Avenue. The founder of the house had built up a fashionable trade in pearls and precious stones and, having a strong private fancy for certain kinds of ceramic ware, had been led into adding a department of rare porcelains.

After the death of the founder, the business was incorporated. Mr. Rene, as president of the firm, continued his father's twofold policy with such success that, when the uptown trend of high-class trade necessitated a change of quarters, Fontaine and Company transferred their establishment to one of the choicest corners of Fifth Avenue. Here the ceramic and other works of art were displayed in galleries on the second floor. And the patronage of these galleries was so profitable that Claude had persuaded his father to open a gallery for paintings

on the third floor and let him conduct the new department.

Mr. Fontaine was a fastidious man and a stickler for appearances, particularly British appearances. The fashionable set in New York aped English manners, and consequently, the door attendant at Fontaine's was an English youth and the salesmen in the art departments were Englishmen with consciously superior airs fortified by British university educations, Oxford accents and modish London clothes.

A humble art lover on a visit to the galleries might easily have been frightened off by the sumptuous appointments, or overawed by seven or eight swagger young gentlemen who would eloquently ignore him as he crossed their several posts. They might have been so many heirs to dukedoms engaged in a feeble game of passing themselves off as prosaic American commoners. Yet they could pay a very flattering attention to multimillionaires, especially of the feminine gender; and these, as their astute employer knew, they attracted in considerable numbers.

Moving in and out among his father's young men, Claude might readily have passed for one of them. He was like them in the ingratiating, physical appearance that comes from a systematic cultivation of the body, and his accent, if not of an Oxford, was of a Harvard flavor. The only real difference was that he was several degrees less arrogant—not that humility was one of his specialties, by any means.

II

About ten days after the Mineola outing he was seated at his desk, opening the morning's mail. Two letters caught his eye. One, from Marjorie Armstrong, supplemented Mr. Armstrong's invitation to the two Fontaines to attend a weekend party in the Armstrong's Long Island home. The other was a note from Cornelia, reading:

"Lothario, remember your appointment with us this evening. We shall sup *al fresco* in the Japanese pagoda on the Lorillard roof—Araminta, Hercules and you will be the guests of honor. Only the chosen few are invited: Lydia, Charlotte, Robert and the invisible Pryor. A special attraction has been provided after supper—if indeed you need an attraction other than the piteous spectacle of

Araminta pining away for you.

Cornelia.

This operatic reminder was much more welcome to Claude than Marjorie's frigid message. Cornelia's latest party—parties trod on one another's heels in the model tenements—was in celebration of Janet's admission to the society of the Outlaws. Everybody counted on Claude to be the bright particular meteor of the occasion. Yet how was he to follow his natural inclination without offending his father, to say nothing of Colonel Armstrong and Marjorie?

He turned over a volume of Muther's *History of Painting* and, while staring vacantly into its pages, raked his mind for a diplomatic escape from attendance at the Armstrongs' party. He was still far from successful, when his father approached to transact a little business. This settled, Claude referred to a Van Gogh he had lately bought for \$5,000. Mr. Fontaine's face puckered quizzically.

"You are worse than the prodigal son," he said. "That young man squandered his patrimony on real extravagances, while you fritter yours away on unreal mockeries."

"Did you look at it, father?"

"Bless my soul, no. Its mere presence in the house is enough to upset me. As soon as I learned of its arrival, I looked at a copy of Ruisdael's "Mill" for ten minutes to steady my nerves. Whenever I hear of one of your modern pictures, I steal comfort from an ancient one."

"But you can't judge a picture without seeing it," remonstrated Claude.

"My boy, you once induced me to spend ten minutes at a Matisse exhibition in Stieglitz's Little Secession Gallery. What I saw there was one horrible libel on humanity after another. That will last me a lifetime, thank you."

Claude laughed. He and his father got along admirably by rarely pursuing an argument beyond its illogical conclusion.

"What have you done with my particular 'libel'?"

"I had it sent upstairs, to join your other atrocities in the Chamber of Indecencies."

This was a nickname Mr. Rene Fontaine applied to a little room on the top floor where Claude had hung various "finds" in the later Impressionist, Cubist and Futurist styles.

"Tomb, not chamber," said Claude. "Everything there is practically buried."

"Not at all. Your friends are forever trotting upstairs. I even send people there myself. Only yesterday I invited J. Tulyer Harmon to go up. He said he enjoyed himself hugely."

"What brought the old rogue in here again?"

"His mistress. She's one of the chief patronesses of the Religion and Forward movement. She had to attend a committee meeting downtown. He escorted her from her apartments in the Plaza and waited here for her until the committee adjourned. Out of that waiting I made several handsome sales—but not of your pictures."

"Thus religion and art," said Claude, "are reconciled by the Mammon of Unrighteousness."

III

This reflection was lost on Mr. Fontaine, whose thoughts had switched to another line. He reminded Claude of the party they were to attend on the Armstrong estate in Huntington, Long Island.

"Can't you lunch with me at one, Claude?" he asked in an excellent humor. "Then we'll take the train together."

"I'm sorry, father, but I have another engagement this afternoon."

He elaborated the urgency of the matter with an anxiety that Mr. Fontaine was quick to detect.

"An invitation from Armstrong Hall, Claude, is like an invitation from Windsor Castle," he said, smiling. "It cancels all previous matters except matters of life and death."

"I never felt less like breaking my word," countered the younger man obstinately.

Mr. Fontaine did not press the point. His easy life and lucrative business had enabled him to cultivate certain expensive reticences. It pained him to drive anyone into a corner. As regards the three stages of paternal activity—the interrogative, the declarative and the imperative—he held that a competent father need rarely go beyond the first two. Besides, he had found by experience that, if he took a determined stand, his son frequently yielded to the mere pressure of silent expectation.

Mr. Fontaine, who had been a widower for ten years, habitually gave great latitude to Claude, his only son, of whom he was genuinely fond. He frankly made "keeping up appearances" the basis of all conduct. Apart from that, he had a naive Rousselian theory of education, to the effect that, if you let a young man indulge all his whims and passions to the top of his bent, he will settle down at

thirty or thereabouts to a sane and steady career.

As refined tastes and good physical habits came natural to Claude, the operation of this theory had done him no bodily harm; but it had trained him to an exaggerated concern for his own desires and an enormous ignorance of other people's. Opposition to his stronger wishes was so rare that, when it occurred, he was tempted to regard it as wicked, and hence to crush it with a close approach to a feeling of self-righteousness. To put it shortly, he had the makings of a first-class tyrant, and he would have become a vicious one if his will had been as pronounced as his desires.

"You haven't had a tiff with Marjorie?" asked the father, with a casual air.

"No," said Claude. "We haven't quarrelled in three months."

"But you haven't seen her more than once or twice in that time."

"That's why, father!"

"Well, I'm glad you're not on bad terms with her, anyhow," repeated Mr. Fontaine, a deep interest beneath his affected unconcern.

"Oh, no. On as good terms as she'll allow. I don't know whether you've observed it, father, but it isn't easy to break through Marjorie's reserve."

"You don't mean she's a cold nature!"

"Only when Lord Dunbar is around."

The trace of petulance in this reply was the scar of an old wound. Claude, always first among his rivals on the battlefield of love, had once been obliged to yield the supremacy. This had happened about a year before, when the young Earl of Dunbar came to Newport in Marjorie's train. With two fine strings to her bow, Marjorie actually made Claude her second string. This sensation had been the talk of the smart set from Bar Harbor to Palm Beach. And Claude had never quite forgiven the very serious blow to his pride.

Mr. Rene Fontaine had no fault to find with Marjorie's supercilious airs and snobbish predilections. He liked and admired her unreservedly and thought it quite natural that, in choosing a husband, she should prefer a titled Englishman to a Yankee commoner. Why not? That London was the real capital of American fashionable society was, after all, a fact no socially ambitious American girl could be expected to ignore.

"I don't think she ever cared for Dunbar," ventured Mr. Fontaine. "At all events, he's gone."

"Gone!"

"He sailed for England yesterday. I've just heard it from Mr. Armstrong."

"Good Lord!" exclaimed Claude, walking up and down in marked agitation.

"My dear boy!" cried Mr. Fontaine, uncertain as to the cause of his son's emotions, "she didn't take him after all."

"No. Probably she couldn't. I dare say she means to take me, now."

"Why, Claude, everybody supposed you two were as good as engaged long before this Englishman came over."

"So we were—before he came."

"Well?"

"Well—he came."

"Really, Claude—"

"I mean, she preferred him to me. I don't blame her. He had more to offer."

"What had that to do with it?"

"Everything. He's a British nobleman. I'm only an ordinary American. He's got the entree of the best London circles. I've only the entree of the best New York."

"That's a very unkind thing to say of Marjorie. I've known her since she was a baby. She has her faults. But heartless calculation is not one of them."

Mr. Fontaine's indignation did not sound convincing. Like Claude, he knew that Marjorie would not hesitate to sacrifice her feelings to her social ambitions.

"I don't say it's a fault," protested Claude. "She had the right to change her mind. For women, the business side of marriage is the most important side, since marriage establishes them in life positions. I find it perfectly natural, therefore, that they should knock themselves down to the highest bidder."

This was a sentiment he had adopted, with his own modifications, from Robert Lloyd.

"Don't be cynical, my boy," said Mr. Fontaine. "Business is business, but family life is quite another thing."

"I agree with you, father," said Claude, pacifically. "As I said before, I don't blame Marjorie. And I'm not too proud to be her second choice."

"That's the way to talk. Second choice, like second thought, is often the sounder."

"Only, it happens that when *she* changed her sentiments, *I* changed mine, too."

"You mean there's some other girl?"

"In a way—yes," replied Claude, awkwardly.

Then, on the impulse of the moment, he plunged into an account of Janet Barr.

IV

Mr. Fontaine was distinctly uneasy. But he concealed his emotion as well as he could.

"You haven't any wild plan of marrying this young woman?" he said, adopting the air of a judicious outsider.

"I like her better than any girl I ever met."

"My boy, is that a good reason for marrying her? Take the word of an elderly man: It isn't worth while to marry *solely* for love, because you are bound to fall in love with somebody else as soon as the honeymoon is over."

"If not for love, what is one to marry for?"

"Why, for compatability, position, money—these are the considerations that wise men weigh."

Both were silent for a while, Claude thinking sardonically of his father's charge that his view of family life was too materialistic. Then Mr. Fontaine resumed his objections.

"How do you intend to support the young lady?"

"Surely my interest in the firm is enough."

"You never made a bigger mistake, Claude. Perhaps the fault is mine, though. For I have never driven home to you the relative value of an income of twelve thousand a year. That is what you've been spending."

"Good Heavens, father! You exaggerate, surely."

"Not in the least. I am in the habit of keeping very careful accounts, a habit it would do you no harm to acquire. Let me remind you that your new car cost five thousand dollars. That puts your weekly outgo roughly at a hundred and fifty, of which your chauffeur alone gets fifty."

"I'll cut down my extravagances! Besides, two can live more economically than one."

"Can they? Well, just try it, my boy! I fear you've picked up that idea in some novel. But don't forget that all novels are written by middle-class people and reflect middle-class notions of economy. Possibly a middle-class couple can save if they double up in one sordid flat, sleep in one bed, limit their amusements to the few which please both, compromise on the one or two friends whom neither dislikes too much, and generally lead the spiritual life of the Siamese twins. But this can't be done in our class! With us, the diverse activities and needs of husband and wife make expenses for two run four times as high as expenses for one."

Mr. Fontaine returned significantly to the assertion that he was in no position to play the benevolent father. He would not deny that the firm was doing business on a magnificent scale. But magnificence was costly, on the debit side as well as on the credit side. There were ferocities of competition that were slicing off the safe margins of profits, besides pressing the management into transactions

involving a peculiar risk.

"Risk!" exclaimed Claude, greatly surprised.

Ha begged his father to remember the huge dividends recently declared on Fontaine & Company's stock.

"I didn't say financial risk. There's a tremendous legal risk."

Mr. Fontaine felt that the time had come for Claude to learn more of the technique of a big business in jewelry and the fine arts. He pointed out that the war had caused a substantial reduction in the demand for luxuries accompanied by a substantial increase in the tax upon them. And he asked his son if he had never wondered why, in the face of this handicap, the firm's post-war profits had exceeded the records of pre-war years.

"Yes, it did puzzle me," admitted Claude. "But there's so much wizardry in your management of the business—"

"No wizardry at all. One or two of the biggest firms land their prizes without the Customs House being a penny the wiser."

Claude made a wild movement to rise, but fell back in his chair again.

"Then that blackguard was right," he cried, his face ashen.

"What on earth do you mean? What blackguard?"

"Hutchins Burley! He called me a diamond smuggler right out before everybody at the Outlaws' Ball."

In the greatest agitation Mr. Fontaine pressed Claude for particulars. When the whole story had been told, he breathed a sigh of relief.

"Nothing to worry over, thank goodness!" he said, reassuring his son. "Nobody will pay the slightest attention to what a tipsy man blurts out against the Fontaines."

"No?" Claude's tone was decidedly skeptical.

"No, they won't dare to."

"Anyhow, we're actually *in* this smuggling game—" Claude went on gloomily.

"Our competitors call it slight-of-hand organized."

The ghost of a smile flitted over Claude's face.

"And what do they call being at the mercy of a drunken cur's venom?"

"Don't rub it in, Claude. I blame myself severely for your embarrassment. I ought to have forewarned you earlier. But it won't happen again. Depend upon it, I shall lock that fellow's tongue, good and tight."

"Is it really necessary for us Fontaines to have truck with such degraded scoundrels?"

"Well, my boy, it isn't exactly easy to get certificated gentlemen for the work," said Mr. Fontaine, stung into irony. "But don't let's go into that now, Claude. You must have confidence in me. One of these days I shall give you the

history of the whole matter from A to Z.”

”But look here, father. Suppose we were caught!”

Mr. Fontaine sat down in an armchair opposite his son and lighted a cigar with leisurely grace.

”It’s a possibility,” he said, ”a slim possibility. But we have excellent friends.”

”Government officials?”

”H’m—yes. More especially—there’s Colonel Armstrong.”

”Mr. Armstrong! You don’t mean to say he dickers with backstairs political grafters?”

”Dickers’ is hardly the word. Colonel Armstrong stands above, about and underneath the political machines—both of them.”

”Mr. Armstrong in the boodle game! I can scarcely believe it.”

”Boodle game! Don’t talk like a grocer or a reporter, Claude. Mr. Armstrong is a lover of fine art who, like all sensible people, thinks it monstrous to tax foreign works of art destined to do an educational service here. By virtue of his influence at Washington, he has been able to use his good offices to our advantage. The result is that the Customs House officials are wise enough not to go behind our list of import declarations.”

”Does he get much out of it?” inquired Claude.

”What a brutal question, Claude! Armstrong is so rich that he has nothing to live for except the luxury of being disinterested.”

Mr. Fontaine added that there had never been any outright verbal understanding between himself and his protector. Mr. Armstrong might be said to have slid into the protectorate insidiously. He was chiefly interested in the exquisite vases and textiles handled by Fontaine, and he was probably ignorant of the fact that it was not these articles but the precious stones that comprised the larger and more profitable fraction of the smuggled goods.

”For the rest,” said Mr. Fontaine, ”he is, as you know, a steady purchaser here. He buys whatever suits his fancy at cost price. We needn’t begrudge him the bargain.”

”I wish our relations with the Armstrongs were not complicated in this way,” said Claude, with an ominous feeling that he, too, might be knocked down at a bargain if the influential banker should fancy him as a bridegroom for Marjorie.

Claude had always taken special pride in the irreproachable origin of the Fontaine riches. He had looked up to his father as a convincing example of the possibility of making trade both clean and aristocratic. Mr. Fontaine’s disclosures now robbed his son of this illusion, besides confronting him with the sordid hazards of reality.

One of these sordid hazards was barely a week old. A new customs inspec-

tor, in a fit of unsophisticated fervor, had stumbled upon an act of smuggling in which the complicity of the Fontaines appeared in the course of investigation. Only the lucky fact of Mr. Armstrong's nephew being the Collector of the Port of New York had saved Fontaine & Company from scandal, public exposure and humiliation.

"By Heaven!" said Claude. "We're indebted to Mr. Armstrong for being out of prison!"

"Quite so," replied the father. "An American business man who desires to keep out of prison must take one of two hygienic precautions. One is to form a friendship with a leading financier or a political boss; the other is to avoid being caught. I have done both."

Mr. Fontaine looked significantly at his son.

"Those plans of yours," he said, "about the William Morris art center and all that—there can't be anything in that line if you marry a poor girl, you know."

Claude was silent for a while. His father, watching him keenly and sympathetically, supposed him to be in the throes of a fierce emotional contest between his sense of duty and his love for Janet. Claude was under the same delusion. In reality, the willful force that swayed him was not so much inclining him to marry Janet as pushing him not to marry Marjorie. For the moment, the easiest course to pursue was to yield on the minor issue and gain time on the major one. He would give up the evening with Janet and go to Huntington, but he would refrain from committing himself definitely as regards Marjorie and marriage.

"I'll be in Huntington for dinner, father," he said briefly.

Mr. Fontaine, greatly relieved, patted his son's back affectionately and walked away with a satisfied smile.

V

That evening, just before the theatres opened, a tall, thin man in a taupe-colored flannel suit and a soft beaver hat came out of the Commodore Hotel walked westward along Forty-second Street, and took an uptown bus at Fifth Avenue.

Mark Pryor, in a very unprofessional mood, had the air of one who is determined to be seen rather than to see. Considering the constant use he made of his knack of fading out of his surroundings to the point of almost total invisibility, this was not as easy for him as it sounds. Easy or not, it was his mood. Mr. Pryor, whose gift for self-effacement amounted to a miracle, needed a change. And he

sought it by trying to make himself manifest, as other people seek it by trying to hide.

He had not deserted Kips Bay. But the growing inquisitiveness of his neighbors, and particularly of the acquaintances he had struck up in flat Number Fifteen, had driven him to the expedient of running two domiciles and of dividing his time between them. The choice of a room in a first-class hotel had been dictated not by a craving for luxury but by a sense of domestic propriety. "There are two things I can't live without," he had once told Robert Lloyd. "One is an unailing supply of hot water, the other is perfect freedom to come and go as I choose. A man can always get these treasures among the model poor or the unmodel rich, but never in a middle-class home."

Robert had heartily endorsed this sentiment without any suspicion that Mr. Pryor—whom some of the Outlaws suspected of being a fugitive counterfeiter and others of being a shrinking novelist in search of local color—perambulated from an army cot in his Lorillard flat to a Circassian walnut bedstead in the Commodore Hotel. On the evening in question, Mr. Pryor decided to explore a section of Manhattan which he had hitherto neglected. Accordingly he boarded a cross-town bus going east and alighted at the corner of Second Avenue and Seventy-second Street.

Between this point and East End Avenue, he took a zig-zag course along several side streets and main roads. Thus he sauntered past the Vanderbilt tenements—the aristocrats of their kind—and through the German and Czechoslovak colonies, which were remote enough from Times Square to have retained some of their European flavor.

Presently he found himself in a very prettily lighted shopping section of First Avenue, a section which reminded him faintly of the chief street in some of the Teuto-Bohemian towns he had once traveled through. Reaching the Eighties, he strolled westward again, not without a sigh of regret as he noticed that the few quaint German or Slovak spots left on the East Side were fast being submerged in the uniform drabness which inevitably descends on all the quarters of an American city.

The cross street into which he turned was dimly lighted and quite deserted except for one other pedestrian on the opposite footway. This was a man whose hippopotamine dimensions instantly chained Mr. Pryor's scrutiny.

Surely there were not two people in New York with the aggressive waddle, the labored locomotion of Hutchins Burley? Pryor was in a holiday frame of mind; but here, as usual, was opportunity knocking at his door when he was in a mood to be "not at home."

"What must be, must be," he murmured, resigning himself to his fate.

He kept his eyes glued on Burley, and followed him slowly until he had

watched him enter a cigar and stationery shop at the corner. Walking hurriedly past the shop window twice, he observed Burley, in a rather secretive manner, handing the proprietor a small bundle of letters.

Then Pryor acted with lightning speed.

In less time than it takes to tell, he had darted down the dark basement steps of the closed shop next to the tobacconist's and, after a brief disappearance, had emerged again.

The man who came trudging up the steps, however, was not the agile, immaculate gentleman who had descended a few seconds before. At least, to outward view, it was a middle-aged man with stooping shoulders, a painful limp, clothes that looked trampish and untidy, and a round hat rammed Klondike fashion far down over his forehead.

This ugly looking customer lurched past the tobacconist's shop a moment later, just brushing the sleeve of Hutchins Burley on his way out. Wholly absorbed in himself, Burley paid no attention to the incident or the cause of it. He plodded on up the street; but the man who had so nearly collided with him went into the shop, made a quick purchase—during which he took a good look at the shopkeeper—and then came back to the street again with a haste that was scarcely in keeping with his limp. By this time Burley had almost turned the corner of Third Avenue, and Mark Pryor was obliged to throw his limp to the winds and strike into a lively clip in order to keep his quarry within view.

Eventually, he contrived to be a passenger on the bus that carried Hutchins Burley downtown, and got off with him at Seventeenth Street. There he watched his man waddle heavily towards Irving Place and enter a dingy old house in the middle of the block.

Mark Pryor followed slowly. As soon as the coast was clear, he crept cautiously up the front stoop to look at the name plate on one side of the doorway. With the aid of a pocket flashlight, he read the words: "Japanese Consulate General."

"What in thunder has the Mikado got to do with Hutchins Burley's smuggling adventures?" he asked himself, greatly perplexed.

An hour or so later, he repeated this query to a brisk, florid-faced gentleman in the prime of life who was seated in what purported to be an actor's agency in the heart of Times Square. The florid gentleman, who looked much less like a theatrical agent than like a military man in mufti, offered no solution to the enigma.

"Major Blair, I think I'm on the trail of something big at last," volunteered Mr. Pryor, hopefully.

"Possibly, sir, possibly," replied the gentleman, briskly.

But he paid only a languid attention to his visitor's spirited account of how

he had gradually wormed himself into the confidence of Hutchins Burley. When Pryor finished, he said:

"Somebody else will have to take up the trail of Burley. Orders came from headquarters this evening that you are to sail for France the day after tomorrow. You will report in Paris to Colonel Scott at the address in this letter."

"Foiled again," exclaimed Pryor, veiling his real feelings with assumed good humor. "Whenever I'm on the point of nailing a case down, headquarters steps in and calls a halt, as if I were the villain in the piece."

He added sardonically: "What is the use of information fairly breezing into my hands, so long as headquarters' notion of Secret Service is that the only conduct becoming an officer or a gentleman is to keep a secret dark."

"Mr. Pryor, orders are orders! The first duty of an officer of the Secret Service is never to ask questions."

"Quite so, sir," returned Pryor coolly. "And yet the first duty of a crack Secret Service officer is to ask questions all the time."

Major Blair stared at this independent, gifted member of his staff. Nothing daunted, Mark Pryor took his sealed orders, saluted and left.

PART III JANET ON HER OWN

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

I

Earlier in the same day, a special messenger from Claude had brought two notes of regret to the Lorillard tenements, one for Cornelia and one for Janet. A little before evening, these notes were followed by quantities of flowers and fruit, which were for Janet alone. But Cornelia went into ecstasies over the presents and caused the rooms of Number Fifteen to ring with her *arpeggio* laughter.

The note to Janet read:

Darling Janet:

Business interests and a promise made long ago make it imperative for me to go to Long Island today. The worst of it is, I shall be away for three days, and how unhappy this makes me, you can't conceive. Six days without you will have loitered by when next we meet! Six endless days away from the miracle of your soft voice and the wonder of your heavenly smile.

I came back from Washington late last night, not knowing that I should be prevented from seeing you today. Even so, I had my car driven, far from its regular course, past the Lorillard houses. How I prayed that a light from your little corner room would invitingly tell me that you were still awake! But all was dark, and I had to be content to let my fancy play around a certain maze of curly bronze hair, two eyes as limpid gray as an Adirondack lake before dawn, and a pair of ruddy lips that smile divinely or talk with so much sense and charm.

You are not like any other girl I have ever known, dearest Janet! I think of you as a rare and delicate flower whose perfume holds my senses as your spirit engrosses my soul.

I want you to have a happy evening, dear girl, despite my absence. Only, every now and then, you are to give a passing thought to me—disconsolate, forlorn impatient to be with you again.

Ever your Claude.

Of course, in Claude's absence the party was declared off, all but the supper in the pagoda.

Cornelia read the letter over twice. The second time, she uttered some of the more lyrical passages aloud, rendering them with a faintly exaggerated stress or mock-heroic inflection as the case might be.

"Exquisite!" she carolled, handing the note back to Janet. "A perfect love letter! By what an expert hand!"

Lydia Dyson came in just then and had to be told all about the disappointment. The author of "Brothers and Sisters," in an abbreviated accordion pleated frock, a necklace of jade beads, and very French shoes, looked as professionally Cleopatrich as ever.

"Janet," she said, knowingly, "Claude has gone to Huntington, to that Armstrong girl, Marjorie—the one that was hotfoot after the Earl of Dunbar. She didn't get the Earl, you know. Now they all say she'll marry Claude. I bet she will, too."

"He doesn't love her," protested Janet.

"As if that made any difference! Every man needs a woman to represent him in social life and to advertise the dignity and solidity of his own rooftop. Any woman who can do these things satisfactorily qualifies as a suitable wife. Men, you see, are more conventional than women. Or perhaps I should say, more businesslike."

"Businesslike!" Cornelia interposed. "Say disgusting, and you'll be much nearer the truth. Didn't I tell you, Janet," she continued, "that men think of women in only one way—and that a beastly one?"

"On the contrary, they think of women in two ways," contended Lydia in her drawling Southern tongue. "To a man, all womankind is divided into two groups: the woman who stands for his home, and all the others—the women who stand for his pleasure. The one woman is a necessity; all the others a luxury. Every man gets the first at any cost, and then bids for one or more of the second, if he has the price."

"Don't be bizarre and crude, Lydia," said Cornelia, not relishing this analysis in Janet's presence.

"Crude?" said Lydia, repelling the charge as melodramatically as it was made. "It is not I who am crude. It is man. It is man who divides our whole sex crassly into these two groups. It is man who sees in every woman either a housekeeper or a wanton. It is man who fixes a trade price for affairs of the heart and rates marriages by their market value. Call *this* crude, if you like! Or call it an incurable blindness to the differing blend of vital forces that makes each woman unique. In this respect, how unlike men are to us, who see in every man a new, mystic union of protector, lover and father of our children!"

"The new trinity!" chanted Cornelia, with a significant laugh. "But I'm sure, dear Lydia, that not every woman has *your* gift for discovering this mystic trinity in so many unique specimens of the other sex."

"Dear Cornelia, you flatter me. My only advantage over other women lies in the prudence which caused me to get a husband before I set out to make the discoveries you allude to."

"Don't let us talk about marriage as it exists today," said Cornelia, parrying the blow as best she could. "Marriage is so banal."

"Yes, and so convenient," drawled Lydia, who reluctantly supported her husband in idleness and luxury. "Also, so expensive. Husbands now come dearer than ever before in the history of family life, while lovers never were cheaper."

"Lydia is joking," said Janet, sending her clear, mollifying voice into the breach.

"No, I'm not joking," said Lydia, with the utmost gravity. She lit a cigarette, adding as she did so:

"I'm making hay while the sun shines."

"Does your husband agree with you on this point?" asked Janet, curiously.

"My dear, he's used to me. He takes my word for everything. Also my money. But I'm frank to say that I don't hold with Cornelia's notions about free love. They're too fantastic and impractical. I hold with the French system: Marry first and experiment afterwards. It's not logical, Janet, but it works well. If you experiment first, you are sure to be done out of marriage, and you may even be done out of love."

"Really, Lydia," said Cornelia, now thoroughly incensed. "You must know that Janet believes, as I do, that love is a surrender, not a sale. She isn't offering her affections to the highest bidder."

Janet, intervening, remarked that this was true; but, as she found Lydia's views very interesting, she begged Cornelia to let their visitor have her say.

"Oh, very well," said Cornelia, biting her lip.

"That's right, Janet," said Lydia Dyson, grateful for her support. "I'm sorry to disagree with Cornelia. But in this matter, she's all at sea. Believe it or not, in modern life, love is a commodity for sale, like any other commodity. What else can you expect? Do you know of any other gift in the possession of man, woman or child which is not sold to the highest bidder? Doesn't a playwright subdue his creative faculty to the requirements of the manager who offers the most royalties? Doesn't the novelist or the musician or the engineer do the same in his line? How indeed can they help it in a country where everything is bought and sold, where the greed and gluttony of men put everything under the hammer, from a glass of water to a draught of genius? Why marvel that women have to sell their bodies, when poets and artists have to sell their souls?"

"Take it from me, Lydia," Cornelia burst in, caustically, "when you apply the oratorical powers of Robert Lloyd to the moral principles of Mazie Ross, the product is hard to beat!"

"Cornelia, you wouldn't say spiteful things like that if you only knew the truth about sex relations. I forgive you because you don't."

"If *I* only knew!" said Cornelia. She gave a florid operatic laugh. "Do you really suppose I *don't* know?"

"No woman does who hasn't been married to a man. Not until she has been chained in wedlock for some time does she see the cloven hoof or feel the mark of the beast, or get her fanciful pictures about love put in a proper perspective. That's one thing marriage does for a woman."

"By your own admission, then," remarked Janet, "Cornelia is right in thinking that the game isn't worth the candle, isn't she?"

"Dearie," said Lydia, with unctiousness, "ask the most wretched wife on earth, and she'll answer: 'Tis better to have wed and lost, than never to have wed at

all.”

II

Cornelia, observing that Janet took Claude’s absence with surprising composure, wondered whether it was a case of still waters running deep. It was partly that, but there was another reason. The apparent ease with which Claude had yielded the preference to Marjorie’s claim upon his time carried with it an unflattering implication as regards the value he set upon Janet’s friendship. To be sure, there was the rapturous love letter. But fine words buttered no parsnips; they pleased the ear but they neither explained Claude’s course nor justified it.

Thus Janet was as much nettled as disappointed by her lover’s absence. Yet it was not her way to stew in misery. And her control of her feelings was made easier by the pressure of some secretarial work for which she had just been engaged by Howard Madison Grey, the playwright.

Immediately after supper, therefore, Janet left her friends in the Japanese pagoda on the roof, having arranged to spend the evening in Harry Kelly’s office in flat Number Thirteen, where she proposed to practice on the athlete’s typewriter.

Her object was to ”increase her speed” so that her most recent position might be made securer.

Through the Collegiate Bureau, to which Cornelia had introduced her, she had already been given two opportunities in business offices downtown. She had lost them both within a week, her refinement and charm of manner having been voted poor substitutes for the experience that she still lacked.

The fault was not wholly Janet’s. Before she left home, she had taken a course in shorthand and typewriting (in the teeth of her mother’s opposition) at an Evening High School. It was one of those carefully pasteurized courses for which the American educational system is famous; it was showy, time consuming, and totally useless. But how could Janet have known that high-school stenography was as pitifully inadequate to the practical needs of a modern mercantile office as high-school French or German to the practical needs of a tourist on the Continent?

Not wanting to get into the bad books of the Collegiate Bureau, Janet was anxious to avert a third discharge. Moreover, her post with the playwright had the intrinsic merit of being more congenial, as well as more lucrative than any

she had filled before.

Janet was thankful that Cornelia would be occupied with the party, for her efforts to make herself more competent invariably excited her friend to derision. Cornelia, like a true-blue Kipsite, was no devotee of good workmanship. Endowed with the makings of success in any one of half a dozen professions, she had achieved failure in all of them, her inveterate lack of industry and application having botched a promising career in turn as an author, singer, painter, dancer, decorator and dress designer.

A born worker, Janet stood in no danger of imitating Cornelia's business vagaries. She could not have afforded it, anyway. Unlike Cornelia, she had no private income, her only resources being a small bank deposit (a relative's bequest), which was dwindling with alarming rapidity. Thus, inclination and necessity were as one in spurring her on to making a success of her new post as typist and amanuensis for Howard Madison Grey.

III

The keys of the typewriter were going at a merry gallop when Robert Lloyd, who had a desk in Kelly's office, came in.

"What do you mean by breaking the commandments of the Lorillard Tenements?" he said, putting a sheaf of papers on his desk and getting ready to attack them.

"Which commandments, Robert?"

"All ten. The first five prohibit any useful work in the daytime on penalty of loss of caste. The second five prohibit the same at night on penalty of excommunication, if not expulsion."

She laughed and asked him why he hadn't joined Cornelia's supper party in the Japanese pagoda. He explained that he had been detained at a meeting of the Guildsmen's League, of which he was now the organizing secretary. He added that he had brought home a quantity of raw material to be hammered into a tract on Waste in Industry, a job which would take him all night.

They each buckled to the task in hand. Janet liked to work in the same room with Robert, who knew when to be silent as well as when to talk. He treated her like a fellow worker of his own sex, paying her none of that exaggerated show of consideration which most men give to women outside their own family circle. Thus his presence stimulated her and in no wise interfered with the concentration

demanding by her typewriting practice. When she reached a good stopping point, she offered to help him. He accepted the offer eagerly and dictated several letters to her.

"A good job," he said, after she had handed him the typed sheets to be signed, "and a quick one, too. You're improving by leaps and bounds. Indeed, you might develop into a 'speed demon,' but for your un-American weakness for accuracy."

"I've got to be accurate. I do all sorts of work every morning, for Mr. Grey, the playwright."

"Grey? The author of 'The Love that Lies' isn't he? The play that ran for two seasons. Is he very exacting?"

"No, but his wife is. She keeps an eagle eye on all the typing that's done for him."

"Why?"

"Why? Well, she serves him as a sort of combination mother, nurse, watchdog, and general superintendent. Just as most wives do."

"And just as most wives will continue to do, until they choose an independent living in preference."

"Do you think that women are solely responsible for the social arrangement by which two distinct things like motherhood and housekeeping are tied indissolubly together?"

"No. And I don't believe that men are solely responsible, either."

"Aren't they?"

"No. Remember, marriage was not always what it is today. In the middle ages, the home was also the place of business, and the wife was her husband's business associate as well as his mate. Later, when business went out of the door, slavery came in through the window. This was not exclusively man's doing. Men and women muddled things up together. Honors are very nearly even on that score."

"Be fair, Robert! Hitherto, men have had all the power."

"Yes, and women have had all the glory. They were every bit as well satisfied to belong to the fair, privileged, and law-evading sex, as men were satisfied to belong to the coarse, responsible, and law-making sex. As soon as the majority of women follow the lead of Lady Cicely in 'Captain Brassbound's Conversion,' that is, as fast as they 'scorn death, spurn fate, and set their hopes above happiness and love,' they will be able to cope with man's supremacy as successfully outside the home as they have already done within it. What is more, they will work their will in public much more openly and honorably than they have so far worked it in private."

"Men are always declaring that women could easily get full independence

if only they would go about it in the right way. Clearly, men know the right way and women don't. Cornelia says that if they are so very much cleverer than we are, it is a pity they don't set their wits to work so as to help instead of hindering us in the struggle for equality."

"Never mind what Cornelia says," exclaimed Robert, energetically. "She is crazy on the subject of men; that is why she keeps forever harping on it. One way of doing this is to accuse men of everything evil under the sun, from the creation of God to the invention of the cardboard kitchenette flat. Please don't join her in the vulgar senseless game of pitting one sex against the other."

"You do Cornelia an injustice. She doesn't maintain that all women are angels and all men devils. Nor do I. But suppose some men are angels. I shouldn't care to be a housekeeper for the archangel Gabriel."

Robert hoped that any lady who consented to share Gabriel's bed and board would find the archangel up-to-date and gentlemanly enough to excuse her from washing dishes and scrubbing floors. Why should an archangelic or any other sort of gentleman shortsightedly insist that a talented bride on her way to becoming an excellent banker, merchant, or politician, should transform herself into a mediocre woman-of-all-work? Why should he consider his own bargain bettered by such a questionable transformation?

"On the other hand, Janet," he added boldly, "why should an up-to-date young lady jump from the devil of housekeeping into the deep sea of free love, as I fear you will end by doing if you follow Cornelia's suggestions?"

She knew that he had Claude in mind. But she was unable to take offence at his uncandid candor and his disinterested interest.

"Robert, what a tantalizing mixture of the liberal and the conservative you are!" she exclaimed, refusing to take up his challenge.

"I am merely the child of my age, Janet. I was born with reactionary habits and nursed on radical ideas. All logic counsels me to become an enemy of existing institutions; all instinct drives me to conduct operations within the enemy's camp. I betray under two flags."

"You can't make me believe that. If you were all kinds of a traitor, you wouldn't be such a jolly companion to work with or to talk to. Do you know the most delightful thing about you, Robert?"

"Modesty forbids me to say—but not to hear. Tell me."

"It is the fact that you can behave towards a woman friend as frankly and decently and unsentimentally as you would towards a man friend. You can't imagine what a relief it is to a girl to know one man who'll always treat her man-to-man fashion."

"Will I? Janet, if you were perfectly sure of my future conduct you'd find me an insufferable bore. Besides, no fascinating woman ever wanted to be treated

like a man—at least not for long at a time. You won't be the first exception."

"Don't be silly, Robert. If ever I should get married—which Heaven forbid!—it will be to a man like you, one who can work with me without constantly remembering my sex."

"Oh almost any man will be able to do that, as soon as being your husband loses its novelty for him. Still, I'm grateful to you for your well-meant opinion, Janet. I shall try to deserve it by offering you a small business partnership."

He rapidly sketched the plan he had in mind, pointing out that, as only her mornings were engaged by the playwright, Grey, she might help him afternoons with the Guild League's work. He was hard pressed for assistance; the League could just afford a part-time worker; there was a good deal of editing and typewriting which he was sure she could undertake.

Janet begged to be taken on trial. The bargain was struck amid the sounds of merrymaking that came, none too faintly, through the walls of flat Number Fifteen. She remarked that Cornelia's party appeared to have been a huge success after all.

"Yes, it has given birth to the firm of Barr and Lloyd," said Robert, jestingly.

He was aware of the conflict in Janet between the temptations of the love chase and the attraction of the force that moves the sun and the stars. And he fondly believed that this conflict no longer existed in himself. The love of man for woman against the love of life! He had made his decision, she had not.

Two questions remained uppermost in his mind. One was: "Could he capture Janet's great natural talents for his own side, the side, not of the fires of sensuous gratification but of the flame that burns at the heart of the world?" The other was: "Did Janet really want him to act towards her precisely as towards a man?"

Curiously enough, the irrelevance of the second question to the first, did not strike him.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

I

In the days that followed, Janet's morning duty as Mr. Grey's secretary and her afternoon employment as assistant to Robert left her with very little leisure. Such time as remained on her hands she spent chiefly with Cornelia or with Claude.

Neither of these friends exhibited much enthusiasm over Janet's determined effort to earn her own living. Cornelia looked with ill-concealed disfavor on an exhibition of diligence which, besides being foreign to the atmosphere of Kips Bay, used up so much of her protegee's time that the burden of housekeeping in flat Number Fifteen was inevitably shifted to Cornelia's own shoulders. As for Claude, his reaction, equally cool, was governed partly by the scarcity value which now attached itself to Janet's leisure hours, partly also by another reason which he hardly dared to face.

Somewhat daunted by the lukewarm attitude of her friends, Janet nevertheless kept courageously on with the task of making her independence secure.

Howard Madison Grey, the playwright, was then composing his fourth play, "Cleopatra's Needle." His practise was to dictate rapidly to Janet for an hour and a half, after which she was expected to typewrite the sketchy dialogue, changes in grammar and syntax and even in diction being left, as time went on, more and more to her discretion. As the work appealed to her interest as well as to her skill, she despatched it with zest.

Bit by bit, two drawbacks emerged, however. One was Janet's liability to mistakes because of an absorption in the plot, an absorption so deep as to interfere seriously with quick mechanical transcription. The other was Mrs. Howard Madison Grey.

This lady had opened a correspondence with her future husband during the short run of his first play, "The Spice of Life," for the hero of which (a masterful but incorrigible polygamist) she had conceived an unbounded admiration. The correspondence ripened into matrimony, Mrs. Grey bringing her spouse the money and influence that lifted him swiftly to a solid place in the theatrical world.

When his second play, "The Love that Lies," financed by her father, scored a big hit, she noticed that he became the gratified recipient of a good deal of feminine attention. Mindful of the polygamous experiments of his two masterful heroes, she remembered that precaution is the better part of safety. Marriage had considerably modified her point of view, and she now had a conviction that there should be a yawning gulf between the pluralistic imaginings of the dramatist and the monogamic behavior of the husband.

To give this conviction shape, she enframed him in a watchful chaperonage. Chaperonage was not the name she used. She called it, "being a helpmeet."

The helpmeet's first official act was to place Mr. Grey's communications with the world beyond-the-home under a strict censorship. She looked after his correspondence, registered his engagements, and kept in telephonic touch with him when he went to a club or directed a rehearsal. Let the enemy idolaters capture him (if they could) through the barbed-wire entanglements of her devotion!

In the same spirit, she threw cold water on his business-like proposal to

do his writing in an office building. Such an environment, she said, would kill the soul of his art. Her substitute was a study, comfortably fitted up in his own home; and there, accordingly, he and Janet were obliged to work.

Mrs. Howard Madison Grey was a woman of fixed opinions. She was firm in the belief that a transcendent artistic talent was lodged in her husband; she was equally firm in the belief that a transcendent executive talent was lodged in herself. On the principle that it pays to specialize she held it to be no more than right that any power or glory acquired by the name of Howard Madison Grey should be exercised by the executive branch of the family. About this opinion she was entirely frank.

"I've made him," she said to Janet, one day. "Why should I let others enjoy the fruit of my labors?"

This was said as much in warning as in confidence. Janet was greatly amused, inasmuch as her feelings toward her employer were unsentimental to the point of prosiness.

None the less, Mrs. Grey's never ending readiness to suspect Janet of a design on her vested interest in Mr. Grey soon became a great bore. It was also somewhat trying to the nerves. At the most unexpected moments, the good lady would shoot in upon her husband and his assistant like a cartridge from a noiseless gun, and explode into embarrassing explanations.

Until, at length, Mr. Grey's perfectly correct and unemotional attitude towards Janet underwent a dangerous change.

II

By the time Claude returned from his visit to Huntington, Janet had already settled down to her new routine. Claude did not seriously object to her morning engagement with Howard Madison Grey, but her afternoon work in Kelly's study—the work she did for Robert's league—this he viewed as an intolerable encroachment on his privileges.

Out of regard for Janet's warm espousal of the cause of woman's independence, he concealed his feelings as best he could. But he used his prodigal gifts without scruple to lay siege to Janet's hours of employment, especially to her afternoons. Four or five days out of seven, on one excuse or another, his imposing car would draw up to the Lorillard tenements, and its owner, handsome, dashing, persuasive, would tempt Janet away from laborious tasks to the delights of

an excursion.

In vain did Janet upbraid herself each time she yielded, or school herself diligently against the next occasion. When the next occasion came, she found, as likely as not, that she was as helpless as ever to resist his thrilling voice, his ardent eye, and his magnetic wooing.

In Cornelia, Claude had a subtle and insidious agent on his side. If Janet gave a crushing refusal to one of Claude's incitements to truancy, Cornelia would flash a reason in his favor as unanswerable as a sword. Or if Janet, persuaded, but not convinced, gave signs of an uneasy conscience, Cornelia was always ready to annihilate doubt with some apt quotation (or misquotation) such as "Work no further, pretty sweetening—youth's a stuff will not endure."

Naturally, this spasmodic holiday making was the cause of frequent delays in the performance of the work for the Guildsmen's League. Janet tried to make up for lost time by working late at night, a practice that drew upon her the reproaches of Cornelia who alleged that it interfered with her sleep. Needless to say, Cornelia exhibited no compunction for the serious inconvenience that all this caused Robert. Far from it. She appeared to get a lively satisfaction from seeing his partnership bedeviled and his remonstrances ignored.

As a fact, she feared that Robert's influence over Janet was quietly undermining her own ascendancy. But what was there to justify this fear? Janet's enthusiasm for the free life of the model tenements had not yet abated and her admiration for Cornelia's talents was still very strong. But a straw showed Cornelia which way the wind was blowing.

Janet was gradually but steadily cutting down the amount of housework she did in Flat Number Fifteen!

The terms on which Cornelia chummed up with her successive companions always included an agreement to have the housework done, share and share alike. In practice, the adoring friend took over most of Cornelia's share, at least while the friendship was in its early stages. As time went on and illusions were shattered, the unequal burden was slowly whittled away by the active partner until Cornelia's shoulders stood in grave danger of having a full half of the cleaning and marketing thrust upon them. At this point, she generally unearthed a new adorer as well as excellent reasons for breaking with the old one; and then she started the whole cycle afresh.

Like her predecessor, Janet had begun by doing far more errands, dishes and cooking, than a strictly fair division called for. At first, the respective proportions had stood at about three-quarters for Janet and one-quarter for Cornelia. After a few days of this arrangement, however, Janet had begun so to manipulate matters that her allotment fell rapidly to one-half. And the pendulum had swung gaily on. In fine, within a few months of her arrival, this new convert to modernity had

reversed the original proportions so that they now stood at about three-quarters for Cornelia and one-quarter for Janet.

If this was feminism—Cornelia confided to Hercules (“among the faithless, faithful only he”)—it was feminism with a vengeance!

The situation was without precedent in the history of the Outlaws of Kips Bay. Even more unprecedented was Cornelia’s acceptance of the situation. But this compliance of hers was in no wise dictated by generosity or affection, as some innocents conjectured. Cornelia was simply shrewd enough to see that Janet was the magnet which had drawn back to Number Fifteen its departed splendor and had restored to herself the position of the first lady of the Lorillard tenements, a position she greatly prized.

One question that Cornelia put to Hercules was: Had Janet’s repugnance for housework merely kept pace with her growing appetite for women’s rights, or was Robert Lloyd at the bottom of all the mischief? How should the mute and glorious Hercules reply to a purely rhetorical query?—Cornelia favored the second explanation, a fact which boded Robert no good.

III

Although Robert had in no sense entered the lists as one of Janet’s suitors, Cornelia instituted comparisons between him and Claude, never to the former’s advantage. She took occasion to contrast Claude’s noble bearing and look of sovereign strength with Robert’s simpler and frailer appearance. She dwelt on the cosmopolitan aura that clung to Claude, his subtle atmosphere of wealth, breeding and high social origin, the amalgam of gorgeous qualities that offered so much more than Robert’s radical connections and straitened financial circumstances. Her trump card was to call attention to Claude’s free and easy response to the Lorillard conception of the rights of women and to offset this picture with an allusion to Robert’s prudent reservations on the same subject.

If these comparisons were of an offhand and haphazard sort, nothing was thereby lost in effectiveness. Far from it. They glorified Claude by what was carelessly said: they damaged Robert by what was carefully left unsaid.

Although unaware of the Machiavellian promptings of which she was the innocent cause, Janet became dimly conscious of the conflict already sensed by Robert, the conflict between her work (which was bound up with Robert) and her love affair (which was somehow bound up with Cornelia as well as with

Claude). She felt the tug of Robert one way and the tug of Claude and Cornelia the other way, without fully grasping the difference in the two directions or the final significance of either goal.

It was Claude, however, and not Cornelia, that gave Janet's friendship with Robert an importance that none of those concerned attached to it. Claude simply could not understand why Janet should refuse to neglect Robert's League, whenever the work of the League stood in the way of their outings together. Economic independence, the reason advanced by Janet, was a reason he laughed at. The words meant hardly anything to one who from birth had been glutted with the thing itself. Surely a few beggarly dollars, more or less, did not adequately account for Janet's readiness to cloister herself in Kelly's bare and sunless study! Yet what other motive could there be, if not one of tender feeling on Robert's part, or soft pity on hers?

Still, the rivalry that actually sprang up between the two young men was not a rivalry in love, at least not in Robert's sense of the word.

For Robert was no fool. He was soon convinced that Claude and Janet had surrendered unconditionally to a mutual infatuation which he was in no position to challenge. Yet he had a magnetism of his own, a magnetism of the spirit rather than of the flesh. To this magnetism Janet responded. Why should he not claim the same title to Janet's response in the one sphere that Claude laid claim to in the other?

At all events, he meant to fight for what he considered his rights, regardless of Claude's frowns or vanishing friendship.

Between the two, Janet had a hard time of it. Claude professed to accept free love as a new and improved social principle, and praised her for holding it; yet he grew unmanageable the moment she gave the least hint of exercising this freedom in connection with any other man than himself. On the other hand, Robert rejected free love as a pernicious Greenwich Village or Lorillard tenement eccentricity, and even severely scolded her for entertaining it; yet his actions showed that she might love as many different men as madly as she pleased, without causing his friendship for her to undergo any really radical change.

To cap the oddity of this contrast, she found that Robert's unlimited tolerance, though socially much the more agreeable attitude, was not without its suggestion of tepidity of sentiment, a suggestion which piqued her not a little.

The rivalry, such as it was, followed a very human course. Robert, as an outgrowth of his work with Janet took to promoting her education in contemporary thought and political theory. Claude, not to be behindhand, made the most of his special knowledge of art as well as of his wide first-hand acquaintance with the men and events that figured picturesquely in the ruling social and political rings of Washington and New York. In the matter of books, Claude gen-

erally took the cue from Robert. The latter would lend her works by Shaw, Wells, Bennett, Galsworthy, Bertrand Russell, Anatole France, Barbusse, Romaine Roland; Claude would follow suit with the latest fiction by Robert W. Chambers or Rupert Hughes, his authors ranging as high as Rudyard Kipling, Maeterlinck or Barrie. One would take her to a symphony concert in Carnegie Hall, the other to a Sunday Pop in the Hippodrome. Robert held out invitations to a Theater Guild's play by Masefield or Andreyev, Claude would counter with an evening at a revival of *Florodora* or *San Toy*. If Janet accompanied Robert to a Labor Mass Meeting at Cooper Union or to a radical Cameraderie at the Civic Club, she was sure, soon after, to be escorted by Claude to a Titta Ruffo recital in Aeolian Hall or to a midnight cabaret in Moloch's Den off Sheridan Square.

To Janet, who had broken with the Barrs of Brooklyn and who was as much on pleasure as on emancipation bent, it was not Robert's offer that usually seemed the happier one.

Not the least of Claude's advantages was the fact that he moved in Kips Bay as a representative of the great forces of finance and fashion. He reflected the high lights of that glittering social system of which he was a favorite child. Direct and intimate was his contact with the celebrities of the day—the bankers and politicians, the diplomats and society leaders, the cabinet set in Washington, and the inner opera box set in New York. These were his real people; the Lorillarders were merely the people among whom he was sowing his radical wild oats.

In short, Claude was one of the persons "in the know." He knew a good deal more about the personages whose names were on everybody's tongues than the public knew or the newspapers thought fit to print. He could tell about the opera soprano of the first magnitude whose attacks of hysterical jealousy would cause the curtain to be held down between the acts for forty minutes, while the poor director tore his hair in desperation. He could laugh at the "mystery" of the appointment of a certain mediocre woman teacher to a superintendency in the city's schools, the mystery vanishing upon his inside story of how the lady in question "had been good" to Big Jim Connolly, a local political boss. And he could explain the connection between the failure to float a certain foreign loan and the omission of a well-known financier's wife from the group of guests invited to meet the Prince of Wales.

Thus Claude Fontaine, whose handsome face and dashing airs would have made him an idol in almost any society, enchanted his fellow Outlaws with the aroma clinging to him from the world of fashion and the glimpses he afforded into the secret workings of the world of power. Small wonder that to Janet, as to the others, Claude was bathed in a romantic glamor.

By contrast with Claude, Robert seemed to lead a decidedly work-a-day or humdrum life. Especially so, since his newspaper employment had been cut off

and his active time given up to the League of Guildsmen. As far as Janet could see, Robert's entire thought and energy were absorbed by an overwhelming interest in the Labor movement. For though he had plenty of esthetic diversions, she noticed that the books he read, the music he delighted in, and the pictures he admired were all in some way expressive of souls in bondage, aspiring to freedom.

Now for the time being, Janet wanted to forget about the lowly and the oppressed. She had the same feeling towards "causes" and "reforms" that a released convict has towards societies for Improving the Condition of Prisoners on Parole.

It must not be supposed that Janet took an unsympathetic view of the movements for human freedom which were convulsing society after the Great War. She was a sincere convert to the principle of woman's equality and she made an honest effort to be open-minded to the theories that Robert expounded. But her heart was not in theories. Her pulse refused to quicken when Robert told her of the new social cleavage which was fast ranging the useful active people on one side, and the parasitic profiteering people on the other. In common with a great many of her contemporaries, she sat heedlessly on a volcano, enchanted by the twinkle of the stars.

What if Robert *did* prove up to the hilt that the world was in the birth throes of a new social order! Youth must have its glamor. And there is no glamor about birth throes, not even about the birth throes of a new world.

Besides, the old social alignment in which princes of the purple and masters of the gold ruled in pomp or circumstance over the toilers of the factory, the office and the soil—this old alignment was much more familiar to poor Janet (and to everybody else) than the new one predicted. Literature and legend, the school room, the pulpit and the press—all the regular organs of education, in fact—had mesmerized her into viewing the practical politics and the dominant economics of the day as splendors and glories without parallel. Was the psychology of a lifetime to be uprooted or transformed by a few weeks of unconventional conduct in a Kips Bay tenement, or even by a brief high-tension course of reading in the works of Samuel Butler, Bernard Shaw, Romaine Rolland and other prophets of the life to come?

Clearly not. And so when Claude came with his many-colored news from the seats of the mighty, he found it easy to engross and transport Janet. But when Robert talked to her of strikes, trade unions and labor congresses, he left her bewildered or mystified, though seldom cold. In short, the rivalry even for the mind of Janet was a rather one-sided affair, Claude, the darling of the gods, holding an immense initial advantage over Robert, the advocate of rebel causes.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

I

On an afternoon late in May, Claude took Janet to see the boat race between Yale and Pennsylvania over the so-called American Henley course on the Schuylkill. Nature was in one of her soft and sober moods. The weather was mild, the sky lightly overcast, and the colors of the landscape as well as of the living things upon it were toned down to various shades of slate, dove or lavender, all blending into the serious beauty of a dominant pearl gray.

After the race, while the crowds were melting away, the two lovers walked into the pathway along the river. Perhaps in response to the pallid coloring around, Claude became a prey to melancholy thoughts; and the day, the mood and the girl impelled him to confidences about the marriage with Marjorie Armstrong into which he felt himself being forced.

Janet made an ideal confidante. The exercise of putting herself sympathetically into other people's shoes was a joy to her. Not only did she see herself as others saw her; she had the rarer gift of seeing others as she saw herself. In doing so, she could leave her own desires and feelings entirely out of the prospect. Thus, the story of Claude and Marjorie, like any other human drama, appealed to her judgment on its merits. Nor did she disturb Claude with the intrusion of any vulgar jealousy because the lover was her own lover and the woman was a rival woman.

The narrative began with the tenderness Claude had conceived for Marjorie some two years before. He told Janet how the proud beauty had first encouraged him and then, with unexampled coolness, had allowed the Earl of Dunbar to displace him in her favor. Later the Earl in his turn had jilted Marjorie. Could he be asked to care for her after such an ill-starred episode?

Unluckily, he was by now far the most desirable match among the young men whose names she consented to put on her list of eligibles. In this preference she had her father's hearty support. Naturally. For Mr. Armstrong was a slave of every wish she framed. Meanwhile, his own father had the most urgent private reasons for promoting the Armstrong project.

"You see my horrible position," he said. "I'm expected to marry a girl I don't love in order to get my father out of a bad box. It's like a story of the eighteenth century; only, in those happy days, it was the daughter, not the son, who had to pull the chestnuts out of the fire."

"But surely, Claude, not all the king's horses nor all the king's men can *compel* you to marry if you don't want to."

"No, but compulsion isn't the only form of coercion in the world, Janet. Nor even the worst. Can you think what it means to have everybody in your set *expecting* you to do a certain thing?"

"Expecting you?"

"Yes, it sounds fantastic. But it would sound real enough if once you had a taste of it. They show their expectations by word and deed, by sign and innuendo. They show it constantly, mercilessly, in a hundred small and super-subtle ways. I tell you, Janet, concerted expectation is the strongest form of pressure that can be brought to bear upon a man. It can bring about miracles. It can move mountains. Only a hero or a coward can resist it."

"I suppose it's like the pressure of public opinion or of one's family," she said, her soft clarinet tones pouring balm on his feelings. "I know what family pressure means. I am so sorry for you, Claude, sorry from my heart."

"I love you for saying that, Janet! I love you for your adorable pity. I love you for being so unlike Marjorie. She has her good points; but fellow feeling is not one of them. You see, her social ambition and the ease with which she can gratify her every wish have quite dried up the tender places in her heart. She has no pity left in her nature. And pity is always the essential thing in a woman's soul."

They sat down on a grassy slope in a secluded corner of the park. In a lyrical mood, Claude pointed to the sun just then flaring out and splashing a thousand colors on the livid sky.

"Look, Janet," he said, "how the whole earth thrills to its warm radiance! Just as everyone thrills to your divine gift of sympathy."

He was lying on the ground with his head in her lap, while her hand was gently stroking his curly hair.

"I am so happy to be in this spot with you, Claude, and to hear from your lips the things that only you can say. When you make love to me, I feel as though I were in some Enchanted Valley with a prince from the *Arabian Nights*."

"Yes, and he a miracle of discretion, too!"

"A miracle of indiscretion, rather!" said Janet, as he drew her head down to his, kissed her once and kissed her again.

He soon became pensive, however. Pursuing his former train of thought, he declared that if he remained in New York, "public expectation" would certainly drive him into the dreaded marriage with Marjorie. There was only one avenue of escape. That was to go abroad and stay out of harm's way until Marjorie should choose some one else as in due time she was bound to do.

"But the force that holds me back," he said, "is far stronger than the one that bids me go. I can't live without you, Janet, darling."

"Then I suppose you'll have to take me along," she said, bending low over

him.

Their lips met in a sustained and ardent kiss.

"No," he said. "I dare not assume a responsibility so great."

"If I go with you," she said quietly, "I shall go on my own responsibility."

"Janet, it would be too wonderful. Don't let me think of it, or my good resolutions will stand no firmer than a flag in a strong wind. But you are an angel to offer to come. You do love me then, very, very much?"

"What a question, Claude!"

"Well, you keep a pretty tight rein on your feelings, darling," he said, with the least trace of reproach. "Tender and true you are, I know," he added. "But you don't say any of the things that girls say when their hearts are in the grip of a wild, extravagant passion. Do you know that you have never even asked me once whether I really and truly and madly love you?"

"Whether *you* love *me*?"

"Yes, that is the question girls ask their lovers over and over again."

"Well, Claude, the important thing to me is that *I* love *you*."

"Do you mean to say, Janet, that you don't care whether I love you or not?"

"I don't mean that. But what I care about most is that you are the sort of man whom *I* can love. That is the thing that makes me happy. It's delightful, of course, to know that you love me in return. Still, if you didn't love me, I don't think I should be in hopeless misery. If you turned out to be different from what I dreamed you were, so different that I could no longer love you, then I should be heart-broken."

To Claude, this seemed a bitter-sweet reply. More sweet than bitter, however, and so he did not contest it.

What a puzzling girl she was, he thought. So sensible and yet so imprudent. And totally devoid of the instinct that induces most women to exploit the amorous moment. Claude could not get over it. Any other girl would have made the most of his present mood, the mood in which he was ready to think the world well lost for love. When the blood is hot, the tongue is prodigal of vows. Claude, at all events, was willing to promise anything, especially as he was still in pursuit, and as his promises were not to mature until he was in possession.

Yet Janet asked absolutely nothing! This surrender, as open-handed as it was confiding, moved him to compunction. He sat up and put his arms around her. Her head buried in his shoulder had the effect of seeking refuge there. And she looked so trusting, so helpless, so innocent, that a great love for her welled up in his heart. Ought he not to do the noble, the chivalrous thing?

"Look here, Janet," he said, with the air of Sir Philip Sidney offering his last drink of water to another wounded soldier on the battle field, "why couldn't we be married? My father would get over it in time."

"Yes, your father might. But *we* might not."

"No, no, dearest. You mustn't say that. My love is not a thing of whims and fancies. I shall love you till life itself has passed away."

"Then what difference does it make whether we get married or not," she said.

With infinite tact, she refrained from accepting his lofty pledge of eternal constancy. She also refrained from a similar commitment of her own affections.

"Don't misunderstand me, Janet," he said, as sadly as if her disagreement cut him to the soul. "I merely felt in honor bound to offer to marry you. I know better than you do what an unconventional step means.

"All the more reason why I should learn by experience, then. No, Claude. If I married you, I'm sure I should soon stop loving you. The thought that you had a legal claim on my affection would be enough to kill it."

"Oh, you mustn't take the law so seriously, darling. Nobody does, nowadays."

"I know nothing about the law, Claude," she said, repudiating all jurisprudence with one of her eloquent gestures. "Do you want us to become a careworn, broken-spirited, isolated married couple, hating all the other careworn, broken-spirited, isolated married couples of the western world? Do you want me to grow to hate and despise you as my mother hates and despises my father, as so many wives appear secretly to hate and despise their husbands?"

"How can you say such monstrous things, Janet?"

"How can you pretend to believe that love should be free?" she retorted.

"Well," he replied, "I admit there's a lot in what you say. I suppose," he added with a fine masculine irrelevance, "that we can always change our minds and get married later on if we choose to."

He could not fully persuade himself that Janet really believed in free love. Nevertheless, he was hugely relieved to learn that, whatever her motive might be, she had no ulterior matrimonial designs on him. If only he could have suppressed a sneaking fear that he was "taking advantage" of Janet, as he called it, or satisfied himself that he was legitimately taking the good the gods provided, as the Outlaws boldly called a step of this sort!

But Claude's Bohemianism was only skin-deep. Like a good many Bohemians, he discarded traditional forms, costly conventions and social restrictions, chiefly in order to extract from social intercourse and philandering, the greatest amount of pleasure with the smallest amount of risk. Being a Bohemian was merely a sybaritic pastime for him.

In short, Claude lacked the courage of his experiments. The only morality he genuinely believed in was the current morality (and immorality) of his peers. Thus loose love could be allowed to have a certain place in the scheme of things,

but free love, as an avowed principle, was incontestably wrong. Claude might humor the model tenementers to the extent of using their free-love propaganda for his own ends. At heart, however, he was profoundly shocked by Janet's stubborn contention that her views of marriage, though glaringly heterodox, were morally sound.

As Claude had worked it out, there were two ways of getting past the limitations of a social institution. One was to support the institution while sneaking over the fences and enjoying the secret breach of law as a delightful bit of "living in sin." The other way was to defy the institution by boldly climbing over the fences and asserting the sin to be a virtue. Surely, the first was the pleasanter, the wiser, nay, the more ethical proceeding!

Of course Claude did not reason the distinction out as clearly as this. But he felt its force and, for his part, was resolved to act upon it. However, he did not attempt to convert Janet to his way of thinking. That would have been fraught with peril to the smoothness of their future relations. Besides, a long didactic argument would have spoiled the tender passages in the journey home. And Claude never encouraged his conscience to make a martyr of him.

II

When they got back to Kips Bay, they found Cornelia and her Hercules in Number Fifteen. Harry Kelly, silent and worshipful, was washing the accumulated dishes of the day, in a supreme exhibition of devotion. His innamorata, ensconced in state in her favorite armchair, was tacking a blue denim smock together with bits of fancy colored worsteds.

She announced her intention of marching in the parade of the Overalls Economy Club, an organization recently formed to protest against the high cost of living.

Robert, it appeared, had greeted this announcement with gibes and with an ironic contrast between her expenditure of time and her economy of money. Nor had he confined his sarcasm to her.

"What do you suppose Cato said when I told him about the parade?" Cornelia retailed vindictively. "He said, 'I suppose Claude will march, too? He will have no difficulty in getting the right kind of uniform. In the Times this morning, a Fifth Avenue store advertises overalls with solid gold buckles from fifty dollars up.'"

"There's a typical reformer for you," said Claude, bitterly. "Always shying bricks at the very people that want to build with them."

Hereupon, Cornelia, in the role of a loyal though long-suffering friend of Robert's, undertook to extenuate his conduct. She observed that he had doubtless been made angry because his work was retarded by Janet's absences. The best proof of his state of mind was a threat he had made to engage another secretary.

"I wish he would," said Claude, compressing his lips, while Janet tried not to look conscience-stricken.

"Of course he doesn't in the least mean to part with Araminta," continued Cornelia, wallowing in the emotional effect of her news. "Not he. Cato knows a good thing when he sees it. But he doesn't approve of Janet's parties with you, Lothario. The principle is wrong, he claims."

"The principle is wrong!" cried both Claude and Janet with very different inflections.

Cornelia laughed musically up and down the scale.

"Just fancy what he said: 'A friendship which doesn't grow spontaneously out of joint partnership in work is built on quicksands.'"

"He's a fanatic," said Harry Kelly, breaking his silence and one of Cornelia's saucers in the violence of his feelings.

"Nonsense, Hercules," she said, in a tone that poured contempt on his vehemence. "He has simply let all the soft places grow in his head and all the hard places in his heart."

Janet went into the next room to hang up her hat and coat. Claude followed her.

"I think Robert's ideas are getting more and more unbalanced," he said, dictatorially. "If I were you, Janet, I'd finish up my work with him at once."

"It takes two to break a bargain, Claude."

"Well, you might at least keep your relations with him on a strictly business footing—and as little of that as possible."

He ignored her slight mutinous gesture.

"He's a difficult man to get along with," he went on. "Look how even Hutchins Burley had to fire him. And as if his dismissal from the *Chronicle* were not bad enough, he joins these Guildsmen people who are trying to wreck the very basis of modern society. That has just about dished him, as far as the Out-laws are concerned. They all cut him now."

A new imperiousness crept into his voice as he added:

"I wish that, for my sake, you would not be seen going about with him, ever."

He accepted her silence as an evidence of tacit consent.

III

The very next afternoon, before a full hour's writing and typing had been done, Robert amazed Janet by proposing that they suspend work and take a walk.

"I want particularly to talk to you," he said.

"About what?"

"About love," said Robert, gravely.

What girl could resist an invitation like that? Despite Claude's stern admonition, Janet did not wait to be urged.

They walked near the East River towards the gas-house district, and presently turned into a recreation pier which was almost deserted. Clearly, Robert was looking for a very private and sequestered corner.

On the way, every topic was broached except the one that Robert had advanced as an excuse for truancy. Did suspense sharpen Janet's anticipation? No. Janet was curious, but not consumedly so. She had a marvelous power of attracting confidences and was quite used to having young men, who had known her only a few days, confide in her their love affairs, their religious or financial troubles, and indeed the whole history of their lives. True, Robert might be in love, not with another girl but with herself. Having no false modesty, Janet entertained the suspicion for a moment. Only for a moment, however. For the presumption against it seemed conclusive.

Meanwhile, they walked happily along, until Robert found the spot that suited him. This was at the end of the pier farthest from the street. No watchman being in sight, they sat down on a great terminal beam and let their legs swing over the green and choppy water.

The Janet who laughed and chatted with Robert was a very different girl from the Janet who was accustomed to hang romantically on Claude's lips. Nothing, of course, could equal the magnetism of Claude or match the fire and glory of their mutual passion. Still, in Claude's presence she seemed constantly to be playing up to some magnificent part; she felt like a cross between, say, the Lady of Shalott and the ecstatic lady in the Song of Songs. Without denying that it was a rapturous game, a game well worth the candle, she found it a trifle exhausting.

With Robert, on the other hand, the high-tension, party-dress Janet could be put away (so to speak) and the simple, work-a-day, blouse-and-skirt Janet substituted. Now Janet was the kind of girl who always looked her worst in her best things and was most herself when least dressed up. Naturally, she did not apply this symbol to her two friendships. Being a young, rebellious, and infatuated young lady, how could she? Besides, had she done so, she might have

reasoned the matter out to a disturbing conclusion.

"Well, Robert," she said, cheerily. "Begin, and tell me all that's in your heart of hearts."

"It's not my heart I mean to talk about. It's yours."

"Mine! What an idea! Why, my heart's in the pink of condition. Positively no inspection needed.

'Oh my heart is a free and a fetterless thing,
A wave of the ocean, a bird on the wing.'

I don't mean to say that it's a flighty object, though," she added, with a smile.

"No, if it were, it would be much easier to talk to you about it," said Robert.

"What do you mean?"

"Well, a whole century separates the Janet I first knew—the Janet who hesitated to go to a picture play on the Sabbath—from the Janet who reads Bernard Shaw and Bertrand Russell, attends labor meetings on Sundays, and catches each newest whiff of radical opinion. The change takes one's breath away."

"You admit it's a change for the better, don't you?"

"In every way but one."

"Which one?"

"You have taken Cornelia too seriously. Her views on sex are morbid and totally unsuited for adoption by a healthy, inexperienced girl."

"Now, Robert, please don't begin that over again. You've said it all before."

"I shall say it and say it again until I've convinced you. Even you must admit that Cornelia has a chronic grudge against men."

"Well, it isn't so unnatural, after her unhappy love affair, is it?"

"Precisely. As a result of that love affair, all her sex emotions are inverted. She sublimates her sex into acts of spite, usually unconscious acts. For instance, she is subtly encouraging you to run off with Claude as she ran off with Percival Houghton. Forgive me for mentioning it, Janet. But I can't bear to see you duped. Believe me, if you followed her example, with an equally unhappy result, she would like nothing better."

"Claude is not in the least like Percival Houghton," said Janet coldly. "Whatever else he may be, he isn't a cad."

"Of course he isn't," Robert hastened to say.

"Then stop making horrid comparisons. It is such an easy thing to do. Suppose I were to say that you are like an X-ray machine, finding out all that is bad in people, while Claude is like a magnet drawing out all that is good in them. What would you say to that comparison?"

"I should accept it," replied Robert, with a smile. "The superiority of the

X-ray in point of social usefulness is, I think, beyond dispute.”

”Oh, with you social usefulness is everything, and personal happiness nothing!”

”Suppose Claude is a magnet,” he went on, unheeding her exclamation. ”Is that a good reason for flying into his arms, like a willless iron filing, on *his* terms instead of on your own?”

”On my terms! What do you mean?”

”Janet, my friendship will be worse than useless to you unless I can tell you exactly what is in my mind. I either do that or hold my peace forever. Will you let me speak frankly?”

”Will I let the rain fall or the sun shine? I’d like to see the person who could stop you from speaking frankly. But please don’t attack Claude.”

”Have no fear. I don’t intend to play the part of the heroine’s second friend confidentially warning her against the first. What I want to urge, with all the force I can, is this: if you mean to live with Claude, why not marry him?”

”Quite apart from my own preferences in the matter, Robert, how do you know that Claude wants to marry?”

”Oh, no doubt he doesn’t want to. In the eyes of the modern man, marriages made in Heaven are as popular as canned beef made in America. But what of that? Claude is young, self-willed, accustomed to get his own way, and—he worships you. And you—well, I have no superlatives to do justice to the case. You are you. You could marry him in a twinkling if you played your cards right.”

Janet laughed.

”Oh, the heart is a free and a fetterless thing—” she sang, saucily.

”Stop coquetting like Cornelia,” he remonstrated. ”You are making it totally impossible for me to talk rationally. Are you a butterfly or a woman? Am I discussing your glorious voice or your precarious future? Be serious.”

”How can I be serious when you ask me to be a bargain hunter in hearts and coronets?”

”Now you’re acting like one of Marie Corelli’s heroines, Janet!”

”Thank you. Why are you so anxious to have me get married?”

”Because I think that your fine spirit of independence and your divine gift of imagination ought not lightly to be wasted. Because I think, in short, that you have a nobler purpose in the world than mere loving or being loved.”

”Than mere loving!”

”Yes. The world was not made for the gratification of our own feelings.”

”So you are fond of saying, Robert. But, as a matter of fact, I’m not trying to gratify my feelings. I’m trying to carry out my principles.”

”The world isn’t a grindstone to sharpen our principles on, either,” said Robert, with prompt conclusiveness.

"From watching you, I rather thought it was," said Janet, stung into sudden irony.

There was a pause. He tried to take her hand, but she drew it sharply away, with difficulty repressing her tears. After a while, he began again, with impetuous candor:

"Janet, don't go into this adventure with your eyes shut. Remember, you can't give yourself up to an experiment in free love without giving up everything else. That is the strongest argument against the step. All your gifts, all your energy, all your purpose will be consumed in explaining, defending, evading. Your whole life will be one long course of swallowing the consequences and warding off criticism. Do you wish to be a life-long martyr to free love, like Cornelia?"

"I've never posed as a martyr to anything—not even to drink," said Janet, recovering her good humor.

"Then why become one? Martyrdom is all very well for fanatics like your mother who enjoy it, or for idlers like Cornelia who have nothing better to do. But you are neither a fanatic nor an idler; you are a worker."

"But when one believes that an institution has served its turn, isn't it one's duty to destroy it?"

"Institutions are never destroyed. They are sometimes transformed, as tadpoles are into frogs."

"Are you sure? Cornelia says that every free union is a mine exploded beneath marriage. I think she's right."

"A mine! Better call it a squib, Janet. And all the trouble you invite will be like laying a long and elaborate fuse to ignite the squib."

"Oh, you have no ideals left!" she cried, revolted at this demolition of her romantic conceptions.

"I have a little common sense left," he answered. "We can't escape the customs or the institutions of our time, however much we may disbelieve in them. Flying in the face of a decadent institution does not destroy it. It only gives it a new lease of life by putting the props of public sympathy and traditional morality at the disposal of its defenders. Look at the case of George Eliot. Did her entirely justifiable free union help the cause of marriage reform? No. It actually turned her into a defender of the very institution she had set out to challenge."

"What a very wise young man; this wise young man must be," she said, parodying a line of Gilbert's.

"No side-tracking! Promise me you'll turn the matter over in your mind."

"In my mind? Yes. But what about my heart?" she said. And with dancing eyes she sang:

"Oh, the heart is a free and a fetterless thing,

A wave of the ocean, a bird on the wing.”

Her voice turned his blood to paradisaical currents.

”If you sing that again, I shall kiss you on the spot, in public or out of it,” said the tormented young man.

”Why, Robert, what abysses of passion lurk hidden in you!” she exclaimed mockingly. ”I believe you said you’d always treat me just like a man. Do you talk like this to your male chums?” Then demurely: ”We’d better go home at once.”

On the way home, she resumed the discussion. In a more earnest tone than before, she thanked him for taking so much trouble over her and promised to think about his point of view very carefully. She insisted, however, that his reasoning had not convinced her. She and Claude appeared very well suited to each other now, but who could tell what changes a few years might not bring forth?

”True,” said Robert. ”But the future is dark to us in other matters besides marriage. As things stand now, Claude couldn’t do better, and you might do worse. And if the very worst happened, you could get a divorce.”

She replied by reminding him that she and Claude were not the kind of people who lightly repudiated their ties or the responsibilities that grew out of them. Consequently, once married, they would probably remain so for life. In any event, if she changed her mind, it would be infinitely simpler to do so under the other plan.

”Say I grew tired of Claude, for instance, and quite suddenly wanted you,” she said with a mischievous look.

”Well, it couldn’t be done,” said Robert, decisively, her complacent assumption jarring his pride.

”Oh, couldn’t it?” She flashed him a challenging glance.

”Not in my case,” he returned, in clipped tones. ”Free love is the most expensive luxury in the world. Only the very rich or the unambitious can pay for it. As for me, I never can have anything to do either with free love or with a woman who has had a free lover. It would ruin all my plans.”

Janet replied with the faintest shrug, whereat all his self-assertion promptly went bang. Neither yielded a point; but they divined each other’s feelings and, as they walked on, steered the conversation into lighter channels until they got back to the Lorillard tenements.

Standing in the dark hallway at the foot of the stairs, Janet told him with a touch of impishness that his logic had been irresistible.

”Has it? It hasn’t touched your heart,” he said, somewhat dolefully.

”Ah, well, the heart is a free and a fetterless thing—”

As Janet darted up the stairs, the door of an apartment opened overhead, and she fancied she heard Claude's voice.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

I

On her own floor, she halted and, with Robert's kiss still burning on her lips, waited until he had turned into Kelly's flat. Then she opened the door of Number Fifteen.

Sure enough, Claude was there, full of resentment at her absence on a jaunt with Robert. She thanked her stars that Robert's visible presence could not fan the flame. Even so, Claude acted badly enough. He was in a vertigo of jealousy, and at small pains to hide the fact.

At first, Janet tried to carry the matter off lightly, and strove to mollify him by saying that Robert had asked her to consider a very serious problem. She was a little conscience-stricken over this fib, but believed it the best thing to say. She pointed out that while it was with Robert that she worked, it was with Claude, after all, that she played.

At this Cornelia executed an unnecessarily tuneful laugh.

"There's nothing like a man's problem for disarranging a girl's hair," she observed, dropping the inevitable dress she was busy with. "Araminta, your hat's a sight! Do look at yourself in the glass."

Naturally, Claude was more furious than ever. He sulked in silence whilst rebuffing the advances that Janet made. Finally, maddened by Cornelia's pin-prick innuendoes, he strode out, flashing a terrible look at Janet as he did so.

II

When will the play of Othello be absolutely unintelligible? Perhaps five hundred years from now or, let us hope, sooner. Surely, at some distant date, the private ownership of a woman by a man or of a man by a woman will seem as barbarous

as the rings our ancestors stuck through their noses or as unfashionable as the three hundred concubines of Solomon. And the jealous passions arising from this ownership will be classed with rage, hysteria and other forms of emotional disease or pathological bad manners.

Indeed, do not the best people already look upon a pronounced fit of jealousy as an exhibition of arrested development or mental inferiority? If the jealous man is not destroyed, root and branch, by the refuse-reduction plant of ridicule, he will be rendered obsolete and perhaps extinct by the spread of the conviction that, after a human being has discharged his obligations to himself and his obligations to the community, he owes no other personal allegiance whatever.

Herself singularly free from jealousy, Janet was in direct touch with three persons whom the malady afflicted sorely. Besides the case of Claude, she had on her hands the case of Mrs. Howard Madison Grey in business, and the case of Cornelia at home.

Cornelia, who was no believer in keeping her emotions hermetically sealed, made her frame of mind patent to Janet on an unforgettable occasion. It was not the first, nor was it to be the last, of a series of blows, which were fast converting Janet to the belief that her own opinion of Cornelia was founded on an illusion, whilst Robert's opinion was the correct one.

For some time past it had been Harry Kelly's practice to come into Number Fifteen before breakfast and put the two girls "through their paces," as he called the light drill he prescribed for them. Always on the lookout for some new outlet for his tremendous supply of energy, the physical culture expert had hit on the scheme of improving Cornelia's bad health by reforming her bodily habits. Cornelia, who considered early rising bad form and breathing exercises a superstition, was for a prompt veto of the scheme, but Janet's cordial support of it saved the day.

So, early in the morning of the day after Claude's wrathful departure, Kelly, in gymnasium garb, made his entrance as usual. The athlete was not a man of many words. Words, after all, were not needed in his case, since, as he strode along with the nervous muscularity of a Rodin statue, his lithe, powerful body proclaimed his mission to all the world.

"Wake up, girls," he called out, "and fill your bellies with the good south wind."

The unvarnished word always moved Cornelia to a protesting shriek and a well-trilled "How do you do!" Kelly enjoyed both immensely.

After throwing the windows in the sitting room wide open, he paced the floor like a panther in his den. Janet was the first to appear. She was still drowsy, and her short dark hair, in tight somnolent curls, hung down her back. She wore a short-skirted bathing suit, a custom Kelly held in high regard for the business

in hand.

As she toddled sleepily towards the athlete, the energy pent up in his frame unbottled itself on the impulse of the moment. Catching her at the waist, he lifted her high up in the air and spun her around three times as if she were a featherweight. Then, clasping her lightly by shoulder and leg, he set her tenderly down again.

"Do it again, Hercules, do!" articulated Cornelia, coming in just at the close of this maneuver, whilst Janet, still laughing and protesting, was in the act of resuming control of her well-shaped limbs.

But as there was that in Cornelia's eye which belied her command, Kelly was careful to make no move to execute it.

Cornelia's golden hair was done up on her head in a makeshift coil, she herself being enveloped in a long kimono that trailed to the ground. Kelly looked at this garment without ecstasy, a fact that did not escape the wearer's observation.

"Hercules," she commanded peevishly, "you might close this window near me. I've got a very bad headache from too little sleep. Do you want me to catch my death of cold, too?"

He complied with all haste, and then pitched into his calisthenics, Janet joining him with gusto. Cornelia followed suit, though in a very languid spirit; and soon she stopped altogether, on the pretext of unusual weakness.

Her chilly aloofness cut the period short. It was now time to prepare breakfast, a task theoretically shared by all four, including Robert, who was unaccountably late this morning. Habitually, three of them did the actual work while Cornelia "directed," a process which, she firmly believed, enabled the others to save time. But, as Robert sardonically put it, "Cornelia's method of showing us a short cut is to send us round Robin Hood's barn."

It was Kelly's special business to convert a part of the kitchen into a dining room, and thereafter to make the toast. He had just reached this stage, when Cornelia took another hand in the proceedings.

"Go down and get the letters for me, Hercules," she said suddenly, relieving him of the toaster.

"Why, what's the hurry? Rob always gets them after breakfast."

"Oh, do let Harry make the toast," said Janet, chiming in with him. She, too, had thought of the letters, and was in no hurry to bid the devil good morning. "Nobody can eat toast the way you make it, Cornelia. And Robert is sure to—"

"No doubt Robert will do exactly as *you* tell him," said Cornelia, interrupting her sweetly. "Please let Harry do as *I* tell him. Hercules, go *now*, please. I have a notion there'll be some famous news for me this morning."

Kelly, having been her devoted (and despised) slave since the day he ejected Hutchins Burley, obeyed submissively by mere force of habit. He ran down the

three flights of stairs and in a very short time came back again with a single letter.

It was for Janet from Claude, and sarcasm was its prevailing tone.

The writer began by deploring his fatuous inability to remain away from her side. He pointed out that, as his chance visits might take her by surprise or catch her off guard, not to say worry her into thinking of promises she had no mind to keep, he should take steps to rid her of his manifestly superfluous attentions. He had accordingly arranged to spend some time with his friends the Armstrongs, in Huntington. By doing so he should at least please his father, which was better than nothing, certainly better than not pleasing either himself or her.

In short, it was just such a petulant note as a spoiled woman's darling like Claude might be expected to write. Having always received complete submission from women, he regarded the least opposition to his self-indulgence as outrageous and even wicked or perhaps blasphemous.

The depth and passion of Janet's nature were not easily stirred, but this letter startled her out of her usual lightheartedness. She sat down in a chair by the window and looked out fixedly, in an effort to repress her feelings. Kelly, sympathetic and bewildered, gave vent to sundry heartening murmurs and exclamations; and, as these accomplished little, he moved dishes attractively and hopefully around Janet's empty place.

From her point of vantage at the table, Cornelia surveyed her handiwork with a pious simulation of sadness, surveyed it, and found that it was not so bad.

Janet blue and still, Kelly heavily anxious, Cornelia sweetly sanctimonious, such was the curious tableau that Robert saw when he came in, his slender frame and vigorous movements forming a direct contrast to the static spectacle before him.

"Now, see what you've done, Cato!" declaimed Cornelia, in one of those complacent greetings which only she could make sublime.

She fluttered Claude's note aloft and called out the sender's name for Robert's information.

Ignoring her, but grasping the import of the scene, Robert went over to Janet's side and asked her in all simplicity whether he could be of any service whatever.

But she, to hide her tears, turned decisively away from him. Robert gave her movement a totally different interpretation, drew back, and walked quickly out of the room.

III

The alarms and excursions for which Claude and Cornelia were responsible might well have monopolized Janet's mind. But her thoughts were kept in flux by a thunderstorm which threatened her peace from another quarter.

The new cloud on her horizon came from no less a person than Mrs. Howard Madison Grey, the wife of her employer.

Mrs. Grey served Janet as a symbol, a symbol opposed to the Outlaws. The Outlaws were a convenient symbol of the world *within* Kips Bay. Mrs. Grey was an equally pat symbol of the world without.

It amused Janet to study her own reactions to these two symbols and to analyze her experiences with the moral codes symbolized.

According to one of the primary conventions of the Outlaws, sex was anybody's to have and nobody's to hold; there was no recognized private property in sex. In Kips Bay, Janet had acted in the spirit (though not in the letter) of this convention. And the results had been disastrous.

On the other hand, in the world beyond the model tenements, the right of private property in sex was absolute. In Mrs. Grey's world, Janet had acted in the spirit and even in the letter of this convention. And again the results had been disastrous.

The second disaster materialized slowly. Its point of departure was the visit paid by an ex-President of the United States to a performance of Mr. Grey's third play, "The Great Reprieve."

As originally written, this was a drama in which a Vermont Yankee resigns to a younger brother the girl he madly loves, after which lofty sacrifice he starts life anew in the Klondike, makes a fortune there, and later turns up for a brief visit to the old homestead. To his dismay he learns that the girl of his dreams has been left a widow and that, with poverty and distress staring her in the face, she has no choice but to take up the lot of an actress in the great Subway Circuit. Nothing but his hand in marriage can save her from the doom in store for her! And the curtain falls on the Great Reprieve.

The play was a triumph of mediocrity in conception, construction, and style; yet for some unaccountable reason it fell flat. The producer was reluctant to accept the verdict of the playgoers for a fact, but a second footing-up of the box-office revenues conquered his reluctance completely.

Half a dozen play-surgeons—writers of Broadway successes, high-priced, fifth-rate super-hacks, before whose names the public prostrated itself—were hastily called into consultation and an immediate and drastic operation was ad-

vised.

No time was wasted in thinking. All six consultants took a hand, so did the producer, so did the favorite chauffeur of the producer's second best mistress. Three days and three nights of heroic writing, drinking, and rehearsing followed. At the end of this furious interlude, "The Great Reprieve" had been whipped, or as the favorite chauffeur said, "Goulasht" into shape.

The chief character in the revised version was a typical American boy of fifteen (erstwhile the heroine's brother), and upon his pranks, antics, impudence, and callowness, the play now pivoted. The lad's capacity for noisy pertness and imbecile clownage was represented as inexhaustible, yet even so, the producer expressed a fear that the audience might not be equal to the intellectual pressure of the dialogue. Relaxing incidents were introduced—a woman purring over a poodle dog, a chorus girl spouting the real American language invented by George Ade, a squawking parrot, and a Southern mammy (out of "Uncle Tom's Cabin") worshipping the ground the leading juvenile treads on.

These features were warranted to give the play its "universal appeal"!

Dramatic action there was none. Why cast pearls? After all, there was plenty of movement, plenty of "pep" and "kick" as the producer said. All the characters made their entrances and exits with frenzied vehemence and, whilst on the stage, jerked arms and body and legs ceaselessly to and fro, as if in the last throes of St. Vitus' Dance. The audience would get its money's worth of "speed"—so much was provided for, if nothing else was. The dialogue was spoken with a short, sharp, pop-gun explosiveness, except in the maudlin sentimental scenes in which it was drawled out into one world-without-end whine. Apart from these details, nothing in particular was to happen in the play; for nothing in particular mattered. However, a squealing child was kept in reserve, ready to be trotted out for "sure-fire" applause, if the "action" should chance to flag.

In its renovated form, Mr. Grey hardly recognized "The Great Reprieve." It seemed to him that his comedy had become an exact replica of each of the other ten American comedies then playing in Times Square. This, though Mr. Grey was no intellectual giant, made a difference to his artist's pride. It made no difference to the Broadway theatregoers. They fairly devoured the play. They swallowed all the old wheezes and all the old slush and all the George Ade lingo and all the Southern mammy stuff. They swallowed it all without winking. Despite the fears of the producer, they proved themselves to be almost fully up to the intellectual level of the fifteen-year-old leading juvenile. They greeted his every act of clownage and horseplay with salvos of applause. They laughed themselves sick over him. And when the poodle dog and the baby appeared, the applause brought down the rafters.

To put it mildly, Mr. Howard Madison Grey was stupefied. However, the

success of "The Great Reprieve" became the talk of the town. An ex-President of the United States went to see it and drenched his box with the tears of hilarity and contentment. Next day, he described the play as "a clean, wholesome play of American life, manners and thought!—every one hundred per cent American will be satisfied with it."

This description was henceforth underscored in every advertisement of "The Great Reprieve." Seats were sold ten weeks in advance. The producer and his crew of play-salvagers added another feather to their caps. And Mrs. Howard Madison Grey began to look for an apartment on upper Park Avenue.

IV

The ensuing increase in the volume of engagements and correspondence threw Janet together with Mr. Grey for uninterrupted stretches, oftener than Mrs. Grey thought wise.

Before long, the author's wife noted significant alterations in her husband's behavior.

Mrs. Howard Madison Grey was nothing if not scientific. She believed religiously in the scientific method and applied it to all her activities, even to her excursions in jealousy. As she hadn't read "Science and Power" by Fitzfield Tyler, the efficiency engineer, for nothing, she understood thoroughly that the proper method for scientific research proceeds by three stages, namely:

One: Observing facts, without any preconceived notion.

Two: Imagining a general explanation or hypothesis that establishes the relation of cause and effect between two groups of facts.

Three: Verifying this hypothesis, a process of determining by means of personally conducted observations, whether the hypothesis fits the facts it proposes to explain.

Observing, imagining, verifying—these were the three stages the trained investigator had to grasp. And Mrs. Howard Madison Grey grasped them with considerable kinetic energy.

In the first place, observation of the library during work time ceased to reveal Mr. Grey in the careless act of dictating in shirt sleeves and suspenders or of puffing cigarette smoke unconcernedly towards Janet's innocent lungs. Instead, it disclosed him in a handsome velvet smoking jacket and betrayed the astonishing fact that from the very moment the smoking jacket was exhibited

the smoking habit was suppressed. Clearly, Mr. Grey's behavior in the past and his behavior in the present showed the existence of two utterly different groups of facts.

To imagine a general explanation which should connect these two groups of facts was the second and by long odds the easiest step. Mrs. Howard Madison Grey formulated the hypothesis that some perverse piece of femininity had lost her head over Mr. Grey's resplendent fame and fortune, and had set out to tempt him into the primrose path of dalliance.

The third step was to verify this hypothesis with a series of experiments.

Mrs. Grey began by putting Janet through a systematic cross-examination. Didn't she think men looked revolting in shirt sleeves and suspenders? Quite so. Frankly, hadn't she simply longed to know a great literary genius intimately? Naturally! And what might be her views on the subject of nicotine? She thought smoking a disgusting habit? Ah, well!

These answers were supplemented by scraps of information obtained, it must be confessed, by experiments that might have daunted any but a most dispassionate investigator. Disregarding ethics, it is an open question whether a personally conducted observation is better served by studying truth face to face or by studying her through a keyhole. Mrs. Grey's contribution to the answer was to adopt the latter plan on the principle that all is fair in love and science.

She ratified the somewhat precarious keyhole method by the surer method of sudden sallies into the library. She heard Mr. Grey addressing his secretary in musically resonant tones, and saw him showing undue solicitude for her comfort. Nay more, she surprised them in animated, unworkmanlike conversations. True, she did not get the precise drift of these talks, but she was morally certain that the talkers were discussing six of the deadly sins and wishing the seventh. Though further proof was scarcely needed, she found the straw that topped the climax. Mr. Grey offered to double Janet's salary without request. The conclusion forced itself on Mrs. Grey that her hypothesis was incontestably established. It brought light out of darkness and order out of chaos, besides fitting all the facts it proposed to explain.

She lost no time in acting on the verified conclusion.

One Monday morning before Howard Madison Grey returned from a week-end on the New Jersey coast, she intercepted Janet.

"The new play," she said accusingly, "isn't progressing very fast."

"No," admitted Janet, "it isn't. So many topical matters have had to be disposed of lately that the final copy of the play has been held back."

Janet could scarcely dwell on her employer's growing penchant for conversation with her when his wife was presumed to be securely occupied.

"Mr. Grey," said his wife, half reflectively, "Mr. Grey has the creative tem-

perament.”

She frequently aired this phrase; it had, she believed, the ring and tang of distinction. Privately, she thought that the artistic temperament incapacitated a man from the sane discharge of his most elementary duties.

”The creative temperament,” she went on, ”is too fine to cope with the details of business.”

She gave Janet to understand that it was imperative that the success of ”The Great Reprieve” should be followed up without delay.

”Mr. Sarsfield, the manager,” continued Mrs. Grey, ”has just telephoned anxiously for the next manuscript.”

”Mr. Grey is still working on the revision of the third act,” said Janet. ”As soon as he finishes it, I shall rush the whole play through. Of course, I can type the first two acts at once.”

”Yes, do. But can you work uninterruptedly here? Perhaps you could finish it faster at home—instead of coming here?”

Janet jumped at the chance. ”Certainly,” she said, ”I can finish it at home in half the time.”

Mrs. Grey was taken aback. On second thoughts, she put Janet’s eagerness down to the new feminist strategy.

”There’s the risk,” she said, uneasily picturing the precious pages at the mercy of the New York transit services.

Anxious to escape the assiduities of the wife, if not of the husband, Janet gave reckless assurances of her devotion to the manuscript.

Mrs. Grey finally assented to the arrangement. Janet was to take the manuscript in sections and, if the scheme worked well, she might do all future typewriting for the playwright in the same way. She need come to the Greys’ house only for the dictation.

”I hope Mr. Grey will be satisfied,” Janet could not help saying, once the bundle of papers was safely tucked under her arm.

”I hope so,” said Mrs. Grey meditatively. ”But who can fathom the ways of the creative temperament—?”

She left an eloquent hiatus.

From which Janet inferred that the shortest way with that particular temperament was to let the explanation follow the act.

This bout with the green-eyed monster had taken place shortly before Claude's petulant flight to the Armstrong estate in Huntington. To Janet the whole affair was very ludicrous, and none the less so in that she had given Mrs. Grey little cause for anxiety.

Not for a moment had the newspaper acclaim of Howard Madison Grey imposed upon her. Having measured her own wits with the playwright's, she had formed an estimate of his talents which caused her to reject with contempt the fantastic eulogies of him in the press. She continued to see in Mr. Grey what she had always seen, namely, a decidedly middle-aged man with a bald head and a graceless figure, a man whose amorous pleasantries and elderly sentimentalism inspired her with the same distaste as the odor of stale tobacco smoke with which his person seemed to reek.

She knew quite well that she had captured his emotions and his illusions, but as she had found no difficulty in keeping his advances within bounds she had seen no reason for giving the matter serious thought.

On the day of Mrs. Grey's interference, Janet returned to Kips Bay in high feather. This had mystified Cornelia, who could not see in her friend's recital of events any great cause for congratulation. She gloomily predicted that Janet would soon lose her position altogether. Janet said she didn't care. A change was the only stimulant she ever took or needed. And any change, even a change for the worse, would serve the purpose admirably.

Cornelia wondered what was back of all this optimism until Janet pointed out that, with her new program of work, she could repay Robert for his many services to her. The firm of Barr & Lloyd could now carry on business in the mornings as well as in the afternoons, Robert sharing with her the work that came in from the Greys and perhaps from other authors, just as she had shared with him the work that came in from the League of Guildsmen. This statement was received in silence by Cornelia, who drew her own conclusions and communicated them only to Harry Kelly.

Janet's offer to pool her secretarial jobs from all sources with her typewriting for the League had been very welcome to Robert. His funds were running uncomfortably low just then. The reason was that the League was not a paying concern. The economic changes advocated by the Guildsmen were so drastic in character and called for so much discipline and far-sighted cooperation on the part of the working classes that the very people whom they were intended to benefit fought shy of them. Leaders of labor received the Guild proposals coldly, and the rank and file gave them little sympathy and less support.

For several mornings Robert and Janet pitched in with a will on the typewriting of Mr. Grey's manuscripts. In the afternoons they had continued the League work. Their comradeship was a happy and an intimate one, how happy

and how intimate Janet did not fully realize until long after it was over. Perhaps the most delightful periods were those in which they proofread the manuscripts they had finished. They took turns reading aloud, and endless was the fun they extracted from the lines of Mr. Grey's new play. More delightful still were excursions into the fields of literature and economics, the play or some Guild pamphlet furnishing the starting point.

Thus the partnership of Barr & Lloyd had gone on swimmingly for two weeks, until the afternoon on the recreation pier, the memorable afternoon that had begun with the long talk about free love, and had ended in the model tene-ment with Robert's kiss and Claude's sulky fit of jealousy.

VI

On the morning after this fateful day, Janet had to go to the Howard Madison Greys' to return some finished manuscripts.

She had gone there for this purpose some two or three times a week, since the last arrangement with Mr. Grey. On these occasions, the playwright himself met her. And usually he spun out the interview as long as possible, due regard being had to the prudent Mrs. Grey who, hovering watchfully in the background, reminded Janet of a quiet but overcautious museum attendant.

Mrs. Grey would frequently contrive to come into the room for the undisguised purpose of glancing at or even criticizing Janet's typewriting. The expectation of such a visit made Janet, on this particular day, decidedly nervous. For, what with her distraction by Claude's anger, and a sudden crotchiness that had overtaken the typewriter, her papers bore the glaring evidence of innumerable corrections and erasures.

However, Mrs. Grey seemed for once to be off duty. So at least Janet concluded from the fact that the author himself received her with much less than his customary constraint and far more than his ordinary enthusiasm. And not only was he in the best of spirits; he was groomed to perfection. He had put on a suit cut in a fashionable English mode, with quaint cuffs on the sleeves of the coat as well as on the bottoms of the trousers.

These and other details of sartorial artistry were probably lost on Janet, but she was sensible enough of the general effect to surmise that her employer had dressed himself to conquer. This surmise would have forced itself upon her in any event, for Mr. Grey soon launched into repeated hints looking to an assignation

with her outside his home, hints that presently crystallized into a direct invitation to a dinner at Sherry's.

According to the principles of Kips Bay—and Janet at this time subscribed to these principles—there was absolutely no reason why Mr. Grey should not invite her and absolutely no reason why she should not accept. But the heart has a reason to which reason must bow. Janet's heart was in submission to but one law, and that was the law of her integrity. She could no more strike up a friendship with a man to whom she was not naturally, spontaneously drawn than she could fly. And she could hardly pretend to be drawn to Mr. Grey. No, not even for the pleasure of giving the suspicious Mrs. Grey something to be suspicious about.

Besides, the man was too cocksure. He appeared to share Mrs. Grey's conviction that the slightest nod on his part would incline Janet (or any other woman) to follow him to the ends of the earth. This was amusing. But it was also irritating to one's pride of sex.

The trouble with Mr. Grey was that, having realized the first of the two ambitions which governed his desires, he felt satisfied he was about to realize the second. As an author, he had conquered the public; as a man, he now meant to conquer women.

To Janet, Mr. Grey's illusions about himself were as transparent as his illusions about her. It was plain that he took with the utmost seriousness the greatness that had recently been thrust upon him. His reasoning was quite simple. If success in pleasing the crowd and its leaders did not imply the possession of superior gifts and of a masterly technique in exploiting those gifts, what did it imply?

This reasoning struck Janet as puerile. Yet Mr. Grey could hardly be expected to share her view that talent and superb execution had never by themselves attracted the plaudits of the crowd, or that the only man who could please the million was the man born with the taste of the million. Mr. Grey had been lucky enough to inherit this taste. Why demand that he look a gift horse in the mouth?

But the judgment of youth is direct and pitiless! It seemed nothing less than ridiculous to Janet that Mr. Grey should seriously pose as a fount of the divine fire, and calmly invite her to become a ministering angel to the sacred fount. What was still more ridiculous was that he disguised his offer in weird, roundabout phrases calculated to enable her to "save her face."

He was still confidently urging the project, when Mrs. Grey swept in and fell upon them like a moral landslide.

Mrs. Grey did not stop to account for her unexpected return, to disclose how long she had been eavesdropping, or to listen to Mr. Grey's stumbling and

embarrassed explanations. Her belligerent manner left no doubt that she put the very worst construction on what she had heard. Ignoring Janet altogether, she opened her batteries full on her husband and discharged a broadside of questions, short, sharp and desolating.

Her questions were entirely rhetorical.

Was this the loyalty he had sworn to her, when she picked him out of the gutter of obscurity and married him? Had she not, all along, suspected that he was plotting an affair with this girl? No doubt the girl had been setting her cap at him, but was that a legitimate excuse for inconstancy? At his age, he ought to be beyond a desire to sow wild oats. Didn't he know that a mature man sowing his wild oats presented as idiotic a spectacle as if he were sucking his thumb? She didn't know or care what *his* family would think, but was he proposing to besmirch the unstained record of *her* family with a divorce scandal? And so on—

Janet listened in icy humiliation whilst the storm broke over and around her. She expected every moment to be caught up in it, whirled into its vortex, and destroyed.

What actually happened was that Mr. Grey played a ghastly imitation of his masterful hero in "The Klondike Mail," until his lady, infuriated by even this shadow of defiance, reached a degree of tension that would have burst a twelve-inch gun. Death and destruction were almost afoot when she spied the typewritten papers which Janet had just returned. She pounced upon these papers and violently projected them to a point within three inches of her spouse's nose, after which she regaled him with a description of the flaws in the typewriting and the deficiencies in the typist.

This description was pithy, elaborate, exhaustive, but it was not exactly verified.

Followed an effective oratorical pause. And then Mrs. Grey begged to be informed whether the quality of the work was not ample evidence that the worker came for no good and sufficient business reasons. No one venturing to reply, she hurled the manuscripts at the head of Mr. Grey's rapidly retreating form and, as her aim was marred by a trifling miscalculation, she picked up another document and took a shy at Janet. While Janet was warding off this missile, the playwright made good his escape.

"Really, Mrs. Grey," said Janet, standing her ground boldly as her indignation got the better of her fright, "you are behaving worse than a fishwife."

Mrs. Grey sobered down with incredible suddenness.

"My poor girl," she said, solicitously, "did I hit you?"

"You came within an ace of knocking out one of my eyes!"

"Just so. Within an ace. That was my intention, precisely. I aimed for effect, not for damage. I assure you I'm a first-rate shot."

Mrs. Grey had now composed her feelings and her dress, both of which had been considerably ruffled.

"A husband is hard to get nowadays," she went on, smiling, "but he is even harder to keep. When a charming girl makes this comparative difficulty a superlative one, she does a wife grave wrong. Still, under the circumstances, I forgive you."

"You mustn't presume too much on my wickedness," said Janet, smiling at this strange turn of affairs. "I'm disgracefully inexperienced."

"Inexperienced! Ah, well, men have an amazing weakness for some kinds of inexperience—in a girl. In a wife they're not so keen on it. My dear, if unmarried girls would only put themselves in a wife's place, what a lot of trouble they'd save—for us now and for themselves later on. But of course, they can't do it. They think marriage is a picnic on a motorcycle with the bride in the carriage attachment. What a dream! Marriage is more like a tennis game with the two players facing each other across the dividing line of sex. You'll find that out the day after the wedding! You'll know then that the only way to manage a husband is to discover his weakest point and keep driving at that until the game and the set are in your hands. Mr. Grey's weakest point is his horror of facing facts. He dreads a fact the way a boy dreads soap. I discovered that at our honeymoon hotel when we debated how to stop the waiter from serving us with cold soup. Rather than compel the waiter to change it, Mr. Grey tried to prove that the soup was really quite hot. No, I'm not the tartar you think I am. I don't object to a man having his fling now and then, provided it's a short fling. But I can't let him get into the grip of a girl of your sort, the permanent sort. That might introduce fatal complications, and I don't mean to take any chances."

"Then why did you let me come here in the first place?"

"Because you took me in completely," replied this astonishing woman. "You had none of the obvious female ways. You were almost pathetically businesslike and you seemed to be—well—no beauty. Excuse me for being frank."

"The excuses are all on my side, I'm sure," said Janet, highly amused.

"Not at all, my dear. I'm convinced I was quite wrong. You grow on one, even on a woman. I soon found out that beneath your dovelike innocence there was a serpentine wisdom. It's a magic combination. No man can resist it."

"Thank you, Mrs. Grey. This flattery is more than I deserve, but—"

"It's no good protesting. There is a devilish fascination about you. If I'm beginning to feel it myself, what must poor Mr. Grey feel?"

And with a gesture which betokened that, in these matters, feelings transcended verbal arguments and oral contracts, she paid Janet what was owing to her and made it clear that she need not come again.

At the door, she wished Janet good luck.

"My dear," she said, "as a typist you cut rather a poor figure. But that combination I spoke of—it's worth a fortune—"

Janet went away not knowing whether to laugh or to cry. A good cry would not have come amiss; and yet, as she counted up the fortunes of the last two days, she could not help observing that her mishaps had trod on one another's heels in a procession that was well-nigh comic. Claude's letter and flight, Cornelia's bad temper, her own involuntary rudeness to Robert, the crop of errors in the playwright's manuscript, Mrs. Grey's impertinences, and the crowning loss of her position—here was a downpour of calamities amounting to a regular deluge!

And not a single ray of sunshine in sight, either.

On second thoughts, she had to admit that this statement was not strictly true. For Robert would probably be home, and what an immense relief it would be to tell him all that had happened to her! At the same time she would be able to obliterate the effect of yesterday's rudeness.

For she guessed that Robert's feelings had been deeply hurt by her gesture of withdrawal from him. But she felt no doubt of her power to conciliate him or to conquer his just resentment. In fact, she had so little doubt of this power that, the nearer home she got, the more she looked forward to the prospect of exercising it.

Ah, yes, it would be simple and sweet to make up with Robert, and they should spend a very jolly afternoon together, working over sundry papers and planning new activities for the firm of Barr & Lloyd.

And (such is the peremptory, indomitable influence of the heart!), her spirits rose again. In the full flush of agreeable anticipation, she began to turn the day's adventures over in her mind. As she did so, she gave them a humorous twist, for she meant to relate them to Robert entertainingly, in return for his expected concession to her.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

I

On reaching her own street, Janet had to plough her way to the Lorillard tenements through shoals of children that scampered about as derelict as herself. She felt the keenest pity for these little tots who came from the very immodest ten-

ements not far away, where five or even eight people existed in a single room, defying the decencies of life by day and mocking them by night in order to live up to "the highest standard of living" in the world.

She did not expect Robert until two o'clock, when he regularly returned from the League of Guildsmen. In the interval she looked, as a matter of course, under Cornelia's alarm clock, where the four friends were in the habit of putting brief communications for one another. She found the following note addressed to her in Robert's painstaking hand:

Dear Janet:

Forgive me for not being on hand this afternoon. During the next few days, and perhaps longer, I shall be in Pittsburgh. For some time, therefore, the whole burden of the firm of Barr & Lloyd will have to rest on the shoulders of one partner. Lucky that this partner is so thoroughly staunch and dependable, isn't it?

What is taking me out of town is the strike in Pittsburgh. Thousands of steel workers have laid down their tools in protest against the conditions under which they are obliged to work. The contest between these men and their all-powerful employers is horribly uneven, and the apathy of the general public towards the issues at stake is appalling. Naturally, every agency that is pledged to the success of a healthy labor movement must pitch into this prickly business. For the strikers need all the help they can get, whether of a material or a moral kind.

It is on the moral side that our League of Guildsmen comes in. The recent war has filled the earth with indescribable bitternesses and resentments. It has also given sovereign strength to the idea that henceforth the control of the world's affairs must be taken away from the idlers and profiteers and given to the workers and producers. At every turn, omens of a vast incalculable change force themselves upon our senses.

Clearly, those who don't want a bloody revolution have got to work tooth and nail for a pacific one. Now the Guildsmen, being advocates of a change that shall be peaceful though drastic, have a vital interest in drumming it into people's heads that violence can never breed anything save violence and violence again.

You see, don't you, that I am needed there far more than here? Please believe that I'm sorry in the last degree to upset our joint business plans and to hold up "The Klondike Mail" on the typewriter at just the critical moment when Mr. Grey's double-dyed desperadoes are holding it up in the middle of the third act. It makes me feel like an accessory to the crime, all the more so in that it gives

you, at the secretarial end, the task of foiling one more villain.

Arrangements have been made at the League office for the delivery to you of another batch of Mss. Could you call in there tomorrow afternoon?

More later, as soon as my plans are surer.

Ever yours, Robert.

P.S. On second thoughts, it seems a shame that you should be saddled with a partner who is bound to be more or less on the jump. I recall the plan you confided to me last week, the plan of turning Barr & Lloyd into a real secretarial business on an extensive scale. With this on your mind, you may well fear that my haphazard movements will prove ruinous to any settled policy. If so, and whenever you can find a more stable associate, please have no compunction about making a change. We must not let sentiment stand in the way of good management.

"He can't even say good-bye without delivering a lecture," said Janet bitterly.

She felt aggrieved. Just when she needed Robert most, he left her in the lurch. True, his direct connection with the labor movement made his departure inevitable. But did he have to rush off to Pittsburgh the very moment the strike broke out? She supposed his haste was partly prompted by his injured feelings. If not, why had he so needlessly offered to dissociate himself from her, why, indeed, had he written such an entirely cold, unsympathetic letter?

"Like his cold, unsympathetic views on love," she said to herself, recalling with some scorn his severe, intolerant pronouncements on the free love theme.

She reviewed the business-like contents of the letter with a growing sense of desolation. It looked as though she were in for a dismal evening, one of those dismal evenings that are enormously good for us *afterwards*, because at the time they so thoroughly plough up our deepest feelings.

II

But the facts of the present were too disturbing to permit her to extract much consolation from a philosophy of the future.

For Janet's difficulties were by no means entirely sentimental.

Much as Claude's anger and Robert's coolness tortured her feelings, it was

the destruction of her plans that chiefly occupied her thoughts. These were the plans that Robert had referred to in his letter.

Ably assisted by Cornelia, whose power of sketching the most imposing schemes quite exhausted her capacity for executing even the humblest ones, Janet had mapped out a very ambitious career for herself. Her intention was to make the most of her stenographic foothold; to accumulate enough resources to permit a spur, so to speak, to be run into the domain of the law; and eventually to reach a point where the secretarial specialty and its legal intertwinings should be united in one occupation.

It was, as Cornelia all aglow remarked, a time when women were not only casting down the barriers raised by men around the old professions, but were actually bestirring themselves to carve out brand-new professions.

What Cornelia put into enthusiasm, Janet proposed to put into cold deeds.

As a first step in this direction, she resolved that the firm of Barr & Lloyd, which had been born in jest, should be reared in dead earnest. Her work for Mr. Grey, a certain amount of casual work which she was getting from friends of the playwright, and such odd jobs as Robert brought from the Guild League—these three sources were to form the basis of a secretarial office dealing with authors' manuscripts in relation to typing, revision, criticism, and so on.

In short, Barr & Lloyd (Barr first, because Robert, as an advocate of the absolute equality of men and women, insisted that the correct order of precedence was a strictly alphabetical one)—Barr & Lloyd were to be manuscript specialists, handling every conceivable matter linked up with the preparation and sale of manuscripts and the protection of authors' rights.

From Robert, Janet had extracted a promise to supervise the department of criticism and revision. Claude (this was before his flight in a fit of pique) had refused to take the project seriously. Cornelia, in her most pronounced *bel canto* style, had volunteered to "lend a helping hand" to the typewriting department and to give her moral support to most of the other departments. As Janet's last illusions about Cornelia were being speedily dissipated, and as she judged that some birds in a bush are worth ten in the hand, she contracted for Cornelia's moral support and nothing but her moral support in all the departments.

Then, as regards the legal department. Janet held that, in order to round out her business in the most complete way, one member of the firm ought to be equipped with a first-hand training in jurisprudence. She saw nothing for it but to be this member herself, and accordingly she had already made arrangements to attend the coming fall sessions of an Evening Law School. Needless to say, this part of her dream had not been so much as breathed to Claude.

Janet intended, as soon as she had passed her bar examination, to specialize on all points of law bearing on literary and dramatic productions, the rights of

authors, and the relations between the buyers and sellers of manuscripts. She had been put onto this idea by a popular short-story writer, one of Mr. Grey's friends. This man had assured her that the literary field, on its legal side, was practically a virgin field. Merchants, inventors, landlords, captains of industry and the like could, where the law touched their spheres of influence, find appropriate legal specialists with all the precedents, traditions, decisions, appeals, evasions, etc., at their fingers' ends. Authors alone were in no such happy case. The legal background of authorship was a vast morass of contradictions, quibbles and uncertainties. Authors were frequently at sea in respect of their rights, constantly handicapped in the matter of expert advice, and always liable to be done in the eye by the more unscrupulous members of the fraternity of editors, publishers, managers and agents.

This, then, was the field that Janet meant to conquer. She had a roseate vision of Barr & Lloyd occupying a suite of offices on the lower end of Madison or Park Avenue. If fortune favored her, these offices were to be staffed with ambitious young women assistants whom she would help to useful and honorable careers (as far as male prejudice and discrimination would allow). Barr & Lloyd, in other words, besides their primary business as manuscript practitioners, would have a secondary mission, namely, that of multiplying the avenues along which woman might march towards economic equality with men.

Such was the purpose which Janet had already begun to work for. She now saw all her plans collapsing like a pricked balloon. The action taken by Mrs. Grey meant the loss of much potential custom which she had hoped would grow by recommendation out of the Grey patronage. The most galling, stabbing fact in all this sorry business was the reflection that she had failed not merely in her human and business dealings but in her workmanship. If only she hadn't made a mess of those last manuscripts for the playwright, the ones she had prepared under the strain of Claude's tempestuous displeasure! Mrs. Grey's taunt still rankled in her ears: "As a typist, you cut a very poor figure—"

True, Mrs. Grey had tacked on another phrase—the one about her "magic combination." But what did this trumped-up compliment weigh against the maddening behavior of Claude and Robert?

Both of them had deserted her!

Janet was not addicted to the windy heroics cultivated by the Outlaws of Kips Bay, but for once she believed herself entitled to indulge in them. She really felt deserted. By Claude, by Robert, by Cornelia and, of course, by her family.

"How naturally I think of the family when I'm glum!" was her silent comment.

Her thoughts ran back to the time when she had left home in defiance of Mrs. Barr's ultimatum.

Since then, her mother had written one letter full of that spirit of Christian forbearance that has driven so many people into the devil's camp. After that, not another word from her. But there had followed a steady stream of appeals from her father, imploring her to come back at any price, swearing that life at home was not worth living without her, and promising to do anything in the wide world she demanded (except, as Janet sardonically observed to herself, damp down her mother's tyranny a trifle. He had never had, and he never would have, the nerve to do this or to put up the least show of fight.)

As a last effort, her sister Emily had paid a visit to the Lorillard tenements—partly perhaps from curiosity. She affirmed that she had come of her own free will, and probably believed this statement to be the truth. Janet knew very well that her sister was, consciously or unconsciously, the family ambassador. The Barrs always throve best when their right hand did not know what their left hand was doing.

Emily, all a-tingle with the exhilaration which an angel inevitably feels when descending upon a glittering abode of vice, had tried hard not to betray her excitement. In a tone essenced with pious sorrow and celestial distress! She had assured the erring one (though not in these words), that all would be forgiven if only she returned to her home before the world (of the Barrs) should discover that a Barr had abandoned Brooklyn for Kips Bay, and her family for the society of atheists, Bolsheviks, and Bohemians!

"But I haven't the faintest notion of abandoning you," Janet had replied. "I believe I can lead a fuller, freer, more active life away from mother's apron strings, that's all. Of course I want to see the family from time to time. I could come on short visits—"

Emily had assured her, not without a trace of exultation, that Mrs. Barr would never hear of such a cool arrangement. Either the prodigal daughter returned once and for all, or the family would treat her as dead.

"Really! But how you'll miss the funeral!" Janet had wickedly exclaimed.

At which Emily had put on her gloves.

All later messages sent by Janet to her mother in an effort to put their mutual relations on a more reasonable footing had been severely ignored. The only communications she had received were growingly infrequent notes from her father, and these contained nothing but the same old appeals—sentimental, pathetic, fatuous.

III

The doorbell startled her out of her long, melancholy reverie. She flew to the threshold, and in came Claude! She had proposed to treat him coolly at their next meeting. But his return was as sudden as it was unexpected. And he was Claude, the same Claude with the same striking appearance, the same telling voice, the same handsome face. Instantly, the magnetic spark that had darted from one to the other at the Outlaws' Ball made its swift, poignant, thrilling leap between them again.

Though words were superfluous, Claude, as he clasped her in a passionate embrace, murmured:

"Janet, darling, forgive me. I was a beast to write a letter like that."

"Confession is good for the soul," said Janet, laughing and trying to release her head.

"Are you angry? Well, you ought to be. And I ought to grovel in the dust at your feet. You are a saint to forgive me, and I should be ashamed to accept forgiveness if I hadn't suffered. Yes, Janet, I've suffered cruelly. I never had so keen a grief and I never so thoroughly deserved one. But I'm nearly ill with worry."

He *did* look pale, nor did it hurt his cause that pallor became him. Besides, his apologies were as overwhelming as his fits of temper. How could the poor girl help forgiving him?

And so Janet, who but a few minutes before had been considering (mock-heroically to be sure) sundry historic forms of self-slaughter, now forgot all about jumping off Brooklyn Bridge, etc., and poured a heavenly compassion on Claude.

"Something happened in Huntington," she said. "Something serious. Does it involve me? I want you to tell me straight."

"That scoundrel Burley tipped my father off about us, and as a result, the old man is half out of his wits. He is determined that my marriage with Marjorie shall not fall through, for the one terror of his life is that of disobliging Mr. Armstrong. In what form the word was passed along the line, I don't know. But they were at me, one and all, day and night, giving me a hundred and one sly intimations of the general satisfaction that would follow the much desired event. The pressure got to be unbearable."

He said that the older people had left no stone unturned to bring the Armstrong-Fontaine alliance to pass. Pacing the floor restlessly, he spoke of the delicate hints, the veiled references, the consummate skill with which he and Marjorie were engineered into *tete-a-tetes*. Could Janet picture him alone with Marjorie, and the resultant sessions of sweet, silent thought? Had she any idea of what the imperious will of Armstrong's daughter could do in the way of maneuvering a man into the most difficult situations? Janet had little difficulty in calling up an image of the stately brunette with lustrous dark hair, patrician nose,

and sulky, discontented mouth. This imposing young lady had impressed herself indelibly upon Janet's mind at the Mineola Aerodrome, and, such are the unfathomable processes of sex, Janet profoundly pitied Claude. She did this without a suspicion that he might be drawing generously upon his imagination for the sake of that very pity of hers, which she gave him so divinely. Nor did it occur to her that there were few young men in all New York who would have been in unrelieved misery if Marjorie Armstrong had set her cap at them.

As a matter of fact, Claude quite omitted to mention that he had gone to Huntington with more than a vague notion of finding out whether he and Marjorie couldn't hit it off together, after all; also that, if Marjorie, with all her eagerness to capture him, had not so plainly exposed her design of "bossing" the marriage after it had taken place—well, then—

What he did say, was:

"Of course, I was left quite free to do as I pleased. Oh, quite free. They wouldn't lead the horse to water—not they, that would be brutal coercion—they would simply make it drink."

This irony expressed the full truth. Claude had virtually given his father a promise not to marry Janet. But Mr. Fontaine senior put no faith in vows that were subject to the stresses and strains of love. Mistrustful of his son's infatuation and also of the unknown quantity of Janet's ambition, he did not scruple to adopt any tactical measure by which the union of the Armstrong-Fontaine forces might be achieved.

"What do you mean to do?" asked Janet, greatly troubled.

"What *can* I do? What can *any* prisoner do? Run away, I suppose."

"What—without me?"

"Well, you see, I'm planning to go to Europe, darling. Separated by the Atlantic I shall be able to make my position much clearer to my father. An ocean is an astonishing convenience when it stands between the giver and the receiver of an explanation."

"Yes, but why can't I go, too?"

"You dear innocent," he said, taking her hand tenderly, "we can't go cavorting over two continents as if we were merely joy-riding from here to Quakertown."

"Why not?" she persisted, with her customary refusal to be sidetracked.

IV

The question embarrassed him. Even had he been clear about the train of thought at the back of his mind, he could not, in all brutal directness, have said: "A man in my station does not flaunt his mistresses in the face of the public. That is all very well for the vulgar rich. But not for my sort. High-class polygamy is strictly *sub rosa*."

Claude did not explicitly think this, much less say it. His chief difficulty in the way of reaching a straightforward understanding with Janet was that his mind did not work straightforwardly upon the problem of sex relations. His adopted radical professions were entirely subordinate to powerful, instinctive reactions along traditional lines.

Thus, at heart, he had little use for Janet's views about free love. To Janet, the term meant a public abandonment of an obsolete institution. To Claude, it was little more than a polite synonym for illicit intercourse.

Claude, in fact, had no deep quarrel with existing institutions. He prided himself on being tolerant, and his tolerance extended to the institutions of Bohemianism (which had no recognition in law), as well as to the institutions of the established order (which enjoyed this recognition). His support of "advanced" art, his membership in the Outlaws' Club, his philandering among the Lorillard tenementers—these were all ways of escape from the particularity of normal civilized life. Bohemianism, by systematically discarding troublesome forms, costly conventions and restrictive social obligations, really organized these ways of escape for him and provided a maximum of pleasure with a minimum of effort.

He was, therefore, by no means prepared to go as far as Janet wished to go, openly; yet he was fully prepared to go to the limit, clandestinely. So much so, that a severe critic like Robert would have said that Claude was deliberately taking advantage of Janet's inexperienced outlook on life. And it was quite true that Claude was willing to profit by her belief in free love, although he was far from willing to champion this belief, much less to become a martyr in its promotion.

But if he was exploiting Janet's infatuation for him, he was not doing so consciously. And the fact remained that, had she been so minded, she could just as easily have exploited his infatuation for her. Indeed, the latter would have been easier. Claude was not aware of this. He was aware only of his own power, and he believed he was exercising almost superhuman self-control in an effort to avoid compromising her future.

He believed he was doing this now, whilst fishing for an answer to Janet's candid "*why not?*" A few hours earlier, in Huntington, under the concerted pressure of the Armstrong family, he had realized that he would have to give up either Marjorie or Janet; and it had occurred to him that if he took Janet now, Marjorie was not lost to him later; whereas if he took Marjorie now, Janet was lost to him forever.

Naturally, it was not in terms of pitiless realism that he sought to explain his choice.

A more heroic explanation was that he had given up Marjorie for Janet's sake, and that, on a peremptory summons of the heart, he had run away from Huntington determined to risk everything—from his father's wrath to the loss of Mr. Armstrong's protection in the matter of smuggled diamonds. The heroic explanation was the one he meant to give to Janet.

Looking, at the moment, into Janet's gray eyes in their superb setting of long, dark lashes, he was ready to give his thoughts any form that might be acceptable to her. Surely, such a mixture of radical daring and native good sense, of enticement and candor, of self-reliance that ennobled her and soft yielding that flattered *him*—such a mixture had never before been found in one woman. It made her exquisite, enigmatic, thrilling and quite indispensable to him.

So reasoned his heart. And all his commanding nonchalance returned.

V

The result was that when Janet, failing to get an answer to her question, repeated anew her wish to accompany him abroad, he enfolded her in his arms and said:

"After all, why not?"

And after a fervent embrace, he added:

"Janet, I think you ought to face what's in store for us."

"Don't let's cross bridges, Claude," she pleaded.

"We'll get married, of course," he went on, unheeding her. "Frankly, my father won't like it. He'll probably make Rome howl. However, he'll get used to it in the end—especially when he meets you. But, though there's a storm ahead, you are brave and we'll weather it, I'm sure."

"Your father won't raise a storm," said Janet, with a strange smile, "for a small but important reason. Remember, I'm not going to be married."

"Janet!"

"You know I don't believe in it."

They argued the matter pro and con, she spiritedly, he lamely. Janet pointed out, among other things, that when Mr. Fontaine senior learnt of their free union he was little likely to attempt any serious interference, but would count on time to separate them.

"'Love's not Time's fool!'" said Claude, quoting dithyrambically. "We'll

never be separated, darling, will we?"

"Well—not for the present," said Janet, with dancing eyes. "I won't vouch for our dim and distant feelings."

"No teasing, you darling imp!"

"Claude, I mean it. If—if it should turn out that your father was right, that will merely prove that we were wrong."

He was at a complete loss how to treat her incredible self-surrender. As a man of the world, he was part scandalized, part uneasy, according as he swerved from the conviction that Janet was candid, to the suspicion that she was designing. Again, as a gay Bohemian trifler, he saw in her attitude an easy way out of possible complications. Whether he should or should not carry out his offer of marriage was now a question he would not have to face. She did not mean to put his vows to the test! This was breath-bereaving, staggering; it was even slightly annoying. But, her eccentric choice being a fact, surely the consequences did not rest on his soul?

"Janet, you don't know what you are doing!" he cried out involuntarily, being torn many ways at once.

She, too, was greatly agitated; but, under the pressure of her theory, she kept her head. While he stood there as if distraught, she poured out a flood of reasons to which he scarcely listened. For instance, she said it was criminal for two people to form a permanent union or bring children into a family until they were sure of being well-suited to each other and of establishing a family that children would wish to enter.

All marriages ought to be trial marriages of the kind that George Meredith had suggested long ago.

Moreover, until she became independent in the matter of money, she couldn't dream of subscribing to any permanent arrangement.

He replied that this was all nonsense and derided Meredith as a bookworm and a dreamer. For his own part, hadn't he money enough to provide for them both? If she wouldn't take half his money, she didn't love him. That was flat!

"I do love you!" cried Janet, with more visible emotion than before. "That's why I mustn't marry you."

He rose with a wild movement.

"I must save myself—and you, too!" he murmured. "I'm going abroad by the first steamer."

But these words were dashed with insurgent passion. Handsome, hypnotic, intense, his whole being vibrated towards her. She surrendered incontinently.

"Not without me!" she said, enchaining him in her arms.

He kissed her tempestuously.

"It's a daring step, and a perilous one," he said, more in weak protest than

in forceful remonstrance.

"No, no, no!" she cried, as with a gesture of ecstasy she hid her face on his shoulder.

PART IV NEMESIS

CHAPTER TWENTY

I

One morning in the middle of August, Harry Kelly cut short his gymnastics and went downstairs to get fruit, cream and rolls for Cornelia, as he had done daily since Janet left. The letter box held one letter, a fat one, postmarked Paris. Cornelia was inclined to be lackadaisical before breakfast, but a letter enlivened her at once, especially if it came from a long-lost friend or bore a foreign postmark. Kelly sent his powerful form bounding up the staircase, the victuals being safeguarded by a miracle of balancing.

"A letter from Paris," he called out joyfully, as he entered Apartment Fifteen.

"From Janet!" exclaimed Cornelia with conviction. One glance at the handwriting verified her guess.

"Janet's hand," she said, and tore the envelope open feverishly.

"Wouldn't you enjoy reading it more after breakfast?" he said wistfully as he watched Cornelia unfolding a great many pages of writing.

"What an idea! Make the coffee, Hercules, there's a good boy. The water is boiling; all you need to do is to pour the water on the coffee and let it stand."

As Kelly had fallen sole heir to the daily duty of preparing her breakfast, he uncomplainingly went to work. Meanwhile, Cornelia, in a very becoming green-and-gold Mimosa jacket, sat down on a lounge and buried herself in Janet's letter.

II

Dear Cornelia:

Here I am in the Luxembourg Gardens, alone with my fountain pen and my pad of paper, Claude having gone to the races as the guest of a Russian Grand Duke. I feel ages removed from the days of Kips Bay, though by the calendar only four weeks have gone by.

Why haven't you heard from me in all this time? That, I imagine, is the first question you would ask me if we met face to face. No, you wouldn't. You would divine the answer. You would know that the blinding, paralyzing, notoriety into which we were suddenly plunged, left me with but one desire, the supreme desire for solitude. A desert without a single oasis would not have been too lonely for me to live in. For a few days even Claude—

Those cruel headlines, those stabbing capital letters! Like points of fire in a demon dance they riot in and out of my memory yet. "Affinity or Elopement!" "Fontaine Heir Meets Enchantress on Baronia!" "Diamond King's Son in Joy-Ride to Europe!" How did the inquisition happen to overlook such exquisite weapons of torture as huge red capitals on a smooth white space?

Writing the letters down affords a mild relief. To my physical sight, not to my mind's eye. Oh yes, I actually saw the headlines that Hutchins Burley fabricated in his newspaper story. Some thoughtful enemy of Claude's took pains to have a copy of the *Evening Chronicle* forwarded to his Paris address.

Didn't you guess at once that Hutchins was the beast responsible for the publicity we got? That vicious man has a mortal grudge to pay off against me or against Claude or perhaps against us both. But what for?

How he got on our track, heaven alone knows. Heaven and Mark Pryor.

Yes, Cornelia, our own Mark Pryor (the human embodiment of the theory of protective coloration, as Robert called him)—he it was who brought me the fateful news. In this wise.

On the second morning out, I was taking a turn around the deck by myself, while Claude was chatting with the captain. (The "Baronia's" captain is an old friend of Claude's family, the Fontaines being heavy shareholders in the steamship company. This was the connection that enabled us to get accommodations at such short notice, the purser's room having been given up to me and the second engineer's quarters to Claude.)

As I said, I was roving about the upper deck, when one of the ventilators or posts or something, suddenly became alive. Or so it seemed to my startled eyes. Walking remorselessly towards me, this no longer stationary object magically assumed the form and voice of Mark Pryor! You could have knocked me down with a feather. (By the way, I'm more certain than ever that he's a detective or a spy or a Soviet propagandist—or can he be merely an American novelist studying

life for the *Saturday Evening Post*?)

Whatever the key to his inmost mystery, I've always been greatly taken with him. He's like a flash of lightning on a pitch-dark night: his comings and goings are never more sinister or mysterious than when his sudden vivid presence gives them a momentary relief.

Without letting me into the secret of his skill at sleight-of-hand (or rather, sleight-of-feet), he drew me aside and told me in a most sympathetic way of the story about Claude and me that was being headlined in the *Evening Chronicle* and that was soon to be the gossip of two continents. The information had breezed his way—by wireless. Out of pure regard for me, he had bribed the radio man to keep mum. Wasn't it splendid of him? But he warned me to prepare for a leak. "The only thing you can keep dark nowadays is the truth," he said, in his quiet way, without a twinkle in his eye.

He also said that Hutchins Burley was certainly at the bottom of the whole scandal. He was sure of this, because he had seen Burley on the pier shortly before the "Baronia" left, and because of other reasons which he declared he was not at liberty to divulge.

After predicting that we should meet again, Mr. Pryor "faded away" as imperceptibly as usual, leaving me a prey to my thoughts. My heart was mostly in my boots and I can tell you I was getting pretty limp when I pulled myself up short with the reminder that I must pluck up a little courage if only to show that I deserved a disinterested friend like Mr. Pryor. (He's in France at present, on some dark business or other. I don't care how dark, I'm glad he's here. The mere fact gives me the sensation of being watched over. I'm confident that Mark Pryor's keen sight is at least as far-reaching as the long arm of coincidence.)

It wasn't exactly a picnic to tell Claude the news. Like most of us, Claude thrives wonderfully well on good luck but takes bad luck hard. Naturally, to a man who has so many important friends, newspaper notoriety is a bitter pill to swallow. Claude raged at his fate with a violence that frightened me. He tortured himself by anticipating the libels to which his character would be exposed, the pictures of himself and me that the yellow newspapers would print, the slanders that the busybodies would privately circulate. How his father and the Armstrongs would take the affair was another source of torment. And then there was the fear that the story might leak out on the "Baronia" and that we should become the talk of the ship.

It was a calamity. And the worst of it was that Claude appeared to think I was in some way directly responsible for it. His anger worried me far more than the notoriety did; the angrier he got, the more the notoriety sank into relative insignificance. He accused me of being callous! Wasn't that monstrously unjust? Merely because my advice was that we should make the best of a very bad matter

and face the world as if nothing had happened of which we were ashamed. He took my calmness, which was all on the surface, as a personal affront. It infuriated him more (if that were possible) than the exposure, and caused him to accuse me of disloyalty and lack of sympathy. Are men ever satisfied? They pretend that they can't endure a weeping woman. Yet, give them a stoical countenance, and they'll ask for tears.

No, Cornelia, this was not the first rift. That had come on the very evening we sailed, when the passengers held a dance on deck in the moonlight. I was not feeling very well and danced only once, but Claude did full duty as a leader of the cotillion. During his absence from my side, a young British captain in mufti (he had been an ace in the war) sat down in a steamer chair next to mine and helped me, what with his charming manner and his gorgeous British accent, to while away the time.

All went swimmingly until, in an interval between dances, Claude came back to me. Can you call up an image of Claude, the magnificent, approaching at a temperature of absolute zero? His manner, of the ice icy, froze the poor captain dead away. This done, he turned on me and asked me what I meant by "picking a man up!"

You can imagine that I replied pretty tartly, and one word led to another till we reached a point where Claude threatened that he would never marry me—no, not for all the king's horses and all the king's men. At this, I burst out laughing. My laughter was immodest, unladylike, spiteful. And I should have regretted it, had Claude understood me. But Claude is in some respects a reincarnation of Kipling's famous vampire lady. He had never understood, and now, he never will understand.

But I'm running ahead of my story.

As we feared, rumor and gossip about us soon had free rein on board the "Baronia." Poor Claude had to bear the brunt of this annoyance and of the Captain's anger too. That Claude and a lady were together on the voyage had certainly been a secret, but a secret to which the old sea-dog was a party. The Captain's sense of propriety was not outraged by the secret. It was outraged only when the secret became a matter of common knowledge. And he did not permit a feeling of delicacy to restrain his indignation against his fellow conspirators.

What happened on the "Baronia" was trifling compared to the furor of our landing at Southampton. We were met by "all the latest London papers" filled with the wildest details of our "elopement." That is the way they featured our experiment over here. It was described as the elopement of a young multimillionaire with a poor plebeian stenographer, an elopement carried out in the teeth of a tyrant father with invincibly aristocratic prejudices. Shades of the Barrs and their Mayflower ancestry!

Worse remained behind. The English reporters promptly spotted Claude. You can't be six feet two in your socks and have the airs and graces of Prince Charming, without being conspicuous even amongst a crowd of first-class passengers on a fifty-thousand-ton liner. When the newspaper men plied poor Claude with questions, I began to weaken at the knees. But Claude was a trump. He kept his most nonchalant air, gave cleverly evasive answers, and even begged one of his tormentors for a cigarette quite in the style of the imperturbable villain of a screen play. Then a battery of motion picture men turned their cameras on us. Mark Pryor and the British captain swooped down to the rescue at this critical moment, which was very lucky for us, as we had just about exhausted our nerve (to say nothing of our nerves).

We stayed in London barely forty-eight hours. In spite of our assumed names we were bundled out of three hotels, thanks to the curiosity of reporters who kept after Claude as though he were a ticket-of-leave man. I had supposed that only American journalists hounded people, but evidently the London tribesmen have taken a leaf out of the New York book in the matter of pitiless persistence. Claude felt so harassed, outraged and persecuted that he could not get out of London fast enough. He saw a reporter in every strange face and lived in constant dread of another forced interview until we were safely across the Channel.

And now I had better answer the question that I know is uppermost in your mind.

We have been living as a married couple! Now it's out. Your Janet, the bold and fearless advocate of free unions, has been masquerading as a wife, a timorous and trustful, cowering and respectable wife, differing from other wives only in being a fraud.

It's a terrible comedown, a sickening fall from grace, isn't it?

But what else could I have done, short of leaving Claude entirely?

You see, Cornelia, the stark fact was that we couldn't get accommodations anywhere except by pretending that we were married. Had we declined to make this pretense, we couldn't have remained together at all unless we adopted all sorts of secret, underground, time consuming devices. It was a choice between the pretense and the secrecy—a Hobson's choice, so far as I could see.

Cornelia's lips curled with contempt. She could not escape the reflection that she had showed much more courage when *she* had been in London with Percival Houghton.

I must add that free love, at any rate in my case, has proved a failure, a dead failure. I do not say that trial experiments in loving and living together should not be made, but I do say that the time is not ripe for them. At present, the two scores I have against free love are: First, that it simply won't work; and second, that the only thing about it that is *free* is the undesired advertising one gets.

This conclusion has not been reached in what Mrs. Grey calls the cool, disinterested spirit of the dispassionate investigator. All the same, it is my conclusion.

Of course, it is an abominable thing that a unique, intensely individual experience like love should have to be made the subject of public inquiry and official registration before it can claim to be legitimate. In a more highly civilized nation, such a state of affairs would be unthinkable. But amongst us! Well, when you think of our housing, transport, and domestic arrangements, when you remember how primitive and rigid these still are, can you expect more fluid and elastic relations between the sexes to be welcomed or even understood?

"Huh," exclaimed Cornelia, half aloud, "she got all that from Robert."

Please don't picture me as sitting down and wringing my hands. What's done is done and can't be undone. I've made an experiment in love. And if the result hasn't been what I expected, I have, like the experimental chemist, made discoveries I never dreamed of, discoveries about myself, about other men and women, and about human institutions. I can truly say that I haven't spent four more unhappy weeks in my life, nor—mark this—four weeks that have done me more good.

I call them unhappy weeks. But suppose I had *married* Claude!

Well, I dare say you've been thinking to yourself: "She is capable of anything; now she will try to sell out to smug respectability and settle down as Claude's duly wedded and articed wife." I admit this would be the logical sequel to my new conclusions about love and marriage. But though I'm still fond of Claude, a great streak of doubt has crossed my dreams of a happy future with him.

Shall I tell you the truth, Cornelia? Claude and I would make a very poor team. I have in mind, not his fits of bad temper, which are very annoying, nor his attacks of jealousy, which are monstrous. I have in mind his outlook on affairs and his active interests, which are in every respect different from mine. Claude is in love with the pomps and trappings of life; and I am not. He goes in passionately for elegance, luxury, all the externals which men admire in society or public

institutions; and I do not. He wishes to study and master the ritual of social intercourse in all its forms (even in its Kips Bay form); and I will not. He is fond of the gay boulevards, the fashionable restaurants, the crowded promenades; I am fond of quiet places and a chair to myself in a corner of a park. Our divergence of tastes is almost absolute. We don't like the same theatres, concerts, pictures; we don't even like the same games.

The only game we ever enjoyed together was the great game of love. "What," you will exclaim, "you mean to contend that this game, which you played with such abandon, so thrilled and absorbed and united you both as to smother the thousand differences between you?" Precisely. That is what I contend, for that is what happened. It is weird, disconcerting, inexplicable, yet it is true.

Equally true is the fact that Claude lacks the talent for companionship. With women, at all events. He has no use for a woman except as a plaything or a wife. And he does not want his wife to be a companion or a partner in his work. He wants her to be an ambassador plenipotentiary, representing him in polite society, and also a species of superior twentieth-century domestic scientist taking full charge of his creature comforts at home. I don't see myself in either role. Do you? Can you picture me as a sort of mother, nurse, housemaid, valet, cook and errand girl rolled into one?

All of which means that I'm not quite ready yet to handcuff myself with Prince Charming's household keys. "Hoity-toity," say you, "isn't this a bit like piling the evidence sky-high to prove that the grapes aren't sour?" Perhaps it is, but I think not. It is true that Claude hasn't asked me to marry him yet. It is true that whenever he is out of sorts with me he tells me that my reputation is damaged beyond repair and that I need not look to him to patch it up. It is true that when I smile at this he invariably insists with explosive fury that he will never, never ask me to marry him. He repeatedly insists that he will not. Still, I believe that he will. My problem is not what will become of me if Claude *doesn't* marry me, but what will become of me if he does.

As for my damaged reputation, I'm really not worrying about that. Say I have *sullied* my character. In one respect, a spot on a character is like a spot on a fine satin dress: hard work will wash all spots away.

But it stands to reason that things can't go on like this much longer. The little Sorbonne *pension* in which we are staying (as Monsieur and Madame) has its good points. And there are evenings when Claude, a little tired of all the famous and imposing Parisians he has met, expresses a longing to be quite alone with me again, and transforms himself once more into the Claude he was before we lived together. Then we walk along the Seine or drive on the wondrous roads towards Fontainebleau or Versailles. And these evenings are very delightful.

But they cannot be repeated forever. Any day I may take the step that I

ought to have taken some time ago.

Write to me, Cornelia dear. Tell me all the news about the tenements. I suppose the Outlaws are as tame and bourgeois as ever. Does dear old Harry keep you fit and sylph-like with his rising exercises? And how is Lydia Dyson shaping? I see she has another serial in the *Black Baboon* (I found a copy in Brentano's here)—she must have coined bushels of money by it. I wish I could work as copiously on *my* diet as she does on hers of cigarettes and Haig and Haig. Charlotte Beecher, I fear, will be "through with me" as the cinema heroes say. Has she exhibited again or married Robert yet? Tell Robert I shall write to him as soon as I've done something he'll approve of.

Need I give further hints of my insatiable hunger for news? Don't let me continue to be cut by the postman. Write and write soon to

Your affectionate friend, Janet.

III

"Janet's a little fool," was Cornelia's laconic comment as she folded up the letter.

Under Kelly's persuasive service, she attacked breakfast. Between mouthfuls she epitomized the contents of the letter, a proceeding that she punctuated with caustic exclamations. At the end, Harry Kelly expressed much sympathy with Janet's predicament.

"She has made her bed; she'll have to lie in it," said Cornelia.

This was a far cry from the line Cornelia used to take when she told Janet that "marriage is either a vulgar sex deal or a legalized debauch;" or when she declared in lyrical accents that "a free union is the golden key to the garden of spiritual love." Her sentiments on this subject had undergone dilution since Harry Kelly with his athletic build, fair prospects, and standing offer of marriage had become a fixture in Number Fifteen.

But then Cornelia had never really had the courage of her radical opinions. Beneath her advocacy of new forms of sex relationships there lurked a strong affection for the old forms. Essentially, her instincts fitted her for the orderly virtuous days of bustles and bust pads, not for these latter days in which established conventions were being summarily overhauled. For her, the time was decidedly out of joint.

It had been so since her affair with Percival Houghton, the artist who had

"stolen her soul." This affair had been an accident of conduct and circumstances, and not, as she always declared, a logical outcome of her character and convictions. And it was as a result of this accidental episode that she was now an irritable, spiteful, new-fangled woman instead of the old-fashioned wife and mother (of seven children) that she should have been.

Some dim perception of all this stirred in the head of Harry Kelly the ex-Harlem Gorilla. Kelly's mentality fell far short of his bodily development. Still, he was no fool, and he rightly guessed that Cornelia was unfair to her former protegee. He did not approve of Janet's flight with Claude. But he had seen too much of life in the Lorillard tenements to be easily scandalized. Moreover, his fondness for Janet disposed him to put the blame, if any, on her lover. Like many amiable persons, he reserved his moral censure exclusively for people he did not know or did not like.

"The poor kid's down on her luck," he ventured gingerly. "It's not up to us to hurry the post-mortem."

"Down on her luck! With a man like Claude at her side?" cried Cornelia, the words curving by slow ascent to an unmusical top note.

"Claude's a grand looking man, that's true. But I've known many a grand looking man who was no better than a four-flusher when you had to share your bunk with him."

"Poor Hercules, what do you know about it? If Claude was a rotter, she should have left him. In all decency, she should have left him the moment she saw that her passion was merely physical. What has she done? Nothing. They are still together on the most intimate terms."

Kelly put his arm soothingly round her waist. It was a privilege she had allowed him in the dull days of late—though not often and always grudgingly.

"I don't suppose she's going to have a child," she went on, in a bitter tone, "yet that would be her one solid happiness. She's too selfish, I fear. Look how idiotically fate deals out the cards. *She* could have a child, but she doesn't want one, while I want one so much, but—"

It was a generous hiatus, and her voice softened as she approached it. She was forever telling men that she wanted a child of her own; they were usually embarrassed or piqued by the information; and whatever the effect she enjoyed it.

For once, Kelly was not nonplussed. He drew his arm tighter.

"Listen, sweetheart," he said, sentimentally, "what's to prevent it? I want kiddies, too."

"Do you indeed," said Cornelia, with a dangerous light in her eyes. "I said I wanted a child. The difficulty is that I don't want the father for it."

"Why not, if we're married?" he proceeded with unexampled obstinacy. "I'd

rather follow Janet than go on being tormented like this," he concluded, drawing the long bow at a venture.

She withdrew from him and rose, her cheeks parading an angry red. Ordinarily, a look was enough to make him quail, but, lo and behold, he was marching with unprecedented independence to the door. And how could Cornelia know that his body went hot and cold by turns for fear that she would let him walk out?

She could not afford to lose him, so she called him back.

"Here, goose!" she cried, coming swiftly down from her high horse. "Here's Janet's letter. You'd better read it through before you quarrel with me about it."

He took it happily and obediently, she getting little pleasure from such an easy victory.

While he read it, she reflected once more that she could not afford to lose him. She set small store by his doglike devotion and, though he had recently obtained an excellent position as physical trainer in a fashionable men's club, she considered him vastly beneath her. That he was physically a veritable Borghese Warrior was wholly offset by the fact that he was socially little better than a superior handicraftsman. In her eyes, that is to say, he had his points, but they were not the points of a polished gentleman.

Yet he was the one friend left to her in Kips Bay, the one friend whose constancy to her was undeviating and unimpaired.

Cornelia's decline from glory had proceeded rapidly since the departure of Janet. The renaissance of flat Number Fifteen as the social and artistic center of the Lorillard tenements had been shortlived. That renaissance (which Cornelia tried to believe was of her own making) had really begun with Janet's advent. While it lasted, the Outlaws and their cohorts had paraded back, with all flags flying, and had restored the flat to the pinnacle of importance which it had occupied when Cornelia, in the full flush of the Percival Houghton notoriety, had first settled down in Kips Bay. For a brief space Cornelia, glittering like the morning star, had been "the first lady of the model tenements," and had tasted again what she called life, splendor, joy.

But Janet had gone, and Claude had gone with her. As a direct consequence of Janet's flight, Robert had more and more often invented excuses for absenting himself from the Lorillard flats. Charlotte Beecher's visits ceased as soon as Robert's did, and Denman Page's as soon as Charlotte Beecher's. In its turn, the loss of Claude deflected a whole galaxy of feminine stars, including Lydia Dyson at the top of the scale and Mazie Ross at the bottom. And so on, ad infinitum.

Thus, almost in a week, the brilliance of Number Fifteen had been extinguished. Forever, or so Cornelia feared. True, her queenly state had ended in a burst of radiance, as a sky-rocket ends in a dazzling shower of gold. But this

was cold comfort at best. Cornelia knew that, without some novel attraction, there was no hope whatever of recapturing the fickle homage of the model tenementers. And no such attraction was in sight. For once, no other adventurous young lady was ready or eager to step into Janet's shoes as Janet had stepped into those of Mazie Ross. Cornelia's stock had fallen to its nadir.

She felt deserted. In a mood of bitter, unreasoning resentment, she gave Janet full credit for dimming the splendor of Number Fifteen, the splendor she had never given her any credit for enkindling.

She was very angry with Janet on another score. This adventurous young lady, after a gorgeously romantic time abroad with Claude Fontaine, had apparently come a cropper, as her tirade against free love sufficiently betrayed. Reading between the lines, Cornelia fancied that she detected a veiled reproach. It was as if she were being held responsible for pointing out the step that had landed the writer in disaster. Cornelia repudiated this responsibility and was intensely irritated by the reproach.

What, hadn't she and Janet threshed out the whole question of sex in the most open and aboveboard fashion? And hadn't she drawn a sharp line between free love as she sincerely advocated it for the sake of a woman's rights, and free love as it was practiced among the Outlaws and in Greenwich Village for the sake of a woman's pleasure or gain? She had told Janet (and told it with some feeling) that many young women nowadays regarded free love as simply a very convenient antidote against man's growing disinclination for matrimony. It was a new bait for the old trap, and a very successful bait, too, as numberless marriages growing out of free unions attested. In Greenwich Village marriageable girls used this bait by instinct; in Kips Bay they used it with cool professional dexterity, as a surgeon uses a knife.

For Janet to insinuate that she had been taken in, was a trifle strong. If she had been duped at all, she was self-duped. And was this likely? The curve of contempt in Cornelia's lips indicated her belief to the contrary. There was such a thing as carrying a pose of artless inexperience too far. And what did Janet mean by all this talk of casting Claude off? Casting Claude off, indeed! What was she really up to?

Harry Kelly, having finished the letter, now handed it back.

"Janet's getting a bit flighty," he remarked with true male cynicism. "Seems to me Claude has got somebody else on a string."

Cornelia gave a scornful laugh.

"Don't be an idiot, Hercules," she said. "More likely, Janet has got somebody else on a string."

Kelly held his peace. Like King Lear's daughter, he adored and was silent: his love was mightier than his tongue.

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

I

By the time Cornelia's answer reached Paris, Claude had taken Janet to Brussels. The immediate cause of this move was a stringency in Claude's funds. A brief and somewhat acrid correspondence between father and son had followed hard on the latter's international adventure. After much shilly-shallying on Claude's part, Mr. Fontaine had laid down the terms on which alone he proposed to continue polite relations.

Mr. Fontaine proceeded on the theory that in some cases the most effective sort of moral force is material force. He did not demand that Claude abandon Janet, although this was the goal of his desire. He simply made it emphatic that until his son *did* leave Janet, the old days of independence coupled with generous financial supplies were over.

Meanwhile, he made a point of thwarting Claude at every turn. Claude longed for leisure and also for a fairly free hand with the Fontaine Company's bankers in Europe; Mr. Fontaine offered him definite work at a far from princely salary. Claude wanted to travel (as heretofore) in the role of a commanding member of the firm; Mr. Fontaine allowed him no choice but a paltry assistantcy to one of Fontaine's European agents. Claude vastly preferred the conspicuous agency in Paris, if an agency he had to be reduced to; Mr. Fontaine detailed him peremptorily to the humble agency in Brussels. And so on.

Clearly, Mr. Fontaine believed that a series of pin pricks, tirelessly administered here and there, would serve his purpose much better than a dagger inserted under the fifth rib.

Claude, having some means of his own, planned a summary rejection of his father's terms. But his available funds were pitifully inadequate to his tastes and habits. It was in vain that Janet threw herself sturdily into the task of retrenchment. She lacked experience; and as for Claude, he was born to the purple and had inherited the aristocratic idea that economy consists in making lesser people do the saving. He could not refrain from living on a handsome scale or from entertaining his Parisian friends at costly parties. The day of atonement drew swiftly nearer.

And came in due course. All his pecuniary sins were visited upon him at one and the same inopportune moment (when ordering a dinner at the Ritz in honor of the Prince de Cluny). At that moment he experienced the novel sensation of finding himself suddenly without a single penny of credit. Had the ground been abruptly withdrawn from his feet, the shock could not have been

greater.

There was nothing for it but an immediate acceptance of the terms on which his father had proposed a truce. The Brussels agency was in charge of a hard-headed Walloon between whom and Claude little love was lost. The pin pricks were warranted to do their work to a nicety.

Thus it was that in no very amiable frame of mind Claude set foot in the Belgian capital and reported to the Fontaine agent there. Janet shared his contracted fortunes, accompanying him from Paris in spite of a series of quarrels which had chequered the weeks preceding their departure.

She accused herself of weakness for remaining with Claude. But she felt she could hardly leave him when he was so completely down on his luck. True, their quarrels furnished her with a pretext, but not with a worthy one. They were all in the nature of petty bickerings, trumpery matters seemingly unrelated to the real issue.

But she began to suspect that the real issue between herself and Claude would never be brought into the open.

II

Their hotel was in the aristocratic *Quartier Leopold*. Scarcely a year had elapsed since the armistice was proclaimed, yet the *Boulevard Anspach* and other central highways were again the glittering rendezvous of international idlers indefatigably bent on expunging the last unpleasant memories of Armageddon. This expunging process appeared to involve the consumption of much bad food and the production of much loud noise.

Early in the morning of his seventh day in Brussels, Claude was awakened by the penetrating backfire of a motor car in the street. Having already been aroused by disturbances twice, he sprang from one of the twin beds in the room and closed each window with a furious bang. Janet, in the other bed, changed from her right side to her left, but was too deep in sleep to wake up.

"Damnation!" he called out, first towards the street and then, as this bore no fruit, in the direction of the occupied bed.

Getting no response he stalked to the sleeper's side.

"How can a man get any rest," he shouted angrily, "with pandemonium in the streets and every window in the place wide open?"

The world in general showed no interest in this conundrum propounded

by a very good-looking young man in pajamas. And Janet, after stirring uneasily for a moment, returned to a motionless slumber. The street noises had kept her, as well as Claude, awake until the small hours of the morning. Once asleep, however, she slept soundly and could defy Bedlam.

Seeing no prospect of petting or sympathy from this quarter, Claude nursed his anger to leviathan size. He paced the room like a madman, distributing a liberal supply of imprecations on everything and everybody as fast as the images raced into his thoughts. This proceeding relieved him of a part of his fury. The rest he sublimated in the act of tidying up the room.

He went at this task with breakneck speed. His method was to set chairs and tables in and out of place with vicious thumps; then to pile books, newspapers, brushes, combs, wearing apparel and the like into roughly classified heaps. He took special pains to pick up Janet's scattered articles of underwear and to fling each one on top of the last with the force of an invective.

Under this steady percussion and repercussion, Janet finally woke up.

"What's the matter?" she murmured drowsily, pushing the rebellious dark curls from her face.

Claude bombarded her with reproaches.

"The matter! The matter is that you have the nerves of a rhinoceros. I can't sleep with the windows open, while you could sleep with them shut. But it means nothing to you that I haven't slept a wink for seven nights running, just because you insist upon keeping the windows open."

(Janet's hands gestured: "Oh dear, another tempest in a teapot!") She sat up in bed and, with her feet tucked under her and her hands folded over her knees, braced herself for the storm.

"I thought we agreed to compromise by changing off," she said mildly. "The windows have only been kept open every other night."

"Compromise! Compromise!" He sprang from his chair with a violent laugh. "How can oil and water compromise?"

"I'm sure I don't know. I'm not a chemist. They don't mix, but they may get along very amicably together side by side, for all I can tell. What difference does it make, anyway? The real trouble is that you've been made nervous and irritable by your father's letters. If you'd only let us talk the whole matter over sensibly and in good humor—"

"My father's letters have nothing to do with the case," he cut in savagely. "The trouble is with your idiotic superstition that the sooty, dusty air from the street is more important than peace and quiet."

"What is the use of saying the same thing over and over," said Janet, with a touch of asperity in her clear, soft tones. "You are in a perfectly childish temper, Claude. If I were your wife I'd have to put up with it. As I don't have to, I won't."

"My wife! If you were my wife, you wouldn't dare to be so selfish, or to ignore my rights so shamelessly."

"Luckily, I'm *not* your wife."

"No, thank Heaven. It's also lucky that you're so well satisfied with your limitations and your sorry future. Like all the Barrs of Brooklyn, you may well glory in your irresponsibility. It's all you have."

"Oh, I have my freedom. I glory in that, too. If I were married to you, I dare say I should have to cringe and even ask your forgiveness. As it is, before this day is over, you will probably ask mine."

"Don't flatter yourself! I'm going for good. That'll spike your prophecy."

He began to dress posthaste in order to put time and space between his threat and its retraction.

Janet watched him through the long dark lashes of her half-closed gray eyes. He was spoilt, tyrannical, contemptible. Yet his energetic masculine beauty and the seductive ring of his voice still had power over her.

"Don't imagine I can't see through your game," he flung out, recklessly scattering the heaps he had so painfully assembled, in a frenzied search for a necktie. "Your fine pretense of not wanting to marry me is a clever way of getting me to do it. Exceedingly, overwhelmingly clever! But it hasn't fooled me. Not a bit! There are some things I don't swallow."

"Thank goodness. Perhaps you won't swallow me then, though you seem on the point of doing so."

She lay down again. Her averted face permitted only her dark curly head to show.

"I might have married you," he shouted, brandishing the recovered necktie at the bed. "I might, if you hadn't shown yourself in your true colors. Thank God, I found you out in time."

"Yet you don't seem a bit pleased."

"You little serpent! Is there no escaping your sting?"

"A minute ago I was a rhinoceros, now I am a serpent. A pretty swift evolution, isn't it? Of course, the 'Descent of Woman' *would* beat the 'Descent of Man' all hollow."

And she turned her back upon him contemptuously. Stung by her disdain, he moderated his temper somewhat and said:

"It is the trick of women to put men subtly in the wrong. You fight, but you never fight in the open. You send us into a devil of a temper, and slyly perpetuate the quarrel until you can make capital out of our degraded condition. Patient Griseldas, martyred angels, persecuted saints! If only you'd drop the pose of injured innocence!"

This impassioned speech was really a bid for a truce. But Janet, her heart

hardened, lay quite still, the back of her head expressing defiance.

The silence maddened him more than a flood of reproaches, and he continued dressing *fortissimo*. Finally, he reached for his hat, sending her, at the same time, a parting shot.

"Keep it up," he said, "and you'll be a past mistress in the art of demoralizing a man."

He went out with a spectacular exhibition of bad manners.

Poor Claude! He did not feel entirely guiltless. But he was absolutely certain that the fault lay vastly more on her side than on his. In the breviary of love, he had pledged his soul to an eternity of devotion, but not his temper to a five minutes' trial.

III

The door had scarcely been closed before Janet turned out of bed and began to put on her stockings. She got no further than the first one before she heard returning footsteps. Quick as a flash she resumed her former position in bed, so that when the door opened, her face was buried in the pillows and the back of her head was one obstinate, unconciliatory curve.

Claude had come back on the pretext of getting his walking stick, really in the hope of finding Janet penitent or at least willing to placate him. When he saw that all the advances would have to come from his side, he turned sharply on his heels and marched out, in his anger forgetting his cane.

Janet now waited until she was sure that he had gone in good earnest. Then she finished dressing, reflecting the while that for the third time within a week she was left quite alone. It was the discord that troubled her, not the solitude. Solitude had no terrors for her, although it had a drawback of a practical sort.

Namely, in the matter of the language. She was almost totally ignorant of French, her opportunities in Paris for acquiring the vernacular having been extremely few. She knew that Claude expected his absence to make a virtual prisoner of her. In fact, with this punishment in view, he had stayed away until late at night on the two occasions of their recent quarreling. And she did not doubt that he meant to punish her in the same manner again.

She went downstairs to breakfast full of pity for herself and of indignation against Claude.

Breakfast changed her mood completely. It occurred to her that Claude

might feel the discord between them as keenly as she did, though he might not be as conscious of the reasons. This led her to feel sorry for him and to wonder whether she might not have been more conciliatory.

Her nature was so essentially sound that she was inclined to look on Claude's outbursts of rage as symptoms of a mental disorder. She told herself that her equable temper gave her an immense advantage over him, an advantage she ought not to exploit too far.

It was Robert who had first made her conscious of the worth of her well-poised temperament, not to mention other good qualities which had seemed as inevitably her own as her two arms and two legs. Lately, since realizing what a surprisingly large number of people were ill-humored and bad tempered, she had begun to prize her even-mindedness for the rare gift it was.

Her self-esteem improving, her spirits followed suit. It was too fine a day to spend indoors. And, Claude or no Claude, she made up her mind to gratify a desire to wander through the fashionable shopping district.

She bethought herself of a pocket English-French dictionary, and a little "Colloquial French in Ten Lessons," which she had picked up at Brentano's in Paris. Thus equipped, she sallied out on an adventurous journey in the direction of the Hotel de Ville.

Her course from the *Quartier Leopold* to the *Boulevard Anspach* was intentionally zigzag. Walking leisurely and observing critically she was able to confirm or correct impressions of the capital gathered while riding with Claude in taxis or motor buses.

It struck her that Brussels was cleaner, wholesomer and more competently managed than either New York or Paris. Had the *Bruxellois* taken a leaf out of the book of Prussian efficiency or were they a more competently executive people?

Brussels was, of course, much smaller than Paris, less ostentatiously "grand" or "cosmopolitan." Janet did not agree with the orthodox tourist opinion that the Belgian capital was merely a pocket edition of the Gallic. Brussels was lively without being chaotic, and picturesque without being dirty. Paris, on the other hand, was in some respects a very American city. Its Rue Royales, Champs Elysees, Faubourg St. Germain and other show sections were perhaps more numerous and certainly more beautiful than the corresponding show sections in New York. But apart from these picked quarters, Paris and New York had the same tawdry glitter, the same rag-bag dishevelment, the same noisy, neurotic people, the same morbid chase after pleasure.

These results of modern civilization seemed by no means entirely missing from Brussels, but they existed in a smaller degree, even in proportion to the city's size. Life on the streets of Brussels still had an appearance of being orderly, sane. You could walk along the main thoroughfares without the sensation that

you were steering your way through scurrying, erratic, homicidal pedestrians. In a crowd in New York or Paris you might well become a prey to the fear that Darwin was right, after all, and that the evolution of man was guided chiefly by the principle of chance, Nature being a sort of brute Junker force which imposed *Kultur* on the survivors.

With these reflections, Janet sailed along, and though remembrance of the quarrel with Claude gave her an occasional sinking feeling, this was but the ground swell after the storm.

IV

At the Grands Magasins de la Bourse, Janet experienced little difficulty in making several minor purchases. Not because she had memorized a score of colloquial questions and answers from her little book, "French Guaranteed in Ten Lessons." For the questions and answers which she had conned so trippingly from the text were amazingly inapplicable to her needs. In the realm of trade or barter the phrases she needed always called for a subtly different twist from the high-flown phrases in the text-book. The book model advised her to say: "*Sir (or Madam), have the kindness to direct me to the street by which one may proceed to the Rue Royale.*" She actually wanted to say: "*What's a good short-cut to the Rue Royale?*" But as to this racier version the text-book was mute.

These difficulties proved no insuperable barrier to Janet. A glance, an eloquent gesture, and a copious use of the phrase *comme ça*, bridged the worst gaps in the course of communication. *Comme ça* alone, used at the end of the index finger, so to speak, worked wonders. Single-handed, it was mightier than a whole battalion of text-book phrases. Yet Janet flattered herself that she could, at a pinch, have dispensed even with this omnipotent demonstrative. To be sure, she was far swifter at divining other people's wishes than at getting her own wishes divined. Still, though she had a genius for the first process, she had at least a talent for the second.

"It would be strange," she thought, "if a New Yorker could not talk inarticulately in more languages than one."

The shop assistants met her attempts to communicate with them fully halfway. Their friendliness and courtesy in difficult situations astonished her. So did their efforts to comply with her precise wishes.

It was all very different from the American shop men and girls that she was

accustomed to. A New York salesman, who slept in a hall room in the Bronx and lunched at Child's, on a ham sandwich and tea or on griddle cakes and skimmed milk, was professionally guiltless of every effort save one, and that was an effort to convey to each customer a sense of the latter's abysmal insignificance; also an intimation of his supreme good luck in being waited on by the most distinguished clerk in the metropolis.

Standing at a counter in New York, one might be excused for supposing that the salesman accepted the purchaser's custom only as a grudging favor to the purchaser. Standing at a similar spot in Brussels, one might hope that the favor would be allowed to be the other way.

Perhaps the Brussels salesmen did not really feel favored. In view of the final disposition of the profits, they probably merely pretended to feel so. If this was the case, their pretense carried conviction, by virtue of the artistry of their politeness. Were there not, then, as many fictions in the life of New York as in the life of Brussels? Yes, but they were neither convincing fictions nor polite ones.

Artistry and politeness, Janet concluded, though they might be minor virtues, were not the minor virtues of an industrial republic.

Her last errand in the Grand Magasins was to buy Claude several pair of socks. The redoubtable *comme ça*, in a choice variety of modulations, did yeoman service in facilitating the selection of the correct color, quality, size.

She was sure Claude did not deserve the pains she was taking over him, particularly in view of his conduct that morning. But Janet's indignation had failed to blot from her mind a picture of the night before at bedtime, when Claude had pathetically drawn attention to the spectacle of both his great toes protruding rudely from the tips of his socks. This picture of Claude walking about Brussels with protruding toes offended her sense of the fitness of things. And, as she did not believe that the fitness of things should be tempered with revenge, she made the necessary purchases without pluming herself on her magnanimity.

Parcels in hand, she came close to a section set apart by a low railing. A somewhat depressed looking woman in front of the railing was talking humbly to a magnificent young man behind it. From a sign which read *Bureau d'Emploi*, Janet guessed that this was the section in which applications for employment were received.

If only she knew the language well enough to apply for a position herself, what a lot of problems this would solve!

The magnificent young man, who was patently the absolute monarch of the section, looked disapprovingly at the somewhat slatternly applicant who was abasing herself before him. With an air as superb as his sartorial equipment, he concluded the interview. So Cophetua might have concluded an interview with an unavailable beggar maid.

The dismissed applicant was the picture of dejection as she walked past Janet, who pitied her from her soul.

Suddenly Cophetua saw Janet.

Was she a lady or was she a beggar maid? He reasoned that ladies rarely burden their arms with a load of parcels, nor were they in the habit of making lingering stops in front of a *Bureau d'Emploi*. On the other hand, the object of his speculation was young, supple, well dressed; her gray eyes glancing his way thrilled him as no salesgirl beggar-maid had ever thrilled him before.

Decidedly, if she *was* a beggar maid, she was a most uncommon one. Cophetua saw that she was still looking at him, not artfully, and yet not disinterestedly either. The problem was disconcerting and insoluble; the call of the blood was peremptory and imperious.

He resolved to chance it.

Unbending as much as so magnificent a young man could unbend, he called out to Janet in a most inviting tone.

Alas, she couldn't understand a single word. All she could catch was the note of interrogation.

"*Je ne comprends pas français*—I'm sorry, but I don't understand," she informed him in polyglot. She wondered whether he could possibly be offering her employment, although she doubted this, for his glances were far from businesslike.

Again Cophetua spoke, more slowly. Yet on the same suave, interrogative note. He eyed her with immense favor. She understood his looks; and, as it was clearly not a case for the use of her pet *comme ça*, she lost all desire to understand his words.

Flushing and not quite knowing what to make of it all, she prepared to walk away, discretion seeming to be the better part of valor.

"Can I be of assistance?" said a gentleman who had suddenly stopped on his way past her.

She saw a short, robust, handsome man with an auburn beard and somewhat darker hair faintly tinged with gray. He took off his hat and bowed.

"I can speak a little English," he said, fluently enough, though to Janet's ears the accent sounded rather German.

Then he and Cophetua rapidly exchanged a few sentences in French. From the latter's frigid manner, nothing was plainer than that he regarded the stranger's mediation with extreme distaste.

"He merely wishes to know whether you are seeking a position," said Janet's self-appointed interpreter.

"How could I be? I don't know a word of the language, as you can see," she said, with one of her fascinating gestures.

This reply was duly conveyed to the chief of the employment bureau who, with a thousand daggers in his parting smile, withdrew majestically into his shell.

"It is impossible to know the reason for a mistake so deplorable," said he of the auburn beard, apologizing for Cophetua.

He lifted his hat again, and made as if to go. But he did not go.

"Oh, I don't mind a bit," said Janet, laughing unaffectedly. "If only I knew French, I should like nothing better than to take some position or other."

For a second, they looked into each other's eyes with mutual approval. Then he said boldly:

"In that case—would you like to be—what do the English call it—tutor to my little girl?"

From Cophetua, looming in the background, came mesmeric waves of hostility. Sensing this, they walked away together. He gave her a card inscribed with the name of Anton St. Hilaire. He told her he was an Alsatian, a widower with one child of about fourteen years. His wife had died during his absence on service at the front. His daughter having sickened, he had been to Italy with her. Now he meant to make a long stay in Brussels in order to be near a famous specialist for children. Later he and Henriette would travel.

Henriette had a nurse who for many reasons was unsatisfactory. His wish had long been to place the child in charge of a cultivated woman who should be a friend to her rather than a mere attendant, and who should inspire him with entire confidence. After a few not very searching questions, he professed to have entire confidence in Janet. He waved aside as immaterial the objection in respect of Janet's ignorance of French. She would pick up French as quickly as Henriette picked up English. Henriette had already had some English instruction; and Janet, for her part, had no doubt of her ability to manage the child as far as the linguistic difficulty went. Had she not proved up to the hilt her genius for making foreigners understand her when such was her desire?

"I could get along with a Choctaw," she said to herself, exultantly.

They talked as they proceeded along the Boulevard Anspach. The long and the short of it was that Janet agreed to consider the offer. She promised to pay a visit next day to M. St. Hilaire's apartments in order to meet Henriette. She would then make up her mind whether to take the position or not.

Upon this understanding the Alsatian left her.

Janet, all agog with her adventure, gave up shopping for the day.

The encounter appeared to her to be a godsend.

She liked M. St. Hilaire. If she also liked his daughter, if she and Henriette took to each other enough to make the proffered place attractive, she would be in a position to part company with Claude immediately.

As she had a strong conviction (backed by plenty of experience) that she

could get along with any halfway tolerable human being, she considered the step as good as taken.

True, she anticipated a bad quarter of an hour in having it out with Claude. But what a jolly thing it was to be in possession of a powerful weapon like economic independence. It was the last argument against tyrants, in this case against Claude and the special set of circumstances that made her absolutely dependent upon him.

She wished she could be candid with Claude and tell him all about the Alsatian. But this was impossible. Claude's capacity for candor was like some people's capacity for alcohol. A little of it went to his head and made him quarrelsome.

She was not like that! She could stand being told any amount of truth (or so she flattered herself). This was why so many people made her their confidante. Having an illusion stripped away might give acute pain, but it never outraged her. Witness her disenchantment with the theory of free love. But Claude, in common with most people, was like the famous prisoner who had spent years in a dungeon and who, when released, was quite overpowered by the fresh air. An unusual supply of truth all but killed the average man.

In this matter, the only one she had ever met like herself was Robert Lloyd. How she had underestimated Robert! Worse, how she had underestimated the strength of her attachment to him! Her partnership with Claude, a partnership of infatuation, had been a weak thing. A breath had made it, and a breath had blown it away. But her partnership with Robert, a partnership of work and mutual interests, had been a bond of adamant. Time could not wither it nor custom stale its precious memory.

She had a passionate longing to write Robert and pour out her heart to him as in the old days of the firm of Barr & Lloyd.

But no. This would never do. In questions of sex, Robert was as fanatic as any average American business man. The scene on the East River pier came back to her vividly. There he had stood like a reincarnation of Cato the Elder (Cornelia's nicknames certainly did hit the bull's-eye at times!) lecturing her and saying:

"I sha'n't have anything to do with free love or with a woman who has had a free lover."

The remembrance caused a wave of bitter feeling to surge through her.

By this time she had reached the Place Rogier. There she took a bus to the office of the American Express Company in order to inquire for mail. The one letter handed to her had been forwarded from Paris. The superscription was in Cornelia's handwriting, and Janet tore open the envelope without delay.

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

I

As was her custom, Cornelia had written in a decidedly lyrical vein, sounding in turn the strings of pathos, misgiving and melancholy sympathy. Without formal salutation the letter began:

My heart is torn for you, Araminta dearest, as I follow the story of your wanderings. It is a story that reopens old wounds, for in your sufferings I again experience my own. With what a different poignancy! Different as Claude Fontaine and Percival Houghton are different. I know that Claude possesses the supreme fascination that leads so many women to throw themselves recklessly into his arms. He turns their heads; but at least he does not rob them of their souls. This, Percival Houghton did. Thank your kind stars, my dear, that Claude is not as Percival, that he has not the latter's dominating will or piratical psychic personality. Your soul can still be called your own.

How I pray that your trials may turn out for the best! Araminta, every woman is fated to learn at the hands of some man how unscrupulous all men are in matters of sex. But is it not strange that men should outflag us at what is called our own game, and that women should let themselves be deceived by the fact that they are always credited with the victory? This indeed is man's greatest cleverness. He snatches the spoils even whilst loudly protesting that we have him completely at our mercy. Yes, men are our masters in the game of love, the game that is said to be *our* profession and *their* pastime. My dear, the amateur who gaily calls the tune has a much better time of it than the professional who is compelled to do the fiddling—unless the fiddler plays wholly and solely for love or is clever enough to exact a price insuring freedom after the dance is over. But this is an elementary principle which I need hardly point out to *you*, Araminta.

You say you do not mean to marry Claude, although you believe it lies within your power to do so. At the same time, you speak in harsh disparagement of free unions. To be candid, this mystifies me. I hope, however, that I'm wrong in detecting, beneath your criticism, a subtle reproach. If I'm right, you've done me a grievous injustice.

Didn't I consistently urge that free love is for daring and devoted spirits only? And what wonders have not the bold and brave done for our sex in the last thirty years! Look how the market value of men has fallen and how the market value of women has risen, if I may use the crude language of Mazie Ross. No

longer do women live, as did our grandmothers, for the sole purpose of "charming" men or of sipping the nectar of their "homage."

Pray observe, dear child, that I never decried marriage in the case of the few women who are strong enough to command the legal tyrant instead of submitting to him, and who thus are in a position to straighten out the irrational knot from the inside. As for the common rule of females, if they *will* go on flocking to the altar in droves, if they *will* be infatuated with marriage after we have opened their eyes to man—why, let them rush in where angels fear to tread. And let them take the consequences, too. Small blame to the nuptial fire if it scorches the likes of *them*. Is the flame guilty because the moths dash in?

But now for the news, although there is precious little.

First, Lydia Dyson has produced a new novel—and a new baby. You know she lets this happen (I mean the baby) every once in so often because she says it is the only way to keep her complexion perfect. (It really is a perfect olive, in spite of the quantities of gold-tipped cigarettes she smokes.) The baby, like its predecessors, has been given out for adoption to a childless couple in good circumstances, Lydia contending (*a la* Rousseau) that an artist makes a very unsatisfactory parent. Lydia's other achievement, her novel, "The Mother Soul," has been running serially in the *Good Householder*. It's netting her the usual mint of money, ten thousand dollars down, to say nothing of copious extras in the shape of book and dramatic royalties.

There's Lydia for you, flourishing like the green bay tree! Not like your poor Cornelia, who'd be happy enough to take the child and let the royalties go.

Robert is rarely here nowadays. Charlotte Beecher, therefore, doesn't show up often, and so, what with you and Claude in Europe, I'd be monarch of all I surveyed, if Hercules didn't take pity on me and come in to drive the blue devils away. He spoils me almost as much as you did. A dear, dutiful boy he is, as fond of work as a camel. I feel conscience-stricken when I think how lightly I accept his devotion. Ought I to make him happy? Ah, well-a-day! I'm sometimes tempted—ah, *how* I'm tempted!

But a poor soulless thing like me mustn't think of such things.

Harry's prospects have improved wonderfully of late. You know his heart was never in professional wrestling. He deliberately gave up a promising career *on the mat*, as they call it, where he acquired that odious nickname of the "Harlem Gorilla." Poor Hercules is about as much like a gorilla as I am like an elephant. Refusing engagements to appear in public contests brought him down on his luck for a time. That's how he happened to land in the model tenements. He never was even the least bit of a radical. Among the Outlaws, our gorilla is quite a lamb.

Well, this repulsive part of his career is over for good. He is now the physical director of the Bankers' Club. (What think you of my prophetic nickname

for Hercules? The bankers have their monster clubhouse on Fifth Avenue, almost next door to the Pillars of Hercules, as the Gotham and St. Regis hotels are called.) It's a good position. And an even better one is in sight. The Life Prolongation Institute (I say, Araminta, what a name!) has lately approached him in regard to a post at one of its European branches.

Wouldn't it be odd, if we all met some fine morning in Trafalgar Square or the Champs Elysees?

As for Robert, he has become as mad as a March hare. His Guild League seems to have dropped through a hole in the ground. (I predicted that, too!) He says the Guildsman propaganda was too radical for the old-style Laborites and too conservative for the Bolsheviks. But I can't pretend to follow these distinctions.

At all events, he was very much at loose ends for a while. One or two excellent openings in the newspaper line he calmly turned down with the remark that a successful journalist would have to be as corrupt as Falstaff and Hutchins Burley rolled into one. He is really quite incorrigible. He never seems to be content until he has got himself thoroughly on the wrong side of everybody who might be of service to him.

There are any number of instances of this trait. His personal quarrel with Hutchins Burley was quite unnecessarily lengthened into a business feud. He never made the most of his friendship with Claude (think what a chance it was for a man in his circumstances to be intimate with a man in Claude's!). He got himself in the black books of the whole newspaper world because of his agitation for the Guildsmen. And he is always flinging off violently from his friends. To this day, he rebuffs Hercules and me whenever we try to help him.

But finally, on account of his mother and sister out West, he had to put his pride in his pocket. It was too late! Did Cato ever tell you that he had an uncle with bushels of money in California? Well, it seems there *is* such a relative, and Robert applied to him for temporary help. The uncle, a chip of Robert's block—for he evidently has little use for affection, family or otherwise—preserved a discreet silence. After cross-questioning our friend, I found out why. He had painstakingly sent the old gentleman (who made a fortune in real estate speculation) his own pamphlet on land profiteering! As I said before, Robert is incorrigible.

What does he do next but hit on the brilliant scheme of going to work as a clerk in an insurance company, downtown. Denman Page's insurance company, as it happens. Fancy our fastidious Cato with his quick ways and ideal enthusiasms sitting from nine till five at a poky desk in Wall Street. And is this fearful sacrifice made for the sake of turning over an honest penny (thirty dollars a week, to be exact)? Never believe it. Robert's little game is to help organize the mercantile employees into a radical labor union. Can you beat it?

He says that the clerk is the most abject boot-licker and willing slave of the ruling robber bankers to be found in the whole industrial system (I won't vouch for the accuracy of this description). He (the clerk, that is) needs redemption. But although plenty of rich people go a-slumming amongst the very poor and down-trodden, nobody is self-sacrificing enough to go on a mission of mercy amongst the benighted and degraded "clerkical" classes.—And so he raves on.

In retaliation, the big bankers and insurance chiefs have also formed a society to resist the inroads of Robert's infant union. Denman Page, Charlotte's indefatigable wooer, is one of the most aggressive leaders in the employers' society and is doing his utmost to persecute Robert and make his life as miserable as possible. Robert, loathing business, hangs on downtown, purely out of regard for his union.

He is simply throwing his natural talents away. All so unnecessarily, too. At any moment, he could marry Charlotte Beecher for the asking, and develop his executive ability—become a great public administrator or something like that. Charlotte isn't noted for her beauty; but she is young, she has several millions in her own right, and she is no mere society trifler either. She works almost as hard at her sculpture as if she had to earn her own living. Lots of men are after her, naturally enough. They say Denman Page would give his eyeteeth to add Charlotte's fortune to his bank account. But she seems to want Robert. Rumor has it that she has even proposed to him several times. To Cato! And leave it to him to fish up some silly scruple about not selling his independence to a rich wife!

Still, I saw him in Charlotte's studio in the Mews lately. He was quite lover-like (in his Catonic way). I hear he goes there pretty often. So perhaps there's hope.

What a picture I could draw of how your departure with Lothario set the Lorrillard tenements by the ears! The headlines, the excitement among the Outlaws, Kips Bay in a buzz, buzz, buzz—but you can imagine it much better for yourself. Cato alone took it with stoical calm. Araminta, he astonished me! Hardly a syllable would he say about it. A stern sort of "make your bed and lie in it" expression was all we could get out of him. And he shut off questions with the remark that it was entirely *your* affair.

Yes, we all thought Big Hutch held the key to the leakage into the papers. He hates Claude with an undying hatred for some reason unknown to me, and he has an immortal tomahawk out for you because you so openly showed the disgust he filled you with. "Hell hath no fury like a Hutchins scorned."

The old villain was lately appointed a member of a newspaper mission to travel *de luxe* to Russia. Trust Hutchins to keep himself in clover. Mazie Ross, as bad, as pretty, and as syrupy as ever, is to be his traveling companion (all on

the quiet, of course—the purpose of the mission being to report on the stability and morality of the Bolshevik regime). And they say that ethics is a humorless science!

Keep me informed, dear child, of your plans and movements. What shall I send to Lothario? Rosemary and rue, or poniards and poison? My fondest hopes and wishes—from my heart—wing their way to you.

Ever your devoted, Cornelia.

Janet finished reading with a sigh. The letter changed none of her opinions or plans. It merely determined her all the more strongly to suppress her desire to write to Robert.

II

On returning to her room at the hotel she got rather a start, for Claude was there. Usually when he went away in anger, he returned late at night, and it was now only late in the afternoon. A glance showed her that he was in gay spirits and that he had communicated this mood to the apartment by filling it with the color and fragrance of flowers. It was a part of his peace offering.

Hardly had she entered, when he rushed forward, relieved her of her parcels and kissed her ardently.

"Darling," he exclaimed, "what a bad-tempered beast I've been! Can you forgive me once more?"

She fought desperately against the spell of his romantic personality.

"Why not?" she said, withdrawing from his caresses.

"You are an angel, dearest," he said, seizing her hands.

"Then I shall be an angel on the wing, Claude."

"Janet! Say anything but that. Prescribe any punishment you please. But do let's begin again, with a clean slate."

"You can't get the slate clean when the scratches are too deep, Claude. To forgive and act as though nothing had changed is hard; to forgive and act as though everything had changed is harder still. We must both be sensible and do the second, the harder thing."

"What do you mean?" said Claude, in alarm.

"I mean that we'll be much happier apart."

"Don't say that again, Janet dearest. You are taking my conduct of the last two weeks too seriously. It isn't fair. I've frequently behaved abominably. I don't try to excuse it. I admit it. But remember the constant worry I've had to put up with at this cursed Brussels office. That boor of a Walloon in charge has undoubtedly had orders from my father to be a thorn in my side. And he's doing his level best to please. Not a day passes but what he gives me a hundred lancet scratches ending in a good stiletto stab."

Worry had not made Claude less handsome. The ring and tang of his voice thrilled Janet almost as much as of old. His patrician manner and flashing blue eyes were almost as irresistible. Yet Janet put away his arm and said:

"Claude, I know you've had a very trying time. It's altogether on my account, isn't it? All the more reason for me to go away."

"But what on earth do you want to leave me for?"

"For a thousand reasons."

"You might deign to mention *one*."

"Well, when you frown, you want me to be sad; when you laugh, you want me to be gay. You never think that I may have moods of my own, moods that won't dance to your piping. You never think of any one but yourself."

"Oh, don't I? I've had you on my mind all day. I've thought of nothing else. And it's not the first day that I've spent in a torment of worry about your attitude towards me."

A great wave of self-pity swept through him and quite carried him off his feet. By precedent, it should have carried Janet off her feet, too.

She stood her ground in silence.

"For Heaven's sake, don't be obstinate," he said, his confidence beginning to desert him. "It isn't late yet," he added, in a more pleading tone. "We can still have an awfully good time this evening. Do be nice—"

"Nice!"

She stood up and looked at him. He mistook the mocking expression in her smiling gray eyes, and did not notice the faintly contracting brows above her long-lashed eyelids.

"Yes, nice and reasonable," he went on, pursuing what he thought an advantage.

"Reasonable!" The faint contraction was now a forbidding bar. "I'm trying hard to be reasonable, Claude."

After a pause, she smiled again. "You pull me one way, reason pulls me another," she said, with characteristic candor. "Now see if my plan doesn't follow reason. You left this morning, for a short while; I'm leaving tomorrow, for good and all. You left me in anger; I should like to leave you good friends. It isn't as

easy as it sounds. Will you help me?"

He flung himself angrily into an armchair.

"You must be mad to think you can shift for yourself in a strange country."

"Mad or not, that is exactly what I think," she said, coldly. "And I shall begin to pack my things now."

She actually drew out a bag and suited the action to the words. Claude looked on, speechless. After a while he went over and, roughly taking hold of one of her arms, continued his remonstrance.

"You can't even *read* the language, let alone speak it. And you haven't a penny of your own. Or do you expect to earn money on the streets?"

"Not until I've exhausted the *regular* channels," she said, maddeningly calm.

Inwardly she was boiling. She looked at him steadily until he released her arm. Then she added:

"I feel perfectly capable of looking out for myself, even in a strange country. Here are some socks I bought for you at a counter where no English was spoken."

"The devil take the socks!" he said, hurling the package to the other end of the room.

She sat down on a tuffet beside her case.

"You know quite well that I had a little money of my own, which I brought with me," she said. "That will do me to begin on."

"To begin on!" he raged, pacing the floor violently. "What do you mean by *begin on*? Is this another secret? As for your money, I know nothing about that either. I'm continually being slapped in the face with something or other that you've kept in the dark. But what's a little deceit among lovers?"

"I've never deceived you," she said, growing bitter as she went on. "In any case, deceiving you would be a trifle compared with the crime of deceiving myself."

"Deceiving yourself?"

"Yes. Do you suppose I could ever have lived with you, without first thoroughly deceiving myself?"

Claude's anger cooled at this bitter question. Janet was now worked up, and anything was better than the killing indifference she had so far maintained. He closed her valise and sat down on it, at her side.

"Janet," he pleaded, "you were never like this before. So unyielding, so cold. And I had planned that we'd make a gala night of it. Look at these lovely flowers. Don't you understand their symbolism? I'm going to do the right thing. I mean to marry you now, here in Brussels, at once!"

"You've offered to do that before."

"Yes, but I really mean it this time."

"And I really meant it Claude, every time I refused. You see, I always as-

sumed that your offers were made in good faith.”

”You are making a fool of me.”

”No one can do that but yourself.”

He got up abruptly and stood there nonplused, while she calmly went on packing. He hated her for it. She was rude, inflexible, callous. Her motives were unfathomable. She was never twice the same. Yet at this moment he believed he wanted her more passionately than he had ever wanted her before. He burst into suspicion.

”What’s the real reason, Janet? Some one has written to you—Robert, I dare say?”

He took her silence for an affirmation.

”I thought so. Now I understand your change of attitude. He’s been preaching at you. It’s his specialty. His views, curse them, are like a drought. They dry up all one’s spontaneity and natural affection. Long ago, in the tenements, I noticed his sinister effect on you. Whenever you went out with him, you came back with your heart hardened against me.”

She laughed and said:

”What nonsense! You’re quite wrong. Robert hasn’t wasted any of his valuable sermons on me. He hasn’t sent me so much as a scrap of paper.”

”Then what has changed you, all of a sudden? Is it my father you’re afraid of? That would be too absurd. He’ll come around. He has got to come around. He can’t help himself. I know too much about the business, its secrets and its weaknesses. So don’t worry on that score.”

”Claude, it’s all very fine. But I don’t see myself as your wife. I’d never do. You need a woman to manage you like a mother and to flatter you like a squaw. But—these jobs not being in my line—I’d criticize you like an equal. And you know you simply can’t stand criticism.”

Was she really rejecting his offer of marriage? Claude was appalled at the apathy of the feminine intellect in the face of a miracle. Didn’t she know what his offer meant? (He tried to convey it to her—not in the exact words, but in euphemisms.) It meant a change of estate from mistress to wife. The wife of Claude Fontaine! The wife of a merchant prince of Paris, London, New York, etc. (the only sort of prince that counted in the twentieth century; no mere paper prince or petty Venetian dogeling, but a prince whose rank had an international validity and whose means could challenge the heart to name its wildest desire). It was not conceivable that she knew what she was about. Still, he had to face the possibility.

And this desertion on top of all he had endured in consequence of leaving America with her!

”Isn’t there a shred of gratitude in you?” he cried out, aghast at her unyield-

ing front.

"I'm not ungrateful, Claude," she said, gravely. "Living with you has been a liberal education. I've learned the truth about marriage without binding myself for life; I've also learned the difference between affection and infatuation without breaking either your heart or mine. Can I ever repay this? If every girl could have some experience in living with a man or two before she made a permanent choice, I believe marriage would be far more popular."

"Confound your opinions," he shouted, in an agony of rage.

With a wild movement, he seized both her arms and furiously lifted her to her feet.

"Look here. Do you think you can calmly turn your back on me after what I've put up with, after all I've suffered on your account? Exactly why do you want to go away at the very moment that I'm marooned in this infernal town? You've got to tell me straight! Is it sheer insanity, or a craze for romantic adventure?"

With cheeks glowing and lips quivering, she said:

"I'm leaving you because we have nothing in common except our physical attraction. And that is mostly physical repulsion now, as you see."

"Haven't you one spark of love for me left?"

"Claude, with all your faults I love you still," she replied, smiling, as she rallied her self-command.

He relapsed into his seat, utterly overwhelmed.

Deeply moved, she went over to his side, and looked at him with a pang of remorse. He edged away from her with a passionate sense of injury.

"Remember," he warned her, "if you leave me, that will end everything. Society may ostracize you, or toss you back into the gutter. Don't ask me to lift a finger."

The friendly words froze on her lips. She quietly resumed packing.

He sprang up, beside himself, his whole person vibrating with his fury.

"If you're going, you needn't wait until tomorrow!" he said, drawing in his breath. "You can go now, for all I care."

He walked to the window, his teeth clenched and his body set.

While she hastily assembled the rest of her most necessary things, he was saying to himself:

"This damned idea of independence! She thinks she can frighten me. She thinks I won't let her go. I'll call the bluff, and she'll come back flying."

All this on a horrible quicksand of doubt.

But she saw only his hostile back and heard only the echo of his savage tones.

How like her mother he was!

Without a word, she picked up her bag and went out.

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

I

A sedan drove up to M. St. Hilaire's house in the *Quartier Leopold*. The young lady who got out was met at the door by a girl of fourteen who enfolded her in affectionate embraces.

"Oh, what a slow poke!" cried the girl reproachfully. "You were gone for ever and ever, Jeanette!"

"Two hours and ten minutes, Henrietta," said Janet looking at her wrist watch, "is pretty short measure for eternity. I'm glad you're not my butcher or baker."

Henriette grimaced. They went upstairs together, the girl's arm tightly clasping her companion's waist.

Henriette St. Hilaire was a lovely girl, lithe and slender. Her fair hair was bobbed and her eyes were the soft blue eyes of the North.

She complained again of the dull time she had had.

"Serve you right for having a headache when I left," said Janet. "According to Herbert Spencer, if I went out for a drive by myself every time you had one, your headaches would soon disappear."

"Mine has gone already. Show me all you bought, Janski. May I open the parcels?"

"Yes, one by one."

For Henriette was recklessly attacking strings and wrappers, to the great peril of the contents.

Among the parcels undid was one containing a book.

She read out the title: "Tom, Dick and Harry."

"What's this?"

"That's a book of light reading for a young lady well advanced in the English language."

Henriette had taken to English as a duck takes to water. After a year of continuous practice, she spoke it well; and read or wrote it passably.

"Oh, it isn't a girl's book, is it?" she said, dubiously, and scanning the title again in the light of Janet's words.

"No, it's a boy's book. Boys' books are the only ones I know about because they were the only ones I used to read. They were much jollier than the girls' books."

"Did your mother let you read boys' books? My mother wouldn't."

"Nor mine either. But I read them on the sly. That's what made them so

enticing, I suppose.”

”I can’t imagine that you ever did anything on the sly, Janski,” said the child, who still took idioms somewhat too literally.

”Oh, can’t you? Then I’m not half such a fool as I look.”

Henriette laid the book down and went over to make a demonstration of tenderness by way of intimating that she believed Janet to be the best and cleverest person in the whole world.

Janet skillfully cut this demonstration short. She believed that a child’s affections, like its disaffections, should be kept well within bounds.

”Your enthusiasm for ’Tom, Dick and Harry,’” she said, in her musical voice, ”leaves much to be desired. Let me tell you that it is not a book for study, but a book for light reading. If you really mean to make English your ’adopted tongue,’ as you sometimes tell me, you must get used to light reading. The English-speaking nations read very little else.”

Henriette gave her a look full of adoration.

”Oh, I don’t need light reading while I have you. To be with you is like—it’s as exciting as watching the loop-the-loop!”

”Look here, Miss, do you imply that I’m a sort of three-ringed circus or professional jumping-jack?”

”No. I don’t mean anything horrid and jumpy like that. I mean you are never like other people. That’s why it’s such fun to try and guess what you will do or say next. And I hardly ever guess right.”

”I see. I’m more like a Christmas stocking, full of surprises.”

”There, you see what funny things you say! It’s far more absorbing than a hundred books of light reading.”

”Henriette, you are becoming highly skilled at flattery. It’s a very useful accomplishment. If my absence brings out virtues like this, I think I shall make a point of deserting you for two hours every morning. You will become a paragon, and I shall be famous for my absent teaching.”

”Oh, no, no, most dearest Jeanette. If need be, I’ll say the most awful things about you. I’ll do anything to keep you.”

She gave a great sigh.

”You don’t know how I worry about losing you. It’s terrible! Why weren’t you my sister or my aunt? Then I’d be sure of keeping you always!”

”Don’t be too sure of that, darling. If we were close relations, everybody would expect us to be fond of each other. And this expectation would probably destroy most of the fondness, unless our attraction for each other happened to be overwhelming.”

”Oh, it is overwhelming, isn’t it? It must be, Jeanette. Why, I wouldn’t mind even if you were my mother!”

"That's what I call crushing proof."

"Yes. And it's taking chances, too. I don't really want another mother, you know. Mothers are only truly nice to their sons. Now do you see how much I love you?"

"I do, you little philosopher. And I conclude, from so much undeserved affection, that, as a teacher, I have probably been far too easy-going. In future, I shall have to be much more severe."

"Oh, that has nothing to do with it," said Henriette, laughing. "It isn't the way you treat me. It's—well, I don't know what. Perhaps it's the deep, deep mystery about you. Papa has noticed it, too."

"Has he, indeed?"

"Yes. And speaking of mysteries, I forgot to tell you that some one called to see you while you were out. A gentleman—"

"A gentleman! Who could it be?"

"Well, he was a great big mountain of a man. Ugly, oh, like the ogre in a fairy tale. I didn't like him a bit."

"Oh, you saw him?"

"Yes. I peeked over the banisters. What a monster! Papa wasn't home. Berthe let him in because he said he was an old friend of yours. Here's his card."

Janet read the name of Hutchins Burley, and needed all her self-control not to show her dismay.

"Did he leave a message?"

Henriette prattled on, unaware of Janet's emotion.

"He asked Berthe to tell you that he would call again about five o'clock tomorrow afternoon. He said he especially wanted to see you. If you couldn't be in, he would be sure to see papa."

"Five o'clock, did he say?"

"Yes. Just when my riding lesson comes. I suppose we shall have to give up our ride," she added mournfully.

"Let's wait and see, dear."

II

Had Burley chanced upon her in the street and followed her home, or had he seen her in one of the shops or at one of the English tea rooms in Brussels? Janet did not pursue this fruitless inquiry. The question was how to meet the fact, the

perilous fact. For she could hardly doubt that Hutchins Burley's visit boded her no good.

She passed the events of the last nine months in quick review. M. St. Hilaire had engaged her without references. True to his agreement, moreover, he had given her a free hand with Henriette's education and had been well pleased when a growing attachment between Janet and his daughter relieved him almost entirely of routine parental cares.

As the virtual guardian of Henriette, Janet had had little to complain of and much to be thankful for. Her pupil and her pupil's father had treated her from the first as one of themselves, so that she enjoyed all the advantages of membership in a family of wealth and refinement. These advantages were not to be scoffed at. M. St. Hilaire was not only a man of cultivated tastes; he possessed the means (derived from extensive realty holdings in Alsace and Switzerland) which permitted him to indulge his tastes on a very liberal scale.

All in all, Janet thanked her lucky stars, especially as the pose of chivalry, which M. St. Hilaire had contributed to their first meeting, had worn very well. True, at the outset, he had made a few advances ranging from the demonstrative to the amorous. But she had set these experiments down to the incorrigible habit of continental gallantry. He had not gone beyond them, had accepted her gentle rebuffs with a very good grace, and had not thenceforth encroached upon her intimacy further than she wished.

Of late, she had not been able to close her eyes to the fact that her employer was engaged in a mental debate as to whether or no he should propose marriage to her. She regretted this fact and dreaded its sequel. For reasons that seemed good and sufficient to her instincts if not to her intellect, she had no desire to marry M. St. Hilaire. Her present berth was very comfortable and altogether to her liking. It gave her the rest she needed after the strain of her adventure with Claude; it also gave her an opportunity to reflect on the past and get her bearings in the present, before she took another leap.

It was in the light of these relations with M. St. Hilaire and with Henriette that she wondered what she ought to do.

As regards Hutchins Burley, she was sure that he meant to play the heavy villain. Why not? Nature had cut him out for the part, patterning him magnificently upon the "heavies" that trod on the blood-and-thunder stage. After all, one had to give this stage its due. If the literary drama could create characters which nature copied (and sometimes improved on), so could melodrama. And certainly, in Hutchins Burley, melodrama had prompted nature to make her masterpiece.

Janet had rather settled it, then, that Hutchins would have the audacity to approach her with a repugnant offer (the same old offer), hoping that her recent experience might have left her less squeamish than in the days of the

model tenements when she had repeatedly repulsed him with scorn. On being repulsed anew, he would proceed to inform M. St. Hilaire of her affair with Claude Fontaine in the expectation that the news would bring about her discharge. For it was unlikely that a father would wish his child to continue in the care of a young woman who had "gone wrong."

The mischief done, Hutchins would live in hopes of snatching from her weakness the gratification he had vainly striven to beg, borrow or steal from her strength.

Should she now, like a movie heroine, try to head Hutchins off, temporize with his expected offer, pay him blackmail, or what not? She laughed heartily at this idea, its execution was so foreign to her nature.

What would Robert advise her to do? At this point she repeated an act that had lately been a favorite part of her daydreams. She called up Robert, as Saul called up the Witch of Endor, and had a long, sensible talk with him one of those long, sensible talks so frequent in the days of Barr & Lloyd in the Lorillard tenements.

Robert advised her to obey her common sense unless her instinct kicked over the traces, in which case let her feel no compunction about obeying her instinct. She had better have as little direct dealing with Hutchins Burley as possible. You could no more put off a scoundrel than you could buy up a gentleman. The basest as well as the best of men were incorruptible. If Hutchins had it in mind to do something nasty, he would do it, no matter what course she took.

Of course, she might throw herself on M. St. Hilaire's mercy. But then, though M. St. Hilaire was a decent sort of man, was he not, like most cultivated men, a classicist? That is, were not his reactions towards matters of sex thoroughly traditional? If so, the only attitude of Janet's that he would comprehend would be that of a penitent Magdalene with uplifted hands and tearful eyes. Was she prepared to assume this role?

"Decidedly not," was Janet's hot reply to Robert's shade. "I may have been rash or worldly-unwise, but I won't admit that I was wicked. If I am asked to pay up for my folly, I shall not try to evade payment. But if I am asked to pay up for my wickedness (which I do not acknowledge), I shall fight payment to the last ditch.

"No doubt, M. St. Hilaire will think me wicked, but do you?"

"There are three kinds of people," solemnly responded Robert's astral spirit. "And they correspond roughly to three kinds of existence we recognize: animal, vegetable and mineral. The mineral people are the dead people. Not more dead than the so-called minerals. But, like rocks and stones, they are incarnations of law and custom petrified. Then there are the vegetable people, the people who fold their hands and piously accept such crumbs of life as are showered

upon them from the lap of High Heaven. Lastly there are the animal people, the people who go out to find life instead of waiting for life to find them. If you intend to remain in the last-named class, you must cheerfully assume the risks of adventure."

"Dear me," ejaculated Janet, "if his very shade isn't lecturing me for old times' sake!"

It was a little humiliating to be so dependent on Robert, even in the spirit. She wouldn't have minded it so much if his terrestrial self hadn't, with desolating coldness, washed his hands of her fate.

Still, take it all in all, he had done what all sagacious ghostly advisers should do, he had told her to do exactly what she wanted to do.

Consequently, Henriette's riding lesson should not be interfered with to-morrow. When Hutchins Burley came at five o'clock, he would find her out. Tableau of a raging ogre! His fury would know no bounds, and he would surely embellish Janet's life history so that M. St. Hilaire should put the worst interpretation on everything. Well, let him do his vilest. Come what may, time and the hour would run through the roughest day.

Losing Henriette!—Ah, that would be a bitter pill to swallow. Still, it wasn't the first bitter pill and it wouldn't be the last.

In every other way, she felt ready for a change.

III

"Can I see you for a few minutes?" said M. St. Hilaire to Janet, intercepting her outside his study, a little after six o'clock next day.

She and Henriette were on their way upstairs to take off their riding clothes and to dress for dinner.

"If you two are going to chatterbox, I shall take a little nap," said Henriette, climbing drowsily up another flight of stairs to her room.

"Don't be too long, *mon pere*," she added, stopping half-way and looking down over the banisters. "I'm even more hungry than sleepy. Jeanette, please wake me when you come up."

Janet, from within the study, promised to do so.

Neither her voice nor her manner betrayed her apprehensiveness. Her sailor hat was set rather jauntily on her head. Her light-brown riding coat and breeches made a most becoming costume, one that showed the undulating grace

of her movements to excellent advantage.

M. St. Hilaire followed her into the study and closed the door a shade too circumspectly.

His glances and the vibrant tones of his voice puzzled her considerably. She could guess the substance of what he meant to convey but not the form in which he meant to convey it.

"That man—" he began in a hesitant manner.

"Mr. Burley, the man I said was coming today?"

"He came. You didn't tell me what he was coming for."

"I knew he'd do it so much better."

"He treated me to a long, long story about you."

"Yes, I rather thought he would."

"Oh, so you knew that, too?"

"I had no cause to suspect him of amiable intentions," she said, swinging her sailor hat by the elastic band. "I suppose he told you that I lived with Claude Fontaine?"

"Yes, but of course, I—"

"Oh, it's quite true."

M. St. Hilaire, nonplused by her candor, stroked his auburn beard and feasted on the sight of her as she sat in an armchair not far away. The indefinable suggestion of a devil-may-care mood enhanced her vital charm until it stirred, thrilled, intoxicated him.

"Perhaps—at one time—you have loved this Burley?" he asked, nursing the suspicion.

"A beast like that? Never!"

He moved his chair very closely to hers.

"Just Monsieur Fontaine?"

"You don't expect me to go into details?" she said, coloring deeply.

"No, no, my dear. But—what has been, can be. Is it not so?"

"I don't know what you mean."

He didn't quite know himself. Being in no condition to reason clearly, he had leaped rashly to the conclusion that she had wished him to learn of her love affair as an indirect way of encouraging him.

Janet could not know his thoughts precisely, but she had an inkling. She wondered that she could have been so blind as not to have seen that his studied chivalry towards women covered a strongly sensual nature.

Even then, she was not insensible to the fact that Anton St. Hilaire was a pleasing man to look upon. His bright blue eyes and clear, ruddy complexion testified to a sound physique. Perhaps he was a trifle too robust. But there was a feminine comeliness about him which was a foil to his surging virility. In

many women, the first quality calmed the piquant fears which the second quality excited.

"Burley naturally told all sorts of lies about you," he added, for want of a better line to take.

"I expected he would."

"And of course I sent him about his business."

"I rather expected that, too," she said, smiling in spite of a growing sense of alarm.

For he had abruptly approached her and advanced as fast as she involuntarily withdrew. She retreated around the desk towards the closed door, on one side of which stood a wide leather couch. Against this she stumbled slightly, and he caught up with her.

"Janet," he said, in a low voice, thick with excitement, "the way he dared to talk about you, you—so sweet, so clean, so adorable. I could have strangled the brute."

"I wish you had."

"You must let me protect you—"

They were at cross-purposes. She thought she could still reach the door and make a dignified escape. He felt her withdrawal as an added incitement. He had so long dispensed with the anticipating, insinuating maneuvers in the technique of love-making that he had lost the knack of using them. Moreover, his muscular strength, a sanguine temperament, and past successes in sexual experiments had primed him with the belief that direct action was the shortest way with all women.

"You must let me protect you—"

With the words still on his lips, he took her violently in his arms.

The touch of his hand against her body filled her with an enormous, sexless anger. Making an almost superhuman effort, she struck back his head and succeeded in wrenching herself from his grasp.

He stumbled, but instantly picked himself up. As he tried to back her away from the door, she again raised her hand.

"I can protect myself," she said, with a passionate repugnance that chilled him to the soul.

"Don't go like that," he cried, springing forward and clutching at her arm.

She dragged it away, rang for the maid, and rapidly turned the door knob.

"Berthe," she called down the hall, in clear ringing tones, "please open the storeroom. I want to get at my trunk."

Then she turned and looked at him, cold, distinguished, unapproachable.

M. St. Hilaire plumped into the nearest seat.

"I meant no harm," he muttered, numb, and crestfallen as a dried pear.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

I

Ten days later. A large sitting room in exclusive lodgings near Picadilly, London. Two men in an animated conversation. The decidedly younger one, breezy and Times Squarish, and yet politely deferential to the experience of his senior; the latter, a tall, wiry man immaculately dressed in a suit of neutral coloring.

The young man was saying:

"Yes, Mr. Pryor, he's slowly warming to me. Slowly. I tell you, sir, a Japanese naval attache can give points to an icicle. Still, I think he's biting!"

"Did you tell him that the U.S. Army of Occupation had sent machine guns to the number of three thousand two hundred and fifty to the Ukraine?"

"No. I followed your instructions to the dot. I merely said I was in a position to tell him the number."

"Well?"

"He replied, with a sour smile, that he was in the same position as regards me. I ventured to question the correctness of his information. He volunteered the figure."

"And the figure he gave?"

"Was three thousand two hundred and fifty."

Mark Pryor's rather long neck collapsed telescopically down his high, straight collar.

"And you think he's biting!" he said, turning his roving gray eyes quizzically on his companion. "Take care, Smilo, my boy, or he'll have *you* 'biting' before you know it. And that will be a case of the biter bit."

"Have your little joke at the expense of the service, Mr. Pryor," said young Smilo, with an air of tactfully conveying a rebuke. "But is a mere Jap likely to come it over a real American like you or me? I *don't* think."

"Let's waive discussion on a point so personal. In temperament and disposition we are exact opposites. That's why we get on so well together, and why I'm going to take you into my confidence."

"Mr. Pryor, you mustn't think—"

"I know it, my boy, I know it. I must never think, and I ought never to take you into my confidence, either. Both acts are first-class infractions of the rules of the military secret service. I admit it shouldn't be done. It might result in important discoveries. It might even lead to the disentangling of one of the mysteries we're working on. Think of it! There'd be only one thousand two hundred and fifty-six mysteries left."

Young Smilo laughed good naturedly (to cheer the old boy up!).

"None the less," continued Pryor, gravely, "I shall now violate another inviolable rule. I shall give you four pieces of information. The first: Running across Hutchins Burley in Paris twelve days ago, I told him the number of machine guns sent by us to the Ukraine."

"So that was the dodge. I see! You told him the exact number?"

"Hardly. I told him three thousand two hundred and fifty. I thought that number would do as well as any. Much better than the real number for a variety of reasons which I won't stop to detail. Suffice it, the number agrees with the number which you, in your capacity of informer to the Japanese Secret Service, offered to reveal to the attache, and which he already knew."

"By George! With all the other dope you've got in the Burley case, you must be pretty nearly ready to close in on the man?"

"So *I* thought. But Headquarters didn't. You see, I had followed Burley along a devious route to Brussels. By the way, he nearly slipped through my fingers there. I muffed him, so to speak. But I picked him up again before he left Belgium and dogged him to Coblenz."

"Coblenz? In the thick of the American occupation?"

"Precisely. And bang under the noses of the American army, Mr. Hutchins walked into a tobacconist's shop and sent a letter to the Japanese embassy. At this tremendously exciting moment, Headquarters, in all the majesty of its omniscience, shunted me off to London and ordered me to take you in tow and mark time."

"We marked time all right," chuckled Smilo. "You might say we hall-marked it, what little we had. Linking Burley up with the Japs on the one hand and with the smuggled Fontaine diamonds on the other, wasn't such a bad week's work, even though we haven't got the goods on him yet."

"That's all very well, my boy. But what do I get today? Here is your second piece of information. I get word to quit the Japanese case."

"What for?"

"For a post of honor in the business of trailing certain dangerous American radicals who are temporarily in London. How do you like that?"

"I don't like it, Mr. Pryor. And I don't blame *you* for not liking it. It looks like a raw deal. But are you sure it hasn't some remote connection with Burley?"

"No, I'm not sure. The devil has many irons in the fire. So has Hutchins Burley. Most energetic gentlemen whether of the diabolic or the celestial brand can gobble up an astonishing number of miscellaneous jobs. For all I know, Hutchins may be the new Head Bolshevik Bomb Thrower; or he may be the old chief *Agent Provocateur*; or he may be merely somebody with a friend in Washington whose word can make Headquarters quail. It's a conundrum. A pretty, picture-puzzle, play-box conundrum, if you like. Still, a conundrum. And I'm heartily sick of conundrums. I'm done with them. I joined the Secret Service to become a detective, not a musical comedy magician."

"You don't mean to say you are going to resign?"

"I do. You have guessed my third item of news. As fast as a steamer can carry me, I mean to proceed to Washington, there to give my resignation and sundry pieces of my mind to the Chief in person."

"But keeping its agents in the dark is an old, cherished method of the Service, isn't it? Mr. Pryor, I feel sure you have another reason."

"I have. Item four: I'm being followed."

"Followed—I don't understand."

"I began to suspect something the moment I came to London. Well, I put my suspicions to the test yesterday. Before going out I folded a pair of trousers in a very particular way and left them on a chair. When I came back they had been refolded in a slightly different way."

"Did you question your landlady?"

"Yes. Naturally she denied that any stranger had entered, but her confusion was obvious. I quickly suggested that my tailor might have called, and she as quickly agreed that this was so. When, an hour later, I interviewed the tailor and he confirmed me in my belief that he had not been near the house, the inference was clear. I was being watched. And, mark you, Smilo, I have reason to believe that the watcher is one of our own colleagues."

"Lord, no!"

"Judging from the awkward way the pockets were crumpled in the act of refolding the trousers, I have further reason to believe that the watcher is a woman."

"Impossible!"

"Nothing is impossible in this best of impossible worlds."

"It's a low-down shame, Mr. Pryor. But, after all, it can't hurt you. 'Sticks and stones may break my bones, etc.' You know the saying."

"My dear boy, being a detective you can't begin to realize that the knowledge that you are being carefully watched gives you a very jumpy feeling—especially when you know you're guilty."

"In heaven's name, guilty of what?"

"Of doing a good job in your own line; in my case, tracking down criminals."

"Surely you don't mean to imply that Headquarters would permit influences—"

"I imply nothing. I give you the benefit of the facts. But if you think it's a pleasure to surmise that your every movement has an unseen spectator—you don't know who, but you fear it's a young and beautiful woman—"

The sudden ring-a-ling of the telephone bell cut across the room.

Mark Pryor took up the instrument.

"Yes," he said. "It's Mr. Pryor speaking. A young woman? Indeed! Well, I'll see her up here."

He hung up the receiver.

"A young and beautiful woman," he repeated with a singularly straight face.

Young Smilo, whose way of life was still in the green, the callow leaf, was divided between admiration and bewilderment. In half a minute or so there was a knock at the door.

The young woman who came in was Janet Barr.

II

Smilo's parting look was one of stupefaction at the reception the visitor got, Pryor's enthusiasm being a startling abandonment of his neutral, self-contained manner.

Left to themselves, Janet informed Pryor of the troubles that had brought her to see him. The chief of these was Hutchins Burley.

Would Mr. Pryor advise her how to deal with him if he turned up again, as seemed highly probable?

There were other difficulties. She had nearly exhausted her funds. She didn't wish to return to the United States. Not at the moment, anyhow. Yet she couldn't get a position without a character.

This last she had learned recently, after several bitter experiences. Europeans seemed firmly persuaded that a character existed not in yourself but in the minds of other people, or rather in their handwriting. In the United States a good presence was worth a thousand good characters and your own opinion of yourself, expressed with imaginative brilliance, went much further than other people's opinion of you, expressed with dullness. In Europe, the reverse was true.

Would he make out a good character for her, and have it on tap within easy reach in case she referred employers to him?

She was sure that any testimonial coming from him—yes, from him—
 "Oh, I know you're a mystery," she said, in answer to his deprecatory gesture. "But not an ordinary mystery. A mystery linked to the pink of propriety is a sublime mystery. Like Mrs. Grundy's husband, whom you remind me of. No one has ever identified that mysterious man. Yet who'd have the courage to turn down a character made out by Mr. Grundy?"

She told him of her break with Claude, of her situation as the companion of Henriette, and of her experience with M. St. Hilaire as a result of Burley's interference.

"I left Brussels the very next day."

"For Coblenz?"

"Via Coblenz, for Munich, to see you, if possible. It was a Munich address you gave me, on board the 'Baronia'."

"I left Munich some time ago."

"So I learned. You see, I followed you here. But how do you know I went to Coblenz?"

"On the seventh of October?"

"On the seventh of October. How *did* you know it?"

"I didn't know it. The information just drifted my way."

"You are a detective then, Sherlock Holmes and M. Gaboriau rolled into one."

"Janet, disabuse yourself of that idea. If I *were* a detective I'd be a very sorry one. Let me prove it to you. In the course of my duties (whatever they are), I had occasion to look up Mr. Burley. I located him in Brussels on the sixth of October. I had scarcely found him before he slipped through my fingers."

"Slipped through your fingers?"

"Yes. Slipped through my fingers. You see, I'm trying to live up to the detective role to oblige you. Well, I got on to Mr. Burley's movements again on the seventh of October, just in time to follow him to Coblenz. *Why Coblenz?* I asked myself again and again. By the way, did you ever hear of a real, live detective asking *himself* a question?"

"No. But what is the answer?"

"*You* are the answer, of course. And I've only just discovered the fact. Fancy Sherlock Holmes following Hutchins Burley all the way from Brussels to Coblenz and from Coblenz to London and not discovering a quintessential answer, until the answer had crossed the Channel and stationed itself under his very nose."

"Do you mean to tell me that that odious Hutchins Burley is also in London at this very minute?"

"Don't be alarmed; I give you my word he sha'n't molest you again. I was about to res—I was about to transfer my valuable services to another sphere.

What you have told me determines me to hang on a little longer, for the sole satisfaction of bringing Hutchins Burley to book.”

”Oh, you mustn’t injure your prospects on my account.”

”No fear. There’s pleasure in checkmating a fellow like Burley, and profit, too. You know, Janet, the real old-fashioned heavy-weight villains are deplorably scarce. Goodness, routine goodness, is so easy nowadays, it is so much in fashion, it is so thoroughly rammed down our throats by compulsory education, that very few people are inclined to be wicked and fewer still are energetic enough to carry out the inclination. Mr. Hutchins Burley is a rare beast. He does not identify his wickedness with our goodness. Not he. He believes in himself from top to bottom. Unlike the usual criminal of today, he doesn’t suffer from the cowardice of his convictions.”

They discussed Janet’s plans. Ways and means, and how to get her off the rocks, were the first considerations.

”Do you know what?” said Pryor, reflectively; ”your old friend Cornelia Covert could give you a lift.”

”Oh, no; I can’t go back to America—not yet, anyhow,” said Janet resolutely.

”But she isn’t in America. She’s in Paris. You didn’t know it? Then I’ve a big piece of news for you. She’s married!”

”Cornelia married!”

”Yes. Benedick, the married man, isn’t in it with Diana, the married woman.”

”It’s Harry Kelly, of course. Give me a moment to catch my breath. Mrs. Harry Kelly!”

”Not a bit of it.”

”What do you mean?”

”You’ve heard of Paulette crepe, haven’t you?”

”The crepe that’s all the rage this year. Mr. Pryor, when I see a Paulette crepe blouse in a London shop, the cells of my great-great-grandmother rise enviously within me and turn the clock back to Noah.”

”The curse of Eve,” said Mr. Pryor, in his driest vein. ”Well, everybody knows that Paulette crepe is named after Madame Paulette, one of the first dress-makers of Paris. Not everybody knows that Madame Paulette’s real name is—”

”Cornelia!”

”Precisely.”

Prior briefly narrated the curious story of Cornelia’s migration to Paris, her marriage to Harry Kelly, her transformation into a fashionable dressmaker. Through a convergence of happy events, in which Pryor had had a hand, Cornelia had been able to enter the old and famous house of Paulette, then noticeably on the decline. Her artistic gifts and Kelly’s industry had rejuvenated the manage-

ment and revived the glories of the Paulette tradition. In a little less than a year Cornelia and Kelly had bought out the aged proprietors of the firm.

"No wonder I didn't hear from her," said Janet. "All my letters came back unopened. I began to think she had turned her back on me."

"Marriage has not changed her as much as that," said Pryor, smiling. "But I warn you that it has changed her a good deal."

"For the better or for the worse?"

"For the better *and* for the worse. But wait and judge for yourself."

"Perhaps Cornelia will think me in the way, now that she has a husband to look after."

"Cornelia lose sleep over Harry? No, dear girl; don't worry on that score. And don't forget that she'll be glad to do me a favor as well as you. More than one tony customer has come to her shop at my instance. When I tell you that I brought Mrs. R. H. L. Jerome, the mother of the Duchess of Keswick, to her, you'll admit that I'm a crack barker."

"Mr. Pryor, you are my *deus ex machina*. I believe you are every one else's, too. It must be a hobby with you to help people out of difficulties."

"Quite the contrary. It's a hobby with me to get people into difficulties. The worst of it is, I rarely succeed. I rarely get anybody into difficulties except myself."

"Is that true?"

"Well, it's as true of me as it is of certain other people. Sensitive people. People like you, or Charlotte Beecher, or Robert Lloyd."

"Oh, Robert never gets himself into difficulties," said Janet, with a trace of bitterness. "He's too efficient, too perfect."

"You do him an injustice, I'm sure. Lloyd merely puts up an exceptionally good front. He stands the strain of existence with skill and courage. So do you, for that matter."

"Thanks. But I really haven't had much to stand."

"It seems ample to me."

"Not half what I expected. When I went away with Claude I thought the universe would be arrayed against me. I dare say that in the margin of my thoughts there was a dim picture of Janet flinging a glove in the face of a decadent, despotic world."

They both smiled.

"What happened?"

Janet went on, sub-ironically: "A geyser of slander and mockery that spurted up from the newspapers. Nothing else. Nothing diabolic on the world's side. Nothing heroic on mine."

"That's the rule in these cases, Janet. The Flatbush suburb idea that all the

world loves a lover is about as true as the Greenwich Village or Kips Bay idea that all the world hates a free union.”

”You think both ideas are fictions?”

”Not entirely. Modern society has its own way of giving a pat of approval to a regular marriage and a kick of disapproval to a free union. Apart from these casual demonstrations it doesn’t get tremendously excited over what its men and women do as males and females, so long as they pay their rent regularly, refrain from incurring bad debts with tradesmen, and bow the knee (at least in public) to the seventh commandment.”

”Yes, I soon found that out. Nobody cared a pin whether I was married or not, or whether I was more to be pitied than scorned, provided I wore the proper clothes and told the proper lies.”

”Nobody?”

”Nobody, except Hutchins Burley.”

”Ah, there’s sure to be a Nemesis!”

”Yes. But why Hutchins Burley? What am I to Burley, or Burley to me? Why should that horrible wretch be commissioned to persecute me? Why was he destined to snap the bond of comradeship between Henriette and me? He isn’t exactly one’s notion of a social censor, is he?”

”A scavenger isn’t a popular notion of a sweet and clean man. Yet he serves a public purpose.”

”What an extraordinary analogy!”

”Not at all. You see, Janet, we moderns are too squeamish or too lazy to do our necessary dirty work ourselves, dirty work like punishment, for instance. The result is that when some one rashly assails the majesty of one of our institutions, we punish him by proxy. We kill by the hand of the public executioner. We get revenge by the hand of the judge. We dispense poetic justice by the hand of a Hutchins Burley.”

”Well, Hutchins Burley as society’s Nemesis is a brand new idea to me. I shall need time to let it sink in. But what have I done to deserve so mighty a thing as poetic justice? I haven’t even stolen another woman’s husband. Haven’t I been my own worst enemy, as Laura Jean Libby used to say? Isn’t that vice its own reward?”

”Janet, your question is fair. But your voice and your eyes are not. Now I come to think of it, there may after all be a teeny weeny bit to say—no, not on Hutchins Burley’s side—but on Monsieur Anton St. Hilaire’s side.”

”Mr. Pryor!”

”I don’t mean a twentieth part of what I say. But let me say it. You are strong enough to take it straight. To begin with, the enigma of Hutchins Burley: answer me this. Didn’t you of your own free will settle down amongst the Outlaws?”

"Yes."

"Well, you can't touch pitch without a little of it sticking to your fingers. But let us consider what you are to do next. It's a safer topic. We've talked unguardedly enough, considering that there's a dictagraph in the room, put there by no friends of mine."

"A dictagraph! Then you're not a great detective," said Janet, seriously disappointed. Hopefully, she added: "If you are not Sherlock Holmes, perhaps you are Raffles?"

"Well, it takes a thief to catch a thief," was the enigmatic reply.

He did not tell her that the hiding place of the dictagraph had been located and that Smilo had received instructions to tamper with the instrument as soon as the coast was clear.

III

They took a bus to Janet's lodgings.

Several plans were agreed upon. Chiefly, they were both to write to Cornelia asking her to find a position for Janet in the Paulette establishment.

Fashionable dressmaking was not precisely the work that Janet's heart was in. But she was prepared to take any position as a means to an end. Her real goal was active participation in the later phases of the women's movement. Recent happenings had revived in her the old longing to enter the thick of the battle, to pitch into the struggle for equal pay in every sort of occupation and for an equal title to legislative and administrative power.

"But I shall have to get an income of my own before I can be a factor in this struggle," she said.

"One must get an income of one's own before one can be a factor in any struggle," said Pryor, dryly.

"Yes, I've learned that, too. Feminists say that a woman must have an independent income in order to enter marriage with self-respect. They could go further and say that a woman must have an independent income in order to enter a free union with self-respect."

Pryor told her that he expected to return to the United States in a few weeks. Should he, in case he ran across Robert Lloyd, inform him of her altered views?

She said that Robert wouldn't thank him for any information about her.

"But you were such exceptionally good friends," expostulated Pryor. "Your

little firm of Barr & Lloyd—what a pity you couldn't pick that thread up again, instead of joining Cornelia. If Robert weren't as poor as a church mouse, or if you both weren't too proud to borrow a little cash from me—”

Janet interrupted to veto all suggestions along that line. Pride had nothing to do with the question. It was true that she and Robert had been very good friends and excellent working partners. But Robert had emphatically said that he had no use for a woman who had damaged her social and business value by indulging in an adventure such as hers [Transcriber's note: several words missing from source book]

”Hm!” said Pryor. ”When the shoe pinches his own foot, what astoundingly conservative exclamations even a radical fellow will make.”

Janet went on to say that, although she had changed her views, she had every reason to believe that Robert had not changed his. Thus, he had taken no step whatever to communicate with her, despite the fact that she had indirectly, in her first letter to Cornelia, asked him to do so.

”Besides,” she added, ”didn't you know that he was about to marry Charlotte Beecher?”

”Oh, ho, so that's how the wind blows?”

Pryor, standing in front of Janet's house, gave the curb a sharp whack with his cane.

”That marriage has no place in the scheme of your *deus ex machina*,” he said, with a quizzical frown. ”We'll have to take it out on Burley—give the devil an extra twist of the tail to relieve our feelings.”

”Yes, when you catch him. Meanwhile, what am I to do about him?”

”Forget him, forget him serenely for half a dozen weeks or so. Then you'll hear from him again.”

”Hear from him again,” she said, with a shade of alarm.

”Not *from* him in person,” corrected Pryor, straightening up till he looked like a hickory stick. ”*About* him, through me. Good news for us, bad news for him. Until then good-bye.”

PART V

HEARTS AND TREASURES

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

I

On a cool February morning a private office in the Maison Paulette, Boulevard Houssman, was occupied by five persons of the feminine sex. Four of the five, gorgeous as to clothes and cosmetics, moved busily about in comet-like orbits that brought them periodically near the desk.

The fifth, seated at the desk itself, dominated the room. She was a striking blonde, whose handsome dull-green dress challenged the glint of gold alike in her pupils and her hair.

Seemingly occupied with a book of accounts, this lady was really engaged in inventing petty tasks for the four young women dancing attendance upon her. (*Mariette, ou est le livre bleu? Mon dieu, Gabrielle! les ciseaux; quelqu'un a enleve mes petites ciseaux. Toinette, apportez-moi le boite aux lettres. Tiens, Amelie! Prends ce mouchoir, etc., etc.*) These requests for service continued in a fairly steady stream, amidst much hurrying and scurrying, sharp cries of *tout de suite, Madame*, and a general atmosphere of sulky obsequiousness.

In the thick of the confusion the door was opened by a young woman in a soft suit of brown heather. She stood on the threshold for a moment and, as she looked questioningly towards the lady in command, a slight frown brought a bar of hazel brown over her beautiful gray eyes.

The lady at the desk, who saw everything, affected not to see the figure on the threshold and went on languidly issuing orders.

Thereupon the newcomer, in clear, agreeable English, called out:

"Evidently you don't want me, Cornelia. Good, I'll go back upstairs. I've stacks and stacks of work to do—"

"Araminta, wait! Of course I want you. I want you most particularly."

"You've got an army here, already. What do you want me for? If you keep on calling me away from the manikins whenever Harry is explaining matters, he'll never be able to train me into taking charge of them."

"My dear!" trilled Cornelia, bringing her most musical *arpeggio* into play. "When you've been married as long as I have, you'll understand that no sensible woman ever interferes with her husband's work except for a positively overwhelming reason."

"Really, the reasons here in Paris are as bad as the seasons," said Janet with a smile. "I wish they'd calm down and not overwhelm us quite so often."

"Ah, Janet, you well may jest. Little do you know of the heavy responsibilities involved in managing both a business and a husband. If I had only myself

to think of the worries and risks would be as a whisper in the wind. But I think of Hercules sharing my anxieties, working himself thin and gray—”

While she went on in this theatrical vein, Janet was thinking to herself: “She makes as great a virtue of being married as she formerly made of not being married. Whatever her condition, there’s a terrible to-do about it.”

Aloud she said:

”Look here, Cornelia, if you want to talk privately to me, hadn’t we better get rid of this retinue?”

Without awaiting a reply, she calmly released Marie and the other manikins from service and sent them out of the room. This done, she took a chair opposite the desk where Cornelia sat staring at her in speechless indignation.

Cornelia cherished a sort of mental chromo of herself as the active ruler of the Paulette community, a ruler at once imperious, genial, and adored. In point of fact, her insatiable appetite for attention, reinforced by a sharp tongue, spread an atmosphere of dread and anxiety around her. Janet was the only person who had ever succeeded in weakening Cornelia’s illusion about herself by bringing it into occasional juxtaposition with reality.

”You’ll greatly oblige me, Janet, by not ordering my servants about under my very nose.”

”Your manikins are not your servants, Cornelia. They’re your employees. You slave-drive them outrageously. If you don’t look out, you’ll have a strike on your hands before long.”

”With you as the strike leader, I dare say?”

”Why not? Your inability to respect other people’s time is simply appalling. The moment some whim pops into your head, one of us is called upon to gratify it. You quite forget that when you arbitrarily take us from our jobs, bang goes continuity, a most important factor in good workmanship. Mazie, who came here grovelling in the dust, is now up in arms; the manikins are unitedly rebellious; Harry is almost a nervous wreck. This, with business simply deluging the establishment. I tell you, unless *you* stop, we all will.”

Cornelia quailed under these words, although she kept her face admirably. She was in some respects like a wrongly bound volume: half Becky Sharp and half Hedda Gabler. And it was the Hedda Gabler pages she always turned up to Janet.

”Well, what next?” she exclaimed, on the defensive in spite of her brave words. ”I’ve rescued Mazie Ross out of the gutter where Hutchins Burley flung her; I’ve sacrificed my own creature comforts to make those of the manikins secure; I’ve given *you* a very tidy berth and no questions asked; and I’ve worked myself to skin and bones for Harry’s sake. Now you all turn on me and call me an interfering busybody, or worse. That’s human gratitude.”

Janet, giving the faintest ironical shrug, merely looked at her.

Cornelia smothered a sob of rage. After a pause, she informed Janet that Mrs. R. H. L. Jerome, her most valued customer, had made an appointment that morning to look at some frocks and gowns. This lady had a single hobby, clothes; and she spent an appreciable fraction of her untold millions ("she's divorced two multimillionaires, Araminta, and driven a third into the diplomatic service!") on this hobby. She had expressed profound dissatisfaction with Paulette's offerings on her last visit two weeks ago. It was therefore of prime importance to please her this time.

"I want you to be in the salon with me when she looks at the models," said Cornelia. "She's extremely susceptible to flattery. As the head of the house, I can't very well lay it on too thick, can I? I have a feeling that your presence will make the sales go smoothly."

"You'd better leave me out of it, Cornelia. I never sold a thing in my life. Why, I couldn't sell a sandwich to a starving man."

"I'll do the *selling*, my dear. I simply ask you to be on hand. The fact is, you have a peculiar influence over people. When they get to talking with you, they suddenly forget about *things*—the earth-earthly things by which we are all so obsessed nowadays—they appear to forget about things and begin to occupy themselves with thoughts and dreams. In that condition, a man or woman will buy anything."

"Cornelia, you'll admit that I've done all sorts of odd jobs for you without a murmur. But I really don't like to bamboozle anybody into—"

"Bamboozle! Araminta! No one who buys a Paulette frock is bamboozled. Be quite clear about that."

She added, less belligerently, that Mrs. Jerome, though so very rich, had no taste in clothes. Or, more bluntly, had a most execrable taste. She went in for suffrage, feminism, woman's rights, and all that sort of thing. (Here Janet pricked up her ears.) So you might know what to expect. She was, in short, faddy and temperamental. Her purchases were made or not made, as the case might be, because the seller pleased or displeased her. The articles themselves were of quite secondary importance.

"Forgive my curiosity, Cornelia. But you have regiments of customers. Why are you so anxious about just this one?"

"What a question, you babe in the wood! Don't you know who Mrs. Jerome is?"

"I know she's rich and that Mr. Pryor had something to do with her coming here."

"That's not it, child. She's the American mother of the Duchess of Keswick. And the Duchess— Well, it's Madge and Mary between her and the Queen of

England. Think, Araminta, what a feather in our cap, if we get the patronage of the Duchess of Keswick, and a Paulette frock is worn at the Court of St. James! It's the chance of a lifetime. You won't disappoint me, dear?"

"No. We'll make it Madge and Paulette and Mary. When is this dowager Mrs. Jerome expected?"

"That's her carriage now, or I'm very much mistaken," said Cornelia, all agog. "She hardly ever uses a motor. It's so ordinary."

In some amazement Janet watched her old friend going out to do the honors in the reception room. What a transformation a short year had effected in the Cornelia of the Lorillard tenements! Bohemianism, outlawry, and the one-piece dresses of Kips Bay seemed remoter than Mars. Cornelia was attired in the height of fashion, her cheeks were delicately touched up, her hair was elaborately coiffured.

Even her congenital languor had evaporated, for the moment, as the thrills of social snobbery electrified her.

II

Entering the salon, Janet saw that Mrs. Jerome was a podgy little tub of a woman, the symbol of the fortune which her father, Theodore Casey, had made in wash-tubs. She took a chair beside the visitor, who sleepily watched the crack Paulette manikins whilst they exhibited a variety of frocks and Cornelia nervously courted the favor of her outspoken customer.

Mrs. Jerome examined one of the manikins at close quarters.

"I don't think much of your dresses today," she said bluntly. "The lines are all wrong."

"Pardon me, Mrs. Jerome," said Cornelia with dignity. "But they ought to be at that angle. A Paulette frock is a work of art. It is designed to produce a definite effect from a definite point of view. The lines are like those of a Phidias statue, perfectly right at the proper distance."

"I don't care if they *do* look like a Fiddlesticks statue. Look at that charmuse gown there. Can't anybody tell that girl a mile away for what she is?"

"I fear I don't understand."

"Well, if the gown don't hide the fact that she's a manikin, it won't hide the fact that my figure's no Fiddlesticks statue, or whatever you call it."

This opinion, delivered in an unmistakable New York voice and accent, made Janet laugh. Not disrespectfully. She discerned at once that Mrs. Jerome, like Shakespeare, had far more native wit than college learning. Her judgment was confirmed when the visitor, turning abruptly towards her, said:

"What do you think of these Paulette dresses, young lady. I don't expect you to say that they're pretty rotten. But do they satisfy the eye?"

"I think, Mrs. Jerome, that if they don't *satisfy* the eye, they'll at least astound it."

Mrs. Jerome brightened up at once.

"Well, child," she said, "when I want to astound people, I'll do it on less money than a Paulette gown costs. I'll walk around Columbus Circle in my bathing suit."

"Oh, I'll bet you do it, too," said Janet, at the top of her exuberance.

"Do what?" said Mrs. Jerome, now totally oblivious of the manikins on exhibition and of Cornelia on pins and needles.

"Wear a bathing suit around the house. I used to, regularly. In the tenements in Kips Bay I always did the dishes in my bathing suit. Annette Kellerman tights, a skirt to the knees, no sleeves, no stockings. A dandy rig-out for quick action."

"Permit me to say, Janet—" began Cornelia, in frigid, authoritative tones.

Mrs. Jerome impatiently waved her away, an indignity so astounding that Madame Paulette could scarcely trust her eyes. Janet, fearing she had been indiscreet, hastened to add:

"Of course, Cornelia—Madame Paulette—doesn't allow it in Paris. She requires us to be perfectly proper here."

"She would!" said Mrs. Jerome significantly, her back still turned to Cornelia. "But what good does it do you? Nine-tenths of the people in Paris are perfectly proper; but they don't look it. The other tenth are perfectly improper; but they, as often as not, don't look it either."

The manikins received another inning. A brief one, though, for Mrs. Jerome inspected and dismissed them in quick succession.

"Well, well," she said, half aloud, "to think that you came from the tenements."

She gave Janet a quick, sceptical glance.

"I can scarcely believe it."

"I can scarcely believe it myself," said Janet, with a perfectly straight face.

Cornelia bit her lips and, flashing an angry look at her friend, went out of the salon, unable to trust her feelings any longer.

"If the Duchess got wind of it," Mrs. Jerome mused on, "that would finish Paulette's for me. She don't think a shop is a classy shop unless the proprietor

has a classy pedigree.”

”Oh, our pedigree will seem classy enough to the Duchess,” said Janet, ”if you don’t give us away. And you can’t do that, you know. I only told you in the strictest confidence.”

”Don’t you go shifting your responsibilities on me, young woman. If you want your secrets kept, you just keep them to yourself. I’m no safe deposit vault for anyone else’s hidden thoughts. For your comfort I’ll tell you this, though. I’ve never given my daughter food or information that I knew she couldn’t digest. I’m too old to begin doing it now.”

”You’re quite right, Mrs. Jerome. Things slip off my tongue that oughtn’t to. Personally, I don’t care a straw. But other people—”

”Don’t worry about other people, my dear,” said Mrs. Jerome, who had enjoyed the tit-for-tat immensely. ”I’m not likely to desert Madame Paulette. At least not while she keeps anyone with your healthy face and fascinating eyes here to talk to me. Mind, I’m not gone on these Paulette frocks. I guess the Madame knows that pretty well. But this establishment is run by a woman, a woman from my own country. That means a good deal to me. For although our sex is coming into its own, the pace isn’t a dizzy one. The men see to that. And so I say, this is a time for all good women to stand by one another.”

The little lady sank back in her seat and, as though exhausted by her long speech, closed her eyes. When she opened them again, Cornelia had returned and the parade of the manikins was resumed.

This spectacle always started Janet on a series of curious reflections. As a result of the training in rhythmic which the girls received at the hands of Harry Kelly, they were free from those grotesque mannerisms of gait, posture, and demeanor which manikins cultivated and which were accepted by the trade as superlative expressions of esthetic correctness. Yet Harry’s talent yoked to the service of fashion seemed as wasteful a thing as an artist’s genius drafted in the service of futility. It reminded Janet of the story of the Medici prince who compelled Michelangelo to mould a statue out of snow.

But to Mrs. Jerome the Paulette manikins were a sight to see. She made Janet sit on the lounge beside her and coaxed her to give an opinion on every frock subsequently shown. She purchased all those that Janet praised and several that she made fun of.

It was one of the best day’s work that the sales department of Paulette’s had ever done.

In spite of which, Madame Paulette considered it her duty to take Mrs. Jerome to one side and apologize for Janet and her artless indiscretions.

”She means well, Mrs. Jerome,” said Cornelia, deferentially. ”She’s—well, I might say, she’s naive, incredibly naive in matters of social position. It’s only

lack of training, I assure you.”

”Is that all?”

”Yes, she’s absolutely ignorant of distinctions of rank. Absolutely. Why, she would talk to a Duchess with no more ceremony than to a scrubwoman.”

”Then I’ll bring the Duchess here to be talked to. It might do her good.”

”Oh, do bring the Duchess. I shall be charmed to display for her inspection the best that the Maison has.”

”No doubt. But let me give you a tip. Don’t waste your time training that dear little Janet girl. She’ll learn the deceitful ways of the world fast enough, and no correspondence course needed either.”

Janet came up to them as they reached the outer door.

”My dear,” said Mrs. Jerome, putting her arm around Janet’s waist, ”you’ve given me the best quarter of an hour I’ve had in Paris these two months. It’s been a treat, a royal treat.”

As Cornelia beheld these two, standing there intertwined, a strange expression formed on her face, an expression that bespoke an agonizing doubt of the sanity of the universe.

Unheeding her, Mrs. Jerome continued to say to Janet:

”The people I meet everywhere! In Europe they pick my pockets while they lick my boots; in America they rifle my purse with barefaced assurance. You are the first one I’ve met in a very long time who has talked to me as though I were a human being and not a walking cash box.”

III

The conquest of Mrs. R. H. L. Jerome produced a sensation in the Paulette establishment. It also gave an element of security to Janet’s precarious tenure of office there.

Janet knew full well that Madame Paulette had received her in the Boulevard Haussman with nothing like the enthusiasm that Cornelia had welcomed her in the Lorillard tenements. In the interval between these events the two friends had burned several bridges behind them.

It was obvious that Cornelia was now glutted with hands to wait on her, ears to pay heed to her, and tongues to flatter her. Her natural taste for dependents being completely gratified, she felt less need than ever for friends of an independent turn of mind like Janet.

Moreover, in a year and a half of compact adventure, Janet had matured more rapidly than many young people do in ten years of tame drifting. Time, which had whittled away some of her imprudence, had robbed her of none of her daring; it had left her with her almost naive freedom of utterance intact. Her candor was a trait to which Cornelia had formerly been much drawn. But that was in the days of her first arrival in Kips Bay, the days when the young girl had all but worshipped the experienced woman. Now that blind devotion had given way to challenging criticism, Janet's candor seemed far less attractive.

That is, far less attractive to Cornelia. As regards Paulette's in general, Janet was a great favorite. Her official duties were chiefly those of an assistant to Harry Kelly in the physical training of the manikins, (a branch of their professional instruction on which Kelly laid great stress). She bore somewhat the same relation to her chief that the concert master of an orchestra does to the conductor. This arrangement was Cornelia's doing. In one and the same bold stroke she had thought to cut down the time that Kelly spent with the manikins (this being the time in which his heart lay most); and to shift to Janet's shoulders the odium that frequently devolves on the deputy chief (who exercises authority without possessing power).

But Cornelia's spirit of negation, active as ever, accomplished only one-half of its object.

Janet discharged her duties with so much vivacity and with such invincible good-will that she was idolized by everybody in the Paulette firm from Kelly and the manikins down to the work girls and the magnificent porter who daily consented to guard the street door.

In short, she was the life of the house; than which, Cornelia could have brought no stronger indictment against her of unimaginable *lese majeste*.

The two had a long private conversation in Cornelia's office the day after Mrs. Jerome's visit.

"Araminta, you've certainly made a hit with the old lady. Just as I predicted. It's a fine thing for us both. Paulette's prestige will go up and up. And it should mean a great deal to you."

"How, I wonder?"

"You can make her friendship a stepping stone."

"Easy stepping stones for little feet—so to speak?"

"You know quite well what I mean. Some day you'll go back to America—"

"Is this a hint or a prediction, or both—"

"Don't be silly, Janet. I'm thinking of your future. Your future in your own country, naturally. Mrs. Jerome is a woman of enormous influence. You know how it is over there. Much gold will wash all guilt away."

"You mean my chequered past?" asked Janet, with a smile.

"Yes," said Cornelia, adding handsomely, "although your affair with Claude Fontaine will probably be quite forgotten by that time. Nobody will remember it."

"Robert Lloyd will!"

Cornelia was up in arms at once. She always was, when Janet mentioned Robert's name.

"What difference does that make? You aren't going to marry *him*, I suppose?"

"I suppose not. He's too poor, for one thing. He isn't going to ask me, for another."

"One would imagine you wanted him to," said Cornelia, with concise sarcasm.

"We got along splendidly as partners."

"Partners! What has that to do with marriage?"

"What has anything to do with marriage? I understood your reasons when you believed that marriage was a prison. I confess I don't understand your reasons now that you believe marriage to be a haven of bliss. Mind, I don't say it is a prison, and I don't say that it *isn't* a haven of bliss."

Janet tried to check her sub-ironical impulses: they were irrepressible.

"I feel too much in the dark about the whole thing," she went on, "to be as cocksure as I used to be. But if one isn't to marry a man because one has found him to be a splendid companion in the wear and tear of working together, why is one to marry him?"

"How you do run on, Araminta! Prisons and hells, Paradises and havens of bliss—you jump from one extreme to the other. Who mentioned these things? My dear, one marries a man because he calls to what is deepest and truest in one. Because he responds to—"

"The mating instinct?"

"How can you sit there and say such vulgar things?"

"Vulgar! Well, you *are* going it! Isn't the mating instinct as deep and true as any of them?"

"It isn't a reason for marriage," said Cornelia, in staccato accents. "And you know perfectly well I never said or thought it was. Quite the reverse. I opposed marriage because the sex instinct, which is what induces most people to marry, is a good ground for a temporary union but not a good ground for a permanent one."

"Then there *are* good reasons for a permanent union?"

"Yes. And they absorb the sex reason a million times over."

"It's easy for you to talk like that, Cornelia, with Harry thinking that the sun rises in one of your eyes and sets in the other. But where shall *I* find a Harry

to be absorbed in me a million times over like that?"

"If you go on making nasty sarcastic replies to all my well-meant suggestions, I shall wash my hands of you," said Cornelia, rising with frigid haughtiness.

She added, on a superior note:

"You'd better see a little less of poor, bedraggled Mazie Ross, if it's on *her* level that you're being tempted to think."

IV

Janet hastened after her in a complete change of mood.

"Come back, Cornelia," she called out, remorsefully. "I had no right to be sarcastic. Forgive me, and I'll eat all the humble pie you like."

Cornelia sat down again.

"This is a new tack for you to take," she said, making the most of an advantage Janet seldom gave her.

"The fact is, Cornelia, I'm—my feelings were ploughed up today, ploughed up from top to bottom. The postman brought me an offer of marriage this morning."

"An offer of marriage!"

"From Monsieur St. Hilaire."

Cornelia had of course heard the facts of the whole St. Hilaire episode. She also knew that Janet still corresponded with Henriette, and that all the recent letters of the girl's father had been sent back unopened.

"I thought you never read his letters?"

"This one was folded up in Henriette's note. I'm sure the child wasn't a party to the trick. Here it is. Will you read it?"

Cornelia did so.

"Well, I must say I'm surprised," she said, returning the letter. "He writes in a very decent, manly strain. Altogether different from what I expected. The devil doesn't seem to be nearly as black as he's painted."

"Oh, he's not a professional satyr, if that's what you mean. I never implied that he was."

Cornelia pondered the matter for a minute. She recalled forgotten particulars about M. St. Hilaire, amongst others, the account of his generous income.

"So he's in Paris with Henriette," she mused. "I notice that he says he's coming here tomorrow to get his answer in person. What will you do about it,

dear?"

"I wish I knew. I want to see Henriette again, tremendously. But I don't want to see her father. Do give me your advice, Cornelia. What do you think I ought to do?"

"Well, why not give him another chance? He's made you a perfectly straight and honorable offer this time. As I recall the whole story, he wasn't really repugnant to you, except at that one time."

"No. But am I lightly to forget that he—that he touched me without my consent, presuming to think that, because I had loved one man, my body was at the free disposal of all men?"

"It was a wretched mistake to make—"

"A mistake! It was a monstrous piece of stupidity and impudence."

"Quite so, my dear. I'm not standing up for him. Still, don't let us forget that men are not built like women."

"That's a truth that cuts both ways, isn't it?" said Janet.

She had given up being astonished at Cornelia's peculiar mixture of the old and the new in the matter of theories about men and women. She merely wondered to what weird angle Cornelia meant to shift her outlook now.

"The point is," continued Cornelia serenely, "that a woman's sex emotion is generally excited by something that takes her fancy; a man's, by something that stirs his blood. The mind plays the bigger part in the one case, the body in the other. That's why, in the duel of sex, the psychological moment is so important to the woman, the physiological moment to the man.

"These acute distinctions are quite beyond me. A man has as much gray matter as a woman, or even more. Then why should he let his mental processes suffer paralysis whenever a nice woman looks at him?"

"Well, that's one of the mysteries that marriage helps us to understand, Araminta. In the life of a man there come these physiological moments, these sex storms, different from anything in the experience of a woman. I don't mean to say that men have more physical passion than women. But there are occasions when their physical passion takes a more violently concentrated form. Mazie, in her vulgar little way, isn't so far wrong when she says: 'Scratch a fine gentleman, and you'll find a cave man.'"

"Do you mean to tell me that there are absolutely no men who feel about love as we do?"

"I've never met one. Have you?"

Janet was thinking: "Surely Robert isn't like that!" Aloud she said nothing. There was a dangerous glint in her friend's eyes. Cornelia had an uncanny way of penetrating one's thoughts when Robert was the object of them. Had she accomplished this feat of divination again? At all events, an acrid note entered

her voice as she continued:

"Is it really only Monsieur St. Hilaire that you can't make up your mind about? If so, take my advice. Come down off your high horse and make the most of your good fortune."

"My good fortune!"

"Let's be perfectly frank with each other, my dear. Here's a man who wants to marry you. He's well-born, cultivated, rich. His one child is a girl who adores you and whom you adore. The only thing against him is that he once committed a serious breach of decorum—"

"And that I don't love him—" interpolated Janet.

Cornelia blandly ignored the interruption.

"His letter shows," she went on, "that he is willing to make the most handsome amends, the only amends a man can make in a matter of this sort. What more do you ask?"

"I'm not asking him for amends. I simply want to be let alone."

"Araminta, let me beg you not to deceive yourself about the changing moral values we hear so much of nowadays. Has the price of virginity really gone down? Judged by the conversation of radicals and Outlaws, yes. Judged by the ticker of the matrimonial exchange, it is still pretty high. Bear that in mind, and remember that a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush."

"Do you mean to say," exclaimed Janet, in great astonishment, "that you, of all people, advise me to *accept* this offer?"

Her tone irritated Cornelia.

"Beggars can't be choosers," she began.

"They can remain beggars," replied Janet tersely.

"If that's the way you feel about it, you needn't ask my advice again. We're wasting each other's time."

Saying which, Cornelia rose and left the office.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

I

The Paulette manikins, famed throughout the world of fashion for their grace in attitude and correctness in position and movement, owed their prestige to

a system of hygienic training conceived and carried out by Harry Kelly himself. Yet these young ladies took their distinction so seriously that they held it beneath them to assist their chief in straightening out the classroom disorder when the period of instruction was over.

"Here's a mess!" called out Mazie Ross, walking into the Paulette gymnasium, immediately after the dismissal of a small class of manikins. "You might think they'd been on a grand jamboree."

"Anything up?" said Harry, shortly.

"Janet asked me to help you this morning."

"What for?"

"She went out for a horseback ride with the St. Hilaire's."

"This morning. Why, as it is, she goes almost every afternoon. She went yesterday afternoon. A fine way to do business, I'll say."

Mazie sulkily began to pick up stray articles.

"You needn't pitch into me, Harry," she said. "You're not half so sorry as I am that your gentle Janet isn't here to do this rotten job. Is it my fault?"

"Does Cornelia know she's away?" said Kelly, fuming.

"Can a cat miaow within a mile of these precincts without Corny being on to it?"

"Why don't they keep me posted then? I never hear of a blessed thing that goes on in my own home until it's all over."

"Say, do you want to start a row? Then take a tip from me and land into a certain party in the main office. If you'd knock her down and then jump on her with both feet, you'd be doing something. What's the use of picking on a dead bird like me?"

"Don't talk that way about Cornelia," said Harry, fumbling amongst the papers on the desk, and trying vainly to be stern. "I've told you before I won't have it. Where's your gratitude?"

She made a face at him behind his back.

"Gratitude!" she said. "What's the good of me wasting gratitude on Cornelia when she reminds herself and everybody in Paulette's daily that she picked me up out of the gutter that Hutch left me in?"

"Lock up the wardrobe and clear out, will you?" said Kelly, frigidly. "I can do the rest myself."

"Here's your hat, what's your hurry," she muttered to herself. But she stayed and continued to put things to rights.

Mazie had changed greatly since the palmy days of the Lorillard tenements. She looked ill and haggard, a mere shadow of the jaunty "Follies" girl of old. Her willowy posture had degenerated into an undisguised slouch, her hair was frowsy, and her dress was slung together.

But her tongue had not lost its stab.

She closed the wardrobe door with an unintentional slam that caused Harry Kelly to jump up in his seat.

"Damn!" he said, in that mild voice of his.

It was as if Vesuvius had emitted a puff of tobacco smoke.

The metamorphosis of the "Harlem Gorilla" into the husband of Madame Paulette was astoundingly complete. Harry Kelly's Van Dyke beard and fashionably tailored clothes alone would have effected a radical change in his appearance. Kelly was transformed not only physically but psychically. His muscles were still the muscles of a Titan, but his nerves had become the nerves of a fanciful man or a delicate woman.

Mazie, who was no student of spiritual transformations, went up to the desk at which Kelly sat and began to tidy it. She whisked away stray papers and envelopes that lay near his hands with much the same air that a waiter lashes the crumbs off a table to speed the lingering guest.

He grew more and more fidgety, but she showed him no mercy.

"Janet didn't know those St. Hilaire's were coming this morning," she finally volunteered. "But you can gamble on it that Cornelia knew. When my fine gentleman got off his prancing horse and marched into the reception room clanking spurs and all, Corny was right there on the job in her softest, sweetest tone. My! butter wouldn't melt in her mouth. And all the time Janet hangs in the background, saying she's too busy to go out, and looking as stubborn as a mule. When gentle Janet gets that stubborn expression, it means: You can move the Woolworth Building, but you can't move me!"

"Then why in thunder did she go?"

"Because that St. Hilaire kid got busy with her. A pretty little kid, a regular father's darling, the kind that coos away like a turtledove till she gets everything she wants and a tidy slice of the moon extra. Well, she draped herself pathetically around Janet—all that heartstring stuff—and Janet, like any fool of a man, fell for the pathos."

"You can't persuade me that Janet didn't want to go," said Kelly, gloomily.

"I won't try to, then. Just the same, she didn't. That's the weird part of it."

"What's weird about it?"

"Why, she doesn't want to marry that millionaire and he's crazy to get her. Gee, some people have all the luck."

"If she doesn't want him, where's the luck?" said Kelly, with the logic of simplicity.

"Harry, don't be a nut. Here's the ABC of it. All my love affairs were on the q.t., though I say it that shouldn't. Everything respectable and under cover. Nobody rattled my adventures in the ears of the public, did they? Yet, from the

way everybody points the finger of scorn at me, you'd think I produced the whole Venusburg show and ran it single-handed. Now look at Janet. She hops off with young Claude Fontaine right under the eyes of the moving-picture brigade. The front pages of all the leading papers give her a full week's publicity. She boards with Claude for a month or two, carefully omitting even the formality of a fake wedding ring. She lives in sin! But everybody shies at using 'them crooel woids.' And what are the wages of sin? A couple of millionaires pining away on her doorstep and Sousa's band a-playing at her feet. And she's no great beauty at that."

"Quit it, Mazie. What's the good of fooling yourself with the idea that Janet hasn't had her troubles. My guess is that Claude threw her overboard."

"Well, you can guess again, my simple Samson."

"Anyhow, they wouldn't have separated in a few weeks unless there had been a fierce blow-out, would they? That's the kind of thing that can hurt a whole lot, a whole lot more than shows on the surface. A sensitive girl like Janet! By thunder, we don't know what she went through, do we? She's not the sort that wears her feelings on her sleeve."

"In other words: 'Gentle Janet meek and mild,'" said Mazie witheringly. "What that girl can't get away with! I'd like to go through a few of her sufferings, I would. I'd like to see yours truly riding horseback every day in the Bois de Boulogne with a plutocrat by my side and a couple of grooms toddling along in back. There's a terrible penance for you! And to think I can't even get a second-hand man to take me to a third-rate cabaret in Montmartre. Me, Mazie Ross, the wickedest girl in the wickedest city in the world. Gee, life is tough!"

"You've seen enough cabarets to be sick of them—and you are sick of them," said Kelly, with unwonted harshness.

"Yes, I suppose my cabaret days are over. But listen to me. There'll be no more skylarking for gentle Janet as soon as Cornelia engineers her marriage with the Alsatian."

"Janet's marriage is none of your business, and none of Cornelia's either."

"You don't say so? Well, you just tell the Empress that yourself."

Mazie, with her hand over her mouth, flung these words at him just as Cornelia entered the gymnasium.

II

With the expression of a tragedy queen Cornelia came in and handed Kelly a telegram.

"From Robert!" she said, in a voice choked with emotion. He took it and read:

Am leaving Geneva International Labor Conference tonight. Hope to see you and Janet in Paris tomorrow.

Robert Lloyd.

"That's one on us!" remarked Kelly, awkwardly, and a little afraid of the storm signals in Cornelia's eyes.

His fatuous slang irritated her enormously.

"Isn't it like Robert to turn up at the most inconvenient time imaginable? Just as Janet is on the point of being engaged! It spoils everything."

"How did he locate us, I wonder?" said Kelly lamely. "I thought you had lost all track of him."

When they had taken over Paulette's, Cornelia had insisted on ruthlessly dropping former friends in impoverished circumstances on the plea that every connection that was not an asset was a liability. It had been a sore point between the two at first.

"Pryor—the meddling fool—probably put him onto us," replied Cornelia. "Now everything's sure to go to pot unless we can keep Robert from interfering. As long as he's around, Janet will never marry Monsieur St. Hilaire."

"She's just crazy enough to throw away the chance of a lifetime," said Mazie, judging it expedient to chime in with Cornelia.

"I don't believe she'll marry St. Hilaire, anyway," said Kelly, with the obstinacy of a mild nature. "She doesn't love him, to begin with. And she isn't the sort that'll do a thing simply because other people say that it's good for her. She's the sort of girl that shapes her own future."

"You're as big a fool as Pryor," said Cornelia, flinging tempestuously out of the gymnasium.

Poor Kelly was crestfallen. He walked sadly to a window, opened it, and took several deep breaths, his infallible remedy for depression of spirits. Mazie, relieved at Cornelia's exit, lighted a cigarette and waited for him to finish.

"Why is she so blamed anxious to have Janet marry this St. Hilaire?" he asked, turning slowly from the window.

"Why? Ha, ha, the poor fish asks me why?"

She punctuated the question with a hollow laugh.

"Only because Janet doesn't *want* to marry him," she went on, perching herself jauntily on the desk. "Why, Simple Simon, the old girl would have nothing left to live for, if she couldn't make people do what they *don't* want to do. Or, at least, if she couldn't *prevent* them from doing what they *do* want to do—"

The door flew open.

"So that's the way you talk about me behind my back?" cried Cornelia, the picture of outraged majesty.

Mazie rapidly came down from her perch and slunk out of the room.

The intruder turned her guns upon her husband.

"And you encouraging the little snake. I wonder you don't summon the whole staff in here to plot against me."

Kelly, dismayed and crushed, received the broadside with head bowed.

Cornelia expressed her passionate resentment at the universal treachery and ingratitude. This was her reward for helping girls in the plight that Mazie and Janet were in! She had put all the social and material resources of Paulette's at the disposal of Janet in order that, by a most fortunate marriage, a well-nigh irretrievable blunder might be retrieved. She had herself strained every nerve to help the girl to obliterate her past. And what were her thanks? The unfeeling ingrate acted as if she hardly realized that there was a past to obliterate. She now washed her hands of the whole business. Never again—.

And so on.

Had Harry Kelly been of an inquiring turn of mind he might have ascertained whether or no Cornelia's fury was in part due to being frustrated in the desire to get Janet off her conscience, and in part to being thwarted herself in that game of thwarting others at which Mazie had pronounced her an expert.

As it was, he listened like a Mohammedan prostrated before the muezzin. His silent prayer was that when Cornelia's rage had spent itself, she would not refuse to bestow upon him a little of that affection for which he passionately and hopelessly craved.

III

A few hours later, Janet and Mazie were alone in the gymnasium, the former greatly excited about the news from Robert.

"It's a pity he didn't think of looking you up a little sooner," said Mazie who

was in a mood for throwing cold water on enthusiasms that strayed her way.

Janet was a little dashed by this reminder of Robert's indifference to her fate.

"All the same," she said, "I shall enjoy introducing him to Paris, as he once introduced me to Manhattan."

"What, the Eiffel Tower, The Champs Elysees, the Boul. Mich., the American Quarter, and all the other rubberneck sights?"

"No, I'll show him the places he'll like: the office in *L'Humanite* where Jaures worked, the central hall of the *Confederation Generate de Travail*, and the Seine by moonlight."

"The Seine by moonlight! Now we're coming to it. Janet, you're getting sentimental. Do you think Robert is coming particularly for you?"

"Oh, no, I hope I know him better than that."

"Then what is he coming for? To see me? I don't think. And if ever he was stuck on Cornelia, he took the cure complete, as soon as you breezed along."

"Nonsense, Mazie. Perhaps he has made a fortune and, in passing, means to drop in on his poor relations."

"Robert rich?" Mazie laughed the idea to scorn. "A man who likes work for its own sake will never have a stiver to his name."

She ventured to surmise that all his expenses were being paid by some labor organization. That was the way with these professional radicals. They traveled around the world on their own wits and on somebody else's money. They never succeeded in making even a bowing acquaintance with a check account. Never. She trusted Janet would not be such a fool as to forget this fact. Now, M. St. Hilaire was a very different story.

"Marry a rich man, Janet, and the memory of that Claude affair will die a natural death. Marry a poor one, and it will keep on bobbing up."

"I shouldn't care if it did."

"No, *you* wouldn't, but your husband would."

"So my friends are at some pains to remind me," said Janet, rather bitterly. "You and Cornelia keep on telling me so, and Robert once expressed the same opinion."

"Well, he was right. I don't say it from spite, like Cornelia does. I say it because I'm—because I'm damned fond of you—"

She repressed the tears in her eyes.

"You're the only one here," she went on, choking down a sob, "that doesn't treat me as though I was an escaped inmate of Sodom and Gomorrah, and ought to be sent back there."

Janet went to her side and comforted her. But Mazie would not be comforted. She burst out with:

"The trouble with us girls is that we're too soft about love, as soft as putty. What good does all this talk and fuss about the equality of women do us? Where does it get us? Just exactly nowhere. And women won't be worth as much as men, until they're as hard about love as men are; and that means as hard as nails."

Divining Janet's silent comment, Mazie added defiantly that it was because she herself hadn't been hard enough that she had come to grief at the hands of "that swine Hutchins."

After a marked pause, Mazie reverted to the subject of M. St. Hilaire. Had he proposed as usual during the morning's ride?

"Yes," said Janet.

"No other news?"

"He assured me that I could have everything I wanted. Even my soul should be my own."

"I don't like that sob stuff about souls," said Mazie whimsically. "What did you answer?"

"I told him that women would never be able to call their souls their own until they could call their bodies their own."

"My God, Janet! You have to give the poor man *something* for his money."

"Exactly. And as I can't give him a fair return for it, it's clear that I oughtn't to marry him, isn't it?"

"Fair return! Did you ever see anybody give a fair return in this sex business? I can gamble on it you didn't. Fair return! Look here, Janet, who started putting a price on love? Did women start it or did men? Was it men or women that threw love on the curb to be bought and sold with other junk? Say, did you ever see a man who'd take love for a free gift? Let me give you a tip, dearie. If a woman don't sell her love for all she can squeeze out of a man, and give him underweight into the bargain, the man don't think he's getting his money's worth."

She went on to say that every relation between the sexes was a case of the shearer and the sheep. Somebody was certain to be shorn. The man would fleece the woman unless the woman fleeced the man.

"And here's another tip, my gentle Janet. When Cornelia sees you prancing off to the Bois de Boulogne with Monsieur St. Hilaire, she don't believe you're putting up with him because you dote on Henriette. Not for a moment. Well then, there'll be a rude awakening for somebody. If you don't fleece St. Hilaire, she'll *skin* you. She'll have you in her power at last."

"No, she won't. Mazie, I'd like to tell you something. But I don't want Cornelia to know. Will you promise not to tell her?"

"Will I promise not to feed cakes to a crocodile?"

"Mrs. Jerome has offered me a job."

"Well, I'll hand it to gentle Janet. You'll be going to heaven on a feather bed next. What's the job?"

"I don't know yet. She doesn't either. She has some scheme in mind for helping professional women to make their way in the world. My work is to come out of that. Just the sort of work I have most at heart. Do you remember the plan I had when we lived in Kips Bay, the plan of creating a new profession for women? What a magnificent castle in the air it was! Robert helped me carry the first brick or two down to earth where we could build on solid ground. By the way, I told Mrs. Jerome all about Barr and Lloyd."

"Did you tell all about Barr and Fontaine, too?"

"No," said Janet, swallowing this bitter pill with some resentment. "But I will, before I accept her offer."

"And you think it won't make any difference to her?"

"No. She's a woman with a great deal of good sense. She sizes you up by your future, not by your past."

"Janet, you are a clip," said Mazie, with immense admiration. "Aren't you afraid of the future? Adventures can break a girl as well as make her. Look how they've broken me."

"Mazie, don't be a fool," said Janet, putting her arm around the sick girl. "You're not half broken yet. You're only a bit cracked. And for your comfort I'll tell you what Robert once said. He said nowadays everybody was a bit cracked—especially in the head."

"Where's the comfort in that?"

"Why, it's the cracked pitcher that goes longest to the well, goose. That's what I tell myself when I get the blues."

"Do you, too, get in a blue funk, sometimes? I don't believe it. I always think of you as being the twin sister of the man in the fairy tale, the man who couldn't be taught to shiver or shake. You're a wonderful girl, Janet. Still, I'd like to see a man come along some day and make you shiver and shake just a teeny-weeny bit. Perhaps Robert will."

"Ah, Mazie, do you think he'll try?"

CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

I

She was present, with the other principals of the Maison Paulette, the night that Robert arrived. Her heart beat faster when she set eyes on him again. He seemed perfectly collected (too perfectly collected!) though very cordial. How was she to tell, amidst so much handshaking and greeting that his heart was beating time with hers?

The thing she was most conscious of was that one look of his mobile brown eyes had given a strangely different twist to her adventure with Claude Fontaine. For the first time in her experience she felt uncomfortably on the defensive.

She resented this novel sensation. She regarded it with hostility, as though it were some treacherous thread that crossed her homespun integrity. To think that Robert should be its agent! Or could she be mistaken? No. It appeared that even the most charitable of human beings liked to see you in sackcloth and ashes, and looking remorseful, conscience stricken, punished. Well, she had not given Cornelia the satisfaction of looking so, nor Harry Kelly, nor Mazie Ross, nor anybody. And Robert should be no exception.

With defiant vigor she resolved that, as she had no cause to acknowledge remorse, fifty Roberts should not make her acknowledge it.

There was little time that night for an interchange of news. Next morning, the machinery of the Paulette establishment, too big to be suspended for a mere visitor, automatically began its daily grind.

In the course of the day Janet caught fleeting glimpses of Robert, little more. Cornelia kept him under her wing and guarded him as carefully as though he were a crown jewel. She went so far as to relieve Harry Kelly of the half-hour's treat he had promised himself, the treat of showing Robert the sights of the great Maison.

Cornelia not only undertook the ceremony herself; she protracted the ritual far beyond her husband's intentions. Cato's complete mentor, that was what she blandly constituted herself. All that poor Hercules could do was to leave his work once in a while, dash hastily to whatever quarter of the building his wife had conducted Robert, slap the visitor gently on the back, and fling a gloomy monosyllable at him by way of showing his good will. He insisted that Robert was too thin, and trotted out his famous formula.

"You don't breathe deep and down enough, old boy. Fill your lungs and your belly with good fresh wind, or you'll never travel on asphalt."

Cornelia had ceased to shudder at the inelegant word. But Mazie, happening to pop in at the moment, promptly caught it up and used the occasion to favor the two men with a fusillade of flippant, slangy phrases, not forgetting to add several thinly veiled impudences directed at the mistress of the house before the latter had time to expel her.

Cornelia herself suffered so many interruptions that even she had to post-

pone the confidential talk she had planned to hold with Robert before noon. After lunch, she allowed Robert to take his first stroll through Paris alone, reminding him to come back for an early dinner at half past six. According to her plan, the evening was to be spent in a general confab and merrymaking.

Unluckily, she forgot to announce this plan in so many words, but took it for granted that no move involving Robert would be made that day without first consulting her. Her overconfidence defeated her. In one of the few moments when she was off guard, Janet contrived to get Robert by himself and secured his joyful acceptance of an invitation to a concert in the evening, for which she chanced to have two tickets.

When Cornelia heard of it, she was in turn astounded and furious. Privately, to Harry and Mazie, she described Janet concisely as a selfish beast. In public, she kept herself commendably in hand.

The dinner passed off without much hilarity and with no incidents other than one or two casual allusions, on Cornelia's part, to M. St. Hilaire.

As Janet went out with Robert, Kelly, full of mournful resignation, hoped that their purses would survive the brigandage, and their lives the epileptic locomotion, of the Paris taxi-cab drivers. Mazie called out:

"Janet, my gentle pet, don't let Rob land by mistake into the *Miroir de Venus*." (This was a cafe notorious for its high jinks.)

"Why not?"

"He might reform the joint, before the joint reforms him."

II

They got into an Odéon bus.

On their way via the Boulevard des Italiennes to the Seine, she named a few of the sights they passed, such as the Théâtre Français and the Tuileries. Crossing the Pont du Carrousel, the bus jounced him against her and, as she thrilled to the touch, she felt his magnetic response.

Yet, outwardly, a year and a half had not changed him greatly, she thought. There was the same fire in his eyes (but wasn't there perhaps a shade less of friendliness?). He listened as politely as ever to routine chit-chat, and exhibited the same impetuous candor when the conversation flung up a new idea.

"You haven't changed much, either," he said, rather suddenly, as though he had divined her reflections. "Your contours are a little rounder, that's all, and I

think your chin is much firmer.”

”And my big nose?”

He pretended to appraise it judicially.

”It’s a size smaller. Perhaps a size and a half.”

She laughed delightedly. It was a new thing for Robert to pay attention to such physical details.

”Well, as long as you say it’s a change for the better—”

”I don’t,” he said, affecting a stern tone. ”Not in the least. Do you know what? I’m afraid you’re fast turning yourself into one of these popular Paul Helleu beauties, a Parisian version of the Penrhyn Stanlaws girl.”

”I wish I could. But I’m not a magician, Robert.”

”Oh, there’s no magic about it. Any girl can do it, if—”

”If, of course. Let’s hear the gigantic *if*.”

”If she has a very moderate allotment of brains and looks, and a single-minded passion for beautifying herself.”

”If this is praise, give me dispraise,” she said, with a mischievous gleam in her eyes.

His senses were assailed by the tone and timbre of her voice. In self-protection he somewhat rudely remarked:

”The fact is I didn’t come to Europe to tell you how beautiful you are.”

”No, you came over on business,” she said, drily. ”You always do come on business. We all assumed that. You needn’t fear that we’re any of us flattering ourselves that you came specially to see him or her. You were sent as a delegate to some labor conference or other, weren’t you?”

”Not as a delegate, but as a staff correspondent of the Confederated Press.”

She learned that the Confederated Press was a new venture backed by several radical newspapers and designed to supply its clients with the news of the world, the straightforward news, before it was cooked or adulterated by the old established press services. Robert’s assignment gave him an enormously valuable experience, although his position was not a lucrative one.

”That’s what brought me to Geneva,” he concluded. ”But I came to Paris to see you.”

Just before he left New York, he had seen Pryor, he told her. Of course Pryor had let out one or two startling bits of news gathered from the four quarters of the earth. About Hutchins Burley and Lydia Dyson—things he would tell her later. Pryor had all the town talk (Kips Bay talk) at his fingers’ ends. The man was a regular human wireless station. Did Janet recall how he always spoke of information drifting his way? Well, it was from Pryor that he first had heard that Cornelia and the famous Madame Paulette were one and the same person.

”You see I’d lost complete track of Cornelia after she left the model tene-

ments," he said. "I'm pretty sure that she wanted to sponge the Kips Bay connection clean off the slate. Naturally, my turning up now isn't in the least to her liking. I can feel that, in spite of her tremendous surface cordiality. But I had to come. Finding her was finding you."

("A pity you didn't look me up a little sooner," said Janet, to herself, not stopping to enlighten him as to the subtle cause of Cornelia's displeasure.)

"Look, here's the Ecole des Beaux Arts," she said aloud. "We'll be in the Boulevard St. Germain in a minute."

III

Whilst he obediently turned his gaze from the sparkle of the arc lights and the glitter of the shops and streets, his thoughts were preoccupied by her puzzling manner. She was friendly, of course. Janet was always that. An equable, agreeable temper was the very essence of her. But what was this disconcerting aloofness of hers which was cleaving the air between them! Her generous eyes and her low clear voice were sending out vibrations that penetrated to his very soul; yet her mind was stubbornly withholding the confidence which in the old Lorillard days she had given him without reserve. What did the paradox of her behavior mean? Was this a new Janet at the opposite pole to the candid, unaffected Janet of Barr and Lloyd? He supposed that the Claude episode might furnish the answer. Had it changed her spiritually for the worse as it had changed her physically for the better?

Well, that episode had certainly changed him, though not precisely in any way that he could have predicted. Changed him! For one thing it had opened his eyes to the fact that he had been a good deal of a prig, as his Outlaw acquaintances were so fond of intimating. He blushed to recall his *ex cathedra* pronouncements on the subject of free love. With what assurance he had asserted that he did not object to free love as a matter of prejudice but only as a point of expediency. Hypocrite! The very reverse had been the case. When Janet ran away with Claude, the Old Adam had risen within him and almost smothered him with possessive emotion.

Like any common jealous man! To be sure, he had stoutly told himself that the Claude adventure made no difference in his estimate of Janet's worth. Absolutely none. She was, as always, a prize for any man. For any man? Well, he himself, on the sole ground that his life's work might suffer, would not consider

himself eligible for the prize. That was how he had put it. That was where the prig had shown the cloven hoof.

Still, he could say this for himself. When he had met Janet face to face again, all these piffling considerations of expediency had instantly, along with his vulgar prejudices, gone by the board. The moment he set eyes on her in Paris, he felt himself at one with her as he had never felt at one with any other human being (save perhaps a certain long-lost friend of his own sex).

The cause was not far to seek. Janet could pull the trigger that released and expanded his faculties as no one else had ever been able to do. In her presence, not merely his better self, but his more adventurous self, his more aspiring self, his more poetic self, and his more heroic self—the several Roberts that other people were too dull to perceive, or too futile, ignorant, or base to cultivate—all these craving selves came into their own and grew in stature. What was a previous love affair, what were a dozen previous love affairs, in the teeth of this miracle? Claude Fontaine! One look into the depth of Janet's eyes, and all theories, prejudices, principles, expediencies, and conflicting emotions went up in smoke.

Meanwhile, Janet's thoughts had been taking a very different shape.

She did not know that Robert had never seen the long letter to Cornelia in which she had described her journey with Claude and had given her European address. Cornelia had withheld this letter from Robert for reasons scarcely admitted to herself; and what Cornelia did not admit to herself she was little likely to admit to an interested friend. In fact, in her letter to Janet and in casual conversations since their recent reunion, Cornelia had so often allowed it to be inferred that Robert had had access to the letter, that she ended by making this convenient inference herself.

Not unnaturally then, Janet reasoned that Robert's failure to communicate with her had been deliberate. What dovetailed with this conclusion was the memory of his dictum on free love. How well she remembered the relentless words: "I can never have anything to do with free love or with a woman who has had a free lover. It would defeat my purpose in life."

His purpose in life! He was the sort of man who took more joy in finding and working *that* out than in loving any woman. True, she no longer concurred in Cornelia's view that Robert was a fanatic. No. He just escaped fanaticism by the skin of his teeth. This view explained both his long silence and his sudden reappearance. That is, she knew quite well that he had borne her no grudge on account of the past, had indulged in no theatrical repudiation of her friendship because of her liaison with Claude. He had simply found it profitless to pursue a friendship with a woman in her situation. That would be enough to commit him to silence.

Nor did she take too seriously his assertion that he had made a special trip

to Paris to see her. Why shouldn't he pay her or Madame Paulette a visit if the ordinary course of his business brought him almost to their doorstep? After all, a representative of labor interests could hardly come to Europe without visiting Paris. Paris, where a lurid, underground drama of industrial insurrection, half smothered by gold dust, was going on!

Was there any sensible reason why Robert shouldn't pick up the thread of an old friendship, if it was all in the day's work? It might even be useful to a labor man to get in touch with people who knew the ropes of the French capital. Anyhow, Robert would be the last person in the world to abstain from such a course if it promised to advance his principles.

His hateful principles! The worst of it was, she was beginning to have sympathy for his conviction that the drudgery which served a purpose you believed in might be a real pleasure, compared with which the pleasure that served no purpose worth believing in would be an intolerable pain.

Well, all these speculations were as nothing against the fact of the moment. The fact of the moment was that the swaying of the bus crushed Robert's arm against hers in an impact that was poignantly delightful. Nor was this all. Robert, his imperious principles notwithstanding, acted in every respect as if he liked having his arm against her; no as if he would like to have his arm *around* her. Robert Lloyd amorous? She gave him a sidelong glance. Her senses provided her with abundant evidence that her surmise was correct. But this was a world of sensory illusions as she had learned to her cost; and she reminded herself sharply that she had more than one decisive reason for trusting neither to his feelings nor to her own.

IV

"You're not doing your duty," she said to him. "We've just passed the church of St. Germain-des-Pres. Quick look back. Even darkness can't subdue those imposing walls. Doesn't it look solid and impregnable? Just like my mother and like your convictions. It's a structure that commands your faith, though you have it not. You'll miss the silhouette of St. Sulpice, too, if you don't look out."

"Janet, I didn't come to Paris to look at churches. I came to look at you."

"Well, you came, you saw, and—you conquered."

"I saw more than you think," he went on, smiling at her flippancy. "As I said before, you've changed physically. But the physical change is of no importance."

"I knew it. Those fine compliments were all bunk."

"Not at all. You've changed physically for the better. But what is more important is that you've changed spiritually—"

"For the worse, of course. Now we're coming to it."

"I didn't say it. I'm not at all sure."

"This may be candor, Robert. But it sounds like revenge."

"You may as well be serious, Janet. I've got volumes to pour out to you, and pour them out I will. When I'm with you, I'm like the Ancient Mariner. I want to tell you everything."

"Everything?"

"Well, almost everything, as they say in the comic opera. What do you suppose was the most wonderful companionship I ever formed?"

"I can't guess."

"Barr and Lloyd. Do you know why? Because, for one thing, there was nothing in reason that I couldn't talk to you about, with the most unvarnished frankness. I still feel that way."

"I'm glad you do. We were very good pals, weren't we?"

"Yes, and I hope we still are. Anyhow, I want to speak of something I heard about you from Mark Pryor."

"What was that?"

"Pryor seems to have kept in touch with Cornelia right along. You know Pryor."

"Not a sparrow falleth but his eye doth see," she quoted.

"Exactly. He has been keeping tabs on this rich Alsatian. And, by the way, I ought to mention that he repeated to me what you told him about Monsieur St. Hilaire."

"That's a nice way to treat my confidence," said Janet, seriously annoyed. "Pryor of all people. And I took him to be the only original human clam!"

"Well, I think he was fully justified—"

"In what way, I'd like to ask?"

"Please don't make me go into that now, Janet. The thing I'm driving at is this. Pryor heard that you were on the point of—of forming a free alliance with this Alsatian gentleman. Chiefly to escape Cornelia and this horrible business of clothes."

"You've been misinformed," she retorted coldly. "Not about the clothes. I *do* loathe them. But I've no intention of forming a free alliance with anybody. Certainly not with Monsieur St. Hilaire. Why should I? I don't love him. But I don't mind telling you that he has asked me to marry him."

"Oh, then, that's what you're considering?"

"Yes," she said concisely.

And "put that in your pipe and smoke it," added a defiant glance from her half-parted long-lashed eyes.

If he had any notion of playing the medieval knight, plunging through fire and water for the damsel in distress, she would spoil that chivalrous pose in a jiffy.

"Janet, I don't understand you," he said, with quite unnecessary vehemence. "You said you wouldn't marry Claude, your reason being that you loved him. Now you say you will marry Monsieur St. Hilaire, and your reason is that you don't love him."

His eyes added: "You are inexplicable, exasperating, maddening—and yet adorable: in short, you are Janet."

The bus came to a full stop, and a few minutes later they were in the concert hall.

V

The concert was one of a special series given by an orchestra from Rouen. Janet's attention had been drawn to the series by two circumstances. One was that a third of the members of the orchestra were women. The other was that the inclusion of women in a first-class orchestra had plunged musical circles into a controversy which the newspapers eagerly seized upon and played up with caricature or abuse, satire or eulogy, according to the partisanship, but never the merits of the case.

Robert knew nothing of this controversy until he ventured on a remark during the first intermission.

"The tone and workmanship of the orchestra are splendid," he said. "I don't feel qualified to judge, but it strikes me that the women are doing every whit as well as the men."

"As well? They're doing far better. Do you see that first violin in the front row, the third from the left? I could tell he was slacking all through the Cesar Franck number. And there were four or five others as bad. You couldn't say that of one of the women."

"No. Their performance is amazing, isn't it?"

"Why amazing?" asked Janet, still detecting an echo of masculine superciliousness.

"Well, women don't generally reach the top-notch in the fine arts, do they?"

"How can they," said Janet warmly, "when the patronizing disparagement and merciless rivalry of men hold them back at every turn!"

"Well, they've managed to break into this crack orchestra. That doesn't look like merciless rivalry."

"Ah, but wait till I tell you the facts, Robert. As the war went on, managers found it impossible to deny women the privilege of playing in high-class bands. But the men are now recovering their monopoly as fast and as unscrupulously as possible. How? They have set up a hue and cry against the women and have won the musical pundits to their side. I am told that the management of this Rouen orchestra is almost certain to yield to masculine pressure, which means that the women will be dislodged at the end of the current series."

Did Robert appreciate the injustice of this abominable proceeding? It was a fact that the women brought a fire, intensity and freshness to their work which improved the tone and effectiveness of every band they played in. They were twice as keen as the men and worked fifty times harder. Several of the younger, more liberal musical critics both in Paris and in London fully admitted this. Not so the old-timers who sat in the seats of the mighty. And yet the men who were doing their vicious best to elbow their rivals out of the way were the very men who fluttered about town and with crocodile regret assured the public that, no matter what *equal chances* the weaker sex received, the final incapacity of women to reach the top was beyond dispute.

Janet's shot went home. But the resumption of the program made it impossible for Robert to offer a defense. He was annoyed at himself for having spoken tactlessly on a topic which Janet might well be touchy about. Still, he considered that her rebuke was far too severe to fit the crime, especially in view of his genuine equalitarian feeling toward women, a feeling that Janet ought to have been the last to deny him.

It occurred to him that, if she was capable of regarding him, of all men, with so much detachment (not to say indifference) as to make him the target for a sharp anti-hominist fire, she might be deeper in the M. St. Hilaire entanglement than he or Mark Pryor had suspected.

By the time the concert was over, Janet was sorry for the way she had pitched into her guest. Would he forgive her for letting the heat of argument carry her away? Not that she retracted a word she had said. Far from it. It was impossible to say too much on that score. Had he noticed the wide publicity which the Paris newspapers had given to an assertion appearing in one of Arnold Bennett's recent books? It was the assertion that women are inferior to men in intellectual power and that "no amount of education or liberty of action will sensibly alter this fact." This gesture of finality with which men, even men of genius like Bennett, invariably polished off the future of women and consigned them

to an eternity of subordination! When would this superficial generalization ever stop, if avowed feminists like Robert fell to using the language of their opponents even while avoiding their errors?

"I'm only taking the words out of your mouth, Robert," she concluded, in her softest pacifying tones. "I'm only repeating what you've told me a hundred times over in the past."

He smiled at this sop to his vanity, which none the less helped to restore good feeling.

VI

Janet had taken him towards the river. They walked arm in arm along the Quai Voltaire and the Quai d'Orsay, the tranquil Seine and the starry skies almost their sole companions.

The dispute of the evening still fresh in his mind, Robert alluded to Janet's former ambition to create a new profession for women of the middle class. A branch of law, wasn't it? Authorship law, so to speak. Had she given it any thought of late? What a nuisance it was that money should have to be the root of all experiment as well as the root of all evil. In the absence of enough capital, it was probably just as well that she deferred another attempt to realize her dream. Still, it was a pity. She had made such a good beginning with the firm of Barr & Lloyd, humble though the scale of its operations had been.

"Well, Robert, are you ready to renew the partnership?" she challenged him.

"Is this a strictly business proposal?" he replied, in a hesitating manner.

She was chilled by his clumsiness.

"Barr & Lloyd was always a 'strictly business' affair, wasn't it?" she said, in a cool, quiet voice.

He wanted to burst out with: "No, I never believed it was wholly that. If you'd had my sort of partnership in mind, I'd give a very swift and a very different answer." But the words stuck in his throat. For two reasons. Her sudden return to the almost hostile manner that had baffled him earlier, was one. His knowledge that the limited and precarious means he disposed of would make an offer of marriage from him seem ridiculous, if not insane, was the second.

Had he voiced his thoughts, they might then and there have thrashed their differences out in half an hour. But he could not voice them. For the first time

in their friendship, neither of them was candid when candor was the sensible course. "This comes of caring for a woman not wisely but too well," thought Robert. He was amazed and incredulous to find that he cared so much; he was also a little indignant with himself, for he had vowed never to do that very thing.

"Don't be alarmed," he heard Janet saying. "I'm not going to impress you into the cause. You have bigger fish to fry than the feminist movement. As for me, I've had a very good offer from Mrs. R. H. L. Jerome."

She sketched a picture of this whimsical lady, and gave a short account of Mrs. Jerome's interest in the organized effort to rid women of their professional disabilities. Robert learned that Mrs. Jerome had repeatedly expressed a desire to put Janet to some use in the cause she had at heart.

"The work would be quite in line with my old plans," added Janet.

"Then why don't you accept her offer at once?"

"I wish I knew," she said, evasively. "Perhaps I can do all I've wanted to do, and more, if I follow the beaten track, if I buy cheap and sell dear in the marriage market; in short, give as little of myself as I can to the richest bidder that offers. What do you think?"

"I think a cynical step of that sort would do very well for Mazie, whose words you appear to be repeating."

"Oh, don't underrate Mazie's cynicism. It has been hammered into a durable, serviceable instrument by some very hard knocks. Knocks that she got from men. Her flippant manner often obscures some very sound remarks, like the one that there'll be no equality between the sexes until women exploit men as shamelessly as men exploit women."

"Doesn't the modern woman do this, already?" asked Robert, with a smile.

"How often does she get the same chance? It's equality of chances that I'm aiming for, you know."

"So am I for that matter," said Robert. "I hope we'll get your equality of chances before long. Then we can work together for decency."

It was close upon midnight when they took a taxi back to the Boulevard Haussman.

Not a soul was stirring in the Maison Paulette. Robert and Janet walked through the corridor on the *rez-de-chaussée* to the rear building, the one used for sleeping quarters. For a few minutes they stopped in the vestibule at the foot of the staircase.

Now, as throughout the evening, their instincts swayed them one way, their reason another. Each misunderstood the motives of the other; and, what with this misunderstanding and the economic insecurity of their circumstances, the scales were tipped in favor of discretion. Besides, Janet mistrusted her impulses far more than formerly. True, Robert mistrusted his far less. In spite of his better

judgment, he was succumbing to her ensnaring voice and eyes, was surrendering to an intense longing to tempt her into a betrayal, an unambiguous betrayal, of her real feelings.

But he proceeded in a manner too inadequate.

"I'm no clearer about your plans than before," he said, awkwardly. "You haven't really taken me into your confidence."

"About Monsieur St. Hilaire?"

"Yes."

A marked pause. She did not interrupt it. Discouraged, he lamely continued: "Still, I'm glad you've changed your point of view about men and women. It's something to find out that marriage, like adversity, has its uses."

"Robert, what I've found out is that marriage, like honesty, may be the best policy. I've learned that woman cannot live by principle alone."

"I protest I never urged it."

"No. And if it's the least satisfaction to you, I'll admit that I don't intend to repeat any of my Kips Bay experiments—free love, outlawry, and so on—you know the sort of thing. Why should I? There are few moments in the old Lorillard tenement life that I regret; yet there are none that I'd live over again."

"None?"

"Not one. Wait. There is a single moment—it just occurs to me—it was so like this one—"

"Like this one?"

"Yes, 'when my heart was a free and a fetterless thing, a wave—'"

The line was completed without words, Robert, swept away by her enchantment, having seized her in his arms and kissed her.

"Don't marry Monsieur St. Hilaire," he said, beseeching rather than commanding her, "whatever you do."

She disengaged herself almost brutally, and went up the stairs. Pausing a few steps up, she turned and, in a tone supremely dispassionate, said:

"Whatever I do! Well, whatever I do, I can't marry a poor man, can I?"

CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

I

Hoping to have a few words alone with Harry Kelly, Robert went down to breakfast early. But if he expected to learn anything further in regard to Janet or M. St. Hilaire, he was disappointed. Extracting teeth would have been easier than pumping Harry who, besides being more taciturn than ever, had developed a vein of pessimism quite out of keeping with his material prosperity.

Robert was actually relieved when the appearance of Mazie Ross at the breakfast table put an end to his efforts to draw Kelly out.

"Her Ladyship was sweetly singing 'My Rosary' when I passed her bedroom door," said Mazie, alluding to Cornelia. "Things'll be humming in the Maison Paulette this morning, if I know the Indian sign."

Mazie was getting to be very chipper of late. Whether from the force of association or not, the presence of Robert and Janet had given her a chance to recover some of her old position.

Kelly appeared to agree with Mazie's inference, though he was not so cheerful about it. He wished Mark Pryor were somewhere within reach. That fellow was a regular clairvoyant, and could tip you off about the most astonishing things. A tip would be handy at this time.

"Something's going to happen," added Harry, gloomily. "I feel it in my bones."

"I'd feel it in my bones," volunteered Mazie, "if I nearly killed myself like you do, Harry. You fairly chew up work. What's the use? Let the Empress do some of the worrying."

"She's got enough to worry about, Mazie. She carries the whole responsibility for the artistic work of the house, and you know it."

"You bet I do! The chief joy of my declining days is to watch her Ladyship curl up on a cozy sofa in the office and hug the responsibility while you do the work. When the weight is too much for her, she staggers over to the house switchboard, rings up each department in turn, and interferes with everybody impartially. Say, if you could limber up her knee action a bit—"

At this point, poor Harry, after an ineffectual attempt to stare Mazie into silence, got up and went out, unable to listen any longer.

"The goof!" said Mazie, pitying him contemptuously. "She only married him as a sure salvation from work."

She was so manifestly unjust to Cornelia (who, however much of a shirker she might have been in Kips Bay, was now busy enough making her talent for line and color productive) that Robert refrained from argument.

"What's the matter with Harry?" he said, attempting to change the subject. "He was always monosyllabic, but never as gloomy as this."

"He wants a son and heir."

"Oh!"

"Do you remember how Cornelia used to tell every man who paid us a call in Number Fifteen that the dearest wish of her life was to hold a child to her maternal heart? Every brutal Outlaw that came along would offer to oblige on the spot. Except Harry. He melted right into putty when she sprang that mother gag; and then she gave the cue for the wild wedding bells to ring out. But now she's married, it's different. The muffler is on the maternal urge. On tight! And she's strong for the birth control propaganda. She's so strong for it that—"

Here Cornelia entered and Mazie was put to instant flight.

II

Cornelia's hour with Robert had come. She lost no time in giving him to understand that his arrival in Paris had, to put it mildly, been inopportune. Not that it was his fault. Naturally, he couldn't very well have foreseen the rapidly approaching crisis in Janet's life. But there it was! M. St. Hilaire, a man of parts and of wealth, was anxious to marry Janet, who had just begun to see that the match was greatly to her advantage. Here was Janet's golden opportunity to redeem the past—

"To redeem the past or to redeem Monsieur St. Hilaire?"

"Don't be flippant, Cato. You know very well what I mean."

"I'm quite serious. *Redeem* is a curious word to use in connection with Janet. It implies atonement for sin. Did you apply this word to your own case after your return from England to the model tenements?"

She stared at him icily. Did he intimate that Janet's affair with Claude Fontaine was spiritually comparable to her affair with Percival Houghton? She would show him the difference. True, she had believed in free love ("a hundred years ahead of my time, Cato!") and Janet had followed suit. But when she, Cornelia, had taken up the gauntlet against the irrational knot, she had let herself be pilloried for her convictions. Had Janet done as much? Let his own fairness be his tutor.

Not that she held Janet to blame. Oh, no. She would have Robert know that he and his principles had been the disturbing influence in Janet's destiny. This had been the case in Kips Bay. She feared it would again be the case in Paris.

"I the disturbing influence? Absurd, Cornelia. When did I ever demand that you, or Janet, or anybody else live up to my vaunted principles?"

"Cato, there's something about you, some Satanic magnetism, that gives

you a strange hold upon a woman's soul. It makes her strive to appear before you always in her loftier, sublimer flights, to put on her Sabbath character, so to speak."

"Why do you call this Sabbath magnetism *Satanic*?"

"Because it's unnatural to ask a woman to assume her Sabbath character seven days a week. She's bound to come to grief."

She assured him that this Satanic faculty of his was what caused him to pique or fascinate women, though it seldom inspired them with passion. And, in the long run, it always threw them out of gear. As in the case of Janet! What had his intoxicating mixture of visionary theories and expedient compromises done for her in the Claude Fontaine affair? It had brought her out at the pitifully small end of the horn.

"I may remind you, Robert, that *I* was ready to ruin myself for Percival Houghton, ready to stand, upright and reckless, facing the world with him. *I* didn't go slinking from one hotel to another, as his pretended *wife*."

Cornelia's heroics would have amused Robert but for the jibe flung at Janet. Thank heaven, Janet never declaimed about having faced a whole world or having ruined herself for anyone. After listening to such windy phrases, who would not be biased towards any course that seemed right to Janet and wrong to Cornelia?

He hung on her lips with rapt absorption, hoping by this look of intensesness to mask his thoughts.

In this hope he was deceived.

"Why on earth don't you marry Charlotte Beecher?" she cross-questioned him abruptly.

"I don't know."

"You don't know! Do you suppose a girl with position, wealth and brains turns up every day in the week? A girl who really *wants* you! I'm sure I can't imagine *why* she does."

"Nor can I."

She repeated her question. Had he given Charlotte Beecher up merely because she loved him so much more than he loved her?

He couldn't very well answer this question in the affirmative. So he said:

"Charlotte is a very intellectual girl, the most intellectual girl I know. She never met a man whom she regarded as her equal in point of brains until she met me. The regard was mutual. She mistook her admiration for love. I might have made the same mistake—if I hadn't met you."

"You can't blarney me, Cato," she said, highly flattered none the less. "It's too late in the day!"

"I mean it, Cornelia. Meeting you, made me alive to the full force of the

attraction between the sexes.”

”It is the one thing needful,” said Cornelia, in low siren tones. ”For without it, love is as the dry stubble.”

”I, too, used to think so,” replied Robert, turning a cold douche on this sentiment. ”We’ve all had that notion rammed down our throats since childhood. But can we be certain that sexual attraction is the only road to love? The poets assure us that pity is a famous short-cut. In the case of very young people, *all* roads seem to lead to love. For older folk, mutual admiration may be as good a road as any. Speaking for myself, I’m still considering a proposal to Charlotte Beecher—”

”Oh, you’re still considering her? And Janet is still considering M. St. Hilaire. For ice-cold calculation, give me a one-hundred per cent enthusiast like you or Janet.”

”Are you suggesting that Janet is so well-suited to me that I ought to propose to her?”

She rose, with a growing sense of contempt for him. If he did anything so insane—and he was doubtless capable of it—the results would be on his own head. He had already made a mess of his newspaper career, he had been too proud to cultivate the Fontaine influence, he had gratuitously antagonized his only well-to-do relation in California, even now he could barely make a hand-to-mouth living out of his connection with the radical press. And he actually proposed to lengthen this catalog of disasters! Well, he’d better remember one thing. His friends could pull him out of a hole, but not out of a bottomless abyss.

Really, did he believe in miracles? To put it bluntly: did he suppose that two failures added together made a success? Yes, two failures! He was an impecunious journalist or a discredited labor propagandist—which was it? And Janet! What had she to offer? A pirated soul (this to remind him of Claude Fontaine) and shattered prospects.

”Really, Cornelia, these phrases belong to the screen grade of fiction, not to the facts of the twentieth century.”

Here Mazie interrupted with an urgent message from the exhibition room.

”Stay and talk to Robert,” said Cornelia with frigid disdain. ”He’s a great salvager of damaged reputations.”

Mazie looked inquiringly Robert’s way, while Cornelia swept towards the door. In a mock-heroic tone, he explained:

”Cornelia says that Janet *went wrong*; therefore, unless M. St. Hilaire marries her, she’ll be *ruined for life*.”

Mazie caught the drift of the situation at once.

”Ruined!” she cried out, in a steaming torrent of slang. ”Say, people in the States won’t believe a girl is ’ruined’ nowadays, even when she’s committed

to the House of the Good Shepherd. Ruined! Who's to ruin her? Why, the average American is such a hokey-pokey, near-beer, Sunday-school man of straw, he wouldn't ruin Cleopatra if she begged him on her bended knees! Take it from me. If Janet's people at the cemetery end of Brooklyn heard Claude described as the Duc de la Fontaine, they might give her the glassy eye. They might. They'll believe cruel things about a foreigner. But she mustn't let on that he's a gent from the U.S.A., or they'll think she's stringing them. Think! They'll know it. Why, my brown-eyed cherub, there's only one way a girl can go wrong in little old New York. And that's to have somebody break into her bank account."

Of the latter part of this choicely sustained opinion, Robert was the exclusive audience, Cornelia having already closed the door with a bang.

III

A little later in the morning Janet, glancing through a copy of *Le Matin* three days old, caught sight of a familiar name in a telegraphic despatch from New York. The name was Fontaine. According to the brief news report, headed *C'est fini de rire!* (the fun is over!), Fontaine and Company, the most noted of the Fifth Avenue dealers in precious stones, were charged with complicity in a sensational attempt at smuggling.

Piecing the somewhat disjointed details together, Janet gathered that secret agents of the Department of Justice on the lookout for spies had inadvertently found thousands of dollars' worth of diamonds concealed in the bottom boards of what purported to be cases of Japanese books. The cases, which had been opened by the Secret Service agents shortly after the "Ionic" docked in Hoboken, were ostensibly consigned to a San Francisco book dealer for whom one Hutchins Burley, a New York editor and foreign correspondent, appeared as the representative.

Burley was held, and the newspapers featured him as the "master mind" of a very clever band. On examination he confessed that the book dealer was a mere dummy for Fontaine and Company, whose stock rooms were the real destination of the diamonds. A warrant for the arrest of Mr. Rene Fontaine, head of the firm, was at once issued. Officials of the customs house alleged that the operations of the smugglers, whose ingenuity had baffled detection for years, reached gigantic proportions, the government's loss being estimated at many millions.

News so startling had to be told without delay. Janet excitedly reported it to

Harry Kelly and then descended to the exhibition room where as a rule Cornelia held sway at this hour.

Entering the salon somewhat precipitately, she saw the young Duchess of Keswick seated in great state and surrounded by deferential minions. But no Cornelia visible. Janet beat a swift retreat. The Duchess reminded her, not altogether pleasantly, of Marjorie Armstrong at the Mineola Aerodrome. The two young ladies had the same fashionable contours, the same self-conscious pride of position, the same patricianism of the made-to-order rather than of the inborn type.

Hastening up a flight of stairs to Cornelia's office, Janet was brought to a stop outside the door by the sound of voices, which she recognized at once as those of her friend and of the Duchess's mother, Mrs. R. H. L. Jerome.

It was easy to overhear the conversation. Mrs. Jerome announced her departure for London the next day to inspect an apartment house restricted exclusively to professional women who, besides being mothers, were the sole supporters of their children. She intended to open a similar house (as a humanitarian, not a charitable undertaking) in New York. She had already offered Janet the post of resident business manager. Naturally, she would like to take the young lady with her to England at once, but she wouldn't insist on this. If the inconvenience to the Maison Paulette was too great, Janet could follow later, as soon as she had wound up her affairs.

Cornelia's reply was couched in a low voice so tense with emotion that Janet could distinguish only a word or two here and there. These words were ample. *M. St. Hilaire, woman-with-her-back-to-the-wall, Henriette, redemption, iron-law-of-retribution*, etc., such proper names and stagey phrases showed quite clearly that Cornelia was delivering her customary rigmarole about the sacrifices she was making to the end that Janet might cover up her past and glorify her future.

To Janet's ears, this rigmarole was now so stale as no longer to invite even remonstrance. But to declaim it to a comparative outsider! And to embroider it with all sorts of sticky innuendoes! Janet grew hot and cold by turns. So this was how one's name was buffeted about after an episode like hers with Claude Fontaine! If one's best friends talked this way behind one's back, what might not less intimate associates say or take for granted?

She had tried to steel herself against inevitable collisions with public opinion; yet this first impact, though only an oblique one, had given her a much nastier shock than any she had anticipated.

M. St. Hilaire, the Chateau in Normandy, the prestige that was to cover a multitude of past sins—Cornelia was going it again!

Mrs. Jerome replied that these matters were none of her affair. She needed

Janet and she believed Janet needed her. Surely, the decision lay with the young woman herself?

While Janet was still debating whether or not she should walk straight in and interrupt, Cornelia shifted the attack, her diplomatic allusions to Janet's love affair being replaced by blunter speech. She effected the change with a great show of diffidence and hesitation. Her sense of loyalty alike to her friend and to Mrs. Jerome obliged her, etc.—Claude Fontaine, the *beau ideal* of the Junior smart set, etc.—the transatlantic honeymoon to which the newspaper troubadours had given a far-flung notoriety, etc.—But doubtless Mrs. Jerome recalled these particulars well enough?

Came the tart rejoinder:

"No, I never do read newspaper scandal! The fact is, when I'm not gambling in Paulette frocks, I'm a very busy woman. If it wasn't for the Duchess, the Magpie Club in Mayfair would make short work of me. But the Duchess reads me some of the necessary tittle-tattle at breakfast so as to keep me *au fait*. She's a great newspaper fan, is the Duchess."

When Janet finally opened the door, walked in, and electrified the room, Cornelia had just been sweetly remarking:

"But about the managership of this house, a house for unattached mothers—widows and feminist women I presume?—about such projects public curiosity is simply insatiable, isn't it? Do you really think that Janet is exactly the person for such a delicate position—?"

Ignoring Cornelia and her innuendo, Janet spoke directly to Mrs. Jerome.

"I'm sorry you didn't let me tell you everything last week, Mrs. Jerome," she said, keeping herself well in hand. "You see, all this would have been superfluous then."

"My policy, child, is never to learn more than it's good for me to know. But perhaps I was in the wrong this time."

"I had no idea you could overhear us, Janet," said Cornelia, with as much acerbity as if she were the injured party.

Janet scorned to reply on the level of this remark.

"I came to show you a piece of news in the *Matin*," was all she deigned to say.

Pointing out the place, she handed Cornelia the newspaper.

"I'd like to speak to Mrs. Jerome alone for a few minutes," she said. "Would you very much mind?"

"Oh, by no means," replied Cornelia, trying hard to be superior and authoritative. "Make any arrangements you like to suit your own interests. Never mind the *Maison Paulette*. Don't think that *I* shall stand in your light."

And as she went out, unabashed, she offered the flowery remark that she

had only done her poor best to follow the impulses of her heart, her sole desire having been to help both Janet and Mrs. Jerome to a mutual understanding, in the absence of which any joint project they might embark on would be only too likely to suffer shipwreck.

IV

Mrs. Jerome drew Janet down to a place beside her on the leather settee.

"Now, my dear," she said, "I'd just as soon you didn't dig up ancient history. Unless it's going to relieve your mind. But I shan't be any the wiser for it when you've finished, trust me. Why, if you told me that you were a new version of the Old Nick himself, one look into your lovely gray eyes would convince me that it wasn't true."

None the less, Janet, not wishing to sail under false colors, gave a very short résumé of her life from the time she went to the Lorillard tenements in Kips Bay to the day she left M. St. Hilaire.

Throughout this narrative, Mrs. Jerome's round little face was sphinx-like, becoming animated only at the point of Janet's separation from Claude.

"He left you in the lurch, then?" she had interposed, much affected.

"Oh, no, he would have kept on providing for me," said Janet, evasively, and after a moment's hesitation.

Nobody had really believed the story that she had left Claude. Even Robert appeared to take the reverse for granted. Perhaps, on the whole, she had better fall into a view that people would be sure to adopt in any case, and that she was almost beginning to adopt herself.

"But of course you didn't let him," said Mrs. Jerome.

"No."

"Good. We mustn't be under any obligation of that sort to the selfish sex. Now don't worry about the matter any more. You're a plucky girl, my dear. Keep your pluck, and your pluck will keep you."

Mrs. Jerome added that she hoped Claude Fontaine had not behaved any worse than Janet had represented. She knew the young man. Who in New York didn't? As regards possible criticism, Janet should be comforted with the reflection that glass houses made the whole world kin, human architecture being nowhere complete without them. Why, most of the girls in the Younger Set had lost their heads over Claude, which was all they had had a chance to lose. She her-

self, meeting him once at a costume ball of the Junior League, had been knocked silly by his dashing airs and Apollo curls, not to mention the best pair of calves she had ever beheld.

"So you see, my dear, an old woman can be quite as feeble-minded as a debutante. Nobody has ever had a monopoly of making mistakes."

Janet pointed out that the world did not take quite so liberal a view. This being so, might she not prove a source of embarrassment to Mrs. Jerome? As people looked at it, running away with a man was—

"Child, for every woman who runs away with a man, there's a man who runs away with a woman."

This obvious truth had been lost sight of, and the time had come for its emphatic reassertion. Did Janet imagine that Claude had lost any credit? Well, let her look at the facts. Mr. Fontaine, senior, had just got himself into a very bad mess, one that involved the Fontaine firm in a case of diamond smuggling. The Duchess had read her the story from the papers. And only last night *Le Temps* had reported that Mr. Fontaine was believed to have jumped his bail, leaving his son Claude behind to pull the firm out of the hole. And everybody felt so sorry for Claude! Not that he had anything to fear. He could not be held personally accountable. Still, there were the court proceedings, which were reckoned a terrible load for his handsome young shoulders to bear. And so bankers and clubmen and "sealskin" artists were rushing to his aid; matrons from upper Fifth Avenue were pulling wires; Colonel Armstrong, the great financier, was on the job behind the scenes; and it was freely whispered that when the storm had blown over, Claude and Marjorie Armstrong were to be married in St. Thomas'. Here was retribution! If you judged from the international tidal wave of sympathy and helpfulness that was sweeping towards Claude, you might be pardoned for thinking that he was Galahad, Parsifal, and Lohengrin rolled into one.

"But men stand by one another," added Mrs. Jerome, pointing the moral succinctly.

Women would have to take this lesson to heart and stand by one another just as men did. If Janet joined the Jerome forces, she could depend on one thing, and that was her support through thick and thin.

Janet felt inexcusably ungrateful at not accepting the managership on the spot, and frankly said so. She made no attempt to explain her indecision, her motives at the time being far from clear to herself.

Mrs. Jerome, blissfully unaware of the existence of Robert Lloyd as a factor in this hesitation, took it in very good part. Janet should make up her mind when she pleased. But surely, she wasn't again playing with the thought of marrying M. St. Hilaire? After her emphatic assertion that she didn't love him!

"Yet I don't dislike him, by any means," said Janet. "I was very fond of him

in Brussels, before he lost his head.”

”Fond! Child, one may marry for money without affection, or for affection without money, but one shouldn’t marry for either money or affection without a little romance thrown in.”

Saying which, this whimsical little lady laughed, rose, and put an arm lovingly around her favorite.

”Come back to the States with me, Janet,” she continued. ”You’ll see what we women can do when we put on steam. You shall make an independent place for yourself in New York, besides helping other women to do the same. And by and by some suitable countryman of ours will come along, and we’ll have you nicely married off.”

V

We’ll have you nicely married off. Left alone, Janet had to pull herself together after the shock of these words. Everybody seemed determined to get her married. Claude, Pryor, Cornelia, Robert. And now Mrs. Jerome, too!

Clearly, even people who were extremely well disposed towards her, had it at the back of their minds that she had lost credit with her fellow-men. And that nothing short of marriage could restore her to full public esteem! This was a situation she would have to reckon with. But how comical it was to have marriage urged upon her as though it were a kind of penance she must do in order to regain her standing!

Penance! She was driven to admit that it really would be something like an act of penance to marry M. St. Hilaire. Still, would she feel this way if she hadn’t met Robert again? Would she? Scarcely. It was Robert’s turning up that had caused M. St. Hilaire to appear in the light of a penitential infliction.

There were two courses open to her, and staying with Cornelia was not one of them. No, she recoiled from fashionable dressmaking and all its shows, and the atmosphere of the Maison Paulette with its lurking vapors of parasitism and prostitution grew more oppressively sickening every day.

True, the big establishment was an amusing novelty at first, when you saw only the surface glamor. Nor was it half bad to help Harry Kelly to train the manikins, so long as you supposed that this training merely equipped them to wear expensive frocks in the salon or at the races or at the opera. But when you found out that every one of these dainty girl models expected confidently to

become the mistress of some rich merchant or politician, your zest for the work oozed away.

Not that you saw much difference between the kept mistresses who exhibited the Paulette garments and the kept wives who purchased them. But you began to look upon the whole traffic in dresses as a symbol of woman's enslavement to man and of man's enslavement to the dollar sign. And you observed how this traffic changed everybody connected with it for the worse. (Everybody except poor Mazie, who had experienced a revulsion of feeling against the ghost of her Ziegfeld "Follies" self—unluckily too late to do her any good.) You watched the crude boyish cynicism of Harry Kelly turn into a morose pessimism, and in Cornelia you felt the growth or stiffening of all that was grasping and cruel.

As Janet saw these metamorphoses, she realized that the house of Paulette was a house of bondage. It was not an institution with which a free-spirited woman would wish permanently to throw in her lot.

For practical purposes, then, her choice lay between the managership under Mrs. Jerome and a "marriage of convenience" with M. St. Hilaire.

Instinct, to be sure, pointed to another alternative in which the name of Robert figured in capital letters. But this was a romantic dream, a dream which her fancy might embroider but which her courage and common sense had to dispel. Thus, when instinct urged, "A little feminine beguilement will bring him swiftly to your feet," common sense rejoined, "You may elect life-long poverty for yourself; dare you inflict it on Robert?" Instinct could rear and curvet, it could champ the bit; but it was not in the saddle.

As between the two available courses, she had vastly preferred the managership. She would have jumped at it when Mrs. Jerome first offered it, but for a tacit understanding with Henriette. What a pull on her affections the little girl exercised! In a moment of weakness, or rather of passionate disgust with Paulette's, Janet had given her former pupil all but an outright promise to become her second mother. Yet, though the father's proposal was a handsome one, full of concessions to Janet's conception of a modern woman's sphere, it was difficult to ignore the likelihood of a bitter conflict after the wedding. A conflict on the issue of these very concessions. For between the feudal traditions of a man like M. St. Hilaire and the equalitarian assumptions of a woman like herself, there was a great gulf fixed. Could it ever be bridged?

Anyhow, Mrs. Jerome's offer had blazed out the real path of independence for her, and no mistake. Or so she had thought. A dozen times of late she had been on the point of imparting her final decision to Henriette and facing Cornelia and M. St. Hilaire with it. Lack of courage had not restrained her. A very different consideration had given her pause. Might not her "past" prove a source of serious embarrassment to Mrs. Jerome's work? The last two years had taught her

something of the "chemical" methods of warfare, the "poison gas" attacks which the foes of progress did not scruple to adopt. Was it likely that the enemies of the women's movement would lose the chance of wrecking Mrs. Jerome's scheme by raising against her young manager the hue and cry of *immorality*, that cry with which a handful of knaves had so often brought a whole nation of fools and cowards to heel?

None the less, good sense had suggested that if Mrs. Jerome could risk it, so could she. And she had at last nerved herself to a conclusive interview with M. St. Hilaire. It was no more than fair that after so much shilly-shallying, she should explain at first hand her definitive refusal.

She was awaiting him now. Had everything gone smoothly, she could have shown him that her career was already booked for passage by a different route. Booked! But at this critical moment she had struck a snag in the shape of Mrs. Jerome's intimation that the shortest way with an awkward past was to "marry it down," so to speak. Had she been mistaken in Mrs. Jerome? Was the good lady so bravely taking a risk only with the quiet resolve to insure this risk at the earliest opportunity? Well, if she had to get married for her sins, one thing was certain. The St. Hilaire she did know was better than the St. Hilaire she didn't.

These reflections were brought to an abrupt close by the return of Cornelia.

"Monsieur St. Hilaire is below," she announced, stormily. "It seems to me that you owe an explanation to me as well as to him."

"If you don't mind," returned Janet in a voice that was strangely calm, "let me accept him first. I'll explain to you afterwards."

Cornelia stared at her. For some time she had believed that, despite the disturbing influence of Mrs. Jerome and Robert, there was a fairly good chance of putting the St. Hilaire marriage through. She had cherished this belief until today. Then she suddenly learned that Janet had all along been carrying on an intrigue with Mrs. R. H. L. Jerome, the upshot of which was that the benevolent Cornelia's plans were to be set wholly at naught. And as if this humiliation were not enough, Janet had entertained the disloyal scheme of deserting the Maison Paulette at barely a day's notice.

These distressing facts had transpired scarcely half an hour ago. And now Janet was again serenely proposing to marry M. St. Hilaire! She had been acting in this erratic fashion ever since Robert came on the scene. Had he had anything to do with this latest change of heart?

"I'll tell M. St. Hilaire to come up," she said tonelessly, paralyzed by the instability of her friend's decisions. "The coast is quite clear. Mazie is upstairs with Harry, and Robert has just gone to Fontainebleau for the day."

She omitted to say that she had packed him off on a factitious errand.

"Yes," she continued, her cadenced speech picking up as she went on. "I

told him to make the most of his glorious freedom. You know, he's as good as betrothed to Charlotte Beecher."

"How lucky for them both!" said Janet hypocritically.

Cornelia went out, having thus drawn the long bow at a venture. And not, she trusted, in vain.

VI

M. St. Hilaire came in. Janet had never been tempted to rave over him as Cornelia lately did. She thought him a little too short, but she admitted that his well-poised figure, ruddy complexion, and auburn beard were a delight to the eye. And she liked his courtly and somewhat superior demeanor.

Yet, at the first intimate touch of his hand, she recoiled almost with violence.

Her sudden start robbed him of every shred of confidence. And it astonished Janet herself. The fascination of Claude and the voltaic attraction of Robert had put these two, for her, in a class by themselves. But she had met men who were not half so agreeable to talk to or to look upon as M. St. Hilaire—men whose company was dull or whose personalities she disapproved of and yet whose caresses she would not have wished to repel.

It had been this way ever since their first meeting in Brussels. M. St. Hilaire had befriended her in a time of need, he possessed many mental and material advantages, he was the father of Henriette. But he lacked some one thing needful. When she dreamed her day dreams, she never pictured him; and when he touched her, she never thrilled.

True, in his absence, she thought of him (if she thought of him at all) as precisely the sort of man a girl ought to be able to love. But in his presence she was overwhelmed with the single conviction that to live with him would be more than she could bear. The conviction was absurd, unjust, incomprehensible; yet it was not to be gainsaid.

Sensing her thoughts, M. St. Hilaire was disheartened.

"I hoped I had made amends," he said, in sorrowful allusion to the cause of their rupture in Brussels. "But I see you've never forgiven me."

"Oh, no, no," she cried, with a pang of remorse. "I've forgotten all about that. Please believe me. It isn't that at all. It's—I don't quite know—something tells me that I simply can't live with you as your wife."

He rose, by main force suppressing caustic and resentful comments that leapt to the tip of his tongue. He had one more card to play.

"And you mean to—to go back on Henriette?" he asked, in measured tones. She came to his side and, affectionately taking his hand, began:

"I'm terribly fond of Henriette—"

The door flew open and in walked Robert! But stopped on the instant! He saw Janet caressing the arm of M. St. Hilaire, heard the tender words, and felt the whole universe reel.

In the flash of an eye, he pulled himself together.

"Pardon," he said between his teeth. And, turning sharply round, flung headlong out.

Janet gazed after him in stupefaction.

She never knew how she finished the interview with M. St. Hilaire, nor how, with a hardening of her voice, she made it clear to him that, in a straight conflict between Henriette's self-interest and her own, it was not the former that she was bound to consult.

M. St. Hilaire took his dismissal with a good deal of dignity and self-control, albeit Janet's display of firmness had excited a deeper emotion than any woman had ever aroused in him before. An unconsidered trifle, snatched away, may become the heart's desire. And Janet had ranked far higher than a trifle in M. St. Hilaire's European scale of values, at least since her departure from Brussels. Yet, throughout his courtship of this strange, incalculable American girl, he had never been quite free from an uneasy fear that the marriage might prove a social indiscretion. He now felt certain that his choice had been in keeping with the very best taste. And this certainty, while adding poignancy to his loss, afforded some consolation to his pride.

VII

As for Janet, she fairly bolted upstairs and threw a bombshell into the gymnasium by the summary announcement of her intention to leave for England with Mrs. Jerome next day. An unalterable intention. She was determined to establish her independence not by marriage but by hard work.

Mazie listened to her with very mixed feelings; Harry Kelly looked like one who heard the rumble of an approaching earthquake; Cornelia stood petrified.

She came to life again with a sinister, arpeggiative laugh.

"So you'll go trapesing to America on Robert's heels, after all?" she said. "To dish his whole career!"

"Cornelia, you're a devil!" cried Janet, incandescent with anger. "I'd like to know the reason, the real reason for your anxiety to get me married to M. St. Hilaire. Not to do me a good turn, that's one sure thing."

Mazie advanced between them.

"Say, Janet," she called out, pacifico-satirically, "even the devil sometimes does a pal a good turn—just for a change."

Cornelia extinguished her with a gesture.

"Why did you ever run away with Claude," she said, turning to Janet again, "if you were so gone on Robert?"

"How was I to tell the difference between an infatuation that was bound to perish and a love that had scarcely been born?" replied Janet, once more her cool, keen self. "How was I to tell, until I had tried them out?"

"Tried them out! Words fail to describe your morals, Janet. But go on your own way rejoicing, my dear. Hang yourself around Robert's neck, if you like. You'll make a charming picture there, I'm sure. Of course, clinging vines have gone out of fashion. But clinging leeches are always with us."

Janet went out ignoring these insults and mutely denying Harry Kelly's passionate appeal to her not to mind what Cornelia was saying in a vertigo of rage.

"For God's sake, Cornelia," said Harry, making a frantic demonstration, "don't let her leave us like that."

"Hold your tongue, you imbecile!" called out his wife, turning on him fiercely. "When I want to play the fool. I'll ask for your advice."

Her exit, a tempestuous one, left Mazie and Kelly alone and forlorn. Poor Harry Kelly collapsed in his swivel chair, while Mazie hovered around the desk like a gadfly.

"Unless you give her what for," she warned him, "*you'll* never travel on asphalt."

He looked up and feebly waved her away.

"What can I do?" he said plaintively. "Just jawing back won't help matters."

"No," said Mazie scornfully. "Jawing back won't. But how about knocking her down and jumping on her with both feet? Gee, if I had your strength for five minutes! I tell you what, my frazzled Gorilla, if you don't mop up the floor with her this very minute, she'll make a doormat of you for the rest of your life."

Her tone was slighting, and there was bark in the dose she administered. For a second, he straightened up. Then he shook his head at her, slumped again, and buckled down to the papers on the desk. Poor Harry! His muscle was willing, but his nerve was weak.

CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE

I

The blow which Robert got between the eyes when he saw Janet and St. Hilaire together had left him shunned. And he was on the train speeding to Fontainebleau before he began coming to, a painful process of returning sensibility, beside which the pins and needles of a limb that had been asleep would have seemed the merest child's play.

The wild nomadic images that chased one another across the field of his consciousness! They racked his brain, his world-reforming brain, and limited his feverish introspection to one discovery, the startling discovery of how very much he was in love.

Rather an awkward plight, he told himself, for a young man who had purposed the moral regeneration of mankind and in pursuit of this purpose had sworn to spurn fate, scorn death, and set his hopes above happiness and love. Especially love! Didn't all the Dick Dudgeons and Devil's Disciples begin by renouncing love? Indeed, didn't they make this renunciation a cardinal point of honor?

To think that even Cornelia had cautioned him against making an utter ass of himself about Janet! Cautioned him in vain. And Janet, too, had tried her hardest to warn him off by jibing at his poverty. This cruel kindness had almost worked; almost, but not quite. The poet, the lunatic, the lover—they were the embodiments of diseases (Shakespeare had said it!), diseases that resisted the most desperate remedies.

Of course she preferred St. Hilaire to himself. Why not? According to his own theories, he should be the first to dub her an imbecile if she didn't. When she needed sex to gratify desire, she had taken Claude by preference. Now that she needed a position, she would take St. Hilaire. And rightly so.

He had nothing to offer her but his brains.

Brains and no money! And that in the twentieth century, the triumphant mechanical century, in which any fool with a little low cunning and a good thick skin could make money by the bushel.

What on earth had possessed Mark Pryor to start him on this trail? Confound it! It had all grown out of a chance encounter with Pryor in Charlotte Beecher's studio one fatal afternoon. The fellow had taken him aside and poured out a harrowing story of Janet's miseries coupled with a picture of her dependence on Cornelia! But for that *rencontre*, he wouldn't have gone on this wild-goose chase from Geneva to Paris to rescue Janet from a gilded cage.

A gilded cage! No, by heaven! He might be living in a gilded cage himself (the gilt being drawn from Charlotte Beecher's gilt-edged securities), instead of in one-third of a model tenement flat in Kips Bay. To think that Pryor, the transcendently practical Pryor, should have been the instigator of this fatuous proceeding! Hang the fellow for his unwarranted meddling and plausible tongue!

He reached Fontainebleau in a drizzling rain and voted it a sleek and stupid place. In the chilly Hotel de Londres he had ample leisure to reflect on his folly. Sightseeing! His business in the world was to create new sights not to see old ones. A fat lot he cared for chateaux in which the greasy Bourbons had entertained their mistresses and in which streams of tourists would be sure to blink in awe at vulgarly showy decorations or childishly ornamented bric-a-brac, not to mention the celebrated, idiotic insipidities painted by Boucher and David.

Merely to read about these "sights" in the guidebook made him sick. Why hadn't he followed his own nose instead of letting Cornelia map, or rather, Baedeker, his course for him?

"What dire offence from trivial causes springs," he silently quoted. His present plight was the result of putting Cornelia into a bad temper at the breakfast table that morning. Afterwards, he had gone to pacify her, a feat he had so often accomplished before. So often, in fact, that it seemed to him rather a joke to watch Cornelia's stony heart melt into abject sentimentality. A double-edged joke, now he came to think it over, in his present plight.

Well, on this occasion she had *not* been as wax in his hands. Nor had she been sentimental. True, she had apparently let herself be mollified as of old. But he was so absorbed in Janet that he failed to be struck by her unusual manner. In retrospect it stood out. Cornelia had become playful: it was the playfulness of the panther.

She had begged him to go to Fontainebleau, pointing out that everybody went at least once in a lifetime, and that he could oblige her by doing his duty to himself and performing a service for her at one and the same time. The service (it would save Harry a journey!) was to give a commission for a special Paulette design to an artist who had an open-air studio in the famous Fontainebleau forest.

On his way from Paulette's to the Gare de Lyon he had wondered whether Janet wouldn't be mightily piqued by his unannounced absence of two days. Two days cut clean out of a visit that was not scheduled to be a long one! Well, if she was piqued, so much the better.

Yes, but mightn't she suppose him deeply wounded by her wantonly taunting shot at his impecunious, ineligible pretentions? Possibly. But, as a matter of fact, he had been deeply wounded. A taunt from her lips, at such a moment, and in such a style! It was horribly unlike the Janet he had known in Kips Bay. Had she really become calculating to her finger tips in accordance with the law of the

evolution of the Lorillardian female? Did her rapturous return of his kisses mean nothing to her?

Oh, well, after a tremendous love affair like hers with Claude, a young lady was probably as much thrilled by a kiss of rapture now and then, as by an extra slice of toast at breakfast.

So he had reasoned as he was about to jump on a bus running to the Lyon station. He had stopped and retraced his steps to the Maison Paulette, telling himself that as a sane and sensible citizen of the world it would be much better to bid her a brief good-bye.

Here in Fontainebleau his memory retraced these steps for the fiftieth time. Cornelia had been in the exhibition room, thank heaven. So he had hurried upstairs to the gymnasium, stopping to glance in at the private office on his way. That was how he had come to swing open the door and burst incontinently upon Janet and St. Hilaire.

Certainly, there was nothing like a smasher in the face for making you feel things you had been innocent of feeling before.

"Let the pain do the work!" said Robert, quoting to himself the oldest and most respected maxim known to the medical profession. Then he went to bed.

A sleepless night followed.

II

The weather next morning was brisk and clear. Under its inspiration Robert began to recover from the depression of the night before and, for a time at least, to drive away the misgivings that had tormented him. He yielded to the beauty of the forest of Fontainebleau, a fact which made the discharge of his mission for Cornelia much less tedious than he had dreaded.

During his return through wooded walks to the town, he so far regained his self-confidence that he was able to laugh at yesterday's morbid speculations and nightmarish fancies. What a bother he had made about a crisis that ought to have been foreseen, and a sequel that ought to have been taken for granted!

And, as a pure point of information, could he be absolutely sure that Janet really did mean to marry St. Hilaire?

This startling query, coming like a whisper from the void, crystallized a decision towards which he had unconsciously been groping. He would return posthaste to Paris and level the invisible wall that had sprung up between Janet

and himself. "An invisible wall!" To suppose that a figment like that could separate two people endowed with good will, quick wit, and flexible tongues, was to insult his intelligence.

Parks, palaces, gardens, and all the other sights of Fontainebleau could go hang!

He tingled with shame as he reflected that now, more than at any other moment since the dissolution of the firm of Barr and Lloyd, Janet might need the friendly counsel or the sympathetic ear that he had pressed upon her with unlimited enthusiasm in their Kips Bay workshop. Yet this was the moment he had chosen in which to act like the screen hero who advances his money or his time to the heroine in amounts arithmetically proportioned to the exact quantity of amorous response from the lady's side. True, this sordid barter was the popular American conception of the course of true love. But did he propose to fall in with this conception? Was he ready to prostitute his gifts to the worship of the great Atlantic bitch-goddess, *Success*?

If only he had been in a position to make Janet a tolerably acceptable offer of marriage!

Still, no need to blink the fact that he was now better circumstanced than at any time since leaving the *Evening Chronicle*. Hadn't the Confederated Press given him this assignment at Geneva, the most responsible assignment in its province? He flattered himself that he had reported the proceedings of the Labor Congress with a color, vividness, trenchancy, and fire none too common in American journalism. It ought to make people at home sit up and take notice; it might lead to a much more profitable commission. Look where Hutchins Burley's articles on the Colorado mine strike had carried him, chock-full of rhetorical clap-trap and maudlin pathos though the beggar's work had been!

A pity that the Confederated Press served chiefly radical newspapers with a limited circulation! It kept your tenure on quicksand. He might have to yield to temptation and falsify his better self by sinking into one of the fat jobs that the plutocratic press would now be sure to offer him.

For the sake of marrying Janet? No, no, it wouldn't do at all. Not even if she were insane enough to be willing to take the plunge. He pictured himself and her together in the marital state, saw the cramped Harlem flat in which they'd be boxed up. Both working of course! No conveniences, no facilities for either sociability or solitude, no children (on less than ten thousand a year birth control would be imperative), no health. And the economies they'd have to practice! They'd have to deny themselves freedom of movement, shun social and professional contacts, and take refuge in an isolation paralyzing to their talents.

Until death did them part—

Thousands of childless couples in every big city existed thus. And the lives

they led were hell.

In spite of which solemn conclusion Robert had no sooner reached his hotel than he prepared to desert the spacious freedom of Fontainebleau. And he actually took the first afternoon train back to Paris with the express purpose of seeking Janet out for a heart-to-heart talk.

The perfection of French "system," so extensively advertised on paper, is also realized on paper, and there only. This truth was once more brought home to Robert when, grimy with soot, he reached the capital long after his train was due. He decided to skip the supper at Paulette's, partly from a desire to avoid Cornelia, partly from a hope that he might find Janet alone after Harry Kelly and his wife had left, as they often did, for an evening's entertainment.

A bus to the American Express Company enabled him to get his mail just before the office closed. He kept the dozen-odd letters in his pocket, intending to read them whilst taking a snack in a quaint, spotless little dairy restaurant (the *a toute heure* shop, as he and Janet called it, in allusion to its boast of never closing) in the Boulevard Montmartre.

The waitress having taken his order, he rapidly sorted out his letters, seven or eight of which had official or commercial headings that at once betrayed the enclosures as mere announcements or bills. These he stuffed back unread into his pocket. Of the remaining few, the first one proved to be from the London agent of the Confederated Press. This was the man under whose orders he worked while in Europe. A grudging, carping cuss! Robert hoped that the fellow had at last seen the light (of Robert's merit), and that handsome amends were forthcoming.

The message ordered him home to New York at once!

So much for the recognition and advancement which his gorgeous accounts of the Labor Congress were to bring him. Had the ironical shafts, tipped with caustic wit and aimed at the rancor and obstructiveness of some of the labor leaders, given mortal offence to his own side?

With a horrible sense of the insecurity of life, and with a nameless dread more invasive and powerful than any he had ever known before, he reached the Maison Paulette about an hour later. He met one of the principal manikins at the door.

"Mademoiselle Janet? Hadn't he heard the tragic news? *C'est si triste*. The whole Maison was in mourning. Mademoiselle had departed that very noon with Mrs. R. H. L. Jerome, the great rich lady without a heart. *Ah, comme c'est triste!*"

III

The "Touraine" had been two days out from Havre in weather decidedly rough, before Robert got his sea-legs back again. Others on board were doubtless still deploring the pit of instability that lurks beneath the surface of things. But as a rule their reflections had an origin that was strictly physical. Robert, on his first brisk walk around the second-class deck, reasoned from premises of a very different nature.

For he had reached a point where he felt constrained to take a sort of inventory of himself, a mental stock-listing of his reverses, his prospects, and his altered outlook on affairs.

Not that his theories had changed in substance.

From first to last, his mind had been filled with a fierce impatience of the stupidity of man today and an unquenchable faith in a sanity to come. Evil; as he conceived it, was a by-product of human growth, and not, as Shelley conceived it, something imposed on man by a malignant external power on the fall of which the race would at once become perfect. In short, he believed that the incessant conflict of life was largely a struggle between high and low desires, with money and numbers on the side of Satan, and high-spirited intelligence on the side of the angels.

In America, to be sure, where achievements not open to a flat cash interpretation are passed by with a shrug or a vulgar joke, Robert's view of life had excited as much interest as a whisper in the wind. The few who gave his philosophy a brief attention had hastily dismissed it as a matter for milksops or imbeciles; on the fool who preached this philosophy they had bestowed a cynical pity, and on the failure who practised it, an amused contempt.

The failure who practised it! Robert knew that, judged by every standard save his own, he was a failure, a complete, incurable failure. He did not try to dodge this unanimous judgment. He despised it as much as he exulted in his own faith. To be exact, as much as he *had* exulted in his own faith.

For the blow that had knocked him galley-west in the office of the Maison Paulette had seriously shaken his self-confidence.

A review of his recent conduct led him straight to a very unpalatable verdict. He had behaved as stupidly towards Janet as any average man of stone-age instincts. Because she had made one risky experiment in the field of sex and had almost been tempted to make an even riskier experiment in the field of subsistence, he had displayed in turn his pique, jealousy, anger and scorn. The childish resentment that had mastered him! And this when he owed Janet unbounded gratitude for her wisdom in frightening him off from a suicidal offer of marriage. In his varied exhibition of neolithic folly, where was the high-spirited intelligence he boasted of possessing?

Look how Janet had stuck to *her* guns! As he might have foreseen (if he

hadn't been a perfect donkey!), she was going to make a glorious fight of it, on her own. She had given to Caesar the things that were Caesar's; and for the rest, she had kept her integrity intact.

Incidentally, there was a grain of comfort in the fact that she hadn't accepted M. St. Hilaire after all. A grain! Say rather, several tons.

Suspending this train of thought, Robert turned to his other great problem, his work in the labor movement. He asked himself whether he, like Janet, had kept *his* integrity intact. Two weeks ago he would have shouted out a triumphant yes. But now the thin edge of doubt had entered his soul. This incorruptible, critical gift—the gift above all others that he prized—was he justified in pushing its exercise to the furthest limit? He had always rejoiced in the uncompromising candor with which he had exposed and flayed the special weaknesses of the radical leaders, the general deficiencies of his own side. But when candor compelled you to smite people in the fifth rib in order to save their souls, weren't you carrying virtue a little too far?

Well, his employers on the Confederated Press thought so. And that they were not alone in their opinion was evident from his several failures. He counted them up: the *Evening Chronicle*, the Guild movement, the attempt to unionize the mercantile workers, the Labor Party publicity, and now this latest debacle. Not to mention his friendships!

He retained the hearty confidence of nobody.

Ought a successful honest man, then, to show as much discretion in the practice of candor as a successful knave shows in the practice of deceit? It would seem so. Plainly, he who would change the moral standards of his kind could not afford to be one thing to all men. Not a specialist or an extremist, in short.

How to be an aggressive revolutionist and at the same time a progressive evolutionist—this was the paradox that every effective radical had to embody in his own life.

It was clear that he would have to begin again at the bottom of the ladder.

This being so, the first thing to do was to ascertain his liabilities, material no less than spiritual.

Here Robert was reminded abruptly of the half dozen letters—bills, circulars, and the like, as he surmised—which he had rammed into his coat pocket at the *a toute heure* restaurant. The coat in question was in his stateroom and he would look for the letters when he went below.

Half an hour later he found them. One of the first envelopes bore the heading: Simons and Hunt, Attorneys-at-Law, 150 Broadway. It had two enclosures. The first one he opened read:

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My Dear Nephew:

About a year ago you wrote to me suggesting that I do something handsome by you. In your own delicate words you asked me to subsidize your imagination, a quality you believed of sufficient value to your fellow men to be worth preserving. As a proof that you possessed this quality, you provided me with an outline of your career in all its ups and downs, chiefly downs. You were also good enough to favor me with copies of your several articles on social and industrial reform.

As I am in receipt of some ten thousand requests for money every year, it is obviously impossible for me to comply with them all. And I am bound to say that I saw no reason for complying with your request, the more so in that its tone of mockery and sly derision led me to doubt whether it was made in entire good faith. The claim of kinship which you advanced (somewhat belatedly I thought) had little weight with me. You know what family ties are amongst the Lloyds! I was but a youngster of fourteen when my father and my elder brother (*your* father) ripped up my gilded dreams of a future as an artist and hashed my romantic plans by a single practical act. They pitched me out of the house into the street. There I remained to live on my own wits, and this fate I have had little occasion to complain of.

But to return to your letter. It did not win me to your way of thinking. Nor, to be candid, did your articles on "the collapse of modern society." I will admit that your attacks on land speculators (like myself) were witty, if not wise. And when you sailed into the monopoly on land values, you wrote with astonishing authority; indeed the only flaw I could find in your otherwise perfect qualifications for solving the economic problem of land was the trifling fact that you had never owned a foot of it.

This might have passed. Not so your observations on the distribution of the country's wealth and other related iniquities. Here you repeated the usual flub-dub with the usual fine flourish of the man who imagines he has made a startling discovery. Thus, you solemnly pointed out that there are only two kinds of people on earth: those who prey and those who are preyed upon. You announced that you had never seen the profiteer forsaken, nor the preying man begging his bread. And you informed the world that the [Transcriber's note: some text appears to be missing from the source book] intensified every year, the sheep being now more securely muzzled and more efficiently fleeced than ever before.

Now, my dear nephew, there is nothing new in your "discovery." Since the days of Plato all prudent men have been of one opinion respecting the class war, but no prudent man has ever admitted it. Conscious of this, I was unmoved by your ringing call to the sheep that they had nothing to lose but their muzzles; and your desire to see them organize for the purpose of destroying the wolves by mass action, left me cold. A world of sheep—and nothing but sheep—would not be to my taste. For the wolves, whatever else we may say of them, at least vary

the drab monotony here below. Besides, I suspect that your indignation in the matter of the muzzles is largely shandygaff. It is not necessary to muzzle sheep!

In fine, your credentials did not greatly impress me. Your writings, it is true, were clever, witty, imaginative.

But what is imagination without matter or money to work upon? Like a spark without tinder on a wet day in the woods. At all events, I could scarcely overlook the fact that, whereas *I* had made a fortune by my real estate speculation, *you* were unable to make so much as a bare living by your real estate denunciation.

Have patience a little longer with the garrulity of a dying man. A few weeks ago, I was taken ill with a fatal dilatation of the aorta, and the end may come in a day, a month, a year. What to do with my investments became an immediately pressing problem. The charities I had named in my last will were administered, as I well knew, by a host of charity-mongers even more distasteful to me than kith and kin.

In this painful dilemma I read your letter again, thinking that my reaction to it, a year ago, had been hasty or unfair. Perhaps the wish was father to the thought; perhaps my infirmity has softened my brain. Whatever the cause, one passage in your letter struck me. My eyes were opened and I saw, or believed I saw, that you were a chosen vessel to bear my name and fortune before the American people. Accordingly I revoked all charitable bequests and appointed you as my principal heir and assign.

The passage that took my fancy was the one in which you declared that it is nobler to spend a fortune than to make one. Unhappily, I have never been able to practice this sentiment in full. Not that I have failed to try. I have spent millions in my time. Indeed I feel justified in saying that I have been a constant and deliberate spendthrift in the most literal sense of the word. But, like you, I have an imagination (although, unlike you, I have always prudently given my imagination the wherewithal to work upon). Thus, in the teeth of a free and incessant expenditure, my mind has always produced far more than my body could possibly consume or my hands give away. And so I come at last to the most tragic moment in a rich man's life: that in which he arranges for others to spend what he himself has earned.

But spent it must be. And when I consider your Lloyd heredity, your child-like ignorance of the ease with which money is made, and your crushing innocence of the difficulty with which it is spent, I feel I can hardly put my future in better hands than yours. God bless you, my dear nephew, and may your efforts at noble disbursement be attended by success.

Your affectionate uncle, Allan D. Lloyd.

Robert's feelings beggared expression.

Half dazed, he took out the second enclosure, a brief communication from Messrs. Simons and Hunt, his uncle's attorneys. This notified him of Mr. Lloyd's death, and confirmed the fact of his designation as the residuary legatee. After putting an estimate of two million dollars on the minimum value of the estate, Messrs. Simons and Hunt placed their services at the disposal of the heir and announced their readiness to receive his instructions.

Followed a blank in Robert's consciousness. Slowly, very slowly, this was replaced by the sound of the steamer throbbing its way across the Atlantic.

IV

The day after landing, Robert paid Messrs. Simons and Hunt a visit, with the result that, on leaving their offices in lower Broadway, he was a little less haunted by the suspicion that the reality was a dream. A most reassuring item was tucked away in his pocket in the shape of an advance of cold cash amounting to two thousand dollars, a sum far larger than any he had ever been in possession of before.

On the theory that excess of joy, like excess of sorrow, had better be skimmed off by a long, brisk walk, Robert trusted to his two legs to get him back to Kips Bay. He had planned no change in his habits as yet; hence he still shared part of a model flat with the sporting editor of one of the evening newspapers.

He had just turned from the open court of the Lorillard tenement block into the rather dark entrance, when what appeared to be a shadow on the wall assumed solidity and life, stepped alertly forward, and tapped him on the shoulder.

"The one man in New York I particularly want to see," cried Mark Pryor, in his cool, staccato tones.

"The one man in New York I particularly want to avoid," retorted Robert, not ill-naturedly, but with a lively remembrance of Pryor as the engineer of his Parisian misadventures. "How in thunder did you know I was back?"

"I didn't. Luck simply drifted my way."

His cordial handshake accelerated Robert's returning sense of the reality of earthly affairs. Pryor might be slim and wiry enough to slip in or out of the most impossible places. He might be as elusive as a ghost. But there was nothing weak or spirituelle about his grasp of one's hand or his grip on life. As for his

voice, which had a ring of decency and good intent always attractive to Robert, it dispelled fanciful grudges and installed common sense.

They went to lunch together in a favorite restaurant of Pryor's, a little Austrian place in one of the side streets east of the Pershing Square district.

"A fine scrape you got me into with your tip about Paris!" began Robert, as soon as they were served.

"I've never seen you in better spirits," returned Pryor, cool as a cucumber. "Are you engaged to marry Janet?"

Robert stared at him.

"No," he said emphatically.

"Then you're not the man I took you for."

"I'm not," said Robert, chuckling.

So Pryor knew nothing of the inheritance! And if Pryor knew nothing, who would know? He had rather supposed that the news would create something of a stir. The Lorillard tenements and Kips Bay generally should, in all conscience, have been agog with it. But so far not a word had been said by anybody he had met.

Clearly, it took a good deal to ripple the pachydermatous surface of this monster city of New York!

Well, he would volunteer nothing. It was just as well to keep one or two cards up your sleeve, especially when you matched your wits against a clever man like Pryor.

Meanwhile Pryor did the talking. Did Robert mean to sit there and tell him that he had missed the opportunity of a lifetime? He'd be blessed if he ever threw him a chance like that again.

"A chance!" interrupted Robert. "Are you sure it wasn't a noose?"

"Don't talk through your hat, Lloyd," said Pryor, affecting indignation. "Janet's a girl in a million. Whoever marries her is a made man."

"You are a cool hand," said Robert, lost in admiration. "I don't know what in thunder your game is. Let me say this, though. As a man of mystery you may be as superb a demon as Mark Twain's *Mysterious Stranger*. But as a matchmaker you're a hopeless old blunderbuss."

He briefly outlined his recent experiences in Paris, including the tableau of himself in the act of stumbling upon Janet and M. St. Hilaire; he also sketched the sequel to this climax.

Pryor's restless eyes remained singularly still during this recital. At its close, he offered one enigmatic remark:

"If Janet's coming to New York, we may yet be able to pull the chestnuts out of the fire."

In response to further questions, Robert gave a few intimate word pictures

of unpublishable incidents at the Geneva Labor Congress. He also touched rather pepperily on his recall by the Confederated Press.

"Serve you right," said Pryor. "To a plain man like me reformers who try to change moral standards, whether for better or for worse, are a nuisance. Too many obstacles cannot be put in their path."

"All I did was to tell the truth about my own side," said Robert indignantly.

"What! Peach on your own side? Why, even the yeggmen consider that bad form."

Robert smiled in spite of himself.

"Nonsense," he said. "Facts are facts. The truth is, Americans habitually act like feeble-minded weaklings in the way they receive criticism. And we radicals share the national infirmity. Let the least suggestion of disapproval be levelled at *Columbia, the gem of the ocean*, and all America foams at the mouth. This is a joke to foreigners; it's a tragedy to us. I tell you, Pryor, unless Americans learn to stand up to criticism like men and to tolerate dissent as the English, the Germans, and even the French do, they'll stand where they are—at the tail end of the procession of nations. Don't you agree with me?"

"Lord, yes! Have it your own way. Pull your fellow radicals to pieces if necessary. Treat 'em rough. But don't slaughter 'em. Remember they're the only leaven in the slimy dough."

"For an avowed conservative, Pryor, that's going pretty far."

"Oh, I'll go farther than that. I'll say that if the Confederated Press were to come to grief—which Heaven forbid!—I should have no means of getting at the real news of the world. None whatever. Unless I could sneak into some private whispering gallery in Washington, D.C., or in Wall Street, N.Y."

"You perverse standpatter, what do you mean by sticking up for *my* side? It looks fishy to me. What's your little game now, I wonder?"

"Lloyd, the time has come to give you a straight answer to that question. I'm an agent of the Secret Service; at present, I'm detailed to help the Department of Justice."

"The deuce you are!"

"My game has been to watch the most dangerous radicals in New York—some five hundred of them—whose names are listed in the department's books. You are one of the five hundred."

"Really! I hope I've been a source of ample diversion? As a friend, I'm always glad to oblige."

"*Dienst ist dienst*, as the Germans say. While on duty, I had no friends; I merely had five hundred suspects to keep track of. In point of fact, my men have been through your effects several times. We found nothing treasonable, nothing seditious, nothing compromising, except a copy of the Declaration of

Independence with the first eight lines underscored. I tried to have your name removed from the black list. But the damaging evidence aforesaid was the ground on which my recommendation was ignored."

"Is this a joke?"

"No, it's the gospel truth. But you needn't feel as though you had been singled out for persecution. Not at all. I'm a marked man as much as you. If the Intelligence Service of the Government detects an atom of intelligence in one of its agents, it makes it a special point always to ignore that agent's recommendations. Never mind. I wrote out my resignation this morning. Here it is. It goes to Washington at once."

"Surely, Pryor, you have other reasons for resigning the job?"

"Ah, now you're coming to it. For weeks past, I've been saturating my mind with radical literature. Tons of it. From professional motives solely, of course. After a studious and impartial consideration of facts and principles, I've come to a very curious pass."

"You don't mean to say that you've been converted!" said Robert, rising excitedly from his chair.

"Yes, I've been converted. Not to radicalism, mind. Personally, I'm a firm believer in the aristocratic state as championed by Plato, Ruskin, and Carlyle, the state in which the Government is carried on by those whose equipment best fits them to govern. We'll reach this state—in about a thousand years. Meanwhile, I've been converted not to radicalism, but to the view that the radicals are right in theory and the Government wrong in practice; the former right in demanding a complete restoration of civil liberty and an enormous grant of industrial liberty, the latter wrong in thwarting these demands."

After a few moments spent in digesting Pryor's astonishing admissions, Robert said:

"One good surprise deserves another."

"Fire away."

"I've just inherited two million dollars!"

Pryor was stupefied.

"Where the blue blazes did you get it from?" he cried, his long neck rising telescopically out of his stand-up collar.

"That's one piece of information that hasn't drifted your way, at all events," said Robert, taking a malicious pleasure in Pryor's stupefaction.

A marked pause followed. Then Pryor, having congratulated Robert, said abruptly:

"As far as I can see, nothing now stands in the way of your marriage to Charlotte Beecher."

"What do you mean?"

Searching glances were exchanged. Each recognized in the other a man of rare talent and unusual probity, and trusted him accordingly. Pryor took the plunge.

He remarked quietly that, during Robert's absence abroad, he and Charlotte had become very good friends. He was well aware of her intense attachment to Robert. She had, in fact, talked about it freely and frankly to him. Thus he knew that she had taken the initiative in proposing marriage to Robert, a very natural step, inasmuch as she was in the vastly superior position. He knew, however that Robert had refused on the ground of the extreme inequality of their circumstances.

With the best will in the world, Robert found it difficult to reply. Habit and custom were strong against a ventilation of his refusal and of the real reasons underlying it.

"The truth is," he said, after a second's hesitation, "Charlotte and I would be very poor partners on a long dull grind, and this is what modern marriage has become. We're excellent friends. We put a fine edge on each other's faculties. When we meet, the blue sparks fly. In fact, they fly too much."

"Say what you like, she could at least take you to art galleries and concerts, and count on you as a sympathetic companion. That's where I failed her. I'm such a duffer in matters of art. And as for music! Lord, I hardly know the difference between Beethoven and a beet."

"Don't let that worry you. For all that Charlotte and I pull so well together, our points of agreement are mostly on the surface. True, we both get recreation from looking at pictures or sculpture and listening to music. But not from the same pictures or sculpture, nor from the same music. She's all for chastity and restraint in art—Hellenism or aristocracy, you'd call it. She resents Strauss's volcanic turbulence; Epstein's rough-hewn symbolism merely disgusts her; the brutal abandon of Augustus John drives her mad. Yet I swear by these artists as she swears by the Donatellos, Brahmses, and Raphaels whose exhibitions of technical mastery bore me to extinction. We really have nothing in common except our recognition of honest craftsmanship and our joy in the clash of temperaments, instincts and opinions."

"These differences that you speak of: how do you know that they matter?"

"Because they go so deep. Her hopes are not my hopes, her dreams are not my dreams, her gods are not my gods. These things are of the essence of comradeship, and comradeship is the soul of love."

"Well, I'm as much in love with Charlotte as any normally sane man can be in love," said Pryor, quizzically. "But on the points you mention, *I* don't hit it off with her, either. Her Brahms and your Strauss are equally Greek to me, and I'd give up their collective compositions in a jiffy for half an hour of the "Mikado"

or the "Gondoliers."

He supposed he'd have to work backwards and find out what the essence of comradeship consisted in. He sincerely trusted that it was not bound up, in his case, with Charlotte's money. As it was, she was terribly suspicious on that score. She was quite unshakable in the conviction that Robert was the only man she had ever known who was not a fortune hunter.

"You see the devilish harm you've done," said Pryor, in conclusion, "with your reputation for disinterestedness."

"Quite an undeserved one, too," replied Robert, smiling. "Like most reputations it was founded on my deficiencies and not on my accomplishments. If I had known as much about money two years ago as I do now, Charlotte might have a very different opinion of my disinterested motives, as well as of me."

He assured Pryor that he would do his level best to free Charlotte from her delusion. In return, Pryor was to keep secret the fact of Robert's accession to a fortune.

"I'd like to enjoy the luxury of being a poor man with plenty of money in my pocket," he said.

Nobody was to be told and, in particular, the news was to be kept from Janet. He didn't expect to indulge this rather childish whim for more than a few days. All New York would be talking about his good luck by that time, no doubt.

"My dear fellow! A paltry two millions?" said Pryor with a short laugh. "A mere pebble on the beach. Why, the reigning plutocrats here hand out millions to charity as I'd give pennies to a beggar."

They settled their bill.

On their way out, Robert said:

"Now tell me how you caught that blackguard Burley smuggling diamonds for the Fontaines."

"Who told you I caught them? In the strict etiquette of the Secret Service, the names of the agents in specific cases are never made public."

"Oh, the information just drifted my way," said Robert, bantering him. "Even without it, though, I should have put two and two together. Nobody admires the richness and variety of your knowledge more than I do, Pryor. Yet I'm bound to say that your disguises seem puerile to me. Among the Outlaws, although we didn't guess the Secret Service, we spotted you as a Pinkerton, or something of that sort, almost from the first."

"Precisely what I wanted you to do, my friend. My game was to spread the truth broadcast. People simply will not believe the truth. Ask any detective worth his salt and he'll tell you that being himself is the best of all possible disguises, one that saves no end of trouble in 'make-up' and character acting. It causes every suspect to feel that he and the sleuth are in each other's confidence, as it

were. And this puts people so much at their ease that they positively can't help giving themselves away."

"So that's how you double crossed Hutchins Burley?"

"It's a long, amusing story, Lloyd. I'll keep the details for another day. The poor wretch is doing five years in a Federal prison. Mr. Rene Fontaine, for whom he was a mere tool, paid a fine of three million dollars (not your beggarly two million!) without turning a hair, and then decamped to England, where he lives in a regal villa somewhere in Essex.—Lord, it's nearly three! I must make a move. Where are you bound for?"

"Home, now. California, the day after tomorrow."

"California!"

Robert explained that all his uncle's realty holdings were on the Pacific Coast. His mother, too, was there. What with one thing and another, his presence out West was imperative.

"I shall return in two months for a quest of quite another sort," he added, significantly.

"Walk a few blocks towards the Subway with me," said Pryor, "and I'll show you one of the high lights of our low life."

As they drew near the Grand Central Palace, the streets grew thick with people. Traffic along Lexington Avenue was suspended and a cordon of New York's "finest" was drawn up in front of the Palace, with night sticks polished to a turn.

Robert and Mark Pryor had just reached the outskirts of the crowd, when several imposing motor cars drew up in front of the exhibition building.

"What on earth's the matter now?" said Robert. "Has our Anglo-American Prince of Wales returned?"

A very handsome young man with two richly dressed young ladies alighted from the first car, whilst the moving picture brigade went into immediate action and the crowds thundered out cheers.

"It's the first day of the great Allied Armies' Bazaar," said Pryor. "The Duchess of Keswick and Mr. and Mrs. Claude Fontaine are to open the affair at three o'clock. There they go now."

"What a match for him!" murmured Robert, setting eyes for the first time on Marjorie Armstrong's proud beauty.

"More than a match," said Pryor, softly.

CHAPTER THIRTY

I

"You don't love me, Robert!"

"It's false," he said, retreating. "I do love you. I've loved you madly ever since you fled to Paris."

"Then why do you run away? I don't want you to marry me. You're too poor! But you might at least kiss me. Come back, Robert, please come back!"

Following him, she put her arms around his neck and clasped him tight.

"Let me go, Janet. I won't marry you. I won't! I'll never, *never*, *NEVER* marry a woman who has had a free lover!"

Still he receded, and ever so gently tried to unclasp her hands.

"You needn't marry me, Robert. Only treat me just as you'd treat a man. Don't you remember that you promised you would? You promised on the pier in Kips Bay, when your heart was a free and a fetterless thing."

She concentrated all her magic upon him, upon his pale thoughtful face and discerning hazel-brown eyes. But look! The eyes were not hazel-brown—they were a flashing blue! And these were not the mobile sensitive features of Robert, but the bold virile features (somewhat distorted by angry passion) of Claude.

"What!" he cried. "Marry you here—here in Brussels—after all I've suffered on your account? Serpent! Shall I never escape your sting?"

Hovering somewhere in the background, a thin-edged female with horn-rimmed spectacles took a malignant joy in fanning the flames of his rage.

Claude wrenched both her hands loose and flung them off, the violence of the action sending her prone to the floor.

II

Janet sat up in bed and shook back the tangles of her nut-brown hair.

What a horrible nightmare!

All on account of the rumpus started last night by the thin-edged female with the horn-rimmed spectacles.

Not in Brussels, but in New York. Not in the Grand Hotel, Boulevard Anspach, but in the Susan B. Anthony House, Park Avenue, Mrs. R. H. L. Jerome's

new apartment house for self-supporting professional women with children.

Well, this particular rumpus had been settled, and the attack of officious Pharisaism upon Janet's reputation had received a black eye. Janet wondered whether the blow was to be recorded as a knockout or merely as the end of the first round.

Time would show. Meanwhile, she dressed and breakfasted; then, with all the gravity of her twenty-seven years, she began to discharge the responsible duties of manager of the House.

But the memory of the nightmare would not down. Not even the excitement she still felt in making the rounds of her three departments sufficed to dispel it. In the children's section, she applauded the new floor games which the kindergarten had invented for her wards; she became a ready listener to the woes of the matron in charge of the household division; on her way through the cuisine, she devoted her faculties to the task of adjudicating the claims of the cook against the dietitian in command. And she sought distraction in the stupendous thought that these three great departments of the Susan B. Anthony House were coordinated in the person of Miss J. Barr, the business manager and personal representative of Mrs. R. H. L. Jerome.

Yet, although these occupations drove away the haunting nightmare for minutes at a time, they were impotent to banish it permanently.

The chief trouble was, of course, that her nerves were still shaken by the emotional explosion in which the whole House had been involved the day before. The explosion was the cause of the nightmare. And the nightmare itself, its several metamorphoses and all, had marched in such a logical, well arranged order, that she was greatly tempted to tell it to Lydia Dyson, the novelist, who was a crank on the subject of Freud and dreams.

Lydia, to be sure, would pronounce it a contemptible dream, lamentably short of knives, pitchforks, corks, bottles and other shining symbolic materials. Contemptible or not, she would none the less insist that it must be submitted to a psychoanalyst.

Yes, Lydia Dyson would torment her to be psychoanalyzed. With a smile she recalled the novelist's visit to the Susan B. Anthony House a week ago. Lydia, in search of material for her new novel, *The Soul Pirates* (expression derived from Cornelia Covert), had set the members of the house to narrating their worst dreams. Then she had beguiled more than half of them into having themselves psychoanalyzed by Aristide Cambeau, an amazingly brilliant speaker whose lectures (at the Ritz—five dollars a ticket!) were the latest social rage, and whose clinic was daily besieged by a long queue of fashionable ladies impatient to have their souls laid bare.

Janet believed she could interpret her dream fully as well as the fascinating

Mr. Cambeau.

Her attempt to do so led her to a review of her own recent history.

Seven weeks ago she had returned with Mrs. R. H. L. Jerome to the United States. Mrs. Jerome had resumed training her as soon as the Statue of Liberty was sighted. Thus, the good lady reminded her that they had come from England (where plenty of explosive insurrectionary material was lying around) to their own land with its "tendency to normalcy" as a noted politician expressed it. That is, they had come back to the America of the women's vote, the high cost of living, the housing shortage, the unemployment menace, the deportation of radicals and Japanese, the reception of hoards of unhealthy South-European immigrants, the ouija board, the stock market slump and jazz. The same old America! It was reading "Main Street" just then; and Mrs. Jerome opined that all America was reading the book, *not* because it gave a memorable picture of the soul of a nation in all its drab, desolating mediocrity, but because it gratified the furious national craving to be paid attention to and talked about, it mattered nothing whether in terms of praise, disparagement or abuse.

Mrs. Jerome's gloomy view rolled off Janet like water off a duck's back. She had youth, enthusiasm, vigor; there was a great civilizing work to be done. And though, as Mark Pryor took pains to assure her, it might take a thousand years to do it, she threw herself into it heart and soul, just as if the goal were attainable next year.

Two weeks after their arrival in New York, the Susan B. Anthony House had been opened, undemonstratively but successfully. Mrs. R. H. L. Jerome, an omnipresent deity at first, relinquished the reins of government gradually; all the reins save one, for it was well understood that she was to be the power behind the scenes. Within a week, every suite in the house was occupied and hundreds of applicants were turned away. The rents, though far from low, were not unreasonable; and, as special provision had been made for the care of children, and competent experts placed in control of each department ("quality not quantity" was the specific motto throughout), the house was a godsend for precisely the ones it was designed to serve, that is, for self-supporting professional women with one or two children.

For a time, things had gone swimmingly. Almost too swimmingly. As the news spread, social workers and social science students began to pay the place a visit. Before long the unofficial busybodies followed and, with the kindest intentions in the world, did their level best to disorganize the machinery of the house and subvert the discipline.

And the reporters took up the scent! All the magazine sections of the Sunday newspapers had articles describing Mrs. Jerome's "latest hobby." Interviews with Mrs. Jerome—some real, some alleged—appeared in increasing numbers

and with increasingly pungent specimens of this lady's sprightly wit. Writers of special features in the evening sheets praised or deplored the "communal up-bringing" of the children. The photogravure supplements took up the sport and favored their readers with pictures of every conceivable corner of the house, and also with tableaux in which the children, looking remarkably happy and well dressed, were grouped about three adults (from left to right): the Duchess of Keswick, Mrs. R. H. L. Jerome and Miss J. Barr.

Finally, the Infamous Players-Smartcraft Company offered a fabulous sum for the use of the Susan B. Anthony House as the scene of an "action" (with adagio "close-ups"), which it insisted on calling (doubtless in irony) a "moving" picture.

But the marvel of marvels was that, throughout this period of unbought, unsought advertising, nobody breathed the suspicion that Miss J. Barr, the calm, collected young manageress in the neat blouse and trim skirt, might be the notorious Janet Barr who had eloped two years before with Claude Fontaine!

Then, one fine day, as she was leaving the Broadway side of Wanamaker's, a man had leapt out of a magnificent limousine drawn up at the curb, and had seized her hands.

It was Claude himself! Handsome and imposing as ever, with perhaps a dash less of self-confidence.

He had implored her for a meeting later in the day. No, no, he wouldn't make love to her, he solemnly swore he wouldn't! He wanted to get a load off his conscience. His wife? Oh, he got along well enough with Marjorie, only—Well, surely Janet knew *why* he had married her? There had simply been no alternative! If Colonel Armstrong hadn't stood back of Fontaine and Company at the time of the smuggling exposure, the firm would have gone to smash. And so on—

Janet peremptorily refused to meet him. There was no sense in a meeting, she urged. He was importunate. "What about my House?" said she. "What about my state of mind?" said he. She had tried hard to be firm.

"Come not between the lion and his wrath or the tigress and her work," she said, torn this way and that between the comedy and the tragedy of the situation.

To get rid of him, she had at length made an appointment for the afternoon. The appointment was never kept!

The sequel proved that her encounter with Claude had been observed. That night the bloodhounds of scandal were unleashed in the Susan Anthony House. The ring-leader was the thin-edged woman with the horn-rimmed spectacles.

This precious female was the mother of a whining little boy whose father was authenticated by due process of law. The law had not sufficed, however, to keep the gentleman faithful for long to the nuptial vows. After his disappearance from New York, his wife was left to support herself and to wreak vengeance

where vengeance was not due.

The first that Janet knew about the coming storm was when the dietitian took her aside and told her that the house had been divided into two camps: for and against Janet; or, as the anti-Janet crowd put it: for and against Morality.

Two days before the nightmare, things had come to a head. In the absence of the manager, the anti-Janet faction had assembled under the chairmanship of the thin-edged agitator.

This lady had opened the meeting with the bitter announcement that those present were liberal and fairminded, but that they had their children to think of. Their darling children! Mothers, *married* mothers, mind you (and she, for her part, had consented to join the Susan B. Anthony House *only* on the confident assumption that *all* the mothers were as *regularly* married as herself)—mothers, as such, could afford to take no chances! Unhappily, she was persuaded that in the other camp there were ladies who had more than *one good reason* for standing by the manager. She surmised that some of these ladies were *unmarried mothers!* Scarcely mothers at all (if morals counted for anything), and certainly no better than they should be.

After much nursing of self-righteousness, suitable resolutions were moved, and a deputation was appointed to present the facts to Mrs. R. H. L. Jerome; also to demand the discharge of Janet and the vindication of American morality.

The great impeachment had occurred last night. Mrs. Jerome had motored into town, and both factions had turned out for the occasion in the large reception room on the ground floor. Mrs. Jerome had refused to start the proceedings until Janet was seated at her right hand. This settled, the thin-edged spokesman had made the formal charges.

Then the fun had begun—

At this point, a telephone bell jangled across Janet's reflections.

"Who is it?" she asked the switchboard girl.

"Mr. Pryor."

"Let him come up," said Janet eagerly.

III

As usual, Mark Pryor's spare form was dressed from head to foot in materials of one color. But even Janet noticed that, for once, the inevitable stand-up collar, with its two prongs tilting its wearer's chin upwards, had been replaced by a

low-lying collar of creamiest silk.

"Circles under the eyes!" he began severely. "What's wrong?"

"Nightmares, witches, broomsticks," she replied laughing.

"Out with it!" he commanded.

In her calm, clear tones she gave him a graphic account of the unpleasantness of the last few days, from its inception in her chance encounter with Claude Fontaine down to the demand made upon Mrs. Jerome for her dismissal.

"And how did little Apple Dumpling meet this demand?" inquired Pryor.

"Like a trump! Said she'd stand by me to the limit—also that the Susan B. Anthony House, being designed for busy people and not for busy*bodies*, Mrs. Farrar (the one with the horn-rimmed spectacles) would have to vacate at the end of the week. Further that, in the future, it is to be a fixed rule of the house that any mother, married or unmarried, may become a tenant, and no questions asked other than those needed to satisfy Mrs. Jerome or her representative that the applicant is both self-supporting and self-respecting—"

"Bravo!"

"And, furthermore, she then and there dictated a letter to be sent to the liberal weeklies in New York, informing their readers of the adoption of this new rule."

"Hurrah!" cried Pryor. "The next time anybody queries, in the words of the immortal William:

"What king so strong
Can tie the gall up in the slanderous tongue?"

I'll answer: No king; but let me tip you the name of a *queen*—Mrs. R. H. L. Jerome, the magnificent. *She* can turn the trick."

"Yes, she's a perfect darling. Do you know, I didn't mind the backbiting of those silly women a bit. But Mrs. Jerome's unhesitating support made me want to cry."

She added that in a private conversation with the dear lady she had urged her own resignation as a matter of practical wisdom. Wasn't the cause greater than the individual?—"Rubbish!" Mrs. Jerome had replied with a considerable show of heat. No cause was worth the cowardly abandonment of a comrade! For two thousand years men had prated of the holy duties of friend to friend, and had committed one crime against friendship after another. And when these crimes were committed, what did they do? They folded their hands, raised pious eyes to heaven, and sang (through their noses), "Alas for the rarity of Christian charity!" etc. Well, women would show them that the time to be loyal was not when the pack curried favor with your friend but when it turned to rend him.

"What do you mean to do now?" asked Pryor.

"I shall stick it out. After all, I'm not looking for social or official favors. All I ask is to be allowed to do the best work of which I'm capable. Surely, I have that right."

"So you think," said Pryor drily. "But bear in mind that for every *bona fide* worker in New York, there are nine idlers or time wasters, nine breeders of noise, disorder and disease. And don't forget that the chief objection to the idler is not that he neglects his own work, but that he insists on interrupting or damaging yours. The doer is the waster's sworn enemy to all eternity. And the waster knows it! Therefore, he spies out your vulnerable spot: social, economic, psychic, whatever it be; and the first moment he catches you off guard, he sends his poisoned arrow straight to your Achilles' heel."

"I suppose I must take my chance of that. What else can I do?"

"You might imitate me."

"Imitate you! What do you mean?"

"Why, get married! I'm going to marry Charlotte Beecher."

"But I thought that Charlotte—"

"Yes, she's very fond of Robert Lloyd. And I'm only her second string. But bless your wayward curls, we're all second strings on somebody's violin! What's the odds—especially after the first string has snapped? I've been madly in love myself, twice before. Once, down south in Colon, with a dusky Isthmian beauty. The second time, with you."

"Don't be silly, Mark, or I shall stop envying Charlotte her extraordinary good luck."

"Hers *and* mine! Charlotte was looking for a husband with enough brains to manage a fortune, and yet with heart enough not to love her for her fortune alone. I was looking for a wife with heart enough to lay her fortune at my feet, and yet with enough brains to permit me to enjoy her society. Are we well matched or not?"

"Let me not to the marriage of true minds admit impediment," quoted Janet, laughing.

"Now you're talking sense as well as poetry, dear girl."

"I didn't say I'd follow your example, though."

"All in good time! It's human nature for young blood to rebel against wedlock—and to come around to it in the long run. Marriage, as Lydia Dyson says, is the easiest way!"

"Yes, for Lydia, who changes her lover once a season, while her husband stays at home and keeps the household in smooth running order. But my needs don't run in Lydia's line."

Pryor admitted this. But he pointed out that marriage was a human insti-

tution. There it was, for every one of us to reckon with. Either you made use of it, or it made use of you. Sensible people adopted the former alternative.

"Why, look at me!" he said, waxing strangely eloquent. "I've knocked about the world a good bit in the last twenty years. A born adventurer if ever there was one. Do you see me settling down to matrimony like any spirit-broken married man in the pinchbeck salaried class? No, by Jupiter! I've waited for the right conditions to come to pass so that I could take up marriage as one more great adventure."

"Your last one, Mark!" said Janet, bantering him.

More seriously, she asked him whether all his other adventures had been in the Secret Service.

"Lord no! I've taken a shot at all sorts of jobs and been all sorts of things from a West Point cadet to a buccaneer in the South Seas."

This quiet, self-contained man, spare of frame but tough as a hickory stick, had he really been a gorgeous sea-rover? Looking into his humorously inquisitive gray eyes, Janet could not doubt his words. And, like Desdemona entranced by Othello, she listened whilst he dipped into a store of reminiscences and, in his own inimitably laconic style, gave her an outline of his picturesque career.

Pryor as a West Point cadet, as a lieutenant in the Engineer Corps, in service against the Moros in the Philippines, on the sanitary staff in the thick of the Panama Canal construction, again as a civilian on a dare-devil voyage to Tahiti—these pictures took the romantic side of Janet by storm. She made him tell the Tahitian story most minutely, and hung on his lips with bated breath as he recounted the capture of his tiny steamer by real pirates who gave him a Hobson's choice of joining them in their marauding trips near the Society Islands, or of walking the plank.

"But I never gave full satisfaction anywhere," he concluded ruefully. "Secrets that I had better not have known were incessantly coming my way and causing me no end of trouble. Once, when we unexpectedly sighted a Dutch merchantman laden with coffee and spices, I ran up the red flag instead of the black! My shipmates swore that I did it on purpose and assured me that, as a pirate, I was a failure. It was true. I *was* a failure! Almost a dead failure, in fact, for they left me on what they thought was a desert island."

When he got back to the United States, the Great War had begun, but the officials in Washington were extremely slow to utilize his services. His record was against him. He was one of those men with whom two and two didn't inevitably make four, but sometimes footed up to a sum that included human as well as mathematical factors. For an army man, this was a fatal defect.

Impatient to be of use, he eventually joined the Secret Service.

"Why?" asked Janet.

"Nothing else was open to me," he replied, with a twinkle in his roving eyes. "When a man is a pronounced failure, there are only three professions that will take him into their ranks: those of detective, writer and teacher. I chose the first as the least degrading of the three. Also because it gave me a chance to use my gift as a telepath, an elemental telepath."

"You can't pretend that you haven't made good at *that*!"

"Oh, I've done so-so."

"So-so!" cried Janet indignantly. "Look how you caught Hutchins Burley red-handed!"

"True enough. I'm bound to confess, however, that I went to the pier to arrest him for treason. When his boxes of Oriental books were opened, it was the smuggled diamonds that we found and not (as I had predicted) the evidence of his sale of United States military secrets to the Japanese. Later on, we got that evidence too; but that was Smilo's doing more than mine. Ah, wait till you hear Robert's opinion of my sleuthing skill."

"Oh, Robert!" she said, with the faintest quiver of her lip. "He hasn't been near me. I'm not even sure that he's in America."

"Well, he is! And I happen to know that urgent business is keeping him out of New York."

"What can it be?"

"It's a peculiar business. In a sense, it's the reverse of what I was engaged upon. I was in pursuit of rogues; but rogues are in pursuit of him."

"I must say, you're as enigmatic as ever."

"Only till tomorrow, Janet. I pledge my word to have everything explained to your satisfaction if you'll come tomorrow to Charlotte's studio in Washington Mews. The party begins at four."

"The party!"

"Precisely. An engagement party for Charlotte; a surprise party for you."

Saying which, and protesting that he had talked her deaf, dumb and blind, and affirming that he had never felt so horribly out of character in his life, Mark Pryor gravely took his leave.

IV

In fulfillment of her promise, Janet went the following afternoon to the converted stable in Washington Mews where Charlotte Beecher cultivated sculpture in an

atmosphere of aristocratic Bohemianism. It was the same studio in which, of old, Cornelia Covert had luxuriated whenever the routine of Outlawry in Kips Bay got on her nerves.

Spring and hope in a young woman's breast usually add love to their number. In Janet's case they added thoughts of Robert. All morning she had been plagued with a feeling, amounting to a conviction, that he would be at Charlotte's party. But when she reached the Mews, she found that Pryor and Lydia Dyson were the only other guests at a gathering which bade fair to be intimate and exclusive.

For a minute or two her spirits were considerably dashed. She waited for Pryor's advertised surprise to eventuate; but she waited in the dark, nobody offering so much as a ray of enlightenment.

While Lydia Dyson stretched herself supine upon the magnificent tiger rug before the blazing fire, Pryor fetched wineglasses and poured out champagne.

"Here's to those about to wed!" cried Lydia, raising her glass, and then quoting:

"Farewell, happy fields where Joy forever dwells,
Hail Horrors!"

"You might give us a more cheerful toast, old girl," protested Charlotte.

"An occasion like this conduces to high philosophy rather than to vulgar good cheer," retorted Lydia, whose Egyptian beauty—ebony hair against a pale olive skin—had never been more stunning. "However, since you wish it, I'll take another shot: 'Here's to continued failure for all of us!'"

"Lydia, you *are* a merry soul today," exclaimed Janet, amidst the general laughter.

"And why not?" inquired Lydia, with a provoking drawl. "Why not? When I see my last blood curdler running well into the two hundred thousands!"

"Lydia is right," said Pryor. "In the present state of civilization, all the best people are failures, glorious failures."

He contrasted the fortunes of Lydia's pornographic romances with the fate of her one serious experiment in fiction. The romances sold like hot cakes. But the serious work, a short novel in which, with pitiless Hogarthian realism, she had developed an episode between a brother and a sister, had been refused by her publisher on the ground that "it was too terrible!" Then there was his own case! Had he not failed as a detective because too much secret information was always breezing his way?

"Don't forget our young feminist over there," cried Lydia, indicating Janet.

"Don't forget her, or her heroic gesture against wedlock!"

"A bark is not as good as a bite," retorted Janet. "But isn't it better than a tame crawl into the yoke?"

By way of reply, Lydia half raised herself from the tiger skin and, in measured tones, recited:

"O Dewdrop, thou hast fought the better fight—in vain! Some women are born to be wedlocked, some achieve wedlock, and some have wedlock thrust upon them. Janet belongs to the first group, Charlotte belongs to the second, I belong to the third."

"You to the third!" cried Charlotte. "How do you make that out? From all I see, though Charley Morrow is a perfect dragon of jealousy, you cling to him pretty tightly."

"I have to, Charlotte! I have to keep him in countenance (and in pocket money, too!), because I'm afflicted with what the doctors call 'a floating stomach.' Now, Charley is not only the best housekeeper in New York, he's the best cook, too. There's simply nobody else whom I can depend on not to sneak lard instead of butter into my bread—"

"Or to mix cottonseed oil instead of olive oil with your salads?" thrust in Pryor.

"Precisely. Sometimes, when I eat at home I say: How can I stand Charley another twenty-four hours? Next day I eat at a restaurant, and say: I can stand Charley forever!"

They all laughed, and Lydia buried herself in the rug again.

"All the same," she went on meditatively, "I've never really got used to marriage. It's a well of never-ending surprises."

"What about *my* surprise?" asked Janet, for the fourth time.

The bell rang and Charlotte went to the door a few feet away.

"Here it comes!" announced Pryor, as a man entered.

"Janet!"

"Robert!"

Greetings all round cut their glances short.

V

Janet was struck with the fact that he had never looked better. Robert, as dynamic as a battery giving out blue sparks, was familiar enough to her. But Robert, with

a deepening pink spreading over his pale cheeks, and with a suit that showed the craftsmanship of a fashionable Fifth Avenue tailor, was a sight to make one gasp and stare. Nor was this all. In times past, she had often conjured up a picture of him poised as on a springboard, preparing to leap upward to join the spirits of the air. But there was nothing aerial about the way in which his feet now gripped the solid ground.

She couldn't get over the change!

When he alluded briefly to a trip to California from which he had just returned and on which he appeared to have done some work for the Confederated Press, she had the sensation of not being in a secret that all the rest shared. This was the sort of discourtesy that had hitherto been taboo in Charlotte's crowd, and she resented being made a victim of it.

"Then the Confederated Press knew better than to give you your walking papers?" drawled Lydia.

"They knew nothing," replied Robert. "I simply paid them to keep me on and to let me say exactly what I pleased."

This was more mystifying to Janet than ever.

Presently, Mark Pryor proposed a walk to the Lorillard model tenements to inspect Number Fifteen, Cornelia's old flat. It turned out that Robert had rented it and that Donald Kyrion, perhaps the youngest and certainly the most talented interior designer in New York, had decorated it for him as a labor of love. Pryor pronounced the result: "Art that congealed art!"

"Donald Kyrion?" said Lydia. "If Robert got him to do anything for nothing he ought to get the Nobel prize for wonder-working."

"Ahem!" said Pryor, and again he and Robert exchanged knowing glances.

Charlotte protested with all her soul against being dragged to Kips Bay. Now that Robert could earn an honest living, why didn't he rent a lodging in a decent locality instead of consorting with the Outlaws who—what with their talk of wrongs, their love of dirt, and their smell of tobacco—were tiresome enough to bore Mephistopheles himself.

"The Outlaws parted company with me long ago," replied Robert, putting up a vigorous defence. "It is not they who lure me back."

He said that the Outlaws were, after all, not the whole of Kips Bay. They were the most picturesque element in the population, but they were only a tiny fraction of the total. True, they behaved in every respect as though no other element besides their own existed. Wasn't this, however, merely a proof that they were New Yorkers to the manner born? It was, in fact, undeniable that there were plenty of simple, self-respecting toilers in Kips Bay, plenty of them right in the very citadel of Outlawry, the Lorillard model tenements themselves. Nay, candor compelled the admission that there were even "rich but honest" toilers

in the Kipsian district—to be specific, in the new “art colonies” planted around Sutton Terrace and Turtle Bay Gardens.

He had found this out after the dispersal of Cornelia’s set. Force of circumstances having obliged him to look out into the Kips Bay that extended beyond the model flats, he had learned how parochial, in their assumptions about the district, the Outlaws had been.

“The fact is,” he added, “I often think it’s a hankering after the paths of rectitude and respectability that makes me enjoy a Lorillard flat—for short stretches only, needless to say. Anyhow, the older I get and the more I study the flibbertigibbet Bohemian in *his* lair and the heavy-footed Bourgeois in his, the more I’m struck with the bond between them.”

“The bond, Robert!” exclaimed Charlotte. “Call it a touching point, common ground, but don’t call it a bond.”

“Well, it’s a hidden bond. For the irregular doings of the strait-laced people and the comparatively regular doings of the gypsies show me how Bohemian the Bourgeois is, and how Bourgeois the Bohemian.”

“What Robert says reminds me forcibly of a passage in *Gulliver’s Travels*,” interposed Mark Pryor. “I mean the passage in which the horses, the noble high-born creatures that govern, move about stark naked, whilst the Yahoos, the loathsome human creatures that live like beasts, yearn to cover their shame with rags and strings of beads.”

“For the matter of that,” continued Robert, “look at our little group here. We’ve all lived and worked quite contentedly in the thick of Kips Bay. Yet there’s nothing in our daily behavior at which a Philistine of the deepest dye would turn a hair. Where, in fact, could one find a more incurably respectable lot of people—always counting out Lydia who, I believe, is still a member in good standing among the Outlaws?”

“Look here, old boy!” Lydia called out. “Are you attacking or defending me?”

“As the supreme ornament of Charlotte’s studio, you can always count on my homage, Lydia. But as an Outlaw, you must expect no quarter. I’ve lived among the Outlaws and weighed them in the balance.”

“Meaning what?” said Lydia, groaning for effect. “That their honor rooted in dishonor stands?”

“Not a bad way of putting it, Lydia,” replied Robert, smiling. “Shall I give you the gist of Outlawry? Well, it is an excrescence of Radicalism, often a decorative, sometimes a merely indecorous excrescence. The purpose of Radicalism is to remove the obstacles that lie athwart the course of life, of life aspiring to an estate infinitely higher than that of man. What part in this mighty purpose is played by the mummers of Greenwich Village, the camp-stool triflers of Wash-

ington Square, the picarescos of Kips Bay, and the other Outlaw aggregations?"

"They stand for insurgency, don't they?" drawled Lydia.

"For insurgency, yes. But what sort of insurgency? Your typical Outlaw 'insurges' against perfectly harmless laws and conventions: obstacles of no importance. And at the very same time, he conforms to ruthlessly strangling laws and conventions: obstacles that really matter."

"Kips Bay or bust!" announced Lydia, reluctantly abandoning her tiger skin as the only alternative to a pursuit of Robert's theme.

VI

On the walk uptown, Lydia attached herself to Pryor and Charlotte, while Robert with Janet soon fell far behind.

What a first aid to free speech an independent income is! Dozens of questions which, in Paris, had stuck on the tip of Robert's tongue now rolled off as freely as down a buttered slide. He was the first to break boldly into the vicious circle of topics of the day.

"You'd better return my pearls and diamonds!" he began with a grave smile. "As for me, I'll send back all your letters and also the lock of your hair that I've worn next my heart."

He said that there was only one conclusion to be drawn from the unbroken silence she had maintained ever since the end of the partnership of Barr and Lloyd; an end, he reminded her, not of *his* making.

Well, she liked that! She had written long letters, addressed to Cornelia, but expressly intended for the whole Lorillard circle; and, seeing that several people had replied, it would seem that her intention had been respected. In these letters she had more than once fished for a crumb of sympathy from him. She might say that, on reaching the very bottom of the ladder of luck, she had signalled to him almost as abjectly as Dives had to Lazarus. But no Lazarus had responded.

This reproach led, on both sides, to a rapid fire of questions and answers in the course of which one of their chief misunderstandings was cleared up. Janet learned that Cornelia had never shown her letters to Robert. What she had done was to give him subtly to understand that Janet, in the hope of inducing Claude to legitimate their love affair, was prudently burning her Kips Bay connections behind her.

"It was only one of a score of things that Cornelia did to queer the pitch

between us," was Robert's comment.

They were silent for a space, whilst they adjusted their thoughts to a much clearer interpretation of the curious way that Cornelia had acted out her part in the triangle of their relations.

Robert's mind reverted to a bit of news which Pryor had passed on to him the night before, after the arrival of the San Francisco Limited at the Pennsylvania Station. Pryor had picked up the information in the course of an interview with Hutchins Burley in the Tombs, where the fallen editor, garbed as a Federal convict (he had begun to serve his sentence for smuggling), was being detained to testify against a former confederate in the Japanese espionage case. Burley, raging like the bull of Bashan, had lashed out against all the people who had ever given him offence, and against some who hadn't. As a by-product of sheer, overflowing hatred, he had let slip the item that it was to Cornelia that he was really indebted for having been able to get on Janet's track in Brussels. Cornelia had not known Janet's precise whereabouts, yet she had shown Burley the letters, the very letters she had withheld from Robert! This was a piquant bit of gossip, but Robert decided to suppress it for the time being. Until he had finished with the delicate job he had in hand!

Crossing Astor Place, they proceeded along Bookworm Lane to Union Square. Janet stopped halfway and pointed out a quaint old shop where she had bought at secondhand many of the text-books used in her Evening Law School. "You are on the primrose path of dalliance!" exclaimed Robert, who heard of these studies for the first time. "Do you keep your mother posted regarding your wicked ways or has she closed the front door to you forever, as she threatened?"

"No, the front door has been left on a crack," said Janet. And she recounted a visit she had lately paid her home. The family atmosphere was exactly as she had left it, the only change being that her father, having retired from business as the result of a serious accident, had ceased to be even the titular head of the house.

"The poor old man, a mere ghost of his former handsome self, was in a state of coma, Robert. And I fear that, as his salary days are over, his approaching dissolution is being firmly and not too gently accelerated. He sat huddled up in an invalid's chair, from time to time mumbling that he hoped I'd be a sensible girl, and stay with them in Brooklyn now, and learn to appreciate my mother for the brave and unselfish woman she has always been! He'll lick the whip to the very last breath. The sight of him was heartrending!"

Otherwise, the atmosphere of the Barr household had not changed one whit. The same musty, fusty ideas prevailed, and the same hollow, stagnant, make-believe existence went on. Here, at least, was one spot in America where pre-war conditions prevailed unchallenged!

"How could I ever have stood it as long as I did! Mother pecked at my cheek and, without turning a hair, asked me was I coming home at last (to be a young lady of the house I suppose!) or did I mean to go on wasting the Lord's time? Wasting the Lord's time! I replied that if she was alluding to my work and to my legal studies—which together occupied me from ten to sixteen hours a day—wasting the Lord's time wasn't the picnic it sounded like. She muttered something about the wages of sin being death! 'Oh, no,' I said, 'I get a very fat salary from Mrs. R. H. L. Jerome.' I mentioned the exact figure—the amount quite made Emily sit up!—and I added that Mrs. Jerome, my friend as well as my employer, had undertaken to advance my career.

"Well, it seemed to me that this piece of news stumped mother a bit, although she closed her eyes in that trance-like, oblivious way of hers and affected never to have heard of a Mrs. Jerome. Perhaps she really hadn't. Nobody has ever fathomed the bottomless ignorance of the Barr mind."

"Nobody *could*—not even God!" said Robert.

Janet nodded and went on:

"Don't forget that the Barrs are inordinately vain and aggressively jealous of the things they don't know. This is the fact that makes their ignorance sublime! Take Emily. I got her to talk about herself for a while. She is now one of the head teachers in a public high school. Her devotion to her business is pathetic. She teaches, eats, sleeps—and teaches! Once in a while she shops or sews. These acts complete the cycle of her life from day to day, from year to year. No books, no concerts, no theatres, no travel, no meditation, no self-training, no real companionship with equals or superiors—never one piercing or shattering experience of novelty—nothing that might make the pulse go fast or the heart beat high. 'But how can you teach them anything real, anything about life?' I maliciously asked her."

"'Anything real!' she sneered. 'I suppose you mean romantic adventures! Well, teaching is real enough for me. I study the science of pedagogy every night of the week. And when I want to learn anything more about life, I read the *Saturday Evening Post!*'"

"Yes, Robert; it sounds like a line from *The Old Homestead*. But that's exactly what she said."

"I don't doubt it," said Robert. "I know the Barrs of Brooklyn. I've met them in every part of the United States, and one runs across them even in Europe. Age cannot wither nor custom stale their infinite monotony. As on creation's day, so they'll remain till the trump of doom."

"Of course, Mother isn't as stupid as Emily, not by half," said Janet. "Her behavior at parting convinces me that she really does have an inkling of who Mrs. Jerome is and of how my position near this influential lady sends my stock up in

the world of cash realities. When I left, she didn't peck at my cheek as at first. No, she kissed me almost affectionately and said, in a tone so relenting that I'm sure Emily was greatly shocked: 'Now that you've found the way back, my child, come and see us again soon.' And I had always believed that Mother's moral and religious prejudices were incorruptible—absolutely money-proof, if nothing else in this age was! It was quite a blow to me."

"Never mind," rejoined Robert. "We're all easily taken in by other people's moral counterfeit. Haven't you observed that it's usually a Barr who circulates the Biblical saying that a man cannot serve both God and Mammon? Yet, though too modest to acknowledge it, the Barrs themselves accomplish this miracle daily. It's precisely the Barrs who, in their heart of hearts, worship these two deities as one."

They had now reached the Lorillard tenements. In the dimly lit foyer of the middle house they rested on the settee, quite as in the chummiest days of Barr and Lloyd.

"Speaking of Mammon," he resumed, in the most offhand way imaginable, "don't you think you ought to marry a rich man? Of course I mean your own sort of rich man, not the St. Hilaire sort."

Janet gave him a puzzled look.

"I should hate a welter of trivial responsibilities," she said decisively. "A great big house and a lot of servants to manage—to say nothing of a husband!—the mere prospect terrifies me."

"Now I'm doubly sure that we're birds of a feather, Janet! Still, aren't you rather difficult to please? In Paris you said you wouldn't marry a man if he was poor? Here you say you won't marry a man if he's rich."

"Does it matter, Robert? What rich man is likely to ask me?"

"You're quite wrong. One is asking you now."

"You!" Had he suddenly lost his senses?

"I've inherited a couple of millions, Janet!"

He briefly put her in possession of the facts. Then he made her a formal offer of marriage, in tones so restrained that she could hardly guess the immortal longing beneath them.

"I need a partner to share the rich man's burden!" he said, with a quizzical smile. "And I know from experience that you are the one partner in the world for me."

"No!" she said, her eyes half closed, her cheeks rather pale. "I—I'm not sure that I'm ready for marriage."

"Oh, don't let that stop you! Nobody is ever ready for birth, marriage, or death. We're just plunged in—doubts, hesitations, and all. You don't suppose any sane man or woman *wants* to take the plunge, do you? I know *I* don't. But since

I've got to marry somebody, I've made up my mind to marry no one but you."

"At least you're quite frank," she said, with a rather trembling lip.

"Are you angry? Heaven knows it would be easier for me to use the stock phrases on which we were brought up and fed up. But you're a woman of the new age! And I'm proposing partnership to an equal, to a fellow worker—not to a goddess-drudge!"

They both rose from the settee.

"Surely," he said, wondering at her silence, "it isn't the Free Love philosophy that's in the way?"

"No, no!" she said, emphatically. "I thought I'd told you that in Paris."

She repeated that she was done with all that! She admitted that, for a time, Cornelia had won her over to what Bernard Shaw called the *Love-Is-All* school of fanatics. And, so she feared, she had actually believed in her own readiness to give up *All for Love*! But the hard knocks of the last two years had opened her eyes to the inadequacy as well as to the inexpediency of this philosophy. When the Hutchins Burleys, the Cornelia Coverts, the women with horn-rimmed spectacles, and their like—when these successively popped up to interfere with her purposes, she had realized that love, far from being *all* to her, was simply one of her heart's desires. She still held to the view that the love relation between two people should be subject to no other law than that of their own consciences. And she still hoped that society would be converted to this view, although she no longer had a mind to risk her soul's welfare in its behalf.

"You see, Robert, how fully I've come round to your opinion! If I'm to risk my salvation for anything, it must be for something bigger than the love chase."

After a pause, she added, with a faintly ironical smile:

"For something bigger, too, than a mere husband, don't you think?"

"But you won't risk your salvation with me, Janet," said Robert, coming close to her side. "You're in a position to make your own terms, absolutely—for have you I must! Stick to your practical terms but not to your abstract ideas. And be generous! Remember, a man who's obliged to take care of a fortune, needs a wife to take care of him."

"Indeed! But why expect one able-bodied human being to 'take care of' another human being, equally able-bodied? Or why ask a woman to become what men gallantly call a ministering angel, but what ought bluntly to be called a domestic drudge?"

"I admit it's a very stupid arrangement. Yet at present it's the only tolerable arrangement I know of. Unquestionably, it's haphazard, wasteful, anarchic! And no doubt a later generation of men and women, fired with a collective purpose, will regulate domestic affairs much better. But what am I to do? Wasn't I born and bred on the understanding that some ministering angel would drudge my

home to rights? Well, I'm extremely uncomfortable without one!"

"Selfish wretch. Do you know what Mrs. Jerome says?"

"No."

"She says that women have been men's cat's-paws long enough. It's time for them to abdicate the job. If we are to make any headway, the unmarried girls will have to be strong enough and self-respecting enough to refuse the empty honors offered as bribes for their servitude. They must put a high price on their freedom!"

"Good! I offer you a million dollars, cash down, for yours. It's half my fortune."

Janet turned away, chilled to the soul.

"You're mocking me," she said.

"Not a bit of it," he retorted, following her. "I don't propose to live with an economic inferior. Such a course would wreck us at the start. That there can be no genuine comradeship between people of unequal means is a truth which every philosopher from Plato to William James has pointed out."

"Did they point it out, in the midst of a proposal?"

He held both her hands in a firm grip.

"Darling, don't pretend to misunderstand me. Do you want me to sink to my knees in this public place and overwhelm you with ardors and protestations? It's easy enough, and I'm quite mad enough now. Mad with the enchantment of your touch, that turns my heart to fire; with the music of your voice, in which I hear all Elfland calling; with your haunting mystery and lilac fragrance, at which my senses reel and swim! I'm ninety-nine parts drenched with ecstasy! If you reproach me because one thin gleam of sanity still remains at the helm I shall be—"

"Arithmetical!"

At the word, he seized her and kissed her and—Time being Love's fool—they were imparadised in each other's arms.

VII

After a while, between endearments, she managed to say:

"So you *do* want me to make a marriage of convenience?"

"No, I want you to make a convenience of marriage. That's what all sensible people do."

"Splendid! Then you won't expect me to give up the Susan B. Anthony House? I couldn't leave Mrs. Jerome in the lurch now, you know."

"Of course not!" he said.

She was to go on with her work, he with his. They should have living places to be alone in, and living places to be together in, like the Havelock Elises. They'd have a house together in the mountains or the seashore, remote from other people—a biggish house, this would perhaps have to be. But she need manage it no better (or no worse, he trusted) than she now managed the Susan B. Anthony House.

Janet laughed at his incorrigible, man-made outlook on the future. Indulgent and happy, she rested her head on his shoulder.

"Why didn't you take your own advice," she asked, "and marry some independently rich woman—Charlotte, for instance?"

"Because there are a good many women that I could work with, yet never love. And some few that I could love, yet never work with. But there's only one that I could work with *and* love as well. At least, I've never met another."

"That's a very pretty speech, Robert, for you. We *were* good comrades, weren't we? In the days of Barr and Lloyd!"

"From now on, Barr and Lloyd, Inc."

"But it isn't the same Barr nor the same Lloyd that are to be incorporated again. Suppose we prove not to be good comrades, this time?"

"In that case, we shall hie us to some genuinely civilized country—Sweden or Cape Comorin—where breach of comradeship is the sole ground for divorce—"

Indignant voices from the staircase penetrated their mutual absorption.

"Where in the world can they be!"

"So this is your *radical* hospitality!"

"Robert—latest method?—proposing by telepathy—imperfect communications—vast silences—heavenly harmony—"

"Pooh! Janet's no fool—nothing like a bee line—marriage license bureau—bird in the bush, you know—"

Blushing and looking like culprits, they climbed the stairs and braved the mock indignation meeting which their three friends were holding in the hall between flats 13 and 15. (Robert had rented both flats, as a surprise for Janet.)

Lydia went straight to Janet and enfolded her in a copious embrace, whilst Charlotte stood by, ready for a cordial handshake. Mark Pryor, stupefied at this exhibition of feminine perspicacity, could only stare at Robert and mutter:

"What! Already?"

"Was ever woman in this humor won!" drawled Lydia, as she led the way into Number Thirteen, Kelly's old flat. "I must say, Janet, I'm not much impressed with Robert's 1921 revision of the Lord of Burleigh stunt. Like all modern ver-

sions of fine old idylls, it's gingerbread without the ginger. Give me the village painter who leads his sweetheart to a palace! There's the thrill that comes but once in a lifetime. But fancy a millionaire taking his bride to a Kips Bay model tenement—and Number Thirteen at that!"

"You forget," said Robert, who, with Pryor, had followed the ladies in. "You forget that '*leiser Nachhall längst verklungner Lieder, zieht mit Erinnerungs-Schauer durch die Brust.*'"

"Which means, I take it," Pryor said:

"I saw her then, as I see her yet,
With the rose she wore, when first we met."

"Pooh! Male parsimony disguised as Teuton sentiment," said Lydia. "Don't be

put upon, Janet, by this *love-in-a-tenement* stuff. Let me give you a tip. Laurence Twickenham, my publisher, has just put his Long Island home on the market. He says that the ruinous royalties he's compelled to pay me do not permit him to keep up an expensive establishment. It's a perfectly gorgeous estate, right next to mine, and not too far from New York. Do make Robert buy it and settle down to a useful life as a country gentleman."

"What! Foster his mania for hearth and home?" cried Janet, laughing. "Catch me! Nowadays men are almost incurably domestic, as it is."

"Well, what *are* you children going to do?"

"Children!" said Robert, coming forward, and lecturing Lydia with gusto. "None of your wiseacre airs, Lydia. Our program will show you that we know our own minds. Hear ye! We shall be married as soon as Janet can get a day off. After the ceremony Janet will return to her job of running the Susan B. Anthony House; I shall return to my job of trying to make America safe for those who don't happen to be grafters, parasites, or profiteers. During the better part of the year, our offices will be in the Kips Bay tenements here, Numbers Thirteen and Fifteen, respectively—we shall toss up to see who gets which. No attempt on the part of either to impose his or her friends, diet, hygiene, or recreations upon the other without consent, will be tolerated for a moment. Each is to be absolute master in what may jointly be agreed upon to be his own domain, provided only that Janet is to darn all my socks or buy new pairs as fast as the big toe protrudes. At the end of nine months, we shall both be ready for a trip to—"

"To Sweden," Janet put in softly, going to his side and caressing his arm.

"To Sweden!" exclaimed Lydia, while Charlotte and Pryor laughed at her bewilderment. "To the psychopathic ward, if you ask *me!*"

* * * * *

BY FELIX GRENDON

WILL HE COME BACK? A Play

NIXOLA OF WALL STREET A Novel

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* * * * *

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