TWICE-A-MONTH

SNAPPY STORIES

SECOND MAY NUMBER

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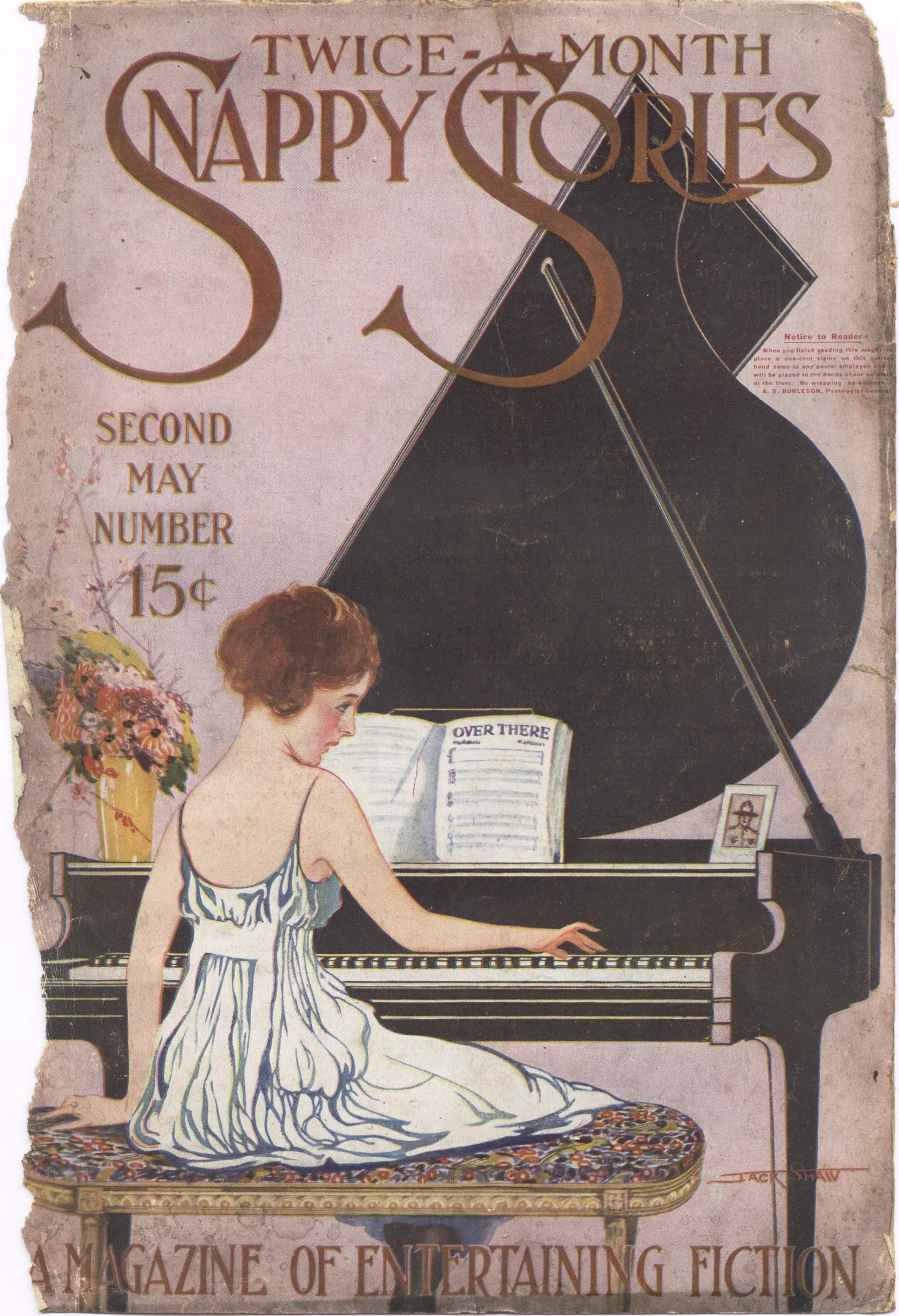

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SNAPPY STORIES

A MAGAZINE OF ENTERTAINING FICTION

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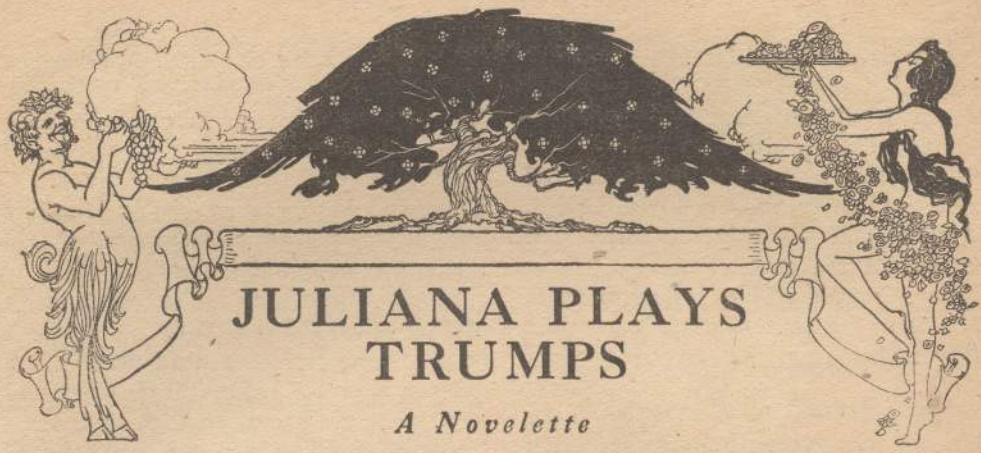

JULIANA PLAYS TRUMPS

A Novelette

By Alice L. Tildesley

I

WHEN Jackson Ramsdell felt the touch of warm and sticky fingers on the back of his neck he almost lost control of the long, gray car. Recovering quickly, he looked around. A very small girl sat on the gray cushions, her face partly obscured by a very large pear.

"My Lor— Little girl, how did you get there?"

She vouchsafed him a bored survey.

"Are you deaf and dumb?" he asked. "What are you doing in my car?"

"Taking a ride," she replied, and renewed the attack on the pear.

He gasped. He had parked the car for a bare five minutes. To be sure, he had not looked into the tonneau when he returned to the steering-wheel. When he had reached the Kentucky side of the Ohio River he drew up beside the peanut-vender and stopped the car.

"What's your name?" he demanded of his small passenger.

"Puddin'-Tame. Ast me again, and I'll tell y' the same."

"Don't be a fool. I can't get you home if you won't tell me who you are."

"I'm Molly Ramsdell, and I want some peanuts."

"You're—what?"

He looked at her with more attention. It couldn't be true. Yet those were the unmistakable eyes of all the Ramsdells: long and gray, and fringed as heavily below as above. His own were the same. Yes, now he came to look at her, it was absurdly like a trick mirror reflecting himself changed so that, instead of his own, he saw the softened features of a little girl.

Molly returned his scrutiny with her usual self-possession.

"Where is your father?" he asked, a bit huskily.

Molly waved a hand vaguely.

"Away. Mother 'n' me are jus' staying here."

"Do you know your father?"

Molly screwed her brows together in exact imitation of her companion and considered. Finally she shook her head.

"Doesn't your mother ever speak of him?"

Molly nodded emphatically.

"Lots. He's nice but busy. I'd rather ride some more."

"In a minute. How did you get here?"

"Mother put me in, an' I don't know where she is any more. An' if we ain't goin' to ride I wanna go home." She began to show unmistakable signs of storm.

"Yes, yes. Sit down, Molly. We'll ride some more right away. We'll go to your Daddy's house, shall we? You'd like that?"

Molly assented indifferently, and they continued on their way. The scene changed from blistering hot streets to fields and hills, white with the dust of the pike. Presently the dust-choked road gave way to an avenue, freshly sprinkled, and very soon the gray car came to a standstill at the door of an apartment building. A colored boy sprang to assist Molly from the car. Another one smiled widely at her from the elevator as they entered.

"This is where your Daddy lives, Molly. What do you think of it? Look like the place you and Mother stay?"

Molly glanced about, unimpressed.

"*We* had a cat," she said disparagingly.

In spite of himself, Jack chuckled. The elevator stopped at the second floor, and he led his charge into the nearest apartment.

"Oh, Jack, honey!" A girl of the "baby elephant" species appeared in the door beyond. "Vivian telephoned—Wherever did you get that child?" Under no circumstances would Mary Elizabeth Ramsdell have been guilty of pronouncing an "r."

"This is your Aunt Mary Elizabeth, Molly," said Jack. "Sis, this—"

"My stars, Jack, where did you get her? Did Juliana—"

"How do you do?" broke in Molly, extending a grubby little hand. "Pleas' t' meet y'. I wanna drink."

"What will Mother say? Really, Jack, it's so unfortunate! Vivian's coming to dinner. What made Juliana—"

"She wants some water, Sis. Come here, Molly, and I'll get it. Is Vivian coming? Right away?" He drew a glass of water from the cooler in his bedroom, adjoining.

"She's on her way up now. . . . That child's your living, breathing image. Jack, how could you, when nothing's settled! If she sees Molly, Vivian might throw the whole thing up, and you know what that would mean."

"Vivian knows she exists. Give me your hat, Molly. That's the bathroom. You might wash your face and hands—er—you can, I suppose?"

"Where you goin' 'a put my hat?" demanded Molly; then, seeing it safely hung beside his own, she proceeded into the bathroom and shut the door.

"Jack, you're in for a scene with Mother when she sees Molly. I wouldn't be in your shoes for a good deal. How did you ever get Juliana to give her up? And what a time to choose, just when Vivian's about where we want her!" Mary Elizabeth twisted before Jack's mirror, vainly trying to see her ample back.

"May 'Lisbeth!" called a voice—a voice so superhumanly sweet and musical that it did not sound natural. "Is that my big boy? What are you two talking about?" She had Mary Elizabeth's prejudice against the use of "r."

"Yes, Mother," said Jack, setting his teeth and throwing back his head in the characteristic Ramsdell way.

Mrs. Ramsdell flitted into the room. It was her boast that either of her children might have "put poor little me into their pockets," and she affected a pretty helplessness that was most irritating.

"Mother, what do you think Jack's done? Taken Molly away from Juliana and brought her here! Here! And Vivian may be in any minute!" wailed Mary Elizabeth.

"Juliana!" Mrs. Ramsdell's face went white under the rose-tints she employed. "Jackson Paige Ramsdell, do you want to kill you' poor Mother? Oh! O-o-eh! It's the shock. May 'Lisbeth, get me my vinaigrette. I feel myse'f going. I can't breathe."

Jack caught her in his arms as she swayed toward him, and laid her on the couch, while Mary Elizabeth, after dancing about wildly for a moment, clutching the air and crying: "Where is it? Where is Mamma's vinaigrette?" brought the ivory trifle and held it to her mother's

nose with the deftness of long practice.

"Now, Mother, there's no use making all this fuss before you know a thing about it," said Jack, with forced calmness. "I didn't go out deliberately and bring back my own child, for the pleasure of upsetting the family. But when I find the child in my machine on my way home, and don't know where she came from, the only thing I can do is to bring her here until I find out, isn't it? Now, don't begin to gasp again, please. Vivian may be in any minute, and it—it may be better not to discuss the thing before her."

"Didn't you see Juliana?" demanded Mary Elizabeth. "My stars, isn't that fearful! Now, you see, she got tired of the child and thought she'd push her off on you. Very likely the man she went away with objected to Molly."

"You don't know there was a man," snapped Jack.

"I wish you wouldn't quarrel with your sister, Jackson," fretted Mrs. Ramsdell. "Not that it matters to anyone what *I* wish. Now, if you' father had lived, he wouldn't have let anyone annoy me."

"Father's got nothing to do with this," said Jack roughly. "The question is, what are we to do with Molly? I don't know where Juliana is, and neither does Molly. Somebody's got to take care of her, and this is my first chance for seven years."

"Well, we can't take her!" Mrs. Ramsdell sat up and looked obstinate. "I can't and won't allow you to have Molly here. It would only drag out the whole scandal again, and you'd be simply done for with Vivian. And May 'Lisbeth can't have the Ramsdell name figuring in the *Hoot Owl* while Russell Stewart's in town. Of course I won't speak of myse'f. Poor little me — it wouldn't matter—"

"I suppose I should turn the little kid into the streets, to starve to death!"

"You needn't worry about her starving to death, Jack," cut in Mary Elizabeth. "Juliana probably has her eye on her. If you don't take her, she will."

"You see, Jackson?" said Mrs. Ramsdell.

"But if Juliana found she couldn't keep Molly any longer, and arranged to give her to me this way, she wouldn't be waiting around to see what I'd do," argued Jack. "She'd know I'd take care of her. It must have been something important that made her give up Molly, but as she did it, she trusted her to me, and knew I'd take her."

"Yes, Juliana must have trusted you considerably when she left you the way she did," said Mary Elizabeth.

"Right in the middle of a dinner-party," put in Mrs. Ramsdell, "when she knew the Carrutherses were there and would go home and repeat everything that happened and more too."

"Well, whatever she may have thought of me seven years ago—"

"Thought!" bristled his mother.

"Oh, well, *known*, then!"

"Said! What that ungrateful girl said that night, I'll never forget. And the Carrutherses in the room!"

"At any rate, Juliana trusted me with the baby, and I've got to keep her. Why, Mother, I've got a legal obligation—"

"Legal rubbish! How are you going to take care of her unless Vivian accepts you? And do you think Vivian wants to be saddled with that child? Take care of her! Why, you can't take care of yourse'f and you' family. Now, once and for all, Jackson, I won't allow you to keep Molly."

Jack thrust his hands into his pockets and turned his back on her. At the same moment the bathroom door opened and Molly appeared, looking refreshingly clean. She came up to her grandmother and regarded her with unsmiling eyes.

"This is your Grandmother, Molly," said Jack briefly.

"Jackson, I positively must request you not to have me called by that dreadful

name," complained Mrs. Ramsdell. "If she must call me anything, let her call me —let me see—Tante Amy will do."

"Pleas' t' meet y'," rattled Molly cheerfully, offering her hand but making no attempt to pronounce the new name.

"Why, she's the image of you, Jackson! A regular Ramsdell. How old are you, Molly?" With rising interest Mrs. Ramsdell looked at the latest addition to the family circle.

"Eight an' a half."

"Yes. She wasn't more than eighteen months old when it happened, was she? I was outraged when I found Juliana had taken her. It all came from having a white girl instead of a colored mammy. I always told Juliana—"

"That's four rings. Vivian's downstairs," announced Mary Elizabeth. "Now what shall we do? See what you've done, Jack!"

"Oh, dear, I feel so bad! I—I can't breathe—I can't—"

Jack seized his mother's wrists and drew her to her feet.

"Yes, you can breathe, Mother. There isn't time to have a faint now. Sis, you go down and stay with Vivian. Tell her Mother and I will be there at once. Go in to dinner with her. Mother, you must pull yourself together. It's important. Now we've got to decide what to tell Vivian."

"I'm hungry," stated Molly.

"Yes, yes, we'll eat in a minute, Molly. . . . I suppose you'll let me feed the kiddie?"

"As if I were some great cruel monster! . . . What 'oo like to eat, Baby?"

Molly moved restlessly and sought Jack's side.

"Mother, she's cut her teeth. Don't make a fool of her. May I take her down? I—I'll explain to Vivian. I'll make it all right with her. She won't complain." His fingers closed over the small hand outstretched to him. "You won't talk if I take you down to dinner, will you, Molly?"

"We can have her dinner sent up."

"And tip the waiter," said Jack ironically. "You know how we stand here. It's nearly six weeks since I paid 'em."

"You can't risk Vivian's refusing you."

"Molly's hungry. We'll go down. I'll fix it up with Vivian." Jack led the way to the elevator, taking a secret pride in Molly's easy acceptance of the situation. He found he liked having a firm little hand in his.

"There's no denying she's your child," whispered Mrs. Ramsdell, as they started into the café. Indeed, the similarity between them fairly cried aloud. The handsome young Ramsdell was no more striking than the handsome little girl at his side.

II

Vivian Amory lifted her eyes from a contemplation of the centrepiece and saw them. Her expression brought Mary Elizabeth half-way around in her chair.

"You didn't tell me your brother had a—a visitor."

"I—I didn't know. He didn't tell me —he—" Mary Elizabeth broke off in despair.

"Good evening, Vivian. Sorry not to have been waiting for you at the door," said Jack, pressing her hand. He was uncomfortably aware that he was the object of much earnest scrutiny and whispered comment all over the café. "Er—this is my little girl. . . . Molly, here is Miss Vivian."

Vivian gave him an upward glance. "I've been feeling horribly neglected," said she. "Your little girl? Looks like you. Staying long?"

"Oh, no!" broke in Mrs. Ramsdell's sugary tones. "Only overnight. My bad boy let himself get imposed on. He can't take care of himse'f, and I never could do a thing with him. Poor little me—really the children walk right over me. I look at myse'f sometimes, and I say: 'Amy, is it possible you've got grown

children?' And you know I can't realize it. I feel such a little thing."

Jack entered into his usual half-sentimental banter with Vivian, with pauses to see to Molly's small wants, acutely conscious of the eyes and tongues about him.

As for Vivian, she was frankly amused. The daughter of a commonplace business man who had made his money late in life, she had not had her fill of importance. She enjoyed being pointed out as the only child of the richest man in Northern Kentucky. She liked being the centre of attention, even if what was said was not always kind. Moreover, she was almost thirty, and Jack was the first man to whom she had been in the least attracted who had paid her attention.

She did not again refer to Molly until the coffee was served and he turned back to her after consoling Molly for its deprivation with a lump of sugar.

"Is her mother in town?" she asked, trying to be very casual.

"I haven't seen her. Vivian, couldn't we arrange to have a quiet little confab by ourselves this evening? I'll have to take the kiddie up to bed first, though. She—she's partial to me." He took a shy pride in the fact. "But when I come down let's slip off together."

It was as she had hoped. This was to be the night of her dreams. She agreed without parley.

"Jack, honey, we'll walk over to the summer-house while you-all are gone," said Mary Elizabeth. "Vivian, you know everybody tells me I should walk fifty yards after each meal, and I'm trying it out now. Do you think I'm as large as Elsie Schoendel? Thank Heaven I'm not! They call the poor girl the Beef Trust—isn't it fearful? I know I ought not to eat candy, but I can't resist these after-dinner mints. . . . Won't you have some? Anyway, I don't suppose you call them candy, do you?"

"Vivian dear, I'm sure you'll excuse me"—this from Mrs. Ramsdell. "I'll run upstairs with my big boy. Not that he'll do anything I tell him. I'm perfectly helpless before my own children! You see, I was frightfully young when I married, and when Jackson came he nearly scared me to death. My husband used to laugh at me. He said we were about the same size, and he hardly knew which was the baby!"

"If you are coming, Mother—" suggested Jack, trying to avoid the stares of the curious. Mrs. Ramsdell flitted after him. As they entered the elevator Molly inquired clearly: "Didn't you say this was my Daddy's house? Well, where's he at?"

Jack hurried her out of the elevator and into the apartment.

"Mercy, everybody heard her! Hadn't you told the child who her father was, Jackson? I must say that was most inconsiderate."

Jack sat down in the Morris chair and held out his hand. "Come here, Molly." He drew her onto his knee and put an arm about her. "Now, look at me. See me? Well, you're looking at your Daddy. What do you think of him?"

"Is it only you?"

"Don't you like me?"

"Oh, you're pretty nice, all right." Then with a puzzled frown: "But you ain't so awful busy, though."

"Busy?"

"Mother said that was the because why you didn't come to see us."

"Oh! . . . Well . . . Mother was right. I used to be busy, but I'm not now. Did Mother tell you I wanted my little girl to stay with me awhile?"

"Jackson!"

"Mother, I'm talking to Molly."

"She said I would go for a nice ride and—and make a visit—and—" Molly looked about her suddenly. "But I don't wanna make a little visit. I wanna see my Mother. I want her right now."

"There, there, Molly. You've got your Daddy. I won't let anything hurt you—

darling." The last word slipped out, and he glanced at his mother to see how she took it. Then, with the Ramsdell toss of the head, he continued: "Did Mother say when she was coming, too?"

"She said to not cry and be a good girl and have a nice ride and—and not forget about Mother."

There was a knock on the door, and Mrs. Ramsdell received and read a card. "And if you know what she means by that—" she said, as she handed it to her son.

It was the regular form kept by the house for recording telephone messages taken when guests were out. It read simply:

Lady left word for Mr. Ramsdell that he give the child something nice to think of. Children soon forget.

"Evidently she's given you the child to keep. I suppose you'd be fool enough to do it, too. But I forbid it. If you can find that woman, you return the child. If not, put Molly in a Home."

"Don't talk nonsense." Jack reread the card and leaned over his daughter again. "See, Mother wrote you a good-night card. She wants you to go to bed and have a nice sleep, and in the morning —in the morning— What would you like to do in the morning? Go for a ride?"

" 'Nother ride and find my mother," agreed Molly sleepily.

"Well, another ride, anyway. Now we'll get ready for bed—er— You don't seem to have any—er—more duds."

"Jackson, a package came for you this afternoon. I thought it was a mistake, because there was something in it that looked like lace." Mrs. Ramsdell disappeared into her bedroom, to reappear with the package. In the wrapping-paper she had deftly torn a peephole.

Molly's dainty little wardrobe was within—frilly white things, childish pinks and blues, funny, heelless shoes. The little girl seized upon a pair of inconceivably small pajamas and marched off with them.

"Give her the couch in your room, Jackson. May 'Lisbeth and I are simply crowded now."

"I'll sleep on the couch. She can have the bed. We'll have to rig her up a place of her own." He turned over the little garments absently.

"And now, Son, we'll come to an understanding. Talking nonsense, was I? You take that child away to-morrow—somewhere, anywhere—or I give Harley Dean's notes to an attorney, and we'll see who is up before the Grand Jury this fall." Mrs. Ramsdell fairly shook with wrath. "If I'd had my say, Colonel Ward would have had them long ago. Instead of that, you let your family suffer and go without things all summer rather than bring a thief to justice."

"Giving up the notes won't make our position a bit different. It was as much my fault as Harley's that I lost everything. We both thought that deal was going through. Why, I staked the last cent I could rake up. We thought it was a sure thing. It won't bring back the money to disgrace Harley now."

"He deliberately took the money I got from Cousin Paige's estate and gave him to invest."

"What did you give it to him for? He thought it was a good investment, and when it fell through he had to have that money to put back into the bank when he heard the examiners were coming."

"Probably you think he had a right to steal money from his employers on such a chance! Whatever you say, and whether it makes any difference or not, that's what I shall do unless you obey me."

"Oh, you couldn't mean that, Mother! You couldn't do anything so—so unfair."

"Will you do as I tell you, then?" She sank gracefully into the vacant Morris chair and drew out her handkerchief. "What your father would have said if he could have seen you treating me like this! O-o-o-oh! I can't breathe—"

"Oh, I don't know where your smelling salts are! Listen, Mother, if I get Vivian to say she doesn't object to Molly, will you let the matter drop?"

"If Vivian agrees—then— O-oh! I must go where I can get a breath of air!"

Jack held the door open for her politely. Then, obeying a clear command to "Come in here and tell me where I sleep at!" he hurried to his bedroom.

More than ever his image in her boy's pajamas, her dark hair denuded of its flaring ribbon, his daughter stood waiting.

"This is your bed—sweetheart. I'll sleep on the couch. You won't be afraid if you've got me, will you?" He knelt down and took her in his arms. What a soft little baby-thing she was, for all her eight years!

"I ain't used to sleeping with gentlemens," objected Molly; then, with a little shout, she put her arms tight about his neck, and a soft, warm mouth pressed against his cheek.

"Thanks, honey. Let me kiss you. One, two, three—like it?"

Molly drew back and studied him with interest. "On'y, they're kinda scratchy!" she said.

III

JACK took Vivian's arm and half ran her down the slope that led to the river cliff. He had just avoided two over-curious ones who attempted to waylay him, and left Mary Elizabeth volubly engaging three others.

"Isn't it dreadful to be so popular!" teased Vivian, as they began to walk along the hedge-screened road.

"Oh—that! Vivian, it's a funny way to begin talking to you, but you'll understand, won't you? I'm in a deuce of a fix. If I didn't know you so well, and—and—if I didn't feel the way I do about you, I—I suppose I wouldn't have the courage to speak this way."

"It sounds thrilling, anyway," encouraged Vivian.

"Well, it isn't. You—you've heard about my first marriage, haven't you? Everybody has."

"I never met—your wife. But of course I've heard a little. I know she left you."

"You've probably heard a pretty raw tale as to why, haven't you?"

Vivian hesitated.

"Well, I've heard that she ran away with another man, and I've heard that she objected to your conduct with some woman—and that you didn't treat her right—all the usual stuff. I never took any notice."

"Thank you." He pressed the hand laid lightly on his arm. "It wasn't another man with her. Juliana never looked at anyone but me—that is, *then*. Why, she was just a kid. We were both kids. She was nineteen and I was twenty-two. We ran away from school to get married a little over two years before it happened. There was a big splurge in the papers at the time. Her uncle made a scene with a gun at one of the hotels. But we couldn't get on. She couldn't stand my family, and you can imagine how they welcomed her. The poor girl couldn't have done anything right for 'em if she'd been a sainted angel, and she wasn't that. She was a spoilt child. I ought to have taken her away from them, but I hadn't any money of my own, and Dad thought we were better off where he and Mother could keep an eye on us. When the baby came we had a high old time squabbling about how she should be brought up. She was a sweet kid, and the only thing we agreed on—that she was absolutely *it*. Then Dad sent me to travel for the firm. I wasn't quite twenty-one, and I got in with a lot of older fellows who went it pretty fast. I was out sometimes for three months at a stretch, and I believe I learned about as much as was good for me—"

"You needn't tell me, Jack. I—you needn't, really."

"That's mighty good of you, Viv, but —I must if I'm going to ask you—the favor I'm thinking of. . . . Look at that river! Would you believe it could be so unlovely by daylight?"

Below them rolled the "Beautiful River," calm and slow, necklaced with mirrored lights, red and green and gold. The *Princess,* passing on her stately way to the Island, seemed a fairy thing upon the silent waters.

Vivian seated herself on the worn rock that overhangs the cliff, and Jack leaned moodily against the wind-tortured "heaven tree" beside it. The girl looked up suggestively. She was not interested in mere rivers. And the man went on:

"The last trip I made I went out with three of these fellows in a yacht. It was on Lake Erie. You know how the storms come up there: one minute you're on a sea of glass, and the next you can't see over the waves. It was one of those nights. They'd all been drinking and were about three sheets to the wind when the storm came up. I was the only one who could see clearly—the only one in the bunch to notice the girl on the raft. She'd gone out for a ride on the raft when it was calm, and when the wind came up she lost control. Idiotic thing to have done at night, anyway. That's why nobody believes this story." He broke off and stood gazing at the twinkling lights on the opposite shore.

"I do," said Vivian gently.

Jack threw her a grateful look.

"You're a brick, Viv. Well, I poured cold water on those swine, and told 'em we'd got to get the girl. They weren't themselves, of course, but I will say they behaved beastly. The end of it was that I took the little boat we carried and went after the girl, and they were mean enough to go in with the yacht. Thought it was a big joke on me. Huh! . . . I reached the girl, but while she was getting aboard I lost an oar, and—well, it was about five bells when we finally hit the dry land."

"I think you were splendid to risk your life," began Vivian.

"Oh, no, I wasn't. I didn't know I was going to risk my life. I expected them to pick us up right away. Maybe I wouldn't have been in such a hurry if I'd known," returned Jack grimly. "That's the way the story originated about my 'woman up on the lakes.' Never found out who started it, but when I got home the tale was all over town. I had a woman on an island, and I was in the habit of going out there pretty often. You'll hear it yet. I think the fellows were sorry they did it, when they saw how it spread, and I know some of them tried to stop it; but you know how it is with anything like that. . . . And after awhile they began to believe there might be something in it."

"The brutes!"

"Well—of course they didn't do it intentionally. I heard the story the day I got in — heard it in town — and I was seeing red when I got home. Mother was giving a dinner. We lived in town then. When I came in things started. Dad was like a bear with a sore head. Wouldn't so much as speak to me. Sis was about sixteen—one of those fresh kids who know everything — and she began it. Juliana had been crying; Mother'd been telling her it wouldn't have happened if she'd been the sort of wife I needed. It hadn't occurred to any of 'em that possibly it wasn't true. Sis blurted it out at the dinner table—asked me what 'She' looked like. I was a fool. I was so red hot mad I wasn't responsible. Everybody seemed to be against me. I launched into a wild description of her that ended in a toast to her health. Oh, I know I was a fool! And Juliana had had all she could stand. She denounced me in front of everyone and ran out of the room. I was crazy enough not to go after her and explain. When I did look for her she was gone. She had taken the baby and gone."

Vivian murmured unintelligibly. She really didn't know what to say.

"There was a terrific scandal in the papers. I was just a youngster, and I was nearly frantic. Queerest thing—we couldn't find a trace of them. At first I was inconsolable. Wouldn't do anything but search. But then I began to feel abused. It hadn't been my fault about the scandal in the first place, and the more I was persecuted about it—and, believe me, I got it good at home and around here!—the sorer I felt at Juliana. Finally I filed suit for divorce."

"Yes; I—I knew you were divorced."

"Yes. . . . Well—now you know about *that.* I felt I owed it to you." Jack paused awkwardly. It was difficult to go on. Somehow the lights on the river put him in mind of Juliana's brilliant eyes. Of course it was seven years since she had lifted those eyes to his. . . .

"Yes?" hesitated Vivian.

"I suppose you know I've felt differently toward you than—than other girls. I mean, I've tried to show you that I—I cared—" He began again: "Oh, dear, that's not the way to put it at all! Vivian, you've always been a good sport. Can't you see what I'm driving at? I—I wish you'd marry me." He rushed it out. The light breeze that had sprung up seemed to be touching his lips with Juliana's fingers.

"Why—why, Jack!" She had been almost afraid he wasn't going to ask her!

"Don't say anything yet, please. You'll hear, if you don't know already, how hard up I am. I won't deny that I'm in pretty deep. People will say that's why I'm asking you. It—perhaps it was what brought me to it first. I'd always cared for you as a pal. It's not as a pal I care for you now. You will believe me, won't you? . . . But I think it wisest that you have all the facts." He added the last rather stiffly.

Vivian rose and laid her cool fingertips upon his sleeve.

"Oh, Jack!" she whispered. "As if money mattered! As if anything mattered but just us two!"

He caught her in his arms. The wind in the heaven tree was Juliana's elflike laughter! . . .

"Vivian," he said, as they strolled back up the lane, some time later, "there's something else."

"More confessions?"

"Um—worse than that. To-day Juliana sent me the baby, Molly. I don't know why she did it. Maybe she found it impossible to take care of her alone. Anyway, I've got Molly, and I don't know what to do with her. Mother says—Mother says she won't have her unless you consent. She doesn't think you will." He paused, but she did not speak, so he went on hastily: "I knew you'd never be willing for me to turn the kiddie into the streets. I knew you'd want me to keep her and take care of her. You do, don't you?"

"Why, I—of course I want you to do what is right," said Vivian, with an effort. "Would you—were you thinking of taking her to live with us?"

"That's awfully good of you, Viv. I knew you'd do it. I told Mother so. And Molly really isn't any trouble. She's the cutest kid! You'll love her." He paused in the darkness below the veranda. "I must kiss you for that, Viv. Oh, just one, a little one; no, nobody can see us— There!"

"Is that you, Jack? Vivian's father's waiting," called Mary Elizabeth. "Do you know it's after twelve o'clock?"

IV

It was impossible to sleep. To close his eyes for a moment meant seeing Juliana's mocking face. He was an engaged man. He had won the woman he had thought his complement. They were congenial. She had the requisite money to pull him and his family out of the mire of debt. They thought alike on most things. She had even consented to take

his little girl. Yesterday he would have thought he had attained his heart's desire. What was the matter with him to-night?

Strange how his baby had come back after seven years! What had they been doing in the interval? An uncontrollable desire came over him to find out how they had lived, and where, and what they had been doing. He started up to waken Molly, but the sight of her sleeping, as she did everything, with all her might, stopped him. Her arms were outstretched on either side, her head was thrown back. He bent over her and shamefacedly kissed the tumbled dark hair.

It seemed ages before the gray room lightened. He was about to drop off to sleep, exhausted, when a grave little face appeared over the footboard of the bed.

"Ain't it time to get up?"

"Not quite. Don't you want to come here and tell me what you've been doing all the long time since you and Mother went away?"

Molly slid off the bed and came and stood by the couch, looking down at him speculatively. Then, with her little shout, she fell on him and kissed him rapturously. A moment later she was eying him gravely from her position on his chest. "I don't 'member you. Mother an' me've been 'most everywhere, but you wasn't there."

"Did you and Mother travel, on trains?"

Molly nodded. "'N' boats and elevators. 'N' lived in hotels since forever."

"And yet you had a cat!"

"Umh'm! Name was Amy. Was my cat. I carried her on the trains. On'y, she ran away just now."

"So. . . . Its name was Amy, was it? Mother named it?"

Molly nodded vigorously. Jack chuckled.

"And what did you and Mother do at those places you traveled to?"

"Oh, nothing. I walked with Mother in the days, and rode on the elevators, and at night I went to bed."

"What did Mother do? Where did she get her money?"

"She was at the show," replied Molly vaguely. "I dunno who gave her the money. I guess God."

"The show? Mother was an actress?"

"Guess so. We find her to-day, think so?"

"Perhaps. What did Mother do at the show, Molly?"

"I dunno. What's your whole name?"

"Daddy."

"Well, let's get up." She sprang off his chest and began to gather up her clothes from the chair on which she had carefully laid them the night before. "Ain't I got no more of a dress?" she demanded.

"Wait a minute. You get dressed that far and we'll see." He felt very fatherly as he looked over the little bundle of frocks and chose a pink and white cross-barred muslin. She would look like a rose in it.

Juliana and the stage! How she must have changed! The Juliana he had known would have been so out of place there. He wondered what she did and whether it was very hard. . . . Why, the theatres would open next week! With a bound he was at the speaking tube.

"Send me the *Enquirer* at once!" he ordered, and began to dress with feverish haste. He was eagerly turning over the pages, seeking the theatrical advertisements, when Molly reappeared.

"Molly, what's Mother's name on the stage?" he asked. "Juliana Worth?"

"Umh'm"—indifferently. "Let's eat."

"Juliana Worth," he repeated. "But it's the only name in the bunch that sounds like her. She'd never call herself 'Goldie Gaylord' or 'Prim Pettie.' But I'll go to see. They open Sunday; that's to-morrow. . . . Don't make any noise, dear, and we'll slide out. Your Aunt Mary Elizabeth and . . . whatever it

was Mother told you to call her, never get up so early."

"Jackson, honey, have you told the management about your prospects?" cooed Mrs. Ramsdell, as Jack was about to leave for the day. "By the way, was any date set? I think Vivian's father ought to make the announcement at once."

"There wasn't any date set, Mother. I'll call Vivian from the office. No, I—I haven't mentioned the matter here. You may, if you must, I suppose."

"You want me to take charge of Molly to-day, Jack?" inquired Mary Elizabeth. "Maybe I'll bring her to town and we'll come home with you. I s'pose Shillito's will give us credit again now?"

"For Heaven's sake, Sis, let me get my breath before you run up bills. You can bring the baby in if you like, though. She'll enjoy it."

He had barely reached the office before a short, stocky man was shown in. The visitor walked with the assurance of the independently wealthy, but his wealth had not been with him long enough for the callouses on his hands to disappear.

"Well, my boy!" He clapped Jack heartily on the shoulder.

The head of the house of Ramsdell looked up from the distressing weekly statement, startled. Then he rose.

"Why, Mr. Amory! How are you, sir?" There was just the right tinge of deference in his manner.

"Ha! ha! Caught you at last, eh? Folks had got to thinking 'once burned, twice shy,' about you. Well, well, well! Boys will be boys, I always say. . . . Er—Vivian told me."

"Won't you sit down, sir? Vivian has done me the honor to accept me. I—I should have called on you to-day."

"Called on me? Pooh! Nowadays girls don't wait around for y' to see their fathers. It's taken a long time to catch Vivie's eye, but when at last she seen what she wanted she didn't beat about the bush much, did she?"

"Vivian has known me for a long time. We—"

"Oh, never mind, never mind, never y' mind! She's caught y', hasn't she? Vivian's always been that kind of girl. Once she seen something she liked, nothing would do till she'd went and got it. You'll find she's not used to living 'love in a cottage.' My, my, my, what that girl don't spend on duds! And that brings me to what I come around for."

"Yes, sir?"

"Yes, sir! It's about swag—money. I hear you're pretty hard up Oh, don't get huffy; I guess most young fellers manage to go through a sight o' money in their lives. What I want to say is, you let me know what you'll need to tide over till the wedding, just to fix this here business on its feet, say, and maybe pay some o' y' bills, and I'll see y' get it. But I want Vivian should hold the purse-strings after you're spliced. I'll give her a plenty. I ain't got anyone else, y' know. She'll get it all some day. But I want she should be the one that says where's the money going. Get me?"

Jack raised impassive eyes from the statement of losses.

"Yes, sir. You mean that Vivian shall have an income from you after marriage, and you are willing to invest any amount necessary to pull the business out of its—er—temporary embarrassment. I am very glad to have your help, sir. I think you will not lose on the investment."

Somewhat taken aback, Mr. Amory looked at his future son-in-law.

"Hey? Yes, I guess that's about the size of it. But I want you should pay up all yer bills now. I don't want people saying: 'He owes me this' and 'He owes me that,' at the wedding. How much will that take? Say, all the bills and enough to get the business on its legs?" He drew out a checkbook and held it temptingly in his stubby fingers.

"Well . . . about ten thousand to

put the business back. You see, I lost most of my capital on a bad investment, and although in a good season I'd have it back within six months, at present I am somewhat embarrassed for ready cash. I will give you the notes of the Company for that amount—with stock as collateral. Yes, of course. And my personal note for the personal loan. That should be—let's see—about seven hundred." He spoke coolly. It would never have been supposed that this was one of the most uncomfortable moments of his anything but calm existence.

"Sure, sure, sure! Make it stock if you wants. I don't care. And about that other: I'll make it a thousand and call it a wedding present." Mr. Amory chuckled as he drew the checks, merely filling in the figures. "Great guns! To think Vivie took a shine to you! I kinda had the *idee* that it wouldn't last when I saw y' rushing her, you being a divorced man. . . . Now, now, now, I don't mean any harm, but you know how it is. When she told me last night, and told about the money, too, I just couldn't help wondering what her Mom woulda said. . . . Here y'are. This'n's the wedding present. Y' can git yer attorney to send me the stock or whatever you want me t' have. Well, guess I'll be doing a goose-step up the aisle to give away the bride next month, hey? And maybe this time next year'll be godfather stunts. Ha! ha! ha!" He gave Jack an unexpected dig in the ribs that made that young gentleman choke over his farewell.

"I hope you understand how much I appreciate this, sir. Business is better lately, and perhaps you will come out ahead on the investment. As for the wedding present, won't you let me give you my note? . . . Oh, well, I won't press it. Thank you very much."

"Vivie's somewhere around town. Wouldn't wonder if she might drop in here later. Bee and the honey-pot, y' know. Well, well, well!" He rolled out of the office.

For a moment Jack sat still at his desk, watching the changing procession passing along Fourth Street, his hands clenched, his teeth set in the Ramsdell way. Then he relaxed a little and sighed.

"My father-in-law!" He gathered up the checks and started for the door. "The Lord help me!"

V

Obeying an impulse he would not acknowledge, on his return from his attorney's office, Jack made a circuit that took him along Vine Street. He knew nothing of the habits of theatrical folk, and had no idea whether or not they rehearsed "on the road." He brought up in front of the Opera House. Two men were busily putting up the electric sign announcing the attraction; gaudy billing was displayed in the lobby; a short line of ticket-buyers straggled from the grated window. Jack wandered from one photograph of the cast to another. Juliana's face was not among them.

"Pretty classy set, aren't they? What are you trying to do, Jack, pick yourself a winner?"

Jack turned to look into Harley Dean's good-natured, devil-may-care face.

"No, just killing time."

He tried to speak naturally. Of course he was not disappointed at failing to find Juliana—he was an engaged man.

"All right, I'll get out my little gun and help you," offered Harley. "Say, there's the road manager. He was with 'Wayfarers' last year, the time I was stuck on that red-head. I'll ask him if they've still got this chicken in the white hat. They change every other day, you know."

"Do they?" Jack's hopes rose. Perhaps Juliana . . .

"Sure. Come on, you pick out a flapper and I'll ask him if she's with the bunch. They don't seem to have but two real lookers. Listen to me, George K."—addressing the road manager. "Is this peach in the white hat with the show this year?"

The road manager wore the expression of one whose food perpetually disagrees with him. His voice sounded as if it did, too.

"Them pictures are the N'Yawk cast. Maybe there's changes and maybe there ain't. They're classy dames, and don't need no muttonheads hanging around."

"Oh, speak softly, Percy!" ejaculated Harley, as they made their way out. "Now, what do you know about that?"

"No more than you deserved. By the way, Harley, how about the practical side of life? What's doing?"

"You mean biz? Well, now, tell you the truth, Jack, I expected to get some money together about ten days ago to help you out, but somehow— But I've struck something now that ought to be a corker. You see, it's this way: here's a fellow's got a scheme worked out where he and I go into business to manufacture and sell something he calls 'Ginjo.' You see, a fellow goes out and gets spiffed . . . well, he needn't be quite spiffed, but he gets a little too many. He goes home and he takes a spoonful of Ginjo in some ice water, and, bing! he's all to the merry again."

"What does he want you to do?"

"Oh, I talk it up among my friends and sell it. And I get half the profits. 'Course I pay in a little each time to even us up—he's furnishing the dope and spondulics to begin with. It's a good thing, Jack. Why, pretty soon I'll be hauling in the coin with both hands."

"Last time I saw you, it was flying machines," observed Jack, without enthusiasm.

"And it was a pippin of a machine, too. We'd have made a barrel of money on that, if the inventor hadn't fallen down on us when it came to the test. The blame' machine got something wrong with its little insides."

"Um. Mother's still sore about those notes. Don't suppose you could get someone else to take 'em, do you? The bank you were in?"

"I should say not! Why, you made me leave there yourself after — after we got stung last spring, because you thought I might be in temptation. S'pose they're going to hand me three thou' without a shudder, on nothing? But this new scheme, Jack, will put me on my feet in two shakes. I'll take up those notes next month, see if I don't. You can keep her down, can't you?"

"I hope so. But it's like living over a volcano. She happens to have proof about that—that bank deal."

"I know. But she realizes I didn't mean to do anybody out of anything, doesn't she? . . . So long. Here's where I leave you. This is the place our offices will be—third floor. Come up and see us."

Jack walked on slowly. Harley was a lifelong friend. They had gone through school together. And Harley, out of all the people in his world, had been the only one to believe in Jack in the darkest hour of his life. Harley was a whole-souled friend, even if his wonderful schemes never came to anything. Perhaps when Jack and Vivian—that is, afterwards—Jack might take up the notes on his own account. The business was a good one. With the new backing, say, in a few months . . .

He halted at the entrance to his office building. There, that girl walked just as Juliana used to! No, she was too tall. He turned away with a rush of disappointment. In the elevator there was a girl with a profile something like Juliana's, but her hair was red. He thought he heard her voice in the hall, but, overtaking the owner, saw that she was plain and elderly. It was almost a shock to find Vivian seated at his desk.

"I wanted to see what it's like to be the president's wife," she said gayly. "How important you must feel sitting here! Did Papa come in?"

He took her hand and sat on the edge of the desk, facing her, still holding her hand with his little lover-air.

"He did." He smiled down at the glove he was busily unfastening. "He also did the right thing. . . . We must buy the ring, Viv. What's the size? I wanted to get it, but I thought perhaps you'd rather pick it out." He took off the glove carefully, and played with her long ringed fingers. Juliana's hands were like little white birds, always in motion, but soft and warm to hold. . . .

" . . . better pick it out next week," Vivian was saying, when he woke up to the fact that she was speaking. He drew in his breath at his narrow escape from missing the main point. And what, after all, was he to Juliana?

"Have you decided on the date, Vivian? I'm getting anxious. You don't want to keep me waiting for you too long."

"I thought— What do you say to a September wedding? My mother was married on September twelfth. Of course I'm not sure I can get ready by that time, but—"

Jack turned away to consult a calendar. He found he could not conjure up the proper joy at the unexpected nearness of the event. He felt stale.

"That's about two weeks, isn't it? Is it possible—"

Vivian blushed.

"Well, of course I can use my new fall outfit as a trousseau. I could have the wedding gown rushed. We'll have a quiet little home wedding, with just Mary Elizabeth as bridesmaid. I — I don't want to wait, Jack. After I've made up my mind to a thing, I like to get it over right away."

"Yes, that's the best way. But I won't be a brute to you, Viv. You needn't look on it as a criminal sentence." He tried to laugh, but it sounded strained. "When were you to announce—er—the happy day?"

"I'll have Papa send out regular announcements to the papers next week. And perhaps I'll have a little luncheon at McAlpin's tearoom or the Sinton and announce it there. What do you think?" Vivian drew her brows together thoughtfully. Jack did not venture a suggestion. He was well enough acquainted with his future wife to know that such appeals were merely formal. She would do as *she* thought best. "Yes, a little luncheon, very informal. And at McAlpin's, I think. I'll have Annette telephone the girls for Tuesday. You must come over at the end of it and let me show you off. Yes, Tuesday."

"I've got an appointment Tuesday at twelve-thirty," began Jack; then after a hasty glance at her: "But of course I'll break it if you want me."

Vivian patted his arm.

"That's a good boy. Come over tonight—or, no, it's the Saxages' dinner. To-morrow."

"Before the break of day!" he agreed, trying to throw the proper warmth into his voice.

The arrival of Mary Elizabeth and Molly at five o'clock found Jack looking rather grimly at an array of packages set out on his desk.

"Here we are!" Mary Elizabeth hailed him brightly. "And *so* hot! Why on earth isn't the electric fan turned on? That's better. Molly and I stopped and had a peach sundae at Mullane's. Now, don't look at me like that, Jack. Peaches are very good for people, and I don't think I get a bit fatter when I eat ice-cream than I do when I don't. Oh, you know what I mean."

"Peach sundaes don't seem to be all you bought," observed Jack, taking Molly on his knee. "What did Auntie get for you, Molly?"

"A pink dress. There was a nawful nice cat on the street 'at I wanted, but she wouldn't let me."

"We'll have to get you a cat, then, honey."

"Why, Jack Ramsdell! Mother'd waltz on your grave. I wouldn't be in your shoes if you came home with an animal for Molly!" cried Mary Elizabeth. "I

s'pose you're mad because I got a couple of little things. My stars, I was positively ashamed to go out on the street, with nothing coming together. And Shillito's had just had a check covering the bill, so they were entirely willing to charge."

"You got a few little things, did you?" queried Jack, indicating the healthy row of parcels on the desk. "Think of hiring a truck to take 'em home?"

"Now, Jack! I had them sent here because they have days or something for the Highlands, and I wanted to wear the things. Besides, your own child had to have something decent to put on her back."

"H'm. I suppose about one-tenth of that junk *is* for Molly. Oh, well! Look here, Mary Elizabeth: I can't have you running up bills. I've got to get straightened out, and that will take some time. We'll have to go slow. You tell Mother—"

"If you want Mother to know anything, you tell her yourself. Why should we go slow? Vivian's got loads of money."

Jack put his daughter down and began to gather up the parcels. It was useless to talk to Mary Elizabeth.

"We met Russell Stewart on the street," went on his sister, with elaborate unconcern, "and he helped me pick out a hat. Well, I just had to have a hat, Jack Ramsdell. I looked a fright in the old one. I tried on all the new shapes. Most of 'em are ugly, as usual, but I found a lovely one, after all."

"Russell liked it, I suppose?"

"He was crazy about it, wasn't he, Molly?"

"I dunno," replied Molly indifferently.

"You don't know? Didn't you hear what he said?" Mary Elizabeth demanded.

"Umh'm. He said: 'Good God!' "

Jack fled from the room with the first consignment of bundles, laughing helplessly.

VI

THE twelfth of September! The twelfth of September! The twelfth of September! As he leaned morosely over the balustrade on the little balcony of the Ramsdell apartment, Jack heard the maddening sing-song of it in every passing car, in the whirr of the lawn-mowers, in the far-off sound of church-bells, even in the ticking of the clock in the room behind him. The twelfth of September!

"You going back to Vivian's this evening, Jack?" asked Mary Elizabeth from the window.

"I was there all afternoon. Maybe I will," gloomed her brother. "Whom are you dolling up for? Russell Stewart? He won't come."

"Why won't he? Who told you?"

"Nobody. Where's Molly?" Molly crawled out of the window. She held a tiny kitten firmly under one arm. "Hello, Kiddie! Like him? I had some time getting him, believe me!"

Molly beamed.

"What makes you think Russell won't come? . . . My stars did you get her a cat? Mother'll kill you! . . . What makes you think that?" Mary Elizabeth finished her toilet by pinning an enormous artificial rose on her capacious bosom.

"Oh, you run after him so hard. No fellow likes to feel roped in. Besides, Russell is rushing at least a dozen girls. What's the kitty's name, Molly?"

"Scannal."

"What's Scannal?"

"Dunno. It lives here." She waved her free hand vaguely. "I heard 'em say they'd rake up the ol' scannal."

"My stars, Jack, she means scandal! Well, did you ever!" Mary Elizabeth disappeared within.

"You couldn't go off and get me another mother, could you," asked Molly suddenly, "s'posing you couldn't find the one I lost?"

Jack looked down at her uncertainly.

"Do you want me to find you a new mother?"

"No!" The Ramsdell eyes between their heavy fringes flamed up at him. "I want my own mother. I want her right away. You won't go and buy a new one, will you?"

Jack knelt down beside her and took her in his arms.

"Listen to me, Molly. Suppose we can't get Mother to come back and live with us. Suppose she doesn't want you and me. Wouldn't you just as soon go with me and stay with another nice lady? She needn't be a new mother—just a nice lady who'd love you and take care of you."

"Who is she?"

"Well . . . Oh, I'll take you to see her soon."

"But Mother will come and live with us if we ask her. I don't like new ladies," averred Molly, dropping Scandal and grasping Jack by the shoulders. "Where's the lady at? Is it Vivyun?"

"You like Miss Vivian, don't you, dear?"

"No, I never."

"Well, she likes you."

Molly looked unconvinced. Even recourse to kissing all her dimples found her unresponsive. Jack lifted her to the balustrade and put his arms about her.

"Molly dear, it's this way. Either you and I must go and live with Miss Vivian or—or— Well, there isn't any 'or' about it! We just have it to do. Won't you try to like her—for me?"

"Why don't we ask my mother first?"

"Because I can't find—because— Well, Molly, I'll go to-night and try. Don't tell anybody." He swung her to her feet. At the same instant came a crash of china. Scandal, left to his own devices, had smashed Mrs. Ramsdell's Rookwood vase.

"Oh, for Heaven's sake! Here, Molly, get that cat. Don't you tell them how it happened or they'll take him away. Here!" Jack seized Scandal by the neck, thrust him into Molly's arms, hurried her through the window, and jumped in after her. "Take him down in the yard and play with him, Molly. I'm going to get out of here."

As he swung aboard the street car a few minutes later, Jack couldn't help wondering what Juliana would have said. It was very evident that he was no proper guardian. What would his mother do when she saw the damage? And Mary Elizabeth knew they had had the cat on the balcony. Oh, well, it simply showed how much they needed Vivian!

He stood on the back platform, hands thrust deep into his pockets, the picture of gloom. The twelfth of September had begun its sing-song again. His wedding day. And here he was on his way to his first wife . . . for what? The car came to an abrupt stop at Bonnie Leslie. At the same time an automobile chugged past. In the passing, Jack saw plainly that the car contained Russell Stewart and a girl in a motor veil.

"Poor Mary Elizabeth!" he said absently. "But the fellow's a cad, though. Always making girls think they're *it*, and—" He broke off. What was he? Just what was this thing he was going to do?

The Opera House was ablaze with lights. Quite a crowd surged in at the doors. Jack, coupon in hand, presently found himself following the usher down the centre aisle. Far down, too. First row, in fact. He hated to sit so far down. People would see him and comment, if it were really Juliana. He had forgotten that there was even a doubt.

"I'll be a subject for the *Hoot Owl* before I'm much older," he told himself grimly, as he buried himself behind the program.

Juliana Worth was billed simply as "The Girl." Apparently, in theatrical parlance, she "supported" the star, a man whom Jack made up his mind to dislike. It seemed a long time before the curtain rose, and much longer before "The Girl" entered the scene. A fair-haired youth who looked like a Viking was desperate-

ly in love with "The Girl." Jack thought him insufferable.

Then she came. It was Juliana—the same, yet subtly changed. Lovelier, if possible. Perhaps more appealing. Her dear-remembered laughter kept ringing out. She was in love with the Viking and hardly able to take her adoring eyes from his face. Jack felt it scarcely decent, but the people around him murmured: "Isn't she cunning?" "Wasn't that darling?" whenever she did any of those myriad pretty things that made her Juliana. She used to try to braid *his* fingers like that. And it was his very own sacred place for kisses, the corners of his eyes! How had he forgotten the exquisite sweetness of her?

He dashed out to the lobby as the curtain fell.

"How do you get behind the scenes?" he demanded of the man in the box office.

"Opera Place—door with three steps."

There were two or three men lounging at the entrance, but they paid him no attention, and he forced the door open and found himself in a narrow hall. Stage-hands were hurriedly disposing of the last of the sets, in the immense vacuum on the right. A woman was reading the bulletin board under the only light. Jack removed his hat.

"I'm looking for—that is, may I see Miss Juliana . . . Worth?"

"Number One — inside the door. Knock." She returned to the board.

Very likely she thought he wanted to annoy her. He wondered uneasily if men annoyed Juliana. "But I suppose that Viking would settle their hash," he decided, and knocked on Number One.

"Come in!" It was Juliana's voice—that voice that played on heart-strings as skilled fingers play upon a harp.

She was seated before the mirror, removing her make-up, and she saw him in the glass and rose.

He advanced, feeling much like a gawky schoolboy.

"Juliana, I—I hope I'm not intruding."

"You are."

"Well, I must speak to you. It's about Molly. Why did you give her to me?"

"If you don't want Molly, I'll take her back, of course," she said distantly. She turned back to the mirror and went on manipulating the cold cream.

"It's not a question of wanting Molly. Naturally, I want her." He leaned over the back of her chair and tried to catch her eye in the glass. Juliana promptly stuck out her little pink tongue and laughed. "Why did you give her up?"

"Oh, I couldn't be bothered."

"Do you mean you couldn't be bothered with Molly or—or me?"

"Both of you." She began to peel the "beading" from her lashes, shielding her face from him that he might not watch it in the mirror.

"Juliana, you can't make me believe you're tired of your own child!"

"Can't I?" inquired Juliana maddeningly.

"Well, what's the matter? Are you hard up? Why the dickens can't you tell me?" He gripped the chair-back so tightly that his knuckles showed white.

"Dear me, was he going to have a little tantrum?" teased Juliana.

"Juliana! I—you—I've had enough of this. You answer me! You're enough to drive a man to drink!"

She took up her powder-puff nonchalantly.

"How homelike that sounds! Almost as though we were back seven years."

"I beg your pardon. I didn't mean to lose my temper. I'm not the same man I was seven years ago." He began to pace the floor.

"No, it would seem not," Juliana observed sweetly.

Jack threw back his head in the Ramsdell way.

"What's the good of quarreling? I want to talk seriously about Molly's future—"

"Really?"

"And I shall stay here until you're

ready to listen, if I don't leave before tomorrow night."

"I wonder what Amy would say to that?" Juliana questioned her reflection.

Jack's impetuous advance was cut short by a triple rap on the door. Juliana shot across the room eagerly and opened it. The Viking stepped inside. He was even better-looking in his street clothes, without his make-up, but he had not lost the little air of possession that had maddened Jack during the play. Juliana bubbled up at him distractingly. It came over Jack suddenly that she was attired in an airy kimono, a thing of lace and butterfly bows. It wasn't decent for her to receive men in this fashion when she wasn't dressed! She liked the Viking. There was no doubt of that: the way she swayed toward him like a windflower on its stem, the stars that danced in her dark eyes when they rested on him . . . Jack ran his finger around inside of his collar. Of course, that explained everything! She wanted to get married again. He turned his back on them and began to examine, minutely, the array of grease-paints, creams, and powders on the dressing-table. If he hadn't been a blind, conceited fool, he'd have known it before. He wasn't the only man in the world. Juliana had had enough of him seven years ago. She could have her pick of any man in the universe. She had given up Molly because the Viking would not be bothered with another man's child!

The low tones on the other side of the room went on. The Viking was evidently a humorist, for they were always laughing. Once Juliana clung to his hands and rocked back and forth with mirth. It was prettily done. It was the sort of thing a man can only enjoy thoroughly when it is done to him.

"Will you be very long? I'll wait," said the Viking, at length.

Juliana glanced at Jack and laughed again. Then she said something which Jack couldn't hear and the Viking disappeared.

"I seem to be very funny," said Jack aloofly.

"Did he imagine we were talking about him? He must stop thinking himself the only occupant of the earth."

Jack threw himself into a chair.

"When we get quite over that mood, Juliana, we'll come down to business."

"Will we?" She began to unfasten the ribbons of the kimono.

"That's not a modest contraption to run all over the theatre in," he couldn't help saying.

Juliana raised her eyebrows and puckered up her mouth adorably.

"I don't run all over the theatre in it, Mr. Ramsdell. I wear it in the sanctuary of my dressing-room. If it offends your sense of propriety, you are at liberty to retire. At any rate, I must ask you to step outside while I modestly remove it and get into something more conventional."

Jack elaborately turned his back. "I'm not looking at you," he said crossly.

She thanked him sweetly, and there was a pause. He could hear the rustle of silk as she changed. Then she began to sing softly: *"Suppose I met you face to face—"* He tapped his foot on the floor impatiently. *"And tears upon my cheeks you'd trace."* He thrust his hands deep into his pockets. *"I wonder if your heart would beat, Or if your smile would be as sweet!"*

"It's getting late, Juliana. Let me say my say."

She was struggling with the top buttons on her little gray gown. "If you're in a hurry, Mr. Ramsdell, perhaps you'll fasten it," she suggested.

He went to her and began on the unoffending buttons, doggedly. It had been a game of theirs that he buttoned a kiss under each one.

"Look here, I came to see if you were —were all right and—and if you—er—needed anything. I won't keep you long. You can get back to that white-topped guy you're so crazy about."

"Thank you, no. I have everything."

"Are you—are you giving me Molly for keeps? You won't try to take her away again, even if I—if—no matter what I do?"

"Dear me, what are you going to do, Mr. Ramsdell? Keep a saloon?"

"Be serious. I know you're going to marry again. I want to know if you will give up all claim to Molly, even if I—I marry, too." He stammered over the last. Vivian seemed far away and unreal.

"I'm not thinking of marrying again."

"What?"

She put on a soft gray hat with a nodding rose and frowned at herself in the glass. "I haven't been asked. Speak for yourself, John."

"What do you say, Juliana? May I—"

"I don't see what I have to do with it, if you want to try again, so long as I'm not the victim. Will Amy let you sacrifice another lamb? By the way, she likes Molly, doesn't she? Molly's happy, isn't she?"

"Molly misses you much more than you miss her, apparently. I was afraid perhaps I wasn't qualified to take care of her, but if you don't appreciate that baby any more, I take it back. You can't have her again—ever!"

"If you came to me to find out whether I objected to your marrying again, Mr. Ramsdell, you've found out and you may go. I told you about Molly. I—I can't be bothered with her." He couldn't see her face, she was so engaged in clasping the last fastening on her glove.

"Not bothered with Molly! Not bothered with the sweetest little kid that—that ever—" He choked a little. "Perhaps you don't know that I—I wasn't guilty that time—"

"I am not aware that I ever led you to suppose I thought so at any time," she said coldly. "May I pass?"

Jack flung himself out of the room ahead of her and banged the door. The Viking was walking up and down the hall. Jack felt that it would be a pleasure to choke him to death and set fire to the place. He'd like to tie Juliana to a stake and watch the flames leap at her throat. There wasn't anything bad enough. How could he have considered living with her in peace and happiness? The Angel Gabriel couldn't have kept his temper.

While he was waiting for his car, Juliana and the Viking passed on the other side of the street. They were not talking. Juliana seemed to droop.

"But I suppose she's only tired," he told himself savagely.

VII

"Mrs. Ramsdell was asking for you, sir," said the elevator man, as Jack stepped into the car.

"Thank you." He let himself in, muttering: "It's that damned cat, I suppose."

His mother awaited him. Her eyes were like cold steel. She was not even pretending to faint. Jack's heart sank.

"Well, young man?"

"Yes, Mother?"

"Is that all you have to say to me, after I've been sitting here half the night? Aren't you going to explain?"

"I didn't ask you to sit up for me. If you'd kindly let me know what I'm to explain—"

"As if you didn't know!"

"Oh, I suppose you mean Molly's kitten smashed your blamed vase. I'll get you another one to-morrow. I hope you weren't cross with the baby. It was my fault."

"Do you mean to tell me that you carelessly allowed that kitten to break my Rookwood vase, Jackson?" shrilled Mrs. Ramsdell. "This is the last straw! My Rookwood vase!"

"Oh, isn't the fuss about that? Why did I have to put my foot in it! Then, what are you driving at?" he demanded.

"You come here to me."

"Mother, hush! You'll wake the house," cautioned Jack, advancing.

"Now sit down there."

He sat down wearily. "I'm tired, Mother. Why the heroics?"

"Well, you'll be more than tired when I get through with you. Where were you to-night? Answer me."

"Mother, I'm over ten years old. You can't expect to control everything I do."

"Oh, so you are afraid to tell me!"

"What nonsense! I was at the Opera House, if you must know."

"You were! You went to see that shameless hussy, did you?"

"Juliana? Yes, I went to see Juliana. I've arranged to keep Molly. Juliana's going—to be married again."

"Married again! Why — why, it oughtn't to be allowed. I should think the law would stop it. It'll be in all the papers. Didn't you tell her what you thought of it?"

"She has as much right to marry again as I have. I'm the one who was in the wrong."

"You got the divorce."

"Yes, but I wouldn't have done it if you hadn't kept at me so. It was a low thing to do. No wonder she hates me." He could not keep the bitterness out of his voice. Why hadn't he explained to Juliana? He had approached her like a bully and a brute, as no doubt she thought him. He started up involuntarily.

"Sit down, Jackson. I am not through with you. The Carrutherses were there tonight, and they saw you. You know what I think of Sunday theatres, and—they had the chance to drop in and tell me my own son was down in the front row, gaping at Juliana, and so absorbed that he couldn't see them behind him. Oh, yes, and I heard how you rushed back of the scenes to see her. I shouldn't be surprised if it were all over town tomorrow. Vivian will be sure to hear."

"Oh, Lord, I might have known the Carrutherses would be around!" groaned Jack. "But, Mother, I've explained, haven't I? I can't do anything more. Juliana and I are done with each other. I never expect to see her again, and she will never see me. And as we are both remarrying, I presume that ends it." He did not sound very happy over the fact. The dear delightsomeness of Juliana . . . that voice . . . that laughter . . .

"Doesn't Juliana want anything? Didn't she tie a string to the child?" gasped his mother. "Is she changed very much?"

"Yes. No. I don't know. I'll never see her again."

"I hope not. Did you tell her you were engaged?"

"I did."

"Well, what did she say? Jack, you're the most exasperating boy in the world! Tell me."

"She said she should worry, or words to that effect. Is that all?" He would have risen, but Mrs. Ramsdell pushed him back.

"Of course that's not all. When you see Juliana after all these years, do you think I will let you go to bed without telling me what she said and how she looked and what she's been doing since she ran away? I suppose you'll tell me you didn't ask."

"I didn't."

"Jack, I could slap you! But you saw. You kept your eyes open, I presume. Is she common-looking?"

"I — no." Common-looking? Juliana was the most uncommon-looking girl the fairies ever smiled upon.

"If it weren't for people talking, I'd go down and see her myself."

"Why don't you? I'll show you the way," offered Jack. He had learned in a hard school that the only way to stop Mrs. Ramsdell was to offer his assistance. As she leaned back to consider the matter, he slipped out of his seat and reached the door. "Let me know when you are ready to go."

"Jackson—I'm not finished—I—the vase—"

Jack turned the key in his lock vicious-

ly, and did not reply. After a futile attempt to open the door, Mrs. Ramsdell retired. Jack turned to face two big, gray eyes that appeared over the footboard. He "cat-footed" over to her elaborately.

"I put my foot in it about Scandal and the vase, Molly," he whispered. "Would you care very much if they took him away?"

"They won't," Molly reassured him, unbuttoning his coat.

"Oh, won't they? You don't know 'em. Why not?"

"I'll cry," said his daughter, standing on the bed to untie his cravat. "She don't like it."

"You've got her number!" chuckled Jack. "Come on, give me three kisses and go to sleep. You ought not to be awake at this hour. What the deuce am I thinking of?"

Molly gave him two rapturous kisses and was about to bestow the third when she drew back, still holding him by the shoulders.

"You see my mother?"

"Yes, dear. I'm afraid Mother won't come home just now. We'll talk about it in the morning." He held her close a moment, then kissed her again and put her down. "Go to sleep, darling. Sometimes I wish there were just you and I in the world."

"Didn't my mother want to see me?" she persisted wistfully.

Jack retreated to the bathroom. Juliana was absolutely heartless. He was glad he was done with her. Vivian was much better suited to them both!

When he returned, Molly was standing by his couch.

"Jus' kissing y' pillow," she explained, as she bounded for the bed. "M-Mother used to always k-kiss mine."

"Why, Baby, you aren't crying?" He bent over the bed on which she had thrown herself with Ramsdellian abandon. "There, there, there, haven't you got your Daddy? Hush, honey!"

Molly sat up and glared at him through the big tears that starred the heavy fringes.

"Will you mind y' business and go to bed?" she said crossly.

Jack retreated to the couch. That was his living image on the bed, not a mere little girl in tears. He knew how she felt, and was considerately deaf to the sobs that shook her. He did not venture near her again until heavy breathing succeeded the sobs, and he could look down on her wrapped in dreams.

VIII

"Jack!"

Jack looked up, then paused in his walk down Walnut Street and hurried to the curb. Vivian had stopped her little electric in front of the Library Building and was leaning out eagerly.

"Well, this is an unexpected pleasure! What's the good word, Viv?"

"I wanted to tell you that this is the day of the announcement luncheon, Jack. Oh, and Papa wants you to bring Molly out this evening to dinner. He suggested that he would be willing to keep her with him while we are traveling, and he wants to get acquainted." She brushed an infinitesimal speck off his shoulder, with the little air of possession she had acquired.

"Certainly. Molly will be glad to come. I thought that announcement luncheon was to be Tuesday, and I cleared the decks then, but—but to-day I'm fearfully busy. You know I haven't much time before the wedding, and things are beginning to boom. I was down at the office until eleven o'clock last night, clearing up. Molly didn't like it a bit. I had to have Sis bring her down to dinner because I couldn't go home."

Vivian looked annoyed.

"Now, Jackson Ramsdell, you're not going to start out that way, surely? Come over to the luncheon, even if it's only for a few minutes. Come over about twelve-thirty. I'll let you go by

one o'clock," she said. "I wasn't able to arrange the luncheon yesterday. I had an important fitting."

"I'm awfully rushed at noon. But, of course, if you can't get along without me—"

"I can't. So that's settled. Now, if you fail me, sirrah, you'll find out what kind of temper I have before we're married!" She laughed self-consciously and pinned a fresh rosebud on his lapel.

Jack tried to smile back with the heartiness of last week. The result was strained and unnatural. He felt he had lived a thousand years since the day he had innocently kidnapped Molly.

"My wedding dress is coming home to-night. If you're a good boy, I'll show it to you. It's never done, of course, but really it's too pretty to waste, and what groom ever saw his bride's gown on the fatal day!" She patted the rosebud approvingly, and gave him her hand.

"I feel properly grateful," smiled Jack, giving her hand the pressure she expected. "But I must rush now. Take care of yourself. 'By."

He hoped Vivian didn't think she could always interfere with business this way. He had imagined her so different —until they had become engaged. Now she wanted him to do her favors as her just due, not as the favors they were. He glared down at the rosebud. He hated to see men wearing flowers. Made them look such idiots.

"I've always had such a dog's life with the women I belong to," he muttered. "I'll just about give up if Vivian begins to run me. What did I ever see in her? Why did I ever get in such a deuce of a fix? I must have been mad."

He crossed the street to walk past a girl who looked like Juliana. It wasn't Juliana, of course. They never were.

Not a word from her since Sunday evening. Well, she'd see the announcement in to-night's papers—that is, if she bothered to read Cincinnati papers. He wondered if she'd care, even just a little.

The luncheon was even more ghastly than he had expected. He had had to leave an important conference before the vote was taken on a motion that meant a great deal to the firm. Even then he had been a little late, and Vivian had tried to scold him before the whole roomful of girls. They all gushed over him and teased him and embarrassed him dreadfully, and it seemed so needless and trivial when that motion might be lost without him. Edith Carruthers was among the guests. He systematically avoided her until he was on the point of leaving, when she caught his arm.

"I saw Juliana last night," she began sweetly. "Did you know she was in town? But yes, Mamma said you were there Sunday. I was so surprised to know she'd gone on the stage. But she looked awfully sweet, didn't she?"

"Mother said your parents were there Sunday," he evaded.

"Yes. Mamma said she was afraid she'd put her foot in it for you, but she never thought, don't you know? I wonder how Juliana will like the announcement?"

"She probably won't be interested." He tried to slip away, but she followed him.

"Why, Jack Ramsdell, Juliana was always wild about you!"

"Will you excuse me now, please? I am really very busy. . . . Vivian, I must be going." He leaned over her chair, and she pulled him down and rubbed her cheek against his, sentimentally, while the girls gave forth little shrieks of delight. Jack stood up, the first sign of emotion appearing in the dark flush that suffused his face. "I'm sorry, but I can't stay any longer. You—I'll see you this evening, Vivian. Good-afternoon, ladies." He stalked out of the room. He had missed his lunch and been made a fool of before every girl he knew, besides losing his vote on that motion, and for what?

He was still fuming when he reached

his office. To find Harley Dean sitting on the desk, whittling a lead pencil all over the mail, did not make him feel happier.

"Here, clear out of this, Harley. I can't be bothered with you to-day!" he snapped.

Harley slid off the desk with his usual good-humor.

"I gotcha, Steve," he said cheerfully; "but this time I'm here on business with a capital B. Best thing you ever heard—"

"Now, Harley, you get out of here before I throw you out. I haven't got time to listen to the latest scheme for making a fortune out of the doormat. I don't care if you've got a million dollars growing on a bush—"

"Don't get peevish, Littul One. It isn't growing on a bush, exactly. Better than that. You just give me ten minutes, old scout, and you'll be glad of it to your dying day."

"It'll be your dying day in just about ten seconds unless you clear—"

"Tut, tut. Honest to John, I've got business this time. Aunt Cora's dead." Harley returned to his seat on the desk and beamed at Jack.

"What?"

"That's the goods. Got a telegram to-day. Just heard that the insurance money's mine." Harley clapped Jack on the shoulder. "Now, here's where I get rid of those notes, and . . . say, you won't be mad if I spill over a little, will you? I've got something on my mind."

"Oh, I don't care."

"Well, it's this: I'll put ten thousand here in the business and you can give back whatever your new father-in-law put in. Oh, I'm not such a poor simp I don't know he put something in. Everybody knows that. I'll pay back those loans you made me — let's see, that's—six and five are eleven and eight are — it's nineteen hundred and something, isn't it?"

"Don't be in a hurry about that. I'll be glad to have you get Mother fixed, though. . . . Why, it can't be true! It's—it couldn't happen after I've gone and—" Jack caught the back of the chair to steady himself.

"It's straight all right, all right. Only nice thing the old girl ever did. She and I always loved each other like the monkey and the parrot. How she ever came to leave me all the boodle *and* the insurance gets me. Except that she fought everyone she knew, and she hadn't seen me for three years, so maybe I was the least loathsome at the time. Say, old scout"—Harley came over to where Jack stood looking out of the window, unseeingly, and put his arm over his friend's shoulders—"now that I'm all to the merry again, couldn't you send the old boy a check for whatever he lent you and — and — can that girl? They haven't tied the ropes yet, and—and Juliana's in town."

"Don't talk rot, Harley." But Jack laughed a little as he spoke. It was so bad it was funny. If this had only happened last week!

"Well, so long. I'll make my get-away while the going's good. See you later. Don't forget what I said, Jack."

Jack shook his head. It wasn't fair. It was devilish. He felt that a row of grinning fates were exulting over him. Why couldn't it have happened last week?

IX

VIVIAN was sitting on the porch, with the evening paper open in her lap, when the gray car drew up at the curb and Jack lifted Molly out. The future Mrs. Jackson Ramsdell waited for them with her assured smile.

"Papa will be here directly. He wants to see the little girl. Annette, take Miss Ramsdell's hat." She did not speak to Molly. It did not occur to her that children understood. As soon as her father came puffing out of the house,

she left Molly to him and drew her fiancé down beside her in the hammock. "Want to see how it looks in print, Jack?" She spread out her copy of the *Times-Star* and laid a long white finger on the place.

Mr. H. L. Amory, of Wallace Place, announces the engagement of his only daughter, Vivian Rose, to Mr. Jackson Paige Ramsdell, son of Mrs. Amy Paige Ramsdell, of the Highlands. The wedding will be an event of the near future.

"It—it makes me feel nervous," said Jack. He felt as though the last chain was being locked about his unwilling wrists.

"I thought it best not to let people know the date. They are so unpleasant sometimes. Mary Elizabeth promised not to tell—"

"Then I reckon everyone knows by this time," finished Jack, trying to laugh. "Where did your father take Molly?"

"Now, don't you bother about them. Anybody'd think you cared more about that child than you do about me," pouted Vivian. She was not very successful at pouting. It takes an expert to do it prettily. Say, an expert like Juliana. . . . "She's got to get acquainted with Papa if she's going to stay with him while we're away. I knew you'd never consent to leave her with your mother."

"Not much! Mother's too nervous. I—I haven't spoken to Molly about leaving her with your father. I don't know what she'll say. I—I suppose we could hardly—hardly take her—"

"Why, Jack Ramsdell, whatever are you thinking of? What would people say if they saw us go on a honeymoon with your little girl? She'll stay all right if you don't consult her. Just leave her here." Vivian put her hands on either side of his face and turned it toward her. "I don't know what's the matter with you to-night. You're not a bit nice. You haven't said one single pretty thing since you came, and—are you going to let me ask for kisses?"

"I beg your pardon, Vivian. I'm sorry if I've been neglecting you. It's because I'm so tired lately. I've been so confoundedly busy, and—won't you come into the house?" He rose and held the door open, then followed her in, throwing back his head and clenching his hands. "I—I thought you knew how I felt—". He broke off impatiently and drew her into his arms, letting his lips brush her cheeks lightly. He felt more of a blackguard than ever. It certainly wasn't Vivian's fault that he couldn't love her. It was very kind of her to care for him. He tried to make his caresses less perfunctory.

"You're horribly cold to-night," she complained.

A determined little hand tugged at Jack's coat.

"Quit it," scowled Molly.

"Ha! ha! ha! There's a kid for you. Little pitchers have big ears, and y' couldn't 'a' kept that kid outa here with a rope, when she seen you sashaying in!" roared Mr. Amory.

"Why, Molly!" reproved Jack gently.

Molly turned an offended little back and walked away. Jack immediately forsook Vivian and went after his daughter, catching her up in his arms to kiss her with all the warmth that had been lacking a moment ago.

"Now you're not mad, are you?" He held her high in the air.

Molly clasped her arms about his neck.

"I do love you," she told him earnestly, " 'n' I won't boss you any more."

"Jackson, do put that child down," said Vivian querulously. "You'll strain your back."

Jack set Molly on her feet and smiled apologetically at his fiancée.

"She's such a little thing, you know, Viv."

"Mother said for me not to boss you," cut in Molly. "Heaven knows you're run to death!"

"Molly!"

"Ain't it the truth? Ha! ha! ha!"

laughed Mr. Amory. "Only kids and fools tell the truth, and she's hit the bullseye that time. Don't you care, Sister, your Pop's used to it by this time. He gets it all around. Lord, don't I know what it is? Vivie here don't gimme a chance to call my soul my own. You wanta get onta the ropes, Ramsdell. Say 'yes' to everything, and do as y' gol-durn please."

"Dinner's ready, Father," said Vivian coldly.

"Now you can see what you're up against, Ramsdell. When she says 'Father' instead of 'Popper,' I know I'm in Dutch. My, my, these women! These women!"

"Vivian," said Jack, as he took his seat beside her at the table, "I hope you're not angry with Molly. She doesn't realize what she's saying. We —you—we shouldn't quarrel. It was all my fault, and I'm sorry. Now will you please smile at me, Lady?"

Vivian vouchsafed him an offended smile. Jack began his half-sentimental banter, but it was an effort to-night. He felt that he was living a lie before his daughter; that he was the tool of Fate—the Fate that had played him a sorry trick; that there was nothing more in life, and yet he must go on living, day after day, just like this. He wished he could die right now and get out of it.

"Molly likes the red maple," observed Mr. Armor. "It's the only tree I ever seen around these parts that's red as early as this. We was kinda sore because the prettiest leaves is at the top and we can't reach 'em."

"She can reach them from the balcony outside my room," said Vivian.

"Ain't it sorta shaky? We don't wanta kill the kid."

"Shaky? Of course it isn't shaky. If she really wants the leaves, her weight won't make any difference," returned Vivian, rising.

"Be careful, Molly," warned Jack. Then, seeing that Vivian waited rather impatiently, he hurried after her. It annoyed her for him to pay so much attention to his daughter.

They went into the music-room, and Vivian played while he sang. She played well, and, knowing it, never lost an opportunity. Jack had a good voice, and she liked to hear him sing love-songs. She spread out the first sheet and began the opening bar.

"Suppose I met you face to face," began Jack. "Oh, Vivian, I can't sing that one. It's too high—I mean, low—I don't like it. Let's try another one."

"Why, Jackson Paige Ramsdell!"

Jack opened another song.

"Come on, Vivian—" he was beginning.

Annette flew into the room.

"Oh, Miss Amory — Mr. Ramsdell — come quick! The child—she's—I think she's dead!"

Jack dashed out of the room blindly. All at once he knew it was the balcony. He had heard that it was shaky. Why hadn't he taken care that she . . . Was that Molly? That little crushed heap on the ground under the red maple? He seemed to be a disembodied spirit looking down dispassionately at the agonized man who was himself. He saw himself helping them put her on an improvised stretcher; he watched himself carrying it into the house; he seemed to be the one who telephoned for the doctor; who cut away the little sleeve over the red-stained arm; who held the wound on the little scalp while the doctor took the stitches. She was unconscious. They didn't seem to expect her to regain consciousness. They were a strangely unsympathetic lot. . . . And then they put him out of the room.

"I had only went down to get me a pipe," Mr. Amory explained brokenly. "I wasn't gone but just a minute, and it was over. Such a cute kid, too! I wouldn't have had her do it for the world. I told her that there balcony was on the bum. But she's like the rest of

these women. You can't teach 'em. But I'd give my last cent if it hadn't happened."

"I know." Jack resumed his steady pacing back and forth.

"They think she'll come out all right, don't they? It wasn't such a bad fall. Lots of kids fall more'n that and don't die. My, my, my!—and she had a way with her. Never seen a kid I fell for like I did for her. No nonsense about her, you know. They say if it wasn't for that cut in her little head . . . And I'd only went away a minute."

"When do you think they'll let me go back?" asked Jack. "I can't stand it out here. I can't stand it!"

"Oh, you can't do nothing with them doctors. They're so used to them things they don't know how y' feel. And she don't know if you're there or not. Just as limp as a little piece of dishcloth, she was. . . . I'd give the last thing I own not to have went away."

A long time afterward, it seemed, Vivian came for Jack. She had been crying.

"The d-doctor says you can go in. She —she's been asking for you," she said tonelessly.

Molly lay limply on the couch, a white bandage coming down to the heavy-fringed eyes.

"Here I am, darling. Do you know your Daddy?" He knelt beside her. He did not know nor care that Vivian was standing behind him.

Molly gave him a sad little ghost of a smile.

"Would my mother," she asked—"would she come to see me if—if she needn't stay long?"

"Yes, darling—yes, of course. I'll—I'll send for her. Do you feel very badly, sweetheart?"

"Oh, I ain't hurt," replied Molly. "On'y, I smashed up this lady's porch."

"I—it's all right about the porch," said Vivian unsteadily. "You must try to get well for your—Daddy." The last word ended in a sob, and she hurriedly left the room.

Molly reached out her well hand and closed it tightly over her father's.

"You tell my mother I ain't goin' to cry if—if she'll just come and k-kiss my p-pillow."

But when he went downstairs to do her bidding Vivian stopped him.

"You needn't. I've sent the car for her. She must be nearly ready."

"Vivian—this is awfully good of you. I'm sorry—"

"I wish you wouldn't talk to me," snapped Vivian.

They wouldn't let him go back to Molly, and there was no one to be found but Mr. Amory with his endless "I wouldn't have went if I'd known." So Jack went out and paced back and forth on the walk, straining his eyes for the car lights. At last the car turned the corner. It had barely come to a standstill before Juliana sprang out. She hadn't stopped to remove her make-up. The blue under her eyes looked ghastly in the lamplight.

"Where is she? Where is she?"

He seized her hand and ran with her to the house.

"And I let you have her—I let you have her! Why didn't I know? Oh, Molly!" she kept saying. They passed Vivian in the hall, but did not see her. The misery in Juliana's face gripped at Jack's heart. He had made a wretched failure of her trust.

"Hello, Mother! This is me."

Juliana sank down beside the little figure and covered her with kisses. "Oh, Molly! . . . Oh, Molly!"

Molly ran her free fingers over her mother's hair.

"There, now," she said triumphantly, "I knew y' cared 'bout me. Sing 'Molly-my-own.' "

"Oh, I can't, darling—I—I—

"Molly-my-own, Molly-my-own,
Heart o' my heart and bone o' my bone,
E'en though the seas stretch their waters between.

Mountains divide us, or vales intervene,
I'll not forget you. I'm weary and lone
When I'm without you, Molly-my-own."

"Ain't that a nice song, Daddy?"

Jack nodded with the painful smile he tried to wear for Molly.

"You going to stay with me and Daddy all the time now, Mother?"

"I'm going to take you back with me, dearest. I—I can't bear it without you. But—but Daddy—"

"I'm so *used* to him," objected Molly.

Jack hastily withdrew. He almost ran into Vivian in the hall.

"Oh, Jack"—she touched his arm hesitatingly—"I think we've made—made a mistake—you and I."

"Mistake?" he repeated miserably.

"A mistake in thinking we could get married. I—I'm afraid I don't care about you in that—that way. I think we'd better stop right now, while there's time. And—and if I were you"—even now she couldn't resist the opportunity to give him advice—"I'd make it up with Juliana. You—you're better suited. You don't mind, do you?"

But she had fled before he could reply.

The door behind him opened. "Jack," said Juliana softly.

"Juliana?"

"I heard what she said. Molly—Molly wouldn't go to sleep until I promised her that we—that you and I—"

"But, oh, Juliana, will you? Aren't you afraid to try again?" He hardly dared to hope.

"Wasn't it I who came back?" whispered Juliana. She was beginning to braid his fingers again.

"Why did you give me the baby? . . . Don't do that, Juliana. You do it to that other fellow."

"I never really kissed him, though," she said shyly. "I gave you Molly because—" She took a worn paper clipping from her dress and handed it to him.

It is rumored that a well-known Kentucky millionaire is to have the pleasure of settling the debts of a certain young scion of the house of Ramsdell. *Will they call it love?*

"I thought Molly would—would stop you. I just couldn't let you, Jack."

"Oh, Juliana!" He crushed her against him passionately.

"I'm getting grease-paint all over your coat," laughed Juliana, and kissed the corners of his eyes.

STAGE-DOOR TRAGEDY

By Oliver B. Capelle

I PITY poor Peter: he tried to befriend
A little blonde pony, the third from the end.

Of course little Dottie was *dreadfully* nice;
And Peter proceeded, regardless of price,
To keep her in candy, and flowers, and shoes,
And *some* people say that he even bought booze;
He mortgaged his house, and he mortgaged his car,
But *somehow* the coin didn't go very far;
And then she got peeved, and her husband got sore
And told her: "Don't go with that piker no more!"

I pity poor Peter: he tried to befriend
A little blonde pony, the third from the end.

THE VAMPIRE

By Zane Stewart

THE Vampire is a kind of bat
That's closely allied to the cat.
It lives in studio or flat,
And ventures forth at night.
It's mainly noted for its clothes,
Its lingerie and silken hose,
And for its deadly bite.

A Vampire of the choicest caste
Has no possessions but a past,
And though its pace is always fast,
It's famous for its glide.
It lures its victims to its den,
It feeds on boys and married men,
And lobsters are its pride.

A Vampire's bite will seldom kill,
But they possess uncanny skill,
Like leeches, to insert a bill
And bleed a bank account.
Beware of them on moonlight nights:
They're deadlier than viper bites,
Or clawing catamount.

On where they go or whence they come
The scientists are strangely dumb.
They're never old nor young, but some
Contend—the plot here thickens—
That when they're of a tender age,
Before they reach the Vampire stage,
They're often known as chickens.

Vampires, impartial as to race—
Some famous ones were black of face—
Are found in almost every place
From Boston to Senescue.
They weave a web of silken hair,
And once they've got you in their lair
You do not wish for rescue.

"FROM THE BURNING"

A Story of the Settlement House

By Margaret E. Sangster

SOMEWHERE in New York, between Delancey Street and a quite unexpectedly pleasant little park, lies a strip of land that is unexplored territory to the casual city dweller. The Bowery is its western boundary, and the East River, sluggishly, sullenly moving, is its other border line. It is intersected by congested blocks — Houston Street, Rivington, Stanton—each a small city in itself. It is dotted with churches and banks and public halls, and tenements that rise, smokily clifflike, on all sides. One sees there a pushcart in front of a shop window typically Parisian; a lurid motion-picture house beside a dignified synagogue. One hears the guttural sounds of Hungarian and Hebrew mingling with shrill American.

The girls of this section are smartly dressed. Their boots are French-heeled and their frocks imitate Fifth Avenue. But the older women, sitting in their sooty doorways, are frankly shawl-clad. Small children play in the gutters, and larger children whisper in corners. Sometimes one sees an expensive car standing at the door of a cheap lodging-house; often one hears the sound of a good record being played on a not very bad phonograph.

Somewhere in the centre of this section stands the Settlement House. It is a gray structure, with many very clean windows that wink blindly in the sunlight. Here young folk come to dance, perhaps, and to learn good English, and to know something of the God Who smiles down so blandly over the slums. Here old people come to gossip and to pray. . . . Here tragic comedies see their beginnings and comic tragedies their grim endings.

Tired little Miss Carpenter put her hands hurriedly over her ears. The Youngest Worker, after a blank moment, flushed and followed suit. But through the thinness of the wall between the Settlement House and the next tenement the ribald song swept unconcernedly to its shrill close. There was a sound of laughter.

Little Miss Carpenter took her hands away from her ears. She spoke to the Youngest Worker.

"I've been here," she said, "for fifteen years. I've been Superintendent for ten. But never, *never,* have I heard anything like that!"

The Youngest Worker was new to the slums.

"It's unspeakable," she agreed. "If the walls were only thicker! Isn't there someone we can report her to?"

Little Miss Carpenter looked at the Youngest Worker. Then she smiled, albeit bitterly.

"Oh, my dear!" she said. Expressively she shrugged her shoulders.

The Youngest Worker moved nearer to little Miss Carpenter. Her eyes were grave.

"How long," she questioned, "has *she* been here?"

The older woman sighed as she answered:

"She's been here for five months now, and every night it's been the same—drinking and songs and—" She paused

a moment before she went on: "We've had to move our club meetings to the other side of the building, and we've had to dust these rooms ourselves, so that the girls wouldn't get—ideas. I myself went to see her, to ask her to move, to offer her *any* inducement. She laughed at me! I told her that I'd speak to the authorities, and she slammed the door in my face!"

There was another burst of muffled laughter from the other side of the partition. After it had died away the Youngest Worker spoke:

"She has a daughter," she questioned, "hasn't she?"

"Yes," said little Miss Carpenter, rather heavily; "she has a daughter."

In silence for a moment the two women sat with the picture of the daughter before their eyes. They had seen her, at night, returning wearily from some store; they had often watched her, in the morning, shaking a dust cloth from a dingy window. A tall, pale girl she was, with rouge-dabbed cheeks that showed unnaturally pink in the sunlight.

"It's rather beastly—for her," said the Youngest Worker at last.

It *was* beastly for her. And yet the singer of the ribald songs was her mother. The girl who shrank back in the darkened corner of the little closet-like room that she called her own pressed her hands over her ears, even as in the next house little Miss Carpenter and the Youngest Worker had pressed their hands over their ears. And her pale cheeks grew a bit more colorless under their cloak of rouge.

From the next room her mother's voice came briskly.

"Aw, leave 'er alone," said the voice. "She ain't no fun. She'd put a crimp in any party. . . . Give us a drink!"

The girl shuddered.

"It ain't fair," she said softly to herself. "It ain't fair." And she thought of other folk who danced and laughed through merry evenings. She thought of the Youngest Worker, the pleasant-looking girl not very much older than she, who had paused at the Settlement House window to glance at her as she went by. And she buried her face in her hands.

Her mother's harsh voice sounded from the next room.

"I didn't know," she was saying, "until th' other day that it *was* a Settlement House nex' door. One o' th' old women from in there come ter see me not long ago. She asked me, would I stop singin' nights. I said, like hell I would!" There was another burst of laughter, and after it had subsided the harsh voice went on again.

"I'm agoin' ter send my girl in next door," chuckled the voice. "She'd fit in there better'n she does here. Maybe them hymn singers—" The voice was stopped suddenly by a fit of coughing.

In the closetlike room the girl had lifted her face from her hands, and it was a face all at once alight with a new idea. Why had she never thought before of going to the Settlement House for refuge—for faith to face the new day? The girl in the window had looked kind. . . . Why, before, had she never thought of going there?

Her mother was still coughing, with a hacking sound that was terrible to hear. Between gasps she was asking chokingly for a drink. But the girl, by pressing her ear against the partition that divided the two houses, could hear a sound of music, as if a group of other happy girls, around a piano, were singing.

"Lead, kindly light," sounded the words that they sang," *"amid the encircling gloom. . . . Lead thou me on. . . . The night is dark, and I am far from home . . ."*

They had just finished supper the next evening, when there came a ring at the Settlement House door-bell. It was the Youngest Worker who answered it. She stepped back in surprise as a tall girl, with the spots of rouge quite washed from her pale cheeks, and a bundle un-

der her arm, stepped nervously into the hall

"I'm—I'm from next door," the girl told her. "I heard you a-singin' last night. It—it got me!" She paused, her hand on the door knob.

The Youngest Worker hesitated. And then suddenly there flashed through her mind a certain quotation that had to do with "a brand from the burning." She smiled and extended a friendly hand.

"We're glad to have you with us," said the Youngest Worker. "Won't you come in and talk to Miss Carpenter?"

The tall, pale girl went droopingly down the long hall and into Miss Carpenter's little office. Miss Carpenter raised tired eyebrows at her coming, and the Youngest Worker spoke hurriedly.

"It's the girl from next door," she said rather breathlessly. "I guess that we can help her."

Miss Carpenter was thinking of the ribald songs, of the shrill laughter, of a certain door that had been slammed in her face. One could see what she was thinking about.

"Perhaps," said Miss Carpenter dryly.

All at once the girl, hands clasped tightly, was standing in front of her.

"Please, miss," said the girl, "it's my mother. She's been that way fer years now. When my pa was alive she didn't carry on"—the girl's eyes flashed—"she didn't dare! He would've blacked her eyes fer her. It's only since he kicked off an' she took ter drinkin'—" The girl's voice shook.

The Youngest Worker put a firm hand on her arm. But she didn't speak. After a moment the girl went on.

"I'd like ter come here," she said. "I'd work; I'd do anything. I—I wouldn't want no wages."

Miss Carpenter was looking at her strangely. Perhaps a certain quotation accounted, also, for the light in her eyes.

"You'd have to give *her* up entirely," said Miss Carpenter suddenly. "Your mother, I mean. You'd have to stay away from her—forget about her. Our girls, you know—"

The pale face flushed suddenly.

"I don't want ter remember her," she said in a low voice that was unbelievably hard. "I wanter forget her—an' everything!"

Miss Carpenter was careful.

"It won't be easy," she said, "with her next door. She'll be trying to get you back. . . . You'll have to give your promise."

The girl thought of the mother who, no matter what she did do, had never asked a favor.

"She won't try to get me back," she answered. "I promise."

There was a silence for a moment, and then the Youngest Worker spoke.

"I'll show you to a room," said the Youngest Worker.

The girl, pale, very quiet, settled down into the routine of the house with the many very clean windows. After a week, it seemed to the others that she had always been there. Uncomplainingly she did the hardest, most disagreeable tasks; with bowed head she accepted advice and judgment. And in the evening, when the house next door shook with mirth, she would crouch beside the piano with her tense eyes on the Youngest Worker's softly moving hands, and join, at unexpected times, in the singing of the hymns.

"She walks past her mother's house," exulted the Youngest Worker, referring to the grim tenement next door, "as if it weren't there." But:

"Why shouldn't she?" answered Miss Carpenter, with tight-set lips. "I have her promise."

Her promise! Sometimes, as she lay in her very clean white iron bed, the girl remembered that promise. And sometimes, though she tried to shut her ears to the memory of it, the ribald singing to which she had so often listened came floating back through her brain.

Her promise . . . Sometimes, hid in

the shadow of a curtain, she watched a woman-figure go stumbling down the street and—she remembered that promise. It seemed to her eyes, grown more critical than before, that the figure was slighter, that it bent more, that the racking coughs were more frequent than they had been.

"I said I'd forget her," she muttered, quite fiercely, to herself, "but, God! I can't!" And she would go back silently to her dusting.

At the end of a month she was teaching a girls' club how to sew. Where she herself had picked up the fine skill with which she worked, no one could guess. But the Settlement House accepted the skill unquestioningly.

"She seems," said the Youngest Worker, "to have forgotten the very existence of her mother." And:

"What she might have been!" ejaculated little Miss Carpenter.

What she might have been! The girl had about forgotten what she might have been. She only remembered, at her sewing class, that her mother, shuffling past with a pail of beer, had worn a dress that was torn quite horribly from the hem of it to the waistband. Always before, she had mended her mother's clothing and washed it. Not, she had argued, from love of her mother, but because she hated dirt and carelessness.

The inmates of the Settlement House never guessed that she watched every day for her mother. They never knew why she always dusted the rooms fronting on the street at a certain time. They never knew that the bent figure that lurched along toward the tenement stepped with heavy feet on the quivering heart of a girl who hid in the shadow of the curtains and bit her underlip to steady it. The girl scarcely realized it herself—until the day when her mother did not appear on the street; and the next day, when the torn dress did not flutter past the window; and the next day, when the girl, peering anxiously through the curtains, did not hear the hacking cough and the rattle of the beer pail.

And the days dragged by. . . .

The inmates of the Settlement House did not notice that the girl was even more silent than usual. The Youngest Worker did not notice that her eyes were vague and far off as she joined in the hymn singing. Little Miss Carpenter, sleeping the tired sleep of the just, did not dream that a tall, pale girl knelt, in her skimpy nightgown, close to the wall that formed a partition between their quiet house and a certain tenement and listened, in vain, for a sound.

The days dragged into a week. . . .

And then one evening the girl did not appear at supper. She had been such a quiet, unobtrusive girl that the meal was almost over before they missed her.

"I wonder where she is?" said the Youngest Worker quite anxiously.

The girl had waited until it was dark before she left the Settlement House. She had walked resolutely the few steps to the tenement, had brushed past the children that cluttered the steps, had climbed the dark stairs to the door of her mother's dingy abode. She had knocked, and when there came no answer she had pushed the door open.

The room that she entered was unlighted. The heap on the bed might have been a bundle of old rags thrown carelessly to one side. Groping along a crowded table, she found a box of matches. Striking one, she touched it to the rusty gas jet.

The heap on the bed stirred. A hand went out toward her.

"Well, kiddo—you back?" said a voice. "What kin I do—fer you?"

The girl noticed that the voice was very weak. She walked over the littered floor to the bedside.

"All in, eh?" she questioned.

The figure on the bed choked, pressed a limp hand to its mouth.

"All—in!" gasped the weak voice.

The girl, looking down at her, felt a

stir of pity. In the draggled figure she saw a certain helplessness, a certain appeal. Mechanically she straightened the covers.

"Alone?" she questioned abruptly.

"They all"—coughed the woman—"leave yer—when yer down!"

Stooping, the girl picked up a handful of soiled clothing. Her voice came muffled.

"Wanta doctor?" she questioned.

The woman on the bed tried to laugh. She choked again, instead.

"Doctor—hell! I know — what — I—got!"

The girl was straightening the room. Under her fingers it began to take on the semblance of order. Her mother watched her curiously. For perhaps a half-hour no word passed between them. Then, gaspingly, the older woman spoke.

"When yer going—back?" she questioned. "There?" Her thumb jerked languidly in the direction of the Settlement House.

"I'm stayin' here now," said the girl shortly.

The woman on the bed eyed her in a curious manner. It was a long moment before she spoke.

"Why?" she questioned at last.

The girl bent low over a dish she was drying at the greasy sink. Her voice was dull as she answered.

"Yer my mother," she said.

The woman on the bed was seized by a violent fit of coughing. It left her weak and shaken. But when she spoke some of the shrill quality had gone from her voice.

"Well," she said, "'t won't be fer long!"

They were really anxious at the Settlement House when the evening settled into night and the girl had not appeared. When they at last locked the heavy outer doors the Youngest Worker tried to voice her fear to little Miss Carpenter.

"I wonder—" she began and paused.

Little Miss Carpenter looked more tired than usual. "She's gone back," said little Miss Carpenter. "I always felt that she would."

It was the next afternoon that the girl came wearily to the Settlement House. The Youngest Worker opened the door for her. The girl's face was pale and haggard, and the Youngest Worker shivered at the dissipated look of it. She waited for the girl to speak. After a moment she did.

"I've come," said the girl, "fer my clothes."

"Then," said the Youngest Worker, "you *have* gone back—next door?"

"I had ter," said the girl. "Y' see—"

A minute can change the whole trend of a life. If little Miss Carpenter had paused, in her study, to pick up the pencil that she had dropped, the girl would have had time to finish her explanation. But Miss Carpenter did not wait to pick up her pencil. Quite steadily she walked into the hall, and her voice was not a pleasant voice as she spoke.

"You'd better take all your things," said Miss Carpenter. "I can't have you here now, you know—not after you've broken your promise."

The girl had passed a night of torture sitting beside a woman who, between bursts of coughing, told horrible stories and sobbed that she was afraid to die. She had scarcely expected blame. She moistened her lips nervously with her tongue and tried to speak.

"You've been a help to us since you came here," Miss Carpenter hurried on, "but I always felt that your mother had a hold over you. I've always believed in heredity—I always knew that you'd go back. We're trying to teach people the way of God here, and how could they believe us—"

The girl interrupted. Standing awkwardly in the hall, she somehow gave the impression of an animal at bay.

"My mother," she began—"my mother is—"

Little Miss Carpenter laughed. One,

knowing that she had spent a nearly sleepless night could almost forgive her the bitterness of that laugh, but the girl standing by the door had no way of knowing.

"Blood," said Miss Carpenter, "will tell!"

Without a word the girl turned. The Youngest Worker put out a detaining hand even as the door banged shut.

"Oh," said the Youngest Worker rather helplessly, "she didn't take her clothes!"

That night the girl's mother died. Her death was not pleasant. The girl, kneeling by the bedside, eased her back to her pillow after each fit of coughing. It was just before midnight that she spoke for the last time.

"I always," she muttered—"I always was—gay. I always did like—singin'!"

Gropingly the girl's hand touched her mother's hand. Falteringly she began to sing.

"Lead kindly light," she sang incongruously, *"amid the encircling gloom. . . ."*

It was the Youngest Worker who told Miss Carpenter about the crêpe on the tenement house door.

"I asked," said the Youngest Worker, "who was dead. It's *her* mother. Oh, we should have known!"

The face of little Miss Carpenter looked suddenly years older. Going to the closet, she took down her small, severe hat and pinned it upon her head.

"Yes," she told the Youngest Worker; "I should have known." She turned toward the street.

"Where," faltered the Youngest Worker, "are you going?"

"I'm going to bring her back," answered Miss Carpenter.

But she flinched before the face of the girl who opened the door in answer to her knock. It was the same girl who had for months obeyed her so gladly, and yet it was a different girl—a girl with a difference more vital than the surface difference that showed in the rouge-smeared cheeks and the penciled eyebrows. Through the crack in the door Miss Carpenter could see that the room was freshly dusted and cleaned, and that, on the smooth bed . . .

"I've come," said Miss Carpenter hurriedly, "to ask you to come back. I think that you need our help now, our religion, our God—"

Somehow death had brought them nearer together, the woman lying on the smooth bed and the girl in the doorway. It had made their relationship more apparent, for, while it had softened the dead woman's face and smoothed away some of its deep lines, it had hardened the eyes of the girl.

"Religion an' God?" questioned the girl, and though her voice was low there was a covert sneer in it. "Religion an' God? What d' *you* know about religion an' God? *You've* put a mortgage on yer religion and a fence around *yer* God!" And for the second time a tenement house door was shut, none too gently, in the tired face of little Miss Carpenter.

The next night there was music in the tenement room. As it swept shrilly through a certain too-thin partition, Miss Carpenter laid modest hands across her ears. But the Youngest Worker, who was new to the slums, sobbed suddenly and buried her face in her hands.

HUSBANDS and cigars are spoiled by letting them go out often.

ALIBIS

By Genevieve Wimsatt

SWUNG on ropes, midway between the cement floor and the low, cracked ceiling, the packing box claimed the one shaft of sunlight that ventured through the high, transomlike window, leaving the illuminating of the cellar to the gas jet above the washtubs. It was an ordinary shipping box, papered with scarlet "Cross & Blackwell" labels that spoke glowingly of strawberry jam; but in its rough depths, hushed by the rhythmic rubbing of heavy cloth on the washboard and the plash of garments being lifted from the washing to the rinsing tub, the baby slept as soundly as in a cradle, rocked to a lullaby.

Madeline Cobbett straightened herself slowly and wrung the suds from the blue shirt in her water-wrinkled hands.

"Come in," she called softly in answer to the blow that still vibrated the timbers of the door. "Come in," she repeated more loudly as the clumsy latch remained unlifted.

"Can't you use your hands?" she sighed, wiping her soapy arms on her apron and going wearily toward the door. "I called to you to lift the latch and come in." She pushed open the heavy door and stood staring out.

The deep area into which she peered was fairly light at that hour; light enough for her to see clearly what stood there. Since the beginning of the war London had swarmed with the maimed and crippled, men without legs, men without features, men blind, and deaf, and mad, but never before, Madeline thought, had she come face to face with so pitiful a remnant, so shattered a trunk. And she had called to this to use its hands!

Like a scarecrow bereft of its broomstick cross-piece, the armless Scotchman on the threshold flapped his empty sleeves in answer to the question and chuckled in the depths of his rank beard; his blue eyes twinkled in appreciation of the joke as he shook his head.

"A—a soldier?" faltered Madeline. "Won't you come in? If you have any washing, I can call for it."

With a wry grin the man looked down at his clothes.

"Dinna jeedge by appearances, lassie," he warned. "It's na washing I want. Is ye mon at hame?"

"My man?" said Madeline questioningly. "Oh, do you mean Corporal Cobbett?"

"Yes, lass, Corporal Cobbett—is he na ye mon?"

"Why—why, I suppose so. . . . But there's been no word of him since he left England last year. He was among the missing after the great drive. He is dead."

"Nay, lass, he isna dead—yet!" cried the man. "A dozen o' the boys have seen him. Jock, my crony, talked to him last week, and I caught a glimpse o' him yesterday."

"Not dead—!"

"He's been in London a fortnight," the man ran on, "celebrating his discharge from the army—over age, he says, and lame; though the fellows say there's three years 'twixt him and the over-age men, and he wasna limping when I saw him. He's heard o' the bairnie, lass, and he's bound to see it."

Rapt in her strained visioning of the time-dimmed man of whom they spoke,

the woman seemed unaware of the other's presence.

"They told me he was dead; they said he was among the missing," she reiterated to herself. "I thought I would never have to see him again. And there was to be a pension . . ."

The Scotchman's glance that had been roving into every darkling corner of the cellar snapped back to the speaker. He laughed, a little acridly.

"I tell the lass her mon lives, and she is clean fey! I say he is coming hame, and she greets over a pension! D'ye na luve ye mon, lass? D'ye na want to see him?"

"No—no! I hardly remember his face—only his eyes, and they terrify me. Somehow, I never thought he might come back. . . ."

"Then, why did ye marry him if ye didna luve and didna want him?" inquired the Scot curiously, but with something of accusation in his voice.

In utter wretchedness there is scant resistance. The stranger was nothing to her; she was hardly aware of him. But to Madeline his question was the echo of her heart's inquisition. The words seemed wrung from her like the drops of perspiration that stood on her forehead.

"I was thirty," she said dully. "I was thirty, and no man had wanted me. There seemed to be so many more women than men, so many younger and prettier women than I. . . . When I realized that my youth had drifted by without bringing me love, half my heart withered and died. Oh, I wanted someone to love me, and care for me, and hold me dear! And when I was thirty, an old maid, I knew that would never be. But still the other half of my heart ached for something of my own to serve, and cherish, and love. I wanted a child—I wanted a child."

"Ye had na mon, and yet ye hankered for a bairnie!" exclaimed the Scotchman. "Strange, that!"

"Why do you say that?" cried the woman in sudden anger. "It's one of the commonest tragedies of life. There are millions of unloved women who would pay any price for a child—any price they could pay alone. I was only one of them."

"But ye said ye had na jo," the Scotchman objected feebly.

"No, I had no 'jo,' no sweetheart. I had not spoken a dozen words to Corporal Cobbett before the day I married him. I was only a curate's sister, a faded, despised drudge, but socially a lift above a corporal. When the troops were leaving England Cobbett came to my brother, whom he had known at school, and confided that it was the patriotic duty of every soldier to marry, that all the Tommies were doing it, and that he was going to take Peggy Titzel, the waitress at Lloyd's. But Peggy ran off with a lieutenant two hours before the time set for her wedding with the Corporal. Well, my brother left me to break the news when the Corporal came to meet his bride at the parsonage. He was drunk—but not so much with spirits as with excitement, and importance, and war. When I told him of Peggy he was mad with chagrin at having been jilted—the boys would laugh at him. It was my only chance—he seemed the average man. . . . And when I let him see I was willing to take Peggy's place he was glad enough to salve his wounded pride with a curate's sister."

The man bent forward—then drew back with a grimace. Like lightning through the heavy clouds of her own grief, a flash of pity crossed Madeline's heart for the armless man whose quick sympathy had tricked him into the impulse to lay his hand on her shoulder.

"Puir lass, and a' for a bairnie!"

Madeline hurried on:

"Oh, I was willing to do anything for that! Of course when I married a common corporal my brother would have nothing more to do with me. And Corporal Cobbett's company left London the

next week. That week—but I would have stayed a week in hell for something to love! Then I worked for awhile in a tea shop, and after that there was government aid for me until the baby came."

"Didna the Corporal send ye money?" inquired the Scotchman. "Why didna ye apply for part o' his pay, lass?"

"I couldn't do that—he seemed to have forgotten me. I *did* send him word about the baby, but got no answer. Then I heard he had been killed, and for the baby's sake I made application for a pension. There was delay, because it could not be established that he was dead, and in the meantime I worked. But I had my baby, and I was happy, happy!" Her voice broke on the exultant note, and sank to a distressed monotone. "But now there will be no pension. . . . I was going to move to an attic, where there would be more air and sunlight—and there was to be richer milk for the baby, and perhaps—perhaps a pram. . . ."

"Aye, aye," nodded the Scotchman. "But here's ye mon come back to his bairnie."

The words galvanized Madeline from her torpor.

"His bairnie!" she cried in scorn, running to the box and lifting the baby to her breast. "My baby! My baby!" she crooned passionately. "It was I who wished you into the world; I who looked from the right to the left to find a way to snatch you from nothingness; I who gave you life; I who bore you, and toiled for you, and loved you!"

Shaking his unkempt head, the Scotchman watched the mother and her child.

"Weel, weel," he muttered after a little silence, "I'll gang alang, and come back later."

Madeline lifted the unawakened child back to the packing case.

"It's cold outside; let me pour you a cup of tea before you go," she urged. From the broken pot on the stove she poured the pale tea into a battered tin cup. "I'm sorry there's no milk or sugar in the cupboard," she apologized, "but the tea is hot." She held the cup toward him, then paused in embarrassment. "I can lift it for you while you drink," she offered gently.

Like a child, the bearded man let her put the steaming drink to his lips.

"Sure ye dinna luve the mon, lassie?" he questioned anxiously, looking over the rim of the cup into the woman's eyes.

"No, no, no!" she protested vehemently. "Even for the baby's sake, I can feel nothing but aversion—and I fear he may take the baby from me."

"Dinna fash yerself," came the kindly, cynical reassurance. "Nane but its ain mither wants a wee, troublesome bairnie!"

"I know I am foolishly nervous," said Madeline, setting the empty cup back on the table. "It was kind of you to tell me about the Corporal. I wish I could do something for you." Her eyes rested pityingly on the wretched figure.

In the closer glare of the gas light he appeared even more neglected and forlorn than he had seemed in the dusk of the doorway—the leavings of a man, fittingly clothed in the rags of a coat. Tears blotted him from Madeline's eyes for an instant; then:

"There's a piece of twine slipping from your vest," she said in a matter-of-fact tone. "It may catch in something and tear your clothes. I'll roll it up and tuck it in your pocket for you."

But at the touch of her hand the Scotchman sprang forward violently.

"Drop that!" he shouted, adroitly relieving the tension on the string by his sudden onslaught. He backed away, apprehensively staring down at the bit of string dangling from his tattered vest.

"Didna mean to fright ye, lass. Didna mean to startle ye," he stammered. "That string . . . Well, I'll be going. . . ." He hitched open the door with his shoulder. Madeline heard his footfalls on the area steps.

"Why was he so rough about that

cord?" she marveled, plunging her arms again into the washtub. "Poor fellow, poor fellow!"

"Rub, scrub! Scrub, rub!" droned the clothes on the washboard. "Rub, scrub! Scrub, rub!" they grumbled monotonously.

The door opened softly, and a man came quietly into the room. He was a heavy, florid man of perhaps fifty, dressed in khaki and carrying a bundle under his arm. Puffing his pipe, he stood at ease and stared about him.

A little draught of air caught the clouds from the pipe and sped them toward the washer. Madeline sniffed the tobacco smoke and wheeled suddenly, a startled exclamation breaking from her lips as she caught sight of the towering figure in the dusk.

"I didn't hear your knock, so it gave me a bit of a shock to look up suddenly and find you here," she apologized, coming forward and taking the bundle from the man. "Washing left here before six o'clock will be finished by six the following day." She laid the bundle in a chair, and bent over a ledger on the table. "What name, please?"

"Corporal Cobbett!"

"Thank you," began Madeline absently. Then, the significance of the name piercing her abstraction, she dropped the pencil and stared at the man. "Corporal Cobbett? My—my husband?"

"Ho, ho, ho!" roared the soldier. "A good joke on you, old girl! But stacks of us fellows don't know our wives! Jed Barton boasted his was a blonde, and she turns out as black as a Moor!"

Madeline straightened herself slowly.

"I am glad you were not seriously injured, Corporal. Is there anything I can do for you? Would you like me to wash some clothes for you?"

With the boorish aplomb of the fighter, the Corporal dragged a chair toward the stove and settled himself with his feet tapping the teapot.

"Keep it up! Keep it up!" he applauded ironically. "Your patter tickles me! So I'm Little Stranger to you now! Didn't nab me like a hot cake when Peggy threw me over, did you? Hardly know me, do you?"

"Of course I know you, Corporal. I didn't recognize you at first in the shadows. Yes, of course I know you. . . . I—I married you."

Again the man's shouts filled the echoing cellar.

"Ho, ho, ho! You married me! Well, you *did* almost pop the question, old girl!" His voice dropped to a less genial note. "But *I* married *you,*" he expounded; "you are *my* wife—if I want you. And lucky you are to be my wife! A live corporal is better than a dead lieutenant any day, and, with so many men killed off, there's the pick o' the land widows and wanting husbands. If it wasn't for you I might pot a prize. But there—I'm a sport, and I won't shake you! Besides," he added practically, "I have plans for you."

"What plans? If there's any washing I can do—"

"Washing and cooking and camp-keeping for four, Maddy," interrupted the man.

Madeline paled. "What do you mean?" she faltered.

"Just this, old woman. I'm discharged from the army—a limp, and the birth certificate of a kid brother that died before I was born, turned the trick for me—and I'm going to trek! What does it matter who wins this war?" he demanded. "England, France, Germany—we're all drained dry, like squeezed oranges. There's no money on this side the ocean. Canada for me! Three of us from the old company are going to pool our back pay and make for Manitoba. We'll get a ranch, and work it together, and you can cook for us."

Madeline shook her head.

"No, I couldn't consider it, Corporal," she said quietly, and looked toward the sprawling man as if expecting him to rise

and take his leave. "Good-by, and good luck to you—"

"Didn't I say I'd take you?"

"It was very kind of you to think of me, and to look me up, Corporal," she went on hurriedly, "but I can't accept your offer."

"Offer be blowed!" shouted the soldier, springing to his feet and facing her threateningly. "You've got to go! Do you hear? Your ticket's engaged, and the boat sails Tuesday. You are an A 1 cook, and I told the fellows I'd bring you. Do you think I'm going to have them jeer at me and say: 'Peter, Peter, pumpkin-eater, had a wife and couldn't keep 'er'?"

"But, Corporal, you don't understand. The baby couldn't stand the cold of Canada—"

"By Jove! The baby! That's what brought me, and I'd forgot the baby!" chuckled the Corporal, his humor veering on the instant. "Hi, there you are!" he roared, catching sight of the swinging cradle. In another moment he was tossing the child in his arms. "Dash it all, Maddy, he has my chin—and the Cobbett nose!" The best in the man stood forth as he scrutinized the little face for resemblance to his own. "Bully boy! I'll make a rancher of you. You'll be one of the gang before long."

Passionately the mother snatched the baby from his arms.

"No, no, no!" she breathed.

With a grin of satisfaction, the Corporal regarded the scene.

"So that's the way the wind blows, is it? The kid's your weak spot. . . . I guess there'll be no trouble about you coming now, Maddy, for, you see, the child is mine, and I'm going to take him to Canada with me. If you want to stay near him, you'll have to trail along, old girl."

There was silence for a moment as the mother took the measure of her child's father. Then defeat spoke in the drooping of her figure, submission to the inevitable in her weary gesture of assent.

"I know the law will give you the child," she said hopelessly. "I cannot fight you. . . . Yes, I'll have to come—and cook and scrub and toil my life away in the wilds where I'll never see another woman's face, and the hard years will pile up age upon me until I'm a broken hag at fifty. But the baby will be there—my own little girl!"

"Girl!" exclaimed the man, disappointment, annoyance, and resentment mingling in the word. "Oh, hell! why didn't you say so at first?"

With the aggrieved air of one cheated with a spurious article, the Corporal stared again at the baby.

"Rather sickly-looking kid, anyhow," he pronounced. "Of course she can't go—no girls in this party! Now, a boy's different: a man's proud of a young rooster that's his daddy all over again. But a girl! Bunkey doodle! I've an old aunt down Covent Garden way, and I'll leave the kid with her."

Madeline shrank against the table, clasping the baby closer to her breast.

"I have seen your aunt," she said slowly. She looked down at the little creature sleeping in her arms, and the light of combat blazed again in her eyes. "I will not leave my child with that drunken wreck! I can work for my baby. . . . Go! Go!"

More impatient than angry, the Corporal confronted his wife.

"Now, look here, don't you get ugly," he admonished. "The kid is mine—see? And I'm going to put it out with my aunt in Covent Garden. You are my wife, and you are coming with me, for the bunch needs a cook. If we strike luck you'll come in for a taste of it—the ranch will be a gold mine in ten years."

"Ten years! I'll be worn out in ten years! You'll be a prosperous land owner; and the baby, if she lives, will be an abandoned gutter snipe, a flower girl in London's streets! No, no, no! I will not go! I will not! I will not!"

For the first time the man flushed purple with fury; then, as an Apache whips out a blade, he flashed the steel of his will in the woman's sight.

"Shut up!" he roared. "No man or woman can say 'I will not' to Corporal Cobbett and get by with it. I teach 'em to say 'I will,' or I break 'em! After Verdun some Scotch boys got padded into our company. Their own regiment had been shot to pieces, and the few chaps that were left were scattered around to fill up the gaps in the ranks. One of those fellows was the 'I-will-not' sort—like you. There was a trim little French piece down there, and this Scotch fool tried to get her away from me. 'Leave the girl alone—she's mine,' says I. But he didn't seem to heed, and went on making love to her, setting her against me, as if I'd never warned him! So I started hammering him—put him in the front trench, picked him for the dirtiest jobs, gave him the dog-watch every chance. Hard lot, the Scotch, but I got him in the end! Remember last winter? Cold! Shoes had worn thin, and our company's consignment of gloves had been lost. Well, when the blizzard came I picked that Scotchie for outpost duty. He had been marching all the day before, carrying another fellow's kit, too, so I knew he couldn't stand it. He was bowled over for fair, and lay in the snow until both his arms were frozen. The field surgeon had to amputate them the next week."

"Oh, horrible! Fiendish!" breathed the woman.

"Rummy go, you know! Dashed if even I expected the beggar to catch it quite as bad as that! But, I say, it was a warning to the rest of the fellows! And let it be a warning to you, old woman! A private's a private; and a wife's a wife. Obey orders, and you'll be treated right; come over with any o' this 'I-will-not' stuff, and I'll break you. The kid goes to my aunt, and you come with me. We fellows need a cook."

A sudden fusillade of kicks interrupted the harangue. The Corporal strolled to the door and peered out; then he looked back at his wife and laughed.

"Speak o' the devil!" he called. "Here's the very chap I was telling you about, Madeline. Here's a warning come home to you!" He faced the Scotchman, who had slipped quietly through the opening, and let the door swing to. "Well, what do you want here, Maclean?" he demanded.

Ingratiatingly the small Scotchman grinned up into the lowering face.

"I wur here before," he began, "and sinsyne I've hunted for ye in the public house—"

"And now that you've found me, what do you want?"

"Jeest heard ye wur here, Corporal," spoke the Scotchman, with mollifying softness, "and looked ye up to pay my respects and bring ye a wee giftie."

"A giftie!" mimicked the Corporal. "Oh, I suppose you mean a present, Mac. Where are you living now?"

"I live wi' Jock, Corporal. Ye mind Jock who had his leg shot away? Weel, he and I bunk togither now; he dresses me, and I drag him around on a wee bit cart. We aft talk o' auld times, and o' ye, Corporal. . . . A mon ne'er forgits his auld corporal, ye ken, so when we heard ye wur here, Jock and I made up the giftie."

The Corporal exuded gratification at the homage of the man he had crushed, and glanced covertly at the woman to note the effect on her.

"We'll have a drink on that, Mac," he said affably. "Maddy," he ordered, tossing a shilling on the table that shook from the woman's trembling against it, "just find the nearest pub and fetch us a bucket o' beer."

"I've never gone into a public house," Madeline faltered.

"You can't find your way younger! Get along!"

A gleam of cunning shot through the mother's eyes; her hand closed over the

coin. Clasping the baby tighter to her breast, she started hastily toward the door—but not before the Corporal had caught the fleeting look. Blocking the way, her husband seized the baby and swung it back to its box.

"You don't get ahead o' me that way, old fox," he laughed, charmed with his perspicacity. "Do you think I'm fool enough to let you take the kid out o' here and give me the slip? I see I'll have to keep an eye on you until we reach Manitoba—you'll be safe enough there!"

Foiled and sullen, Madeline went out. The Scotchman breathed an involuntary sigh of satisfaction as no click of the latch followed the closing scrape of the door.

" 'A woman, a dog, and a walnut tree,' " hummed the Corporal, with more than a trace of constraint in his manner now that he was left alone with the lopped trunk of a man whose empty, flapping sleeves accused him. Restlessly he paced the room, awkward and ill at ease.

"Well, while we're waiting for the beer, let's have a look at the present," he boomed to break the silence. "Where is it? Hand it over."

"Ha, ha, ha! Did ye think I'd be handing it to you, Corporal?" the armless man replied with grim humor. " 'Twould be a long reach, for my hands lie stark and rotting in France!" He shook his shoulders, and, backing against the door jamb, caught his loose coat behind him, exposing his vest to the strongest ray of light in the darkling room. "See that cord dangling?" he asked, ducking his head toward the half-yard of stout twine that hung from his chest. "The giftie's on the end o' it. Jock put it there, and tied the bit o' string to it, so ye could draw it out, for the vest's so tattered ye couldna find the pocket. Gi'e it a yank, Corporal, and out comes a slight token o' our regard for ye! Tug hard and quick!"

Gingerly the Corporal took hold of the string and slipped his forefinger through the noose in the end.

"It's like pulling Christmas crackers," he joked uncomfortably. "Stand fast, Mac! Here goes!"

A deafening report shook the closed room, followed by a heavy thud as the Corporal fell in a heap. Awakened by the shot, the baby whimpered for a moment in its swinging box, and then was still. The Scotchman grinned coolly down at the dark hulk, then turned and rubbed his breast against the dun wall to extinguish the smouldering threads around the bullet-hole where the hidden pistol under his vest had vented its shot.

Huddled on the floor, his knees drawn up almost to his chin, the Corporal, with glazing eyes turned upward, met the triumph in the look the Scotchman bent upon him. Like a spark struck from two meeting blades, a light flashed in the face of the dying man. With a last effort he straightened his stiffening legs, striking the door with his feet. The click of the falling latch rewarded him.

"You'll swing, damn you—"

Too late the Scot sprang to the door. Desperately he fumbled at the rusted latch with his teeth, threw himself against the staunch panels, returned again to mouthing the obdurate catch.

He stared balefully at the dead enemy who had closed the door of safety on him; then, as if the sight of his foe quickened his hatred to genius, he smiled.

"Can a mon strike wi'out arms?" he asked himself. "Shoot wi'out hands? Loon, loon that I be! Wi'out hands e'en my ain tongue couldna hang me!"

He stooped beside the table until the string from his vest lay on the clean deal boards; then, snatching the twine between his teeth, with violent jerks and skilful twitchings, he tugged until the sound of rending cloth brought the flush of victory to his face. Another yank at the string and the polished barrel of a pistol burst through the rotten cloth of the vest. A last tug, and the Scotchman straightened up, swinging a small Derringer from the end of the cord between his

teeth. Lowering the gun to the table with mad haste, he gnawed away the knot tied to the trigger, and, lifting the cord in his teeth, carried it to the washtub, where he released it and watched until it had sunk beneath the suds. Hurriedly he returned to the table and took up the pistol; carefully he carried it across the room and dropped it from his teeth to the floor, and pushed it close up to the door.

"Now for the play!" he chuckled. Raising his voice to a pitch of terror, he screamed:

"Help! Help! The Corporal ha' been killed!" Then he turned and kicked the body at his feet. "Help! My auld corporal!" he wailed, and thrust again at the corpse. "Stop him! Murder! Stop the murderer!"

A few long moments, and there came the rush of hurrying footsteps; the shuffle of the gathering crowd, and the voice of curiosity speaking through the neighborhood mob; then quick, determined steps descending into the area.

"Open! Open in the name of the law!"

"Lift the latch! The door isna locked!" the Scotchman called.

The policeman crossed the threshold and waved back the crowd that surged into the area. He glanced sharply from the weeping Scotchman to the body on the floor, and advanced a step; his foot struck the pistol, and he stooped to pick it up.

"An old Derringer—the number filed away—hundreds of them in London, "he muttered as he pocketed the weapon.

The buzzing crowd was stilled, and of its own accord opened a path for the woman who stumbled into the room. Sick and shaken and dazed, Madeline leaned against the door jamb and pressed her hands to her eyes to shut out the sight of the black bulk sprawling at her feet.

"My auld Corporal! Murdered before my een," the Scotchman moaned.

"Be careful," warned the officer. "Anything you say may be used against you at the trial."

Throwing back his head, the armless man laughed loudly, and, advancing into the brightest light, he flapped his empty coat-sleeves for the crowd in the doorway to see.

"Here are my alibis!" he cried. "Two o' them! Na hands has Angus Maclean to lift against foe or raise for friend! Feel! Feel!" he urged the officer.

With a cursory hand the policeman touched the few inches of stumps in the empty coat-sleeves.

"How did it happen?" he asked.

"The missus had gang for beer," the Scotchman recounted glibly. "There wur a rap. The Corporal opened the door, and a mon standing in the area pushed in, fired at the Corporal, and dropped the pistol. He ran up the steps. I heard him go down the street."

"Why didn't you follow him?"

The Scotchman laughed derisively.

"He had slammed the door. Could I lift the latch wi' hands that are dust at Verdun?" he demanded bitterly, and turned to the still hulk on the floor. "Oh, my Corporal! My Corporal!" he wailed, "and I wi' na arms to defend ye!"

The crowd outside murmured its sympathy. Pityingly Madeline touched the bowed shoulder. Then, with a cry, she sprang to the packing case, and lifted the sleeping baby to her breast.

"My child!" she breathed passionately. "Mine! Mine! *Mine!*"

SOME women demand love, others worship. A man's success depends upon his ability to distinguish between the two.

THE CHINATOWN BEAT

By Thomas Grant Springer

V—"THOU GOOD AND FAITHFUL SERVANT"

IT makes little difference how I came by the details of the story I shall try to give you. We who gather the news often have to pick it up here and there in broken threads, piecing it together at last into a pattern woven from facts and fancies on the loom of conjecture with the shuttle of experience. Glancing over your morning paper at the breakfast table, you see only the news that the city editor (who is no artist) permits us: the barest facts, the climax in the headlines, and only essential details boiled down for quick consumption.

Of that most picturesque quarter of San Francisco — Chinatown — we give you almost no news, for if we did you would not understand it in the cramped space allotted to us; and so perhaps the city editor is right, after all. There may be a tong war; so many men are killed. There are names which are an unintelligible jumble of almost funny sounds to you. A slave girl may be rescued by the mission. We give you a scant paragraph, but the details of the system which forces us to call some Chinese women slaves cannot be dealt with in a news story. A lottery joint or a fan-tan game is raided. We tell you so in a few lines, and your mental vision conjures up low dens of vice. But what do you know of the life, of the inner thoughts, of these people whom even we boys of the Chinatown beat, in spite of our friendship with them, have failed to fathom?

You draw a veil of ignorance, which you call mystery, about Chinatown, and behind it the Chinese hide, well content to elude the idle curiosity of the Occident. Even when they walk among us, becoming our servants and keeping our houses for us, we know little of them, for between the yellow and the white there can be no real intimacy. And yet under their apparent servility there is a sturdy independence of thought and action, veiled by features as immobile as those of their carved stone gods. The tyrant of your household, that white-coated, cat-footed shadow who anticipated your wants, bargained with tradespeople for the last nickel with more success than you could ever hope for, who watched over your interests and comforts with more care than he did over his own, never raised the mask of his features and let you see your image enshrined in his heart, yet often it was there.

In the old days of which I write, before the convulsion swept away the ancient order, there was such service in San Francisco homes as will never be seen again. But though the Chinese lived by us, they did not live with us. The East came to the West, but never became a part of it. Living under our laws, insofar as those laws affected their relations with us, they continued their private existence according to laws more ancient and, to them, more in accord with their needs. Bowing to us in matters which affected us, they kept to themselves, merely transplanting their national system into alien soil.

And so it was that Kin Yep saw with the eyes of the East what was wrong in the house of his master, whom we shall call John Wright, and, being a good and faithful servant, did his best to put that house in order.

John Wright came to San Francisco from up Grass Valley and Nevada City way in the days when Pine Street was the mining stock-market of the world. With little money but a shrewd brain, he dove into the mad whirl of the Comstock boom, emerging with a modest fortune that might have been swept away had he tried to breast the rising tide of that financial maelstrom, as so many did. With his gains he acquired a mining machine shop on lower Folsom Street, an old-fashioned, bay-windowed house out on California Street, and Kin Yep. To those who knew him, Kin Yep was his most valuable acquisition. He was one of those perfect servants to whom we, in these latter days, look back with infinite longing.

The machinery of John Wright's house was never apparent. With Kin's oily presence one never felt the wheels go round. Did John bring guests home unexpectedly to dinner, as frequently happened with his business relations, the meal appeared as if by magic, with none of those surly grumblings or threats so common in these days of tyrannical help. Not, however, that Kin was not himself tyrannical. He brooked no interference in his own realm. He was paid, well paid, to run his master's house, and in it was master over the master. Who the other help was, where the provisions were bought, how his clothes were laundered, pressed, or renovated, were matters that John learned early to leave unquestioningly in the capable hands of his Celestial retainer.

This Son of Heaven made a perfect bachelor heaven of John Wright's house. His skill in concocting cocktails, in cooling wines, in serving mixed drinks, might well have been the envy of many a Market Street barkeeper. His dinners were marvels of cookery and service. The cigar box was never empty, the cigarettes never out. No valet could have taken more pride in his master's personal appearance than Kin did, and shirts, collars, handkerchiefs, and the like always appeared in the dresser drawers without John's having to concern himself about them. On the first of every month, Kin presented the bills, all neatly tabulated, and surprisingly small, considering the manner in which the house was run, and once John had gone over them—a needless formality — and written his check, he knew them no more.

For years this even existence went on, and one would have thought a man could desire no more in this world. Wright's business prospered, his home was the envy of all his male friends, and nothing seemed lacking with Kin Yep at the head of such a smooth-running establishment.

But his Paradise was an Eveless Eden, and at last John took unto himself a wife —and unto Kin Yep a mistress. Kin accepted this with the calm philosophy of his race. Perhaps in his heart he understood. Once in every two years he himself put his "cousin" in charge of John's house, braved a steerage passage across the Pacific to his native Canton, and spent a brief matrimonial vacation there. In the house of his mother dwelt a wife who had assured him the worship of an ancestor when he should be called to his fathers, and, that his sons might one day wear the embroidered coat, or even the peacock feather, of a mandarin, he labored uncomplainingly in the Foreign Devils' land. It was well for his master to marry, for out of marriage come children; and, to the Chinese, children are the joyful instruments through which we, in their memory, continue to live beyond the grave. Already the frost of time had lightly touched his master's brow. It was well that he should heed the warning and sow his seed in the garden of eternity before his strength was withered. Therefore Kin burned many red paper prayers before the joss of fatherhood, and besought that god to bestow upon his master's house the blessing of many sons.

In his inmost mind it cannot be said

that Kin approved of the selection of his master; but, then, Kin, being an old-fashioned Chinaman, could not thoroughly have approved of any white woman. Maude Wright was to him too young, too lacking in dignity, too white and gold and fluffy, for the tall, dark, rather grave man of affairs who had honored her by taking her into his household. But the ways of a Western man with a Western maid are always past the fathoming of the Oriental mind, and, in spite of his secret misgivings, Kin bowed to the decree of his adored master. Nevertheless, he looked askance upon his new mistress. A light blossom she seemed to Kin Yep, more like a sing-song girl than a wife. He could understand the perfume of her presence filling a room whose door stood upon the latch, but not the close-locked chamber of marriage, the altar of which the gods should bless with descendants.

Nor were John Wright's Occidental friends of any other mind. How he had come to marry the girl was quite beyond them. Where he had met her was one of those unfathomable mysteries of choice that we so often observe in the women men marry. John had never been a squire of dames. Apparently a confirmed bachelor, the appearance of Maude Wright as the mistress of his household was anything but a pleasant surprise to his intimates. Perhaps he had met her in some one of the little mining towns to which his business so often took him, and had fallen the victim of an infatuation, for there was no denying her beauty. Perhaps he had known her people in Nevada City or Grass Valley in the old days, for she had the air of a country girl who buys her clothes in the city, reads the society columns of the metropolitan papers one day late, and assumes a culture the veneer of which is not easily penetrated by a man unused to the ways of women. They all hoped for the best, but it was the unspoken opinion of the majority that John Wright had been taken in.

There came a change in the California Street house, although Kin Yep's reign was uninterrupted by it. Maude seemed only too glad to have all the responsibility taken out of, or not even put into, her dainty hands. She made not the slightest move to question or pry into Kin's management, even when the honeymoon had waned. While he would have fiercely resisted any interference with his long-standing authority and defended his assured position as only a Chinese servant can, he was disappointed that Maude did not at least make an attempt to seize the reigns of government. Instead of being complimented that she seemed to regard him as the one most fitted to carry on things as he always had, he felt ignored, which was far from being a personal affront, but seemed to show a lack of Maude's interest in his master's needs. Was she not, now that John had taken her to wife, the real head of his household? Therefore, to show that she appreciated the honor of being thus chosen, it was her right—nay, more, it was her duty to her lord—at least to attempt to assert her authority.

Kin waited, confident in his ability to more than hold his own, but when his position remained not only unassailed but even unquestioned, and the mistress continued to act more as a light guest in the house than as its actual head, an unspoken resentment rose within him. As Maude settled into the warm affection of John Wright's heart, like a softly purring kitten upon a satin cushion before a comfortable fire, so did she accept the social life to which her husband's house was the door, though with his friends and associates there was more of the kitten's playfulness. Observing this, Kin felt more than ever that she possessed the heart of a sing-song girl. Was not marriage a serious thing, even with these queer women of the barbarous West? Were there not responsibilities attached to this sacred prelude to motherhood, which even the lightest woman must as-

sume to show herself fit to guide the tiny feet of those who would one day perpetuate the name and memory of his, and her, beloved master? Maude seemed to have none of them, and treated her position, her household, and even Kin Yep as if she were still a child playing at house with her dolls.

Not only did she play at house and hostess, but she took to the more dangerous pastime of playing with fire. John's friends and associates seemed to find a pretty and vivacious hostess a sort of social magnet that drew them to his hospitality even more frequently than of old. Their own women, however—wives, sisters, and close friends—did not take Maude into their inner circle. Without exactly putting it into words, they made it plain, nevertheless, that they did not like Mrs. Wright. Maude showed no resentment of this; in fact, she seemed to care little to have other women about her, unless it were for the satisfaction of showing them her attraction to even their own men.

John took no serious notice of this. As a matter of fact, he rather took pride in what he thought was his wife's popularity. She could single-handedly entertain a tableful of his men friends, and it gave him a proprietary thrill to watch the grace with which she did it. Not so Kin. Soft-footed, shadow-gliding by habit, without playing the spy, he had seen things that made his Oriental blood rise. If the eyes of love are blind, the loving eyes of a friend are keen, and while John's sight was dimmed by the golden haze of emotion, Kin's catlike gaze took in everything for his master's interest.

Did this woman whom his master had honored above all others of her sex not press the foot of one of the men guests, under the table, with the tiny toe of her glovelike slipper? Had he not seen her slim fingers, like soft pink snakes, wind themselves about and cling to the hand of a departing guest even longer than is proper in that queer Occidental custom of leavetaking? Had he not caught in her eyes the slow languor of a caress as they met the eyes of some attractive friend of her lord's, and had not that friend taken fire under her gaze, even though, for honor's sake, he had smothered the flame? The Oriental was right in keeping his own women close-locked, for they were not to be trusted with freedom. This barbarous Occidental custom of permitting them equal privileges merely courted abuse. To allow them to sit down at meat with men, bare-bosomed, clad in garments of immodesty that displayed to envious and covetous eyes the charms that should be kept for their masters, is more shameful than to take to wife from a flower-boat a sing-song girl, whose perfume is lightly wafted to the nostrils of all men.

Helpless with impotent rage, imperturbable of feature, Kin watched the woman cheating the lord of his heart—if not of hers. Wise in the ways of the Foreign Devils, conscious of his own lowly station in the household, he kept his own counsel.

Time went on. The novelty of Maude's position as John Wright's wife wore off. She settled into the habit of accepting it, and, under its protection, she became more bold. At last even John's slow mind recognized her dangerous flirting. Quarrels followed, quiet remonstrances on his part that she answered with flashes of vixenish temper. Of what was he accusing her? Was it not her duty as hostess to be nice to his friends? Was it her fault that women did not like her and men did? She could not help it if she was attractive, and did he want her to if she could? He was always worsted in these arguments, and usually retired to his study and the questionable consolation of the bottle.

Kin was much disturbed by these scenes, to which he was often a witness and almost always an eavesdropper. If the woman's feet were inclined to stray,

why did not his master, and hers, flay their tender soles with a split bamboo rod, so that they would keep in the path of duty? Why was not her tongue silenced by force when it offended her lord's ear in anger, like a brazen bell that drives out peace? Had Kin's affection for John Wright not been so deep, he might have won his servant's contempt. As it was, Kin's heart ached, and he grew to hate the instrument of what he now knew to be John's pain. Besides, where were the children with whom he had so earnestly prayed the joss of fatherhood to bless the house of his most august master? This woman seemed to be not a garden plot from which the flowers of descendants sprang, and if this were true, it was his master's right to remove the fence of his protection from her and set up his household altar elsewhere. Was she not, as Kin had at first suspected, but a sing-song girl at heart, a thistle bed of love, on which the wind of chance blew lightly, leaving at last but dry, thorny, and barren stalks?

But pride sits in the heart even when it has been broken, and holds its pieces together that a man may show its semblance before the world. At last Kin came to recognize this truth from his own classics in the life of John Wright. The Foreign Devils made many strange laws, and the strangest of them governs their women and permits them in turn to govern men. Did John Wright put forth this now loveless woman from his house, then would he let in shame to sit beside his board and mock him in the presence of his friends. Once these strange creatures made their marriage board, then, be they barren of children or love, still must they twain bide at it, that their friends might not hold them in scorn. Kin's thoughts turned back across the Sundown Sea to where, in the soil of his own Flowery Kingdom, virtue, close-watched and carefully tended, bloomed in women, ripened into sons for the glory of their lord alone, or was torn up as a useless weed and cast out upon the highway, to be trampled underfoot by the passers-by, and the master took no shame therefrom. Here, though a woman walk shamefully, flaunting her fault in the eyes of men, defiling the house with her light presence, still must her master cherish her, mistress of her own life and his, lest he lose face in casting her out. Kin pondered it long and could see no way out, though for his master's own good he knew full well that this woman whom he had taken had best never have put her foot across the threshold of what had been a home best suited to a man's needs alone.

John Wright's business began to take him out of town now more than ever, or so he accounted for his absences to his friends. Kin knew otherwise, however. Love had gone out of his master's household and left it cold. A false god sat upon his family altar and mocked him, nor could he cast it out, lest in so doing he should show his world publicly his secret shame. Thus it was that these false-hearted, cruel-faced Western women ruled men, for as they did, so were their men judged. So, between frequent absences, John made much of his home, keeping the door of his hospitality forever open. He never dined alone now with his wife. Someone was always there, business associates or intimates, and by this time not a few acquaintances of hers, made independently—men, however, never women. Kin, as if to cover the poverty of their inner life from prying eyes, outdid himself in his dinners. No notice was too short, no number of guests too many, to upset his order. He seemed happier when the house was filled, and indeed he was, for in a crowd his master appeared more at his ease, more like his old genial self, no doubt losing himself for the moment and forgetting his troubles in the happy chatter of others. His friends hardly suspected what was going on in his heart at this time, and Kin, seeing that thus his lord

could save his face, found no task of entertainment beyond his skill.

But with John Wright away, Kin was a dumb and muzzled watchdog. Maude paid little attention to this silent servitor, regarding him more in the light of a piece of domestic machinery that ministered unquestioningly to her comfort than anything human. Because his lips never moved in speech, she believed that his eyes, expressionless under their narrow lids as dull brown agates, were merely instruments to guide his noiseless movements, not to guide his thoughts, if indeed she credited him with ever having thoughts. The entertainments she gave during her husband's absences were of a very different character from those when he was at home. The guests were strangers to the master. Kin's skill with liquids was called more into play, and there was much gayety of a raucous order. Tête-à-tête dinners were much to her liking, and a certain dapperly dressed, prematurely aged man who never appeared when John was at home was her most frequent companion at them. Kin, smoking his fine-cut in a brass water-pipe, and silently figuring out an elaborate fan-tan system, in his little room at the front of the basement, always fought off sleep until he heard the guest depart, and made a mental note of the hour, which frequently outstretched the most elastic convention.

It was during one of John's business trips that Maude herself departed. She did not tell Kin where she was going, merely saying that she would be gone a few days. But her tête-à-tête diner had been with her the evening before. She had not yet come when John returned unexpectedly.

"Where is your mistress?" he asked when she did not appear at dinner.

Kin looked into his master's eyes, saw the tragedy deep down in their sombre depths, and felt that he could do no good by adding to it. His features were expressionless as he replied: "No sabe. Allee same she pack 'em li'le glip yesterday. Maybe allee same she go Oaklan' see 'em flend. Me no sabe; she no say."

John questioned him no further. His wife had no woman friends in Oakland; indeed, she seemed to have no woman friends at all. If she had any people, no one knew of them but John, and they certainly were not in Oakland.

"All right, Kin," he said quietly. "That's all for to-night."

Kin departed silently, but he slipped into the study and saw that the whisky bottle was filled, and in the morning he noticed how low its tide had fallen and that the ash-tray contained a dozen half-smoked and badly chewed cigars.

For two days John kept to the house, except for an hour's run down to the Folsom Street shop. Late the second evening she returned. Kin let her in, but it was impossible for him to overhear what took place at their meeting, for Maude went straight to their room. He could make out his master's deep tones, low but of a penetrating timbre, and her shrill replies, sharp and shrewish at first, but at last dropping lower, broken with sobs and a note of pleading. He stole down to his little room, already knowing the outcome of the conflict.

Far into the night he sat and smoked, stuffing little pinches of fine-cut into his brass water-pipe, lighting them with a glowing punk stick, and blowing out the ashes after one or two deep puffs, and, through the purple mist he raised, seeing his home up the river from Canton, that he had not visited since his master had taken this woman into his house for its defilement, for he felt that he could not leave him alone. His own family, he knew, was safe. There was his woman, rigidly virtuous through his long absence, minding his two sturdy sons with the devotion that only a Chinese mother can give her children. Had her tiny feet but once toddled from the path of duty on which they were set, even though she had given him sons to per-

petuate and glorify his memory, her silent body would have floated down the river and out into the Southern Sea, or else all men would have turned their faces from him. Yet here this childless, barren woman dwelt in the house of a good man, and, without the justification of need, plied a trade the only profit of which was her own pleasure; and her lord stood by and let her live, nay, even sheltered her, rather than let his secret shame be known.

The next morning Kin found that his master had spent the night in the study, with such sleep as may be snatched in a morris chair. John bade Kin move his personal belongings into one of the guest rooms, and so the house became definitely divided. Kin obeyed the order with a good heart. At least, it was a step toward an open break. He knew that even in this land where women rule, a man might cast out a faithless wife if infidelity could be proven, and there was no doubt in his mind that John Wright now had the proof.

But time went on, and no such thing happened. Under one roof they lived, and yet apart. Their guests still came, and before them the sorry farce was still played out. Love could not be, nor yet respect, but pride, that queer, distorted pride of the Foreign Devil, still held these two together before their world. Even though his master's trust had been outraged, still his name, which this woman bore for good or ill, must be unsullied in the eyes of men.

John went less often out of the city now. At least, with him at home, his wife could be held in check. He drank more than ever, and it began to show upon him in sunken eyes and deeper furrowed face. The slight snow touch upon his hair widened into a dirty gray. Alone, he was silent; with his friends he showed a boisterous merriment that rang utterly false. Friends laid it to business cares, yet wondered, for his income seemed unimpaired, his hospitality even more lavish and continued. Kin alone knew, and silently watched and thought.

Maude chafed under the restraint that John's almost continual presence enforced; yet because of the creature comforts of her surroundings, the luxury which had now become a fixed habit to her, she made no open move. Then one of John Wright's own younger friends, an unsuccessful dabbler in Pine Street, a professional diner-out, whose tailor's credit was his one remaining asset, began calling in the afternoons while John was busy in Folsom Street. Kin watched until he became convinced that the very sanctity of hospitality had been defiled, and then took counsel with himself.

This could not go on long unnoticed. Soon even those who frequented this very house must see, for successful intrigue between a man and a woman soon drops its cloak of caution and becomes bold, and then all his master's sacrifice would have been in vain. Pride alone was left him now, and should she be allowed to take even that from him, then indeed would John Wright's face become a thing he could not show to anyone. John had been a wonderful master to Kin. Nothing could he look back upon but love, and with love. Once in the old, mad Pine Street days he had taken Kin's savings to that strange Foreign Devils' market of quick gains and returned them to him increased a hundredfold. Out of the generosity of his pay Kin had been able always to indulge every real Chinaman's craving for gambling, and the carefully worked out fantan system had yielded him much, when on his nights off he hied him to the haunts of his own kind and laid his offerings on the altar of the god of luck. All these hoardings had been shipped to an English bank in Canton, and, should Kin decide to return to his native land, there to spend the few years that remained to him in the bosom of his family before he was laid away, to mix with the dust of his fathers in the soil of the Flowery

Kingdom, he would be accounted a rich man; the future of his sons was well assured. His name would be honored, and on the tablet of his memory there would be written no bad character. His life, according to his own standard, had been lived to the fullest and was now almost rounded out in years.

Going over all this, he took his counting machine and carefully computed his material wealth. The result was eminently satisfactory. With a bamboo brush, a tiny block of India ink, and a sheaf of rice-straw paper, he wrote an explicit letter to the Chinese accountant of the English bank in Canton. Next he addressed a flowery epistle to the local branch of his Tong, and to each of his sons, another. Last he wrote a message to the "cousin" who in the old days had made such a satisfactory substitute in John Wright's house during Kin's matrimonial absences. As he arranged all these in a neat package, one of his rare smiles illuminated his features, the brown skin and finely chiseled wrinkles of which made his face look like one of those queer, tiny masks his countrymen cut out of nut shells. Then he went straight to his mistress' room.

Maude was seated at her dressing-table, combing out the long fleece of her fluffy blond hair. The glass threw back the golden glory that framed her pretty, weak face. The loose negligée fell away from her round arms as she plied the comb, and its unclasped neck showed the wide snow of her bosom and the strong, white column of her throat. The picture was quite as pleasing to her as it would have been to one of her admirers, and her soft lips curved in a contented smile as she surveyed it. Suddenly her smiling mouth straightened into a tight line, and her eyes stared in a sudden terror; for over her shoulder she beheld Kin Yep, and on his usually imperturbable features was an expression such as she had never before seen there.

One hand instinctively clutched her loose draperies, and she made as if to rise. But before the scream for which her lips parted left her throat, his left hand was tangled in her hair, dragging her head back, and with a swift movement a long, thin-bladed knife nailed the cry deep down. Then, with a deft wrist movement, he turned the blade so that the head was almost severed.

He paid no attention to the quivering body, nor to the horrible, gurgling sound that came from the now awful lips. Silently he descended the stairs, examined his blood-spattered jacket, wiped the long-bladed knife clean upon it, and turned to wash his hands. He went to his room, donned a fresh, immaculate garment, returned the knife to its carved ivory scabbard, and then summoned the police by telephone.

When the horrified patrolman surveyed the body he asked:

"Who did this?"

"Me no likee; me kill," replied Kin calmly, and went with them without struggle or protest.

When John Wright arrived at Kin's cell in the Hall of Justice, several hours later, he asked to be left alone with his servant.

"Kin," he asked in a hushed voice, "why did you do it?"

Kin looked deep into his eyes. Under the horror that filmed them he saw, too, the blessing of release. Kin thought of the house far away up the river from Canton. On the tablet of his memory there would be no blot, for in the Flowery Kingdom a man has a right to clean his house. His master had not that right in this strange land, but Kin was his good and faithful servant. His rare, slow smile came over his face.

"Me no likee; me kill," he replied quietly, and made no other defense even to the Foreign Devils' court. For in his heart he was sure that John Wright understood.

SPRING IN WASHINGTON SQUARE

An Idyl

By Harry Kemp

(*Prelude*)

THE Square is wonderful in spring,
When green boughs dance up in the sky,
While clothes are hanging out to dry
Where soft, malodorous breezes wing.

They toss the flannels in their flight
That all the winter lurked unseen
On some bambino's limbs, I ween,
Sewed in so snug and warm and tight. . . .

The organ-grinders grind and grind,
The little blootblacks shine and shine,
And Love, the Pagan, the Divine,
So sweetly mad, perversely blind,

Goes questing where the gleaming Arch
Leads outward toward Fifth Avenue,
Where, verging down the vistaed Blue,
The taxis march and countermarch.

He walks in shameless nakedness
In spite of clothes that clothe the Fair . . .
Loves walks abroad and takes the air
In undraped, utter shamelessness . . .

And it is good that he's a god
Or else the cops would run him in
And make him dress and call him Sin
And give him sixty days in Quod. . . .

. . . . . .

In Molly's first he found her fair;
She was an uptown slummer there
Where Village artists congregate
And dreaming poets meditate:
In Molly's first he found her fair,
Adored her rich, abundant hair,
Her small, aristocratic face,
As delicate as the creamy lace
She wore (and found himself unable
To reach her foot beneath the table).

'Twas in the Ferret Hole he met
The one on whom his heart was set
Again . . . and now "she was alone."
He thanked God in an undertone. . . .

Where candles, wax-encrusted, burn,
The Blind God served another turn,
For her cheeks, also, bloomed, afire
With small, bright roses of desire. . . .
As they drank tea they talked and talked;
Then out they went, and walked and walked . . .
And talked and talked—of love and art,
Of soul and body, mind and heart. . . . .

They found that they were kindred souls;
They crowned with perfect aureoles
Each other's heads, and, open-hearted,
They kissed (as comrades) when they parted. . . .

Jack was an artist—oh, how glorious!
She dreamed of him in smock laborious,
Beyond life's tumula harsh and rude,
Depicting nudity more nude,
With torso whiter, lips more ruby,
Than nature ever meant them to be. . . .

Jack was an artist—how she loved
The different world in which he moved,
Where to the shoulders men wore hair free,
And women bobbed it and went care-free. . . .

She loved all places lit with candles,
Conducive to romantic scandals;
She loved the incense-laden air,
The talk of books—if Jack was there,
And (not to speak of things material)
She loved Jack with a love ethereal. . . .

For six weeks they had loved, or longer,
And constantly their love grew stronger;
Yet neither asked the other where
They lived, because they did not care:
They met in others' studios never,
For she was cautious, Jack was clever;
They met in others' studios never—

And so it might have gone forever. . . .
They met in restaurants or tea-rooms
Where, dim and deep as under sea, rooms
Were set with benches, lit with candles—
And bowls were drunk from without handles. . . .

Then one day Marian (that was *her* name)
(Of him or her I give no surname)
Determined (evil fates suborning)
To look him up, one boresome morning. . . .
They'd never met till afternoon—
She might have known it was too soon.

Rashly she set out to discover
The studio of Jack, her lover,
And after several hours' endeavor
She found it . . . love had made her clever. . . .

Jack opened up the door in wonder. . . .
"Too long our lives have stood asunder,—
Now I've come to you to be yours
Forever, Jack, while time endures!"

There never was a man so frightened.
Jack's eyes grew large and his face whitened.
"Hush, Marian—not so loud!" he said,
His face now red, now white, now red,
As one whom danger's nearness scares.
"Hush, not so loud! My wife's up-stairs!"

Then stair by stair went Marian downward:
She hailed a taxi, whirled uptownward,—
And, as she lay back in the taxi,
Her anger flamed like Cotopaxi:
She raved at Jack . . . she cursed the Village . . .
She rode and rode and ran up mileage;
For when she caught the chauffeur slowing
She cried to him: "Just keep on going!" . . .
She found that the continuous motion
Was to her wounded heart a lotion. . . .

But, lest you think that Jack was brutal,
(To find your sympathy is futile)
Know, without any more ado,
THAT MARIAN WAS MARRIED, TOO!

AFFLICTED

By Berton Braley

SHE'S wondrously pretty and dainty and bright;
  She's all that a man could desire;
Her voice is delightful, her footstep is light,
  Her wit is as brilliant as fire;
She's charming in spirit and body and mind,
And, oh, how I suffer because she is blind!

To think that this picture of beauty and youth
  Should always be handicapped so!
It hurts all the more that she bears it, in truth,
  Without any semblance of woe:
She moves through the universe bubbling with glee,
As cheerful and happy as though she could see.

You never would know, if you gazed in her eyes,
  That her sight wasn't good as the best;
She *can* see the sunsets that color the skies,
  And the trees and the birds and the rest;
But in one respect she's as blind as a wall,
For somehow she just cannot see me at all!

THE MASKERS

By Helen Hamilton Dudley

UNREAL the smile we wear, my love;
  Unreal the game we play:
Almost too great to bear, dear love,
  The tasks of a fevered day.
Almost too full of choking tears,
  The laughter which rings at night;
Almost too heavy the mask, O love;
  Almost too hard the fight!

Always the restless, dream-mad dusk;
  Always the harsh, cold day. . . .
Unreal the smile we wear, sweet love—
  Unreal the game we play!

'ARF AND 'ARF

By Katherine McCormack

THE first time Dan Henderson knocked at the door of the girl's cabin, midway in the row of vacant shacks along the one thwarted half street of Empty Pocket, the dog was at his heels.

He was a wolf dog, larger, uglier, and more menacing than most, and the girl was puzzled to see him there. Sledge dogs do not follow their masters about, as she had learned already during her few days in Alaska. There is nothing either of the fondled pet or of the loyal friend about them. So she wondered vaguely.

While she threw that first startled half glance at the dog, the girl was filled with the foolish conviction that the creature was staring back at her with a gleam of hatred in his small eyes, that seemed to be fixed upon her with a look that was at once apprehensive and menacing. Worst of all, the girl felt absurdly, they were understanding eyes—the huge creature seemed to know her better in that moment than his master did or could. She shivered.

"Ugh!" she said. "Ugly brute! Come in and shut the door. I'm scared of him."

"Don't you be afraid of 'Arf and 'Arf," the big man begged her gravely. "He ain't a ladies' dog, that's true; no need for you to go pattin' him on the head. But he won't hurt you when you're a friend of mine, 'Arf and 'Arf won't."

"'Arf and what?" the girl snapped, her nerves shaken.

"'Arf and 'Arf: I named him after his breed. He's a mixture you won't be findin' again in a hurry—half wolf dog and half collie. His hide's mostly wolf, but his heart's all collie. The wolf dogs hate their men, you know; it's fear of the whip and hope of the meat that keeps them in harness. But 'Arf and 'Arf's different. He saved my life once. I'll tell you about it some time."

The girl shrugged and let the subject drop. It was not her purpose to waste time talking to Dan Henderson about mongrel wolf dogs. Only this big man stood between her and an unhoused winter in the North, she thought. In her New York cabarets Lily Dean had heard of this mining town, heard wild stories of the gold that yellowed its waters and paved its streets. So, both greedy and ambitious, she had spent the last penny that she had earned or was able to borrow upon a journey that was to end in Pocket Gulch's music halls and her overnight fortune.

It is a four weeks' trip from Manhattan to Angry Bay, boiling against the ledges of the little mining camp. In the fifty days since the exaggerated rumor of the camp's phenomenal pay streak had sifted out on its way to Gotham, the town had been renamed Empty Pocket — with reason. Its boom had become a boomerang. Its gold, except for one slight, exhausted vein, had been a thin plating over a solid depth of unprofitable rock, and the railroad which was to have been built through the town had been abandoned. Pocket Gulch was dead beyond all hope of a resurrection day.

One more of Dan Henderson's dreams had died with it. He was a seasoned

oldtimer who had struck it rich at Nome and at Dawson, and it was his money that had built the emptied shacks of the camp, and had been expended upon the abandoned railroad and poured as an unguent into the hopeless gash of the mine. He had money left, but the big miner's heart was sore at the thought that his friends, old "pards" and "side-kickers," had suffered through his confidence in the place.

In the death-watch over the camp Lily Dean had come, her greedy little hands outstretched like a baby's to grasp any glistening thing that might dangle within their reach, without regard for the owner. Dan Henderson drained his cup of humiliation when he heard the girl rail against Empty Pocket's false boom. In its happiest days the camp had been no place for a girl like her—but of course the little thing didn't know that. He flinched at the thought of what might happen to her now.

"What's the population of the city today?" she asked him bitterly, as he sat twisting the fur cap with its huge ear-flaps in his red hands. "Nine?"

"The city directory's scratched off two more names," Dan grinned feebly.

"You'll be leavin' next, I s'pose," she said, and there was moisture in the eyes she lifted to his.

"Nope," returned the miner. He was distressed by the tears on her lashes. "I'll stick till there's a lucky strike somewhere else. One place's good as another to burn 'baccy in." Dan had no words to say the thing that was in his heart. He knew that he was staying in Empty Pocket as a mother stays by the side of her dead child, mostly in bitter grief, but a little in hope that her very love must bring it back to life again.

"That's all right for you," said Lily Dean, and one of the tears fell. "You can eat. But—"

"So can you," the big man blundered.

She stole a shrewd, suspicion-charged glance at him. It was on her tongue to tell him that she was a lady, and she'd thank him to remember it, she would! Dan, for all his long acquaintance with the Alaskan camps, would have been mightily surprised had she spoken. This girl seemed so little and so ignorant of life; her hair was so yellow!

"You can have money enough to take you home, anyhow," he said. "But—but let's get married, Lil. You don't know me very well yet, but there's the winter ahead to get acquainted in." He laughed, from the depths of his nervousness.

Lily Dean gave thought to her ideal of masculine perfection as you will find it on Fourteenth Street: a slim and dapper ideal, with highly polished tan shoes, a massive stone in its tie pin, and a leer of brazen admiration in its eyes. This hulk of a man in a flannel shirt and a beard, too shy to meet her eyes, outraged her East Side canons. But he had money. Even if she went back, her cabaret job would be gone.

"I—I—" she hesitated.

The wind slapped through the little shack as if it had been a child's house of cards. It was one of the cabins that had not been finished when Pocket Gulch dropped in its tracks, and now it never would be finished. At that moment there rose outside the door the weirdest and most lonesome sound to be heard in the eerie outposts of civilization — the protracted, heartbroken howl of a wolf dog.

"It's 'Arf and 'Arf sayin' good night to his mates, back at my diggin's," Dan Henderson explained.

But the sound had galvanized Lily Dean into decision.

"All right, Mr. Henderson; I—I will, if you want," she whispered, with the downcast eyes of a village maid.

The big miner got quickly to his feet. He looked at her once, then averted his gaze. Upon his face was the conviction that he wanted desperately to kiss the girl, felt the obligations of the case, but didn't know how to go about it. Dan

could have told you that he was a sourdough at life, but a tenderfoot at love.

"A boob," the girl said to herself contemptuously.

"To-morrow?" Dan blurted, and there was passion in his eyes, for all his shyness. "Father Connolly's here yet, but he goes over the trail to Skagway with the next bunch."

"What's Skagway like—Dan?" asked the girl, hesitating before the name.

"Skagway?" he answered, reddening with pleasure. "Oh, quite a place! Two-story houses, and brick buildings, and schools, and stores, and all." There was supreme distaste for towns in his tone.

"Theatres?" Lily got up from her chair in excitement.

"Burlesque shows," answered Henderson. "And sometimes amateur talent."

"Some talent!" scoffed the girl. "Dan, let's go down there to live this winter, you and me. Please, Dan!"

"Not this winter," said the miner. His negative was gentle, but there was something about it that warned the little dancer not to continue her importunities at the moment.

"You wait!" she muttered to herself. But to him she said, with a coquettish toss of her small head: "All right, Dan. To-morrow."

In her smart little Fourteenth Street hat and the extreme little suit that had begun life on Third Avenue, but, except for its material, might have come from two blocks further west, Lily, a wise but most reluctant virgin, waited for the coming of the bridegroom early the next afternoon. Beauty about to wed the beast in the old fairy tale would have seemed to her no more than a parallel for a cabaret dancer doomed to marry a bearded miner. But the movies had been the only fairy tales of Lily's childhood.

"I wish Charlie'd ask me to go back with him," she muttered.

Charlie was the purser on the boat which had brought her to Alaska in search of fame as it is attested by the click of the dollars. He was little and wise of eyes, outfitted with that glaze of sophistication which Lily knew and understood; he had once spent quite three months in Gotham, and called it familiarly "little ole N'Yo'k." On the boat coming up he had made love to Lily with diligence.

"I'll bet he'd do something about this," she murmured to herself, the tears of self-pity sliding down her cheeks. "Only, he hasn't any money."

She hesitated, remembering that she had boasted a great deal to Charlie of the triumph that awaited her here; then she walked uncertainly to the door. Whether she would have gone she never knew, for outside, crouched upon his haunches, 'Arf and 'Arf eyed the shack with a baleful gaze. Lily was suddenly sure that she must flee from impending matrimony. She advanced several steps, and 'Arf and 'Arf, squatting there in the icy sunshine, growled warningly.

Dan, coming in a little later, with Father Connolly and "the boys," found Lily upon the cabin floor, in a huddle of terror and tears. The others, afraid of women in any guise, as shy men are, and particularly of a woman in tears, as all men are, retreated, while Dan comforted her. Out of her sobs there tumbled presently the fact that the dog had frightened her, and that she wouldn't marry Dan unless he promised to get rid of the dog.

"It wasn't 'Arf and 'Arf's fault," he laughed at her tenderly. "I left him at the door, knowin' I was comin' back—gave him his orders to stay right there. I didn't like to think of you alone in the shack, the only woman in camp."

"You got to get rid of him," reiterated the girl.

Then Dan told her, very simply, of the time when he had had typhoid in Skagway and had started home against the doctor's orders, long before he was strong enough to travel by dog team. He had fainted upon the trail, and had

fallen in the snow, where he would have frozen if it had not been for 'Arf and 'Arf. Yawping and snapping at the rest of the team, gone mad without a driver, the leader had forced them on at a run until they overtook a traveler they had passed half an hour before, and 'Arf and 'Arf, by his strange actions, had brought the man back to help Dan on the sled, and see that he got back to camp alive.

"Runnin' away, that's all he was doin'," grunted Lily, untouched by the tale; she cared so little for Dan, dead or alive.

"He's been with me six years," Dan Henderson said. "Sometimes we've been alone from November till April. I—I think a lot of 'Arf and 'Arf. You know how a man gets to feelin' about a dog."

She didn't, of course. Child of a crowded Bowery tenement, she had never played with a dog in her life. Sometimes one had strayed from his owner, or, ownerless, had ventured into her street, and Lily had chased it with the other youngsters, throwing whatever came to hand, and shrieking shrilly in her glee. That was all she knew about dogs.

Dan Henderson went on opening his soul to her.

"I'm surer of that dog than I am of any man livin'," he said. "Why"—he hesitated, and laughed a little in embarrassment at his depth of feeling—"if it was hell we was goin' to, me and 'Arf and 'Arf, I know he'd run on ahead, and scare off the devils for me. If he goes first, he'll be waitin' for me on the edge of the other world, to show me the way."

"I won't marry you unless you give him up," said the girl again.

"I'm sorry," Dan Henderson muttered. He stopped twisting his cap, and turned his face toward the door. He was almost gone when the girl stopped him.

"Silly!" she said, with an imperious little stamp of the foot. "Can't you see I was only jokin'?"

'Arf and 'Arf, waiting outside the shack door with the eternal patience and deathless love of a dog, pricked up his ears when a woman came out at his master's side, but followed them sulkily homeward. He growled, however, that peculiar, husky, half-human growl of a wolf dog, when she stepped over the threshold into the cabin.

"Don't let him come in, Dan; I don't like the way he smells," begged the girl, putting her hand with its big-stoned, cheap rings upon the man's shoulder.

"He's all right," said the man. "That's just dog. And he always comes in."

"Not to-night," she urged. "Put him out—to please me."

Dan obeyed. What plea of hers would he not have heeded that night? As the big wolf dog went slowly from the room, all dignity, he seemed to Lily to keep his eyes on hers to the last.

They were not better friends as the days limped slowly onward, as like each other in every respect as a flock of wounded winter ptarmigans. Between the big dog of the mixed breed and the little mongrel girl of the cabarets there existed a fixed and inviolable hatred. The one thing they had in common, the fact that they belonged to the same man, served only to intensify it. 'Arf and 'Arf gave no tangible evidence of his hostility after a day early in Lily's life in the cabin. She had been pleading again with her husband to get rid of the dog, and Dan Henderson had again refused. Lily had picked up a sharp-cornered stone (Dan had once examined it feverishly, in the hope of finding hints of gold) and had hurled it at the dog, catching him in the side. Dan, who had not seen the action, turned in time to stop 'Arf and 'Arf as the big dog sprang at the girl.

"'Arf and 'Arf!" he thundered. "Down, you brute!" And the dog brought up on his haunches, quivering, with eyes that begged the man to release him from the command.

Afterward Dan beat the dog with the long sledge whip before the whole team, last step in the humiliation of a leader dog, while Lily looked vengefully on. 'Arf and 'Arf never again made move against her. But his eyes, wiped clean of all but love and trust when he turned them upon his master, added the memory of that beating to his first hatred when he looked at the girl.

To Dan it was incomprehensible that one so small and soft-looking as Lily could cherish so hard a hatred against a dog. But the big miner was slowly accepting the fact that many things about women, as typified by this one of the sex, were incomprehensible. With anxious uncertainty, he eyed the small, yellow-haired creature, in her soiled kimono, sitting over the fire late of an afternoon, forever reading her paper-backed novels. It seemed queer to him that Lily did not care to let him teach her how to snow-shoe, that she would not come with him upon the sledge, that her blatant little soul never once stood hushed as his did before the grandeur of the Northern lights athwart the sky.

He could not understand, either, why Lily did not seem to care about hearing the circumstances of his life before he had met her; there was no slightest detail about hers that he was not eager to know. Early in their married life he had ransacked his memory for forgotten episodes of mining-camp life that the girl might find amusing. But presently he ceased telling her these stories, noting that no one of them ever brought a gleam of interest to Lily's round, brown eyes or a smile to her small, pursed mouth.

"It must all seem mighty tame to her, the things I've done, after being brought up in New York," the man who had lived an epic of the North would reflect to himself with a sigh. And with only the mildest of protests he would leave her to her paper novel.

"You don't get out of doors enough, Lil. You read too much."

Lily would cast a look of utter scorn at the flabby newspaper in Dan's hand. It was all of six weeks old, and she had come from a city where a paper entirely dry from the press is no longer bought, being accounted stale.

"What's there to do but read, I'd like to know," she would whine, in her high, vexed key. "You won't move out of this hole. There ain't anything to do but read or sleep."

Dan might have answered that there was dinner to get and the cabin to tidy, but he closed his lips tight upon retort of the kind, and did the work himself, as he had done before he married. He did not wish to draw down upon his head another tirade upon the subject of leaving Empty Pocket. His heart still leaped to the hope of finding a new vein of gold in the forgotten hills, and he told himself that when spring came again his ill luck would melt with the ice.

"You might, anyhow, get me a phonograph," Lily would rasp, stamping her foot in the babyish wrath that had at first amused Dan, and still made him feel tender and protective toward her.

He promised her a phonograph, although it would mean taking the long trail to Skagway. When the snow was firm and frozen enough for safety, he and 'Arf and 'Arf would captain the expedition that was to end in the gratification of Lily's flippant wish. Her eyes lit up and her cheeks flushed as he made her the promise; Dan was amazed at the depth of her gratitude.

"Women are full of whimsies," mused the big miner to himself.

Dan could not know, and he would have killed anyone who had told him, that it was his absence and not the phonograph that his wife desired. Lily had met Charlie, the purser, again and again, and her life had assumed the faint roseate glow that only a flirtation can assure such as the little cabaret girl. Charlie was not the sort to let the fact that a woman was married cool the ardor of his

phrases. Lily breathed again in her natural atmosphere of intrigue. She had to meet him, though, by stealth, and to cajole him into good humor when he grew impatient.

She was on her languid way home from one of these trysts with Charlie, in the three-o'clock twilight of an Alaskan November afternoon, when she encountered 'Arf and 'Arf immediately in her path. He looked back at her from little, angry eyes that seemed to hold entire knowledge of Charlie's kisses on her lips. It was Lily who turned out of the path into the snow to let him pass. 'Arf and 'Arf was a one-man dog, she knew, but she was not of that rarer breed, a one-man woman, and she could have been under no circumstances. For just a moment shame surged over her anger as she faced the wolf dog.

She meant to gain a still greater hold upon Charlie; perhaps then he would take her back to civilization, she planned, though he had made her no such promise. Hers was a petty, scared soul, entirely unfit for the Northern vastness. It takes a rugged nature to live happily in a deserted mining camp on the outer edge of the rim of civilization. Lily had never so much as owned a room to herself in the crowded tenement days of her old life. She would have been frightened to find herself alone in a house. Here she was in a dead village, while the gale blew through the empty town with the sound of the slap of the wind on a bellying sail and the tenantless gray shacks looked like so many monuments in a graveyard over which she stood guard alone.

"He's going next Friday," she told Charlie one Tuesday afternoon, knowing that his boat would be delayed at Angry Bay for more than a week. "He'll be gone for three days, at least."

Charlie's eyes lingered upon her confusion.

"I'll be there with bells on," he told her. "Friday afternoon, late, I'll come. And I don't know as I'll ever go away."

Lily giggled. It seemed to her that there was a certain slapstick humor in a situation in which the husband played straight into the hands of his wife and her lover.

"You're sure he don't suspect?" asked Charlie, and there was anxiety in his tone. He had taken note of Dan's big frame.

"He ain't on to anything," laughed Lily. "He'd never suspect me in a million years!"

"The poor nut!" sniffed Charlie, with profound contempt for a nature without suspicion.

Lily had kissed her husband good-by with so much warmth that, in spite of a prémonition of evil that hung over him, he felt repaid in advance for the journey he was about to make. Then she made food ready for Charlie's coming, and saw to it that the little cabin was tidy. At last she dressed herself in the clothes that she had worn when she came to Alaska, and peered out into the mid-afternoon twilight, her eager eyes seeking her lover. In the uncertain light, the white drifts around her loomed eerie and frightening. The other shacks, snowed in almost to their roofs, were like bits of wreckage tossed about on a sea of foam. In all the vast, lonesome twilight, nothing was alive, and Lily's blood ran chill for a moment.

Then warmth surged over her, and a wave of joy, as she saw Charlie's slight form swinging toward her. He saw her waiting for him, and waved his hand.

"Everything all right?" he called, as he came nearer.

"All right," answered Lily, almost laughing in her joy, and running toward Charlie's outstretched arms.

She never knew just what happened next. Ahead of her on the path she saw a familiar, crouching, baleful figure. It was 'Arf and 'Arf, and the big dog had never seemed so formidable. For a moment she stopped, and then she saw

that 'Arf and 'Arf was paying no attention to her. His eyes were fixed upon the man.

"Look out!" she called shrilly.

Then 'Arf and 'Arf sprang at Charlie, with murder glistening in his eyes, his teeth at the man's throat. Lily heard a low gurgle that she was never to forget. She beat frantically at the wolf dog with her bare hands, but 'Arf and 'Arf did not seem to feel the blows. She called Charlie's name, and he did not answer. When the dog drew away, she bent over him, and she could not feel his breath on her hand as she held it over his mouth. He was dead, and Lily, futile little scared girl, left him there and lurched drunkenly into her cabin.

It was here a little later that Dan Henderson found her. The sight of his white face roused her a little from her lethargy of horror and fear. Her first thought was to save herself, as always. She was terrified by the dazed eyes of her husband.

"You didn't go to Skagway, after all?" she asked dully. "You're back? You said—"

Dan Henderson did not seem to notice her fright and distress at all, as he dropped heavily into a chair.

"It was 'Arf and 'Arf," he said slowly. "He's dead, Lil. It happened at noon to-day."

"'Arf and 'Arf?" The girl stared at him wildly. For once her small soul was washed clean of all pretense, and there was honest guilt and naked fear in her eyes. "Dead? At *noon?*"

"About then." Dan Henderson's brooding eyes took no note at all of the girl he had made his wife. "I'd unhitched the team, to give them their grub and let them rest. Some fool of a sissy hunter from the States saw one of them there in the wild, and thought he'd happened upon big game. If only it hadn't been 'Arf and 'Arf he got!"

"Not killed?" Lily's voice was a mere thread of sound.

"Got him. 'Fore I knew what had happened, 'Arf and 'Arf was streakin' it down the cañon, leavin' a trail of blood behind him. I didn't dare leave the dogs there without a leader till I had them back in harness again. Then I looked and looked, but the fallin' snow hid the blood stains, and I couldn't find the body. He couldn't have lived an hour the way he was shot. Crawled off into the drifts to die—poor old 'Arf and 'Arf!"

"At noon? He's been *dead since noon?*" Lily's voice was still shaken with terror.

"I'll miss him." There was a strong man's repressed feeling in the halting words. He turned on her a slow look that had in it contempt and a sort of astonishment at her paltriness of nature. "You never liked him," he said.

"At noon!" whispered Lily once more. It came to her that 'Arf and 'Arf dead was going to prove a far grimmer enemy than 'Arf and 'Arf living had ever done. "No, I didn't like him, Dan, but I wish he could come back!"

The man made no answer. And then all at once there came a familiar scratching at the door. The two jumped to their feet as if electrified.

"It sounds like—!" gasped Lily.

"It can't be!" Dan Henderson muttered. He rushed to the cabin door and threw it open.

'Arf and 'Arf came dragging himself slowly into the room. The dog's hair was matted with frozen blood; he was utterly spent with his wound and his long journey. But the collie heart of him had propelled the wolf body to its destination, and had compelled it to a last spurt of strength at the end—in the protection of his master's honor.

"'Arf and 'Arf!" choked Dan Henderson.

He dropped on his knees and threw his arms around the dog. 'Arf and 'Arf rubbed his head against the beloved man-shoulder, but it seemed to the girl that his

eyes fastened themselves upon her own, and that in them she read a lifelong pledge—and a threat. In the moonlight through the window she saw a strange new drift of snow with a curious likeness to the shape of a human form. . . .

MYSTERY

By Clinton Scollard

NIGHTLY the stars their courses run;
Hill calls to hill in antiphon;
And somewhat of the reason why
I can descry.

The rose expands to perfect flower;
The breezes lilt, and strides the shower;
And somewhat of this miracle
Is mine to tell.

But why the most divine of maids
Advances now, and now evades,
Is wholly, I confess, to me
A mystery!

ADORATION

By Elsbeth Murphy

I LOVE myself. How good I am to myself! All day I work hard, supporting myself. I spend every cent that I earn on myself, buying beautiful clothes for myself. I enjoy seeing myself look well; after I have dressed myself in elegant apparel, I stand and admire myself for hours. I will gaze at myself and murmur: "How beautiful!" I spend each evening with myself, reading, singing, or perhaps just talking to myself. I find myself very entertaining. I never argue with myself, nor criticise myself. Always I try to interest myself. And I wait on myself. Willingly and gladly I do little things for myself that I would do for no one else. How I love myself! But, ah, if only I could find someone who would love me as I love myself!

THE GOWN OF GRAY VELOUR

By Du Vernet Rabell

LINA loved to walk up Du Pont Avenue: it gave her a sense of happiness that was almost physical in its intensity.

It was a beautiful street running along the lake front; and now it was April, and the branching maples on either side were just beginning to feather out into their soft green foliage. The houses were attractive, too, old and substantial, with curving driveways of blue stone, spreading lawns, and broad, hospitable-looking porches. There were crocuses and flaunting tulips in some of the borders, and just by the gateway of one big house on the corner were two old lilac bushes, one mass of fragrant purple blossoms. The Townes lived here. Lina's footsteps lingered until she almost stopped; she breathed deeply of the scent of the lilacs, and looked up curiously, almost wistfully, at the windows.

There was the sudden honk of a motor horn just behind her, and a landaulet flashed through the gates and drew up under the porte-cochère. A tall, slender man sprang out with the ease of a college boy and turned to assist an elderly woman. Lina recognized Gibson Towne, and, once around the corner, paused and watched him deliberately. . . .

As the great double doors of the house closed behind him Lina walked slowly on. Her soft young mouth had folded together sullenly, but there were tears in her blue eyes.

Four blocks farther, she turned west into a short side street. Hawks Street bore not the slightest resemblance to Du Pont Avenue. It was narrow and unpaved; the houses were dilapidated, most of them, and huddled close together, as if each were trying to hide its shabbiness behind the shoulder of the other. They slouched down back of broken fences, shutters hanging, tin cans and heaps of ashes in the yards. A woman leaned from one of the windows, bawling at a group of boys who played in the gutter, and a baby cried in gusty shrieks from a rickety perambulator. Lina dropped her head and sped along with eyes fixed on the ground.

She turned into the dingiest house on the dingy block. She ran up the steps and frowned at the bell dangling on one wire. She tried the door, and, finding it locked, knocked on the warped panel. After a moment she knocked again, this time impatiently.

The door was opened by a tall woman, who had evidently answered the summons in some haste. She was shabby, but not slovenly; her blue dress had faded out into a dull gray, but it was clean, and the buttons were all fastened on her shapeless shoes.

"Well?" she asked, as she followed Lina into the combination bedroom and parlor. She seated herself on the edge of the unmade folding-bed and fixed her anxious eyes on her daughter, who stood before the mirror, taking off her hat.

Lina was tall, taller even than her mother, and slim and willowy, with the grace of youth and a well-proportioned body. She came of her mother's people—you could see that at a glance: her hands and feet were small and well shaped, and she carried her head high. Her hair was wonderful, dark in the hollows, but brilliant bronze at the edge of the waves.

She was smiling into the glass at her own image, a feminine Narcissus; her blue eyes were sparkling and her young red lips curved away from white, even little teeth.

Her mother drew a deep breath. Beauty such as Lina's, in such circumstances, amid such surroundings, was almost more of a menace than a blessing.

"Well?" she repeated as Lina turned from the mirror and dumped a fashion magazine, an empty glass, and a dozing kitten from the only chair in the room.

"I delivered the note," Lina told her, stooping for the magazine. "The man at the desk asked me if I wanted to see her, and I said no. She was having her breakfast."

"Why didn't you see her?" her mother asked, frowning.

Lina laughed shortly, and all the bitterness in her tones couldn't hide the music in her voice. "In these clothes? Not much!"

Caroline Morton stared straight ahead of her. "I wonder if she'll come. Just think, Lina: I haven't seen my cousin Marion for twenty years—and we were brought up together like sisters!"

Lina tore her eyes from a delectable picture of a cloth-of-gold evening coat with a sable collar, and patted her mother's work-wrinkled hand.

"You should worry! I can't see what you sent for her now for—after the way your folks have treated you! And just because you married Papa!" she added indignantly. Then a gleam of impish humor sparkled in her eyes. "Although I must say, Mother, you might have done better for yourself."

"I might, indeed," Caroline Morton agreed bitterly. Then she shrugged. "But I never blamed my family—I could see their point of view easily enough. I disappointed Aunt Mary after she had done everything in the world for me. Now, Marion was different. She married Porter Thomas, one of the richest and best-known men in Boston, and was a credit to her upbringing. Well, I did what I did with my eyes wide-open, and I dropped the family quick—I didn't wait for them to drop me. I had my pride."

Lina glanced at her curiously.

"Say, Mother, why didn't you try to reform Papa when he was younger—before booze got to be a habit?"

"Don't say 'booze,'" her mother corrected her sharply. Then she sighed. "I did try, but men don't reform for my kind. I can't make scenes—I never could." She rose and walked to the window. For a moment she looked up and down the street, and then came slowly back to the bed, twisting her hands together.

"Why did you send for this high and mighty cousin if it's going to upset you like this, Mother? I hope you didn't do it for me. If I never see her, it's one day too soon."

Caroline Morton caught Lina's hand and looked at her with something like desperation.

"Now, for pity's sake, Lina, don't take that tone! I've pocketed my pride and asked Marion to do something for you—and don't you get on your high horse the way you did the time that teacher wanted to map out a course of special lectures for you."

Lina's eyes narrowed sullenly.

"I will not be patronized. I'm as good—" She raised her head suddenly and listened. Then she rose and darted to the window.

A taxi had stopped before the door, and a slender woman in a dark taffeta dress, with immaculate white gloves and an elaborately beaded bag, was walking up the path. At first glance you would have taken her for a girl in her early twenties; it was not until she was standing on the top step, close to the window, that you saw she was a woman Caroline Morton's age.

Lina let her mother answer the door. She was looking out of the window when her cousin was ushered into the room.

She turned slowly, half shyly, as her mother presented her.

Marion Thomas advanced, holding out her slender, gloved hand.

"So this is Lina!" She kissed the girl suddenly. "You are very like your mother, dear." She paused and turned with a quick smile to the other woman. "And what a pretty girl you were, Caroline!" She sat down on the chair that Lina brought forward and frankly studied her cousin. Then she sighed softly. "It's been twenty years, Caroline. I wish it hadn't been so long."

"Why?" the other asked dully. "You couldn't have done anything. Nobody could. And, anyhow, I didn't care—I don't now," she added with a sort of grim defiance.

Marion looked into her eyes.

"Then, why did you send for me?"

"I wanted Lina to see you."

"Lina? But why?"

"Because we are having a lot of trouble with Lina. At least, I am. Clement doesn't trouble about anything."

As if an echo to her words, there was a sudden movement from behind the curtains that screened the doorway leading into the next room. A tall, shambling man, collarless, his shirt stained and torn, a tan shoe on one foot and a claret colored bedroom slipper on the other, lurched into view. He stood swaying in the doorway for a moment, blinking at the light, then stumbled forward.

"Didn't know you had anyone here," he mumbled. "'Scuse me—can't be presented—very sick man." He managed to get across the room and out into the hall. He went stumbling and muttering up the stairs, and a moment later a door banged somewhere on the second floor.

"Clement," Caroline explained briefly. "Changed, hasn't he?"

Marion nodded, and slowly her eyes turned toward Lina, who bit her lips and looked out of the window.

"I've changed, too," Caroline went on. She leaned forward and studied Marion. "But you haven't. You are still as pretty and well-groomed and — and fine-looking as ever. That's why I wanted Lina to see you."

"But—I don't understand."

"You think that Lina is beautiful, don't you?" Caroline asked with sudden irrelevance.

"She is lovely," Marion answered at once.

"I knew you'd think so. Oh, I don't mind her knowing she's pretty," she said as her cousin glanced quickly in Lina's direction. "It's all she has, poor girl." She turned to Lina, who was listening to the conversation with an expression of growing irritability on her face. "I want you to look carefully at Mrs. Thomas."

Lina nodded shortly.

"I have;" and she added grudgingly after a moment: "She's all you said she was."

Marion shrugged annoyed shoulders. "I wish, Caroline, you would explain where all this is leading us."

"I am going to—and you must try to understand, Marion, and not get cold and haughty in that way of yours." She folded her hands and, after looking at the rough nails and reddened knuckles for a moment, she slipped them under her apron. "All my life, Marion, I've tried to hold on to a shred of what I used to be. I made a pretty bad mess of my life, but what was done was done, and there was no use crying over it. All I had to hold on to was the knowledge that I came from good people, and that ultimately this might mean something to Lina. I hoped that she would grow up and have some sort of pride and ambition to make something of herself. It's all—" she paused and moistened her lips — "it's all I had to hold on to."

"Well, haven't I pride?" Lina demanded with a sudden drawing down of her brows. "Don't I want to get out of here? Don't I want to make something of myself?"

"No, you don't," her mother denied

swiftly. "You want to work, to make money to buy yourself clothes, so that you can run around to cheap dances with cheap people—"

"Just a moment, Caroline," Marion interrupted swiftly. "What do you want Lina to do?"

"I want her to go to college; I want her to learn something, so that there will be something to her besides her pretty face. Her looks won't help any unless she has something behind them. Mine didn't," she finished bitterly.

"And you don't want to go to college?" Marion asked Lina, who was swinging her foot rapidly and staring out of the window, her eyes narrowed sullenly.

"No, I don't!" Lina burst out, facing her suddenly. "I want a good time, and I can't have it there. The boys are decent enough to me, but the girls make fun of my clothes and won't ask me anywhere, and then snub me because the boys do. I want to make my own money—I want good clothes—some fun—"

"The eternal answer to the riddle of life!" Marion mused.

"Look at Marion," Caroline commanded. "She is not half as good-looking as you are, and she is old enough to be your mother; yet nobody would look at you if she were in the room. And why? Because she has something besides her looks." She turned to Marion with desperate appeal in her eyes. "You see what I mean? For all Lina's eyes, and hair, and perfect figure, and regular features, her face needs something."

There was a deal of truth in what Caroline Morton said. Lina was beautiful—there was no question of that—but she had the beauty of the East, of the Orient—the beauty of the harem, of the body alone. There was no light behind the bright blue eyes, and the lips were too soft, too loosely curved; brain-training was needed to make them anything but sensuous.

Marion Thomas saw this and nodded thoughtfully.

"Go to school," she advised. "It's your best chance."

"For what?" Lina sneered.

"To make something of yourself—to marry well, if you like."

"Well, look at Mary Hains. She was a stenographer, and her boss married her. And I saw a show at the movies—"

"Oh, those movies!" her mother interrupted.

Marion kept her eyes fixed on Lina.

"Now, as I understand this, Lina," she said after a moment, "you would go to school if you had the proper clothes." And as the bronze head nodded sulkily: "All right; I'll give you the clothes."

"What kind of clothes — cast-offs?" Lina demanded rudely, her lips quivering. Then she caught herself. "Oh, please excuse me—please do! I didn't mean that. But Mother has made me so mad—"

Marion looked at her with lifted chin.

"I'll buy you the outfit I would buy my own daughter. Now"—and she placed her hand on Lina's arm—"will you do as your mother wishes?"

Lina traced the pattern in the carpet with the toe of her shoe.

"I'll try it," she conceded after a moment.

Caroline accompanied her cousin to the door. She touched her arm timidly.

"I don't know how to thank you," she said slowly.

Marion waved her hand.

"Don't try. I am going to do some shopping of my own this afternoon, and I'll send up a little frock for Lina—as an evidence of good faith. I have seen just the thing in one of the shops—a charming little gown of gray velour."

"It's good of you, Marion."

"Oh, not at all! It interests me, rather." She smiled. "You know this love of clothes is responsible for much of the evil of to-day. And a girl as pretty as Lina—"

"Lina is not evil!" her mother denied hotly.

Marion shrugged her shoulders with exasperating coolness.

"Oh, face the facts, Caroline! She wants good times, and the clothes to have them in—and she means to get them." She turned toward the steps. "Who knows? This little gown of gray velour may save her." She nodded lightly and ran down the steps.

Caroline turned into the house.

"Just like Marion," she said. "Always spoiled every generous impulse she ever had with a bit of highly phrased cant."

About four thirty that afternoon Mrs. Thomas sent a note to the shabby little house in Hawks Street. In it she said she had bought Lina's gown and it had been delivered to her. She wished Lina to come down to the Hotel Goring some time before six, as she wanted to see how she looked in it. Caroline expected Lina to be wild with excitement, but, to her surprise, her daughter objected to the arrangement.

"It isn't as if she'd taken a fancy to me," she said, "or because she's fond of you. I know her kind: she's doing this because she likes to play the good Samaritan." She shot a sudden glance at her mother. "I heard what she said this morning about 'saving' me."

"Oh, that's just Marion's way. And, anyhow," Caroline added bitterly, "'beggars can't be choosers,' you know."

Lina laughed suddenly.

"Oh, very well; I'll go down to the hotel and let this Cousin Marion of yours put me in my new dress, turn me about, and pat herself on the back for saving a soul." She folded her hands piously and cast her eyes upwards. "And then I'll say sweetly: 'Oh, thank you, kind lady!' like a good little beggar maid." She kissed her mother and ran out of the room and down the steps before Caroline had time to protest.

Lina turned into Du Pont Avenue and walked quickly downtown. But as she reached that part of the avenue which was devoted to smart shops, unconsciously her footsteps became slower and slower. She looked hungrily into the windows, with their kaleidoscopic displays of brilliantly colored gowns, evening wraps, sheer blouses, ravishing lingerie, rich furs, and stunning hats. A tall, fair-haired girl, followed by a small page laden with boxes, tripped across the sidewalk and got into a sumptuous car that waited at the curb. She was about Lina's age. Her black velvet gown hugged her silken ankles; her face was fashionably pale and her lips rouged heavily. Lina gazed after her with smoldering eyes.

"I'm good-looking," she said with savage anger to herself; "even Mother admits that. Why doesn't one of these men who belong to a club like this"—and she eyed the Union Club and its long row of waiting cars—"men who have more money than they know what to do with—why won't they buy me clothes like that? They buy them quick enough for the chorus girls; and cars and suppers and diamonds. Gee! I'd give my life for a car like that!" She stopped and stared at a dark blue town car, its engine running smoothly and powerfully and the chauffeur waiting at the open door.

A tall man came out of the revolving doors of the club and walked across the sidewalk. He had iron-gray hair, but his eyes were bright blue and as young and restless as Lina's own. His passing glance seemed to meet hers for an instant, swept over her like a cold blue wave, and drifted on.

Lina doubled up her fist and gritted her little white teeth.

"Oh, why won't he look at me?" she raged. "Why won't he? I'm easier to look at than that painted thing I saw him with last week." She gazed after the car as it rolled away from the curb, a sudden intentness in her eyes. "You *will* look at me some day, Gibson Towne, you *will!* Some day—" She hurried on, biting her lips on a sudden sob that rose in her throat. "Gee, Lina Morton, you *are* a

fool! Going crazy over a man you don't know—and never will know."

Half an hour later she stood in front of the mirror in Mrs. Porter Thomas' bedroom in the Hotel Goring and tried to keep the glow of gratification out of her eyes. Marion was smiling at her from across the room.

"I wish Gibson Towne could see you now," she said. "He's a friend of mine; a connoisseur of everything beautiful: paintings, ivories, jade images—and women."

Lina listened and regarded herself in the glass with new eyes. She took in every detail of her costume: the high, gray suède shoes on her slim, girlish feet; the soft gray gown of velour, with its long, clinging lines and nunlike collar and cuffs; the close-fitting dark blue hat rolled up on one side, just enough to show the glint of her bronze hair.

"You like it?" Marion said, watching her.

"Yes," Lina answered slowly. "It's different from any dress I ever saw—it's different, even, from any dress I ever wanted. It seems to—to make me stand out, somehow."

It did just that. The gray of the gown toned down the copper of the girl's hair, and yet brought out its rich tints; it kept the lips from being too red, and yet made one conscious of their fresh beauty. Ordinarily, Lina's eyes seemed a bit too bright. Now they were young and sweetly eager in expression. The gray gown was a frame — and for a picture men might well fall down and worship.

"I'm glad the little gown pleases you," Marion drawled, as she said good-by to Lina. "Be a good girl, and you may get another."

Lina checked the impulsive thanks on her lips. Her eyes commenced to dance, and there was an intoxicated ring of mischief and excitement in her voice.

"Who knows?" she almost sang. "Perhaps I won't need to have you buy me any more."

"Why, whatever do you mean?"

Lina laughed mockingly.

"You told Mother this morning that this gown might 'save' me. It might be a boomerang, you know, and work the other way round."

"I didn't mean to go that far," she chuckled to herself as she waited for the elevator at the end of the hall. "But I just wanted to shock some of that smug satisfaction out of her face."

Lina walked slowly out of the great doors of the Hotel Goring and into Du Pont Avenue, reveling in the glances that followed her from every group she passed.

As she reached the sidewalk she glanced back at the clock in the lobby. She nodded quickly.

"If he comes back to his club for dinner I can just make it." She touched lovingly the soft gray folds of her gown. "Will it work? I wonder."

Five minutes later she stepped directly into the path of a tall, gray-haired man who was getting out of his car in front of his club. He drew back with a quick apology on his lips. Then he looked into the eyes of the vision that stood in his path and caught his breath. Marion Thomas had been right: Gibson Towne had a fine appreciation of everything beautiful. He shut his eyes as if blinking in the rays of a brilliant light: the vision had stopped and was actually smiling up into his eyes. It seemed too good to be true.

"Good evening," Lina said sweetly, and waited expectantly.

"Oh—good evening," Towne responded at once. He held out his hand uncertainly, and at once a small hand in a gray suède glove was placed in his with sweet confidence.

Towne stammered a few inane sentences, and Lina simply stood, her hand in his, watching him, always with that wonderful golden smile on her lips.

"Have you dined?" Towne asked presently.

Lina shook her head.

"No, I haven't."

Towne turned, helped her into the car, and gave a low-voiced order. Shortly he was sitting opposite Lina in a popular restaurant, his eyes fixed on her face as if he had been bewitched.

"Why haven't I seen you before?" he asked, as the waiter departed with his order. "I thought I knew the best this town had to offer, but I missed you somewhere in the crowd. Where have you been hiding yourself?"

Lina smiled.

"Oh, you've seen me lots of times."

"Never! I should have remembered. Do you think a man forgets a face like yours?"

Lina sipped her cocktail and regarded him over the rim of the glass.

"It's my dress," she explained. "You've never seen me in this dress before."

"Is that it? Oh, I have it now. Perhaps you are in one of the musical shows. Or do you dance in a cabaret somewhere?"

"No; I only wish I did. I love to dance."

Towne rose at once.

"Then, we are wasting time sitting here. Come on and show me just how much you love to dance."

They danced two trots and a waltz before they returned to the table. Lina's eyes were full of star-sparkles as she sat down, and her cheeks the color of wind-blown peach-blossoms. Towne couldn't take his eyes from her face.

"Why, you are a wonderful dancer!" he exclaimed. "I felt as if I were holding a poppy in my arms, dancing to the music of the wind; that if I didn't hold her close she would blow away from me." He leaned forward with interest. "Is that what you do—dancing, you know?"

Lina shook her head and dipped her fork into the rich concoction on her plate.

"No."

"Aren't you going to tell me anything about yourself? That's the first step, isn't it, when two people are going to be —friends?"

Lina glanced at him quickly.

"I don't see why it should be. Can't you be friends with a girl without knowing the history of her life?"

Towne looked puzzled.

"Oh, I can, of course; but I asked because I was interested."

Lina avoided his eyes.

"There is nothing about me—what I do, where I live—anything—that would really interest you in the least."

She looked off into space, and her eyes widened wistfully.

Towne drew a deep breath.

"Do you know what you look like now? You look like a wonderful tropical flower, a passion flower, growing in a mist of gray."

Lina laughed. "I am a flower," she asserted, trying to meet his mood. "All girls are, I guess."

"Growing in the garden of life," Towne finished for her. "And where," he asked, his eyes aflame as he leaned toward her, "have you bloomed before—and for whom?"

Lina looked at him; she did not quite understand. Then:

"Oh—why"—she laughed nervously—"I never bloomed at all—until to-day." And her hand smoothed the soft gray of her gown.

Towne regarded her thoughtfully for a long moment. "Well, now there is no way out of it. You *must* tell me about yourself. Please," he urged gently. He leaned across the table and placed compelling fingers on her arm.

Lina's eyes narrowed sullenly and her mouth became sulky.

"But why must I?"

"Because I want you to. Because—I like you—dear."

"Well—" She shrugged, and then began to talk rapidly, as if to get an unpleasant task over as soon as possible. It was not a cleverly worded tale that Lina

told Towne: she didn't know how to soften the ugly lines in the picture and still make them tell; she did not know how to paint in the harsh background until she stood out against it, a pathetic, tragic young figure, of whom much would be forgiven. But perhaps the short, bare words into which she put her little narrative made it the more effective, after all. "So, you see, to-day was the first chance that really came my way," she finished, "and I made up my mind to take it. I won't go back to school; I'm tired of books. I am young, I want to dance—I want to have dinner in a place like this every night—I want lovely clothes—jewels—"

"Just a moment," Towne interrupted her. "These desires are natural enough, I suppose, but have you counted the—cost?"

"The cost?"

"Listen to me. You want the things that to you spell life, and you will give—just what? Your youth? Your laughter—the sunshine of your freshness?" He paused and quoted with half-shut, quizzical eyes fixed on her face:

"I often wonder what the Vintners buy,
One half so precious as the stuff they sell."

Lina's soft mouth folded into a childish pout.

"I don't understand you at all. Why do you talk like that to me?"

Towne didn't answer her question.

"Lina," he asked, "how did you happen to speak to me to-night? Had you ever seen me before—did you know anything about me? Or was I just a passer-by who caught your fancy?"

"Oh, no, it wasn't that way at all. Why, I have always known about you—I have watched you ever so long—for two or three years now, I guess. You have been—well, a sort of fairy prince to me."

Towne sat back in his chair.

"A fairy prince! Ye gods!" He rose abruptly. "Come; let's dance again."

As they were returning to their table, he drew her into a little alcove and pointed into a long gilt mirror. "Do you see that man in there?"

Lina nodded, looking up at him with puzzled eyes.

"I see you."

"That's the man I mean. Well—" Towne laughed, a short, cynical chuckle that was hardly a laugh at all—"well, that is a late edition of Sir Galahad. Do you know the original at all?"

Lina drew her brows together; she could not quite follow their conversation along this path. "I've read about him; I forget just what it was."

"It's just as well. He was a young man who, for the good of his soul, disdained the gift the good gods gave him. Now I—" He looked down quizzically into Lina's upturned face. "Have you a soul, I wonder, Lina?"

When they sat down again at their table Towne's attitude had subtly changed. He ordered fresh champagne, and he kept laughing and touching Lina's hand, her slender wrist below the soft white cuff, and once her throat, where the collar rolled away and left it bare.

He told her stories of which Lina could not quite see the point, but which he seemed to regard as exceedingly funny, for he laughed a great deal. Lina's eyes widened, and she pleated the gray folds of her gown with nervous fingers.

"Well," Towne said presently, "let's go."

Lina rose with an odd feeling of relief, and followed him down the long aisle between the small tables, laid now for the supper parties. But her fears came back again with renewed force when she found herself in the limousine a few moments later. Towne was leaning nearer and nearer, and Lina was terrified.

"Now—I am going to kiss you," he announced unsteadily.

Lina drew back and threw out both of her hands.

"No—I—"

Towne laughed immoderately.

"And why not?"

"I don't—I don't like to be kissed," she said breathlessly.

"You don't?" His voice was satirical. "Well, you'll have to learn to like it."

Suddenly Lina found that she was angry.

"I do not have to learn," she declared defiantly.

Towne switched on the light over his head and stared at her.

"Don't take that tone with me. What sort of game do you think you're playing, anyhow?"

"Game?"

"That's what I said. For instance, where do you think you're going now?"

And all at once it came to Lina that she didn't know. She had been nervous and excited when Towne helped her into the car, and she hadn't listened when he gave his order.

"Where are we going?" she asked with sudden sharpness.

"Home—to an apartment uptown."

"No—no!"

"Stop! Don't make a scene—even if you are scared to death. Now, you listen to me, you pretty little idiot. The girl who has dinner with me under the conditions you did—has breakfast with me. Understand that?"

Lina gathered all her terrified faculties together.

"Yes, I do; and you needn't think you can get away with a thing like that, because you can't—not with me."

"Oh!" There was a long silence. Then Towne's voice cut through the darkness. "What a rotten little sport you are! Why, you are only a grafter, aren't you?—like all the rest of your kind! Something for nothing—that's your game, isn't it?"

"I haven't any game. Oh, I want to go home; I wish I'd never seen you—or this dress—or—or anything."

Towne laughed softly.

"Pretty work—you'll be wailing for your mother next. What's the matter with you, anyhow? Or, rather, what's the matter with me? You must play for pretty high stakes! I suppose you think you can get away with it because you are so beautiful—and you *are* a corker—quite the loveliest thing I ever saw! But I dare say you are one of those wise ones who demand the earth in the name of their beauty—even that part of it encircled by a plain gold band. You have your nerve!"

Lina faced him and actually laughed.

"I have—and don't you forget it for one minute, Mr. Gibson Towne. Order your man to drive me home!" And she spoke in the tone of a young empress, although her hands were icy and her whole body shaking.

Towne gave the order and leaned back with a laugh.

"God! and you may get what you want, at that. Your kind does—if they have anything but a powder-puff for a brain." He spoke the last slowly.

Lina nodded at him with a certain gamin pertness.

"My brain may be a powder-puff now—but I'm young yet." She laughed lightly. She wasn't afraid any more; somehow, she felt that her danger was over.

"So you have lost your desire to live?" Towne drawled mockingly. "You are going back to your books?"

"There are worse things than that," Lina retorted at once.

The car stopped. Towne got out, and after an instant's hesitation held out his hand. "I leave you here," he said. "The car will take you home. Do we part friends and is it to be au revoir—or must I say good-by?"

Lina placed her hand for a brief second in his.

"Good-by."

Gibson Towne listened until the purr of the motor had died into the distance.

"Yes, it was good-by," he said softly. "For that little girl, for all her folly, is no fool. She has learned her lesson—and she will never pass this way again."

SEA WIND

By Elias Lieberman

IT carries the tang of a mermaid's kiss
  And the brine of a merman's hair;
It flutters and wings through the air and sings
  Of sun-warmed islands where
All life as it lazily passes by
Is a dream of a gold and sapphire sky.

It echoes the cockatoo's sudden scream
  In the jungle's blatant stir;
It brings the scent of the orient,
  Attar of roses and myrrh;
It thrills, as I see it bob and dance,
With the joy and verve of all romance.

The patter of sandals on narrow streets,
  The jargon of barter and buy,
It brings to me from over-sea,
  But also the ghost of a sigh
That wells from the tomb of a deep sea grave
And is caught by the wind on the crest of a wave.

PASTEURIZED PROVERBS

By L. B.-T.

NECESSITY is the mother of convention.

Quaff and the world quaffs with you; weep—and you get a red nose anyhow.

Virtue is its lone reward.

A word to the wise is unnecessary.

Chickens come home to roost—when the other places are shut.

Discretion is the better part of a valet.

Two is company; three's a triangle.

Tell the truth and raise the devil.

DAVIS' DATING DEVICE

By Clarence Van Jones

CHICKENS is chickens. It don't make no difference whether you see 'em, all fuss and feathers, fluffing up and down Broadway, or doing a Marathon between the wires of a poultry run. It don't make no difference whether they buy their fixings on Fifth or Sixth Avenue, or whether they had 'em as down in a shell and picked their way out where they can grow to pin- and tail-feathers they think is ostrich plumes, they're nothing but a bundle of vanity. It don't make no difference whether you feed 'em high-priced French grub at Rector's or the Claridge or Shanley's, or fatten 'em up on refined Battle Creek breakfast food, to turn up at last nicely browned in a silver dish for a grand finish, they ain't got no gratitude nohow. Chickens is just chickens, and they're all feminine, except roosters, and then most of *them* is so henpecked they don't count none. Personally, I prefer beef, whether it's stall-fed or in skirts, but everybody ain't got my solid taste. You can do something with a bovine and keep 'em in a kitchen or a dairy, but chickens has all got wings, and that makes 'em fly—or think they can.

Now, Dicky Davis was a chicken fancier when I first met up with him, and the fancier they come the more he fancied 'em. He was a good picker, but so are the chickens on Broadway; that's where he started, and, believe me, it's a grand old place to start a finish. Dicky blew in from somewhere out of town and started to blow himself and scatter chicken feed, and in no time he had a whole flock clucking around him. He had 'em from milk-fed squabs to jumbos, but as soon as his sack was empty—and that didn't take no great while—they all fluttered off to their own little coops and left him standing in the middle of Longacre Square, wondering where the hawk had swooped in from. And of course all them chick pullets had put on feathers at his expense, for fine feathers make fine birds, all right, all right, but they didn't molt none that you could notice when they flitted.

It took him quite a while eating at Childs' to convince himself that poultry farming in the city is some different from what it is in the country—but at that it ain't so different as he thought it was. Maybe it was the dairy lunches and the ham an' come-down that turned his thoughts to eggs and hatched his big idea. Anyway, he had an aunt with a little patch of ground out Hackensack way, and finally Dicky got tired of marble tops and took his marble dome over to Jersey by the intermittent trolley, limited, to see if there was any veal stew kept hot there for him.

Well, the aunt was there, and the ground was there. There might not have been a "Welcome" on the mat, but, then, Dicky had gone to the mat a lot of times before, so he didn't let that matter none, 'cause the old lady took him in, same as the young ones done over here. Dicky was sure a great one to have all kinds of females take him in. After he hung around awhile, why I guess Auntie sort of suggested that he ought to do something himself, he'd been done so often. He was there, and the ground was there, and neither of 'em was doing anything but standing round. About the only

thing that Dicky had on his mind was chickens, so he finally decided that if he couldn't keep one kind he'd try to keep another, never getting it through his ivory dome that chickens is chickens, and they're all laying to do a man. He put the poultry business up to the old lady, and she, not knowing his previous experience, fell for it.

Well, somehow or other, Dicky scratched together a flock. Maybe he lured 'em from their happy homes, maybe his aunt staked him to 'em at market prices; I dunno. Anyway, he come over here a couple of times and gets me to go out and look 'em over. I ain't an expert on that particular kind, but Dicky was almost as happy running that flock of yellow legs as he'd been running after the crowd of yellow spats that give him the run on Broadway, so I gives 'em my approval. He had a lot of 'em named after old friends, and they ate out of his hand, same as the others done, only, he was cock of the walk with this flock and could chase 'em whenever he wanted to, for he had 'em all caged in, and they was a whole lot less cagy than the lot he used to run on the sidewalks.

But he got so attached to 'em he couldn't even think of giving any of 'em up. He just couldn't reconcile himself to having anyone pull their tender legs, nicely browned, as they lay on a dish in some Broadway café. No, sir; he decided that them chickens of his should never go to the great, cruel city and be picked to pieces by rounders like their sisters at Healy's and Rector's and the Montmartre. He didn't want 'em dressed for Broadway, for Broadway's dress for chickens is a whole lot décolletée, as we all knows. The simple life for them, and the innocence of their quiet country home! He knew too well what the town does to chickens, and he decides to keep his whole flock right with him, now he's got 'em where he *can* keep 'em. But, city or country, chickens is always eating their heads off, and Auntie decides that them as don't work can't eat, so it was up to them to do something for their keep.

Well, the pullets laid around to some purpose, with the price of eggs what they is, and still going up. Dicky goes around and proudly gathers up the fruits of their labors; in fact, you might almost say their eggs was personally conducted, 'cause he almost squeezed 'em out of the hens and gets 'em over here pretty near warm. Dicky knows what hen-fruit is worth in the swell places—he certainly paid enough for it himself in his time—and so he goes around to a lot of joints and talks 'em into giving back a lot of what they took away from him for what he could warrant as fresh, new-laid eggs.

Now about this time along comes the pure food laws and the cold storage investigations. There's embalmed beef and mummified chickens and frozen fruits and petrified eggs unearthed by the authorities, and it looks as if the produce sharps are making sarcophaguses and mausoleums of our delicate stomachs. Cudahy's packing things in ice, and Armour's armor-plating goods, and Libby's products is as old as Laura Jean Libbey's plots. The muckrakers is raking over the slaughter houses and making the places look like an archæologist's excavation of them ancient Egyptian pyramids. The Ice Trust Preserving Association turns a cold shoulder on the heated discussion, but the public begins to sit up and take notice when it sets down to eat, for it don't want to make its stomach no receptacle for antiques.

Of course the world's most popular breakfast food is dragged into the discussion. A whole lot of hen's pasts is brought to light. It seems that when chickens gets their periodical periods of race suicide, as they does every now and then, once in a while, and lays down on the job instead of laying eggs, why them speculators that is loaded up during the period of the poultry yard's interest in

the census report brings out them indiscretions from cold storage and foists 'em on the public's breakfast table as something that happened yesterday. Now, of course you and me don't want to pay no fancy price for what might have been the offspring of some old hen out in Nebraska that has long since gone to roost with the angels. It's like paying Persian lamb prices for a curled Angora that had died of old age, only one would be hung on you and the other shoved down your throat. The public will stand for a whole lot, but it ain't going to sit down and dine on the products of chickens that was picking up corn when Lincoln was stumping Illinois for the first time. That sort of shell game is too old. We want to pay for what we get and get what we pay for, and that's the way Dicky looked at it, and he was right for once.

Of course he knew that he had the goods, but he had to make other people know it, and then he'd make a fortune. But how? Who was going to take his word that he watched his chickens every time they sat down, and picked up what they sat on before it ever got a chance to get into the speculators' hands to be held onto until they could hold us up on the price of it? Well, he went to work on it and finally worked out his great invention, The Davis Dating Device. As near as I can figure it out, it was a sort of combination adding machine and cash register, Dicky being familiar with both of 'em, for when he was poultry farming on Broadway and scattering chicken feed, every bar used to play him a xylophone solo on the cash register, and in every café they used to use the adding machine to total up his checks. Well, he took all his knowledge of both of 'em, put 'em together, reduced the size, and applied 'em to his present flock of chickens—that is, he made a little machine to attach to every hen, that stamped and dated the egg's shell as soon as it was laid. There was no going back of that, for as soon as Miss (I beg your pardon, I mean Mrs.) Hen laid an egg she registered it. You had a blown-in-the-shell, non-refillable article; it was worth what people paid for it, and, believe me, they paid.

Well, it wasn't no time at all before the Davis' registered eggs was in great demand. They commanded the highest market price, and when they came on the table it was only the very wealthy that could afford to break the shell and dive into the only Simon-pure product of the poultry yard. It looked as if Dicky had a fortune, and he had—for a while. But, as I before remarked, chickens is chickens, they're all feminine and uncertain, and vanity is their chief vice. Dicky was now at a place where he could spring a comeback to the other chicken run, and he sprung. He'd go around mornings, take his orders, telephone 'em out to Jersey, and express in the stamped and guaranteed product of his faithful flock the day before. His nights began to be full of wine and song again—*and* chickens—the kind without wings, and one flock was paying for the other.

All of a sudden, right in the midst of his prosperity, the Federal authorities swoop down like a hawk on his Jersey poultry yard. Auntie madly telephones in that the place is pinched, and Dicky crawls out of the Broadway feathers to beat it over and see who is trying to beat him. When he got there he found a burly United States deputy marshal in charge of the joint.

"Say, what's the idea?" Dicky demands.

"That's what we want to know," the marshal comes back.

"Shoot," says Dicky.

"All right. I got a warrant for you. You're indicted for violating the pure food laws."

At that Dicky gives him a hee-haw that would of done credit to a mule colt in an alfalfa patch.

"Why, you poor simp," he chuckles,

"my product is purer than the law itself. I got the only machine that registers the goods, and there's no going back of that."

"Sure, I know," says the marshal, "and that's just where we got the goods on you." And with that he springs a basket of eggs on Dicky, all of 'em stamped with the Davis Dating Device. "You just cast your glims over them," he says, "and then check up."

Dicky begins to examine the dates, not worrying for a minute. Then he seen his finish. Some of 'em was dated seventeen hundred and something and looked like the product of feathered Daughters of the Revolution; they was a lot whose dates looked as if they was laid by Civil War veterans, and the most up-to-date of the lot was eighteen hundreds.

"This can't be!" gasps Dicky, trying to hold the dome of the administration on with both hands.

"You can bet it can't be allowed to go on no longer. You come along back with me to New York;" and with that the marshal hauls him over here, where he sends me a hurry-up telephone call and I goes down and bails him out.

Well, he goes back over to Jersey, under the shadow of that indictment, and sits down in the hennery, trying to figure it out. It don't take him so awful long, at that. Chickens is chickens, and they're all vanity; it don't make no difference how they're brought up, it's just part of their sex. As Dicky watches them, trying to see how they put it over on him, he notices them combing out their feathers with their bills, same as their Broadway sisters combs out their locks—and then it all comes out. Them toilet arrangements simply jazzes up the mechanical arrangement of them machines and sets 'em to dating any old way. It was a Gawd's own mercy he hadn't put A. D. and B. C. on 'em or they'd had them eggs going back to Noah and coming out of the ark 'fore they got to the arc lights of Broadway.

'Course Dicky got out of it without going to Atlanta, but he got out of the poultry business too, both kinds, and for good. It takes a man a long time to get wise, but some of 'em does sometimes. Dicky's gardening in a monastery now over in Jersey. They ain't even got a cow on the place, and he's happy.

MY HUSBAND

By Betty Osborn

MY husband is a handsome man;
He always looks just so.
The women always stare at him,
Wherever we do go.
He always does the proper thing
At just the proper time;
His ways are quite beyond reproach,
His manners are sublime.
He waits upon me hand and foot,
I know that he adores me;
But I am slowly going mad,
For, gracious! how he bores me!

JANE'S JIM

By Helen Merrill

AS Mazie was shown into the Westons' drawing-room she came upon a sight that made her drop heavily on the nearest chair. There was Paula Weston—whom in the ten years of their friendship she had never found more nearly clothed, before noon, than in a negligée of varying degrees of luscious expensiveness — playing efficient housewife, at 9 A. M., in a high-necked gingham gown with dust-cap to match!

Mrs. Weston did not stop tugging at the yards and yards of Oriental silk that she was pulling recklessly from a curtain pole, even when a gold spindle from Mazie's sadly taxed chair rattled to the floor.

"Oh, dearie!" Mazie cried. "See what I done—er—did!"

"Never mind, girlie. All this seraglio stuff's going out this afternoon. I'm redecorating. I'm trying a simple-life effect—dotted Swiss, jolly red geraniums, canary cages, chintz — and my darling gown goes with it."

"Paula!" Mazie came back to the gown. "Tell me in honest-to-goodness New Yorkese what's going on. Here you go on a lonely joy-ride, spill yourself on some spooky country road, and nobody sees you for four weeks. You have someone mail letters in New York that say you are convalescing from a broken arm in the 'heavenly-peaceful' cottage of a 'white-haired angel' and 'don't want folks to butt in'—'folks' meaning your ownest chum and your poor husband, who's just crawling about after a dreadful illness! Now, wouldn't that—"

Paula pushed Mazie gently back among the pillows of a couch and sat down beside her.

"If I'll tell you, will you promise not to tell Jim?" she said.

With pop-eyed solemnity, Mazie promised.

"That 'white-haired angel' was Jane Weston—Jim's first wife, whom I made him divorce to marry me."

"Your worst enemy wouldn't accuse you of that!" cried loyal Mazie.

"I stole Jane Weston's husband," Paula went on doggedly, "the boy who was her sweetheart from childhood, the man who was the father of her three dead babies. I am the reason that out of the wreck of her life she has nothing left but three pitiful little graves and some gray woolen socks of Jim's laid tenderly away with the babies' dresses."

"Don't be silly! You *earned* Jim, all right. A little trump like you, that'd been through what you had!"

"If you had seen her tears falling on the graves and the socks and the dresses!"

Mazie laughed.

"Now you've said it! She's that weepy kind, always getting mussed up with red eyes, the minute anyone—"

"You couldn't understand such a woman in a thousand years. She was all the sweeter when she found who I was. Seemed real pleased that Jim had 'such a smart, pretty little wife. She just wanted to be sure I was making him happy. Over and over she'd ask: 'Isn't Jim *wonderful?*' and boast of the impression he made on Buck Jennings when Buck was down in Fremont 'promoting.'"

"And, after all, it was Jim that put him out of business," chuckled Mazie reminiscently. "Brains against bunco."

"And I played siren while Buck was trying to fleece him." Paula flayed herself mercilessly. "Well, I made a clean breast of it to Jim; and, do you know, he believed me when I told him all the interest I had in the mess was the fun of flirting a little to keep my mind off my troubles!"

"You didn't tell him about Arthur!"

Paula winced at the mention of her former husband.

"I owed Arthur that. In spite of the misery he had caused me, it was pathetic to see how hard he was trying to die, so as to give me my freedom. And what was I doing while Arthur was dying and Jane was trustfully marking time up there in Fremont? Winding a hypnotized country chap round my pink finger! True, Jim had said Jane was 'narrow' and 'cold' and—"

"And a mush of concession!" snapped Mazie. "All Jim had to do was to ask her politely to get a divorce, and she did it—like a good girl!"

"Well," Paula went on, "as long as I had already done the mischief, and poor, silly Jim wanted me—"

"Seems to me you're terribly concerned about your darling Jim, all of a sudden," mocked Mazie.

"No, not *my* Jim—*Jane's* Jim." Paula fell into a moody silence.

By sheer exasperation, Mazie was driven to action. She shook Paula summarily out of "that ungodly gown," she shoved her under a cold shower, marceled her, powdered and rouged her, put her into a frock of gray silk and silver thread—then hugged her adoringly.

"Now! You to Scanley's for lunch, then to the new show at the Bromley, and from there—does it hurt your arm to dance?—well, from there to Max's place. Don't know Max? We're crazy about him. He dances like a god and looks at you like the devil, and whatever it is he puts in the tea—"

Paula protested feebly.

"No, no! I can't be away so late. Jim comes home early since he was sick. I don't feel right about him. He hasn't been himself."

"All ails Jim is—fifty years. Now, don't go and fall in love with him, and you not forty for some months yet. Why, this minute you don't look thirty—and by the time we girls put you through your paces this afternoon, we'll set you back to twenty-five."

At seven o'clock, as Paula, returning, stood on the steps of the Ardmore, waving good-by to an over-vivacious taxi-load of "the girls," she did not fall far short of Mazie's prediction. Letting herself into her apartment, she announced her presence with a tomboy yodel, feeling sure Jim would be awaiting her. A maid came to say that Mr. Weston had phoned he had to leave at four o'clock for Buffalo and would write her from there.

A sickening reaction flung Paula limp into Jim's big leather chair. Refusing dinner, she lay there without note of time. It was ten o'clock when she rose dazedly and began to pack a traveling bag.

"No use," she thought wearily. "Mazie'll be around for me again tomorrow, and after she's 'personally-conducted' me for a few days— Here, Katie, take the address for my trunk. Put in just the old things I had for camping last summer."

Just before going out she went to look for the third time into a small black box in the top drawer of her desk. She stood for a moment with closed eyes and underlip caught beneath her teeth. Then she locked the desk hurriedly, decisively, and, taking the key to her dresser, put it into her jewel case.

Later, lying awake, hour upon hour, in her stuffy berth, she was still able to bless the impulse that was taking her to

Blatchford. Five years before, the doctor had recommended Blatchford and "Ma" Perkins' farmhouse for Jim's nerves. Jim had endured the combination for just six days, during which time, when not eating or sleeping, he did nothing but grumble at the "poor service," the odor of the cow-barns, the singing of the locusts and frogs, and the lack of excitement.

"And I imagined myself as bored as he," Paula mused. "No man to dress for but Jim. No hotel piazza scandal. Nowhere to go but the postoffice. How my nose went up at those old chaps around the postoffice stove, who eternally spit into the sawdust and ran the country by proxy!

"And now it's so wonderful to find that—thanks to Jane and dear old Fremont—I just love it all!"

She sat up and looked out a long time at the homely towns sleeping under the moonlight—alike as two peas to city eyes.

"To think of all the lost years in which I might have been a *real woman!* Perhaps I might have reared sons to go down to the big cities and show folks what stuff manly men are made of—no! I would have had them stay at home and keep sweet and fine. I couldn't have had *my* boys made 'pikers' of by vampires—like me!" She buried her face in a pillow and cried herself into a little nap.

When the porter waked her the pitiless daylight—and an empty stomach—made her laugh harshly at her moonlight fancies; and when, later, she fell into a long, heavy sleep on "Ma" Perkins' spare bed, she was deadly in earnest in her wish that she might never awake to her maddening problem.

Two days later Jim's letter found her in Ma's hammock under the gnarled apple tree where she had lain the morning long, napping and reading by turns, showered with pink bloom, letting the peace of lazy clouds and droning insects and happy growing things just sink into her soul.

"Your regulation love-letter, you dear old thing!" She laughed softly and read it again: *"Dear Paul: Not much to do here, after all. Home Saturday. Love, Jim."*

She slowly tucked the bulky hotel stationery into her blouse, and lay looking up into the apple blossoms. Once or twice she hugged the crackly "love-letter" against her breast, and when Ma called her to lunch she went upstairs and laid it away in the bottom of her trunk.

After lunch she sat down beside the spare-room window and wrote to Jim, thus:

Of course you're puzzled at this particular tangent of mine. It's due you to know all that's led up to it. Be patient, Jimsy, with quite a long story.

I've never told you that, during your illness, when you were delirious, you talked continually about Fremont—and Jane. I could not sit beside you an instant that you didn't hang onto my hand with a death-grip and call me "Jane," and begin to plan what you'd make of Robert or John or inquire what made little Janie cry so all night long. Other times you'd be talking politics with Sam Somebody, or rotation of crops with Deacon Haynes, or jollying the grocer about sand in his sugar; but always you'd come back to Jane.

Sometimes you didn't talk a bit nice to her. "Lord, Jane!" you'd say, "a man likes to see a smile once in a while. So do *I* miss the babies; but I don't have to go around looking like their tombstones. Thunder and lightning! The babies are a lot happier than you and I could ever have made 'em, and the last one's been gone a year and more. I don't see why— Oh, say, come up on the hill and see the lot for the new house!"

And I'd sit and study you and picture the man you once were. I called him "Jane's Jim." He wasn't a bit like Paula's Jim.

Carefully, lovingly, Paula explained how curiosity had led her to motor out to Fremont all alone, how she skidded into Jane's picket fence and was picked up, with a broken arm, from Jane's pansy-bed, how Jane had nursed her back to health, and how she had ended by despising herself for stealing another woman's husband. She concluded:

And so the only thing left for you to do is to go back to her. She needs you. Fremont needs you—both love you to this day. Oh,

yes, I nearly forgot that you might like to know how to dispose of our marriage. Easy as sinning, Jimmy! And if you don't believe me, read the document in that little black box I keep in the top drawer of my desk. The key is in my jewel case. Read it—mark it Exhibit A!—and then answer.

Paula.

As she slumped exhaustedly into the depths of the big chintz-covered rocker, she realized that she had hardly breathed below a choking lump in her throat since she started to write. Just for a moment she wavered. Then she straightened up, flung back her dainty head, and firmly addressed an envelope to Jim.

Quite as though playing up to the cue of the decisive little thump of her fist upon the postage stamp, exactly at that moment came the rattle of Ma's farm-wagon leaving the barn, and the "hired-man's" rasping whistle.

"Going down to the village?" called Paula.

"Yep. Got any errand, Mis' Weston?" asked Abner.

"Mail this." The letter hit Abner spang on the nose. "And, Abner, send it 'special,' please."

Early next morning, Ma Perkins, in a pitiful state of suspense and a voluminous outing-flannel nightgown, burst into Paula's room and thrust a telegram into her hands.

"Must be somethin' awful," she gasped, "or Jed wouldn't welt the road up here at *this* hour!"

Paula blinked in the rosy glow of sunrise, smiled dreamily at Ma, leisurely read and reread Jim's message, and laughed aloud.

"The dear old stupid!" she sighed, pressing the yellow sheet to a sleep-flushed cheek.

To Ma, miserably nursing first one icy, bunioned foot and then the other in the skirt of her nightgown, that was the last straw.

"Well, I snum!" she flared. "Somebuddy gittin' half the town outer bed at five o'clock of a chilly spring mornin' just to tell you a funny story?"

"You poor thing!" Paula cried. "Get right into my bed and I'll explain. You see, I wrote Jim about an important paper he was to get out of a box in my desk. The key of the box is in my jewel case. He telegraphs: 'Found box and case—no key; meet me noon train tomorrow.' The key being under the pad in the bottom of the jewel case, of *course* he couldn't find it!"

Ma was losing her grouch in the pleasant warmth of the spare bed. A heavenly, elusive perfume rose from a wonderful neckless, sleeveless nightgown; a pink, rounded arm was about her big neck and a lovely gold-silk head pressed her fat shoulder. She lapsed into voluble reminiscence of the departed Mr. Perkins, beginning with how "he never could find nothin' if it was *under anythin' else.*"

When, at noon the next day, Jim bore down upon her at the station, Paula forgot every neat speech she had prepared. She could sympathize with those she had seen awed into dumbness by the irresistible momentum of that awkward bundle of dynamic energy "when Jim Weston got going." Without demanding from him, even in her thoughts, a word of greeting, she let him grip her arm cruelly hard and hurry her around the corner of the baggage room.

Turning her about so that she had to face him squarely, he said: "I chewed things over comin' down on the train, Paula, and I decided I'd just say straight from the shoulder: 'What's the game?'"

"Why, Jim, I—"

"Just a minute, girl. Jim rummaged in the pockets of his coat and pulled out the black box and the jewel case. "Here, now," he sputtered testily, passing her the latter, "let's see you find that damned key!"

It was the very tone and phrase he always used after making chaos of every orderly drawer of his chiffonier in order to unearth a particular pair of socks. With the identical smile of feminine

superiority with which she always put her hand unhesitatingly on the object of his search, Paula lifted the wisp of satin padding from the bottom of the case and produced the key.

The bit of domestic comedy, so reminiscent of their years of comradeship, tempered Jim's ruthlessness.

"Say, little girl," he said quite gently, leading her to a bench that stood against the wall of the station, "I don't mean to scare you, but I've got to my limit. Just you run over in your mind all you've given me to think of in the last few weeks.

"First, I'd no more'n begun to pull out of my sickness than I got wise to that queer look you'd give me every once in a while. Then I noticed you gettin' moody. But before a feller could dope it out, you'd be so hilarious, I sure thought you were soused, sometimes. . . . Shut up, Paul! This is *my* innings! . . . Bimeby, off you go on a joy-ride and get capsized into the pansy-bed of a 'white-haired angel.' I always thought I liked your little flights of imagination, but this time they—well, they warn't amusin' to me, to say the least. I tell you, I was near *crazy,* tryin' to keep from thinkin'—er—things about you! And when you came home I had to just hold onto myself to keep from grabbin' you by the hair of your head and torturin' the truth out o' you. I thought if there *was* somebody else—"

Jim's eyes searched her face wildly. What he saw there made him sink, baffled, against the bench. A delicate flush was mounting in Paula's cheeks. A teary, joyous light suffused her eyes. "Oh, Jim!" she breathed. (How could he know that she was so happy to have him unreasoningly jealous of her that for a moment she quite forgot her rôle?)

Her eyes falling once more on the black box, she remembered and took on a matter-of-fact air.

"What's the use, Jim, of going into all that? Open the box."

For answer, Jim flung it upon the boards at their feet. "I don't *care* what's in it, Paul. There's only one thing botherin' me, and the answer can't come out of any picayune tin box. All the way up on that confounded funeral-cortège of a train, I was on the point of putting my heel through it, but now I'm with you—" He gave the box a contemptuous kick. It fell upon the railroad ties, close beside a rail.

Paula was so engrossed in keeping faith with the task she had set herself that she did not hear the oncoming express until it was close upon them. She sprang to rescue the box. Jim leaped after her and, with a mighty jerk, pulled her back to safety before she could grasp it.

They both lay prone upon the platform while the great train tore past. Then Paula looked, first, for the box. It was crushed into two flat pieces of tin, and along the edges was a pulpy ooze of white paper on which she recognized a few familiar words in black ink.

She turned to look for Jim. He lay with his back toward her, a bit dazed, she thought, by the roar of the wheels so close to his head. She reached for the box. It burned her fingers. The next moment the white paper edges, heated to combustion, vanished in a little burst of flame and smoke. Paula picked the wreck up quickly and dropped it on the platform. Then she went to Jim and shook him gently. He did not move or speak.

"Jim, Jim!" she cried. "Oh, oh, somebody come!"

Jed lumbered out of the telegraph office and managed a dog-trot in their direction.

Paula lived a lifetime in the ten minutes which followed Jed's departure for a doctor. Crouched beside Jim to shield him from the sun, now fondling his head, lying so terribly still on Jed's folded coat, now putting her ear to his heart, now laying her cheek against his,

now, in a sudden panic, chafing his wrists, and at last catching his face to her breast and drawing as much of his great frame as she could hold upon her lap—in those minutes she had glimpses of all the heights and depths of all the kinds of love a woman may have for a man.

As she began instinctively to croon over him as though he were her baby, it came to her that Jane had forgiven him so much because she loved him as a mother loves her boy.

"I don't believe you ever cared for him all the ways I do!" she challenged, flinging up her head as though Jane stood there. "If you had, you could have held him. Saint though you are, there must have been *some* way you killed his love. Jane Weston, it's between you and me now, *on even terms.* I shall tell him everything if—if he lives—and he shall choose between us. If he despises me—then he is yours. But now—for a few minutes, at least—ah, dear God!—he is *mine, mine!*"

She drew Jim closer, pushed back his hair, and kissed his forehead softly, and then — he opened his eyes and stared about.

"You little fool!" he said. "Risking your life for a tin box! Ouch! but I gave my head some whack!"

Paula fell to weeping hysterically, her cheek against his. She tried to speak, but great sobs of relief and happiness shook her, and her tears rained on his face.

Jim's hand began to fumble about weakly, as though for something to raise himself by. It came in contact with the remains of the black box. He pushed it from him.

"Well, I'll be eternally jiggered, Paul! The damned thing is still with us, isn't it!" He tottered to his feet and stood swaying and gazing fascinatedly down upon it.

Paula caught her breath and straightened up to meet her life sentence; for she intended to bring her cause to trial before she had time to reconsider. She guided Jim tenderly back to the bench.

"Jim!" At first her voice did not rise above a tense whisper. "Between those scraps of tin are the remains of a letter from Doctor Harding, who attended Arthur at the sanitarium. I can repeat it, word for word.

"Dear Mrs. Weston: I am to be operated on to-morrow morning, and there's little chance for me. So I think you ought to know something that's on my mind. Somehow, when it comes to the final showdown, a body likes to clean up tag-ends. There's a little fact about your first husband's death that might come in handy some time. Arthur died at three A. M., June 11th. You wrote me that you married Jim Weston before midnight of June 10th. No one noticed the little clash of dates but me. However—"

"Wait!" Jim cried. "How's that?"

"You know, dear," she explained patiently, "that we were married just before twelve o'clock, the night of June 10th."

Jim nodded.

"How did it happen we went and did it without giving the poor fellow a chance to die? I seem to remember you said—"

"Yes, I told you he was dead. I was pretty certain he was, but I *took a chance,* Jim. Doc had cabled me the day before that Arthur was dying, and you were going off on that Western trip at two o'clock the next morning. It couldn't be put off, and I didn't want you to go without me."

"You loved me as much as that, Paul?"

"No, I didn't." Paula didn't temper the truth, even by a shade of pleading in her voice. "You were a 'good thing.' I had held my head above water as long as I could. I needed even the *shelter* your money would buy!"

Jim's face went white as a sheet.

Paula put an arm about him.

"Jim dear, it hurts, I know—and I shall have to hurt you still more. You will have to know the rest of Doc's letter. It was—

"I write you this because in ten years Jim Weston will be an old man, while you will be lovelier than ever. Your temperament will never endure being lashed to a fossil. Preserve this letter, and some day you'll thank me."

Jim stared at Paula blankly and slumped against the back of the bench. Paula, white with apprehension, watched his closed lids and set, colorless lips. In all her life she never forgot the stricken look in the eyes he raised at last to hers.

"There's no fool like an old fool, Paul," he said dully. "I've known it all along. How many times in the past year I've said: 'Look at her, lovelier than ever at forty—and I'—"

"Jim, stop! Haven't I told you dozens of times that you look ten years younger than any man of your age in our set?"

"Our set! *Your* set, you mean. You know I never really belonged, Paula. Lately I've been thinking I—"

"Oh, Jim!" Paula forgot herself. She caught one of his inert hands in hers. "You wish you'd stayed in Fremont?"

"Meaning *you* darn' well wish I had!"

"No, truly, dear, not that; but I'd like you to feel that's where you belong—and glory in it. I'd like you to realize that, underneath, you are made of the true metal that towns like Fremont put into their best men. All your Broadway swagger, your taste for silk pajamas and cabarets, your cynicism, your jests at the serious things of life, your winkings at shady business methods—they are but the spurious—"

"Hey, hold your horses, Paul! Can't you talk in—"

"Honest-to-goodness New Yorkese?" laughed Paula, remembering Mazie.

Jim frowned blackly and threw off her clinging hands.

"Not only 'hold your horses,' but keep 'em on the main road! Who's this 'Jane's Jim' you were prattlin' about in your letter?"

Paula steeled herself.

"Jane's Jim is the man you started out to be when Jane gave her girlhood into your keeping; the man she helped you to become and still believes you to be. You owe it to her to live up to her faith in you. Whether you owe her also the devotion of your remaining years is for you to decide—now.

"Remember, she pinched and saved to start you in business; she lost her youthful bloom and figure bearing your children; she spent the lustre of her eyes beside their graves, and in between times she cooked and mended and scrubbed to free your daily life from friction. I believe she would have crawled on hands and knees to clear the merest pebbles from the highway of your career."

"Yes!" snorted Jim. "Because she jest naturally couldn't endure to see no kind of a highway messed up with no pebbles, any more'n she could bear to see a speck o' gravel on her kitchen floor!"

Paula kept doggedly on:

"Why, Jim, she helped pay for the very gowns and jewels you've given me, by wearing calico and making her own soap and doing the washing."

"Come, now, Paul, that's rather—"

"'S-'sh! This is *my* innings, Jimsy. Do you know, in spite of the wrong you've done her, she loves you like a mother!"

"You've hit it, Paul! 'Like a mother'! And that's the only way she ever *did* love me. Lord! I wanted a *wife*. If Jane would have stopped mendin' and washin' and cookin' for me, once in a while, long enough to snuggle up to me in the buggy on some of those lonesome rides I used to take, time I was sellin' cultivators and grass-seeds to the farmers, or if, days when I used to come in to dinner and tuck her under my arm, while I turned her soft little face up to kiss her, she'd only clung to me a bit, as though she *liked* it, 'stead of jest *bearin'* it, with one eye on her precious floor huntin' imaginary mud-tracks or sniffin' for burnt smells from the oven—why, I'd gladly gone with my big toe

pokin' through a sock or my underclothes pinned on with safety pins. And I'd have doted on scorched biscuits if they was burnt 'count of her sittin' on my knee and spoonin' awhile.

"I'm jest an ordinary human man, Paul. I hanker for a woman to love me like she was made *out of my thigh-bone*. So give me some credit for being square with Jane all those years that I was eaten up with that hankerin', with so little to satisfy it. And pity me—idiot that I am!—for mistakin' for bread the stones you've been feedin' it these last seven years!"

Paula met the feverish gaze that Jim turned upon her with her eyes softly glowing with something he had never found there before.

"Oh, I see it all," she breathed rapturously. "And somehow, now that I've done my best for Jane, I feel I have the right to tell you the beautiful thing that's happened to me. Jim dear, listen! Within a month I've found I love you just the way you said—as though I were 'made out of your thigh-bone'!"

To Paula's dismay, Jim only studied her face a moment with narrowed eyes, shrugged his shoulders, and looked away.

"I don't believe it," he said bitterly. "It's just some more of your play-actin', and I'm not standin' for that any longer."

Paula threw herself against his breast. Her very soul came into her gaze to command his averted eyes.

"I'll *make* you believe it!" she cried.

Jim sternly freed himself from her clinging arms.

"I—I hope so," he said wearily. "But first let's dispose of this infernal black ghost."

He reached the box in spite of Paula, and, holding her off with one hand, held it high in the other.

"That London doctor died, I suppose?" he asked tersely.

"Oh, yes, before I got his letter."

"Good! Now, watch. You know the river's just beyond those alders."

There was a splash.

"It's twenty-five feet deep where 'Exhibit A' has just gone down," Jim commented in dead tones, walking wearily away.

The jerk of his arm had jarred a thin packet of letters from his coat pocket. It lay at Paula's feet.

Jim saw it as he slumped heavily upon the bench. "Oh, yes," he said indifferently; "Katie gave me your mail."

As Paula stooped for it she saw that the top envelope was postmarked "Fremont."

"Jane!" thought Paula, and thrust the letters rather pepperily into her belt. She found that she had acquired quite a lively resentment at the way Jane persisted in making her presence-in-spirit felt; but the feeling softened almost instantly at the thought that it was Jane who had so changed her outlook upon life that even now, with her love-happiness hanging in the balance of Jim's faith in her word, she knew she could meet her remaining years with zest—even without Jim, if so it must be.

Jim was humped over, elbows on knees, square chin cupped in tense hands, staring hard at nothing.

Paula sat down beside him quietly and waited until the moment came when she dared to plead softly:

"Won't you give me a chance to make you believe it, Jimsy?"

She had won. A great, difficult man-sob climbed into Jim's throat, and, as he turned toward her, unashamed man-tears welled out of his haggard eyes.

"I've *got* to believe it!" he cried, as he gathered her fiercely into his arms.

Jed and the doctor, arriving in full expectation of finding a frantic woman weeping over a dead man, were excusably mystified to discover the dead man—though pale and disheveled—radiating a happiness that awed them to silence. The lovely woman whose gold-silk head lay against his shoulder was gazing into his

rugged face with eyes tear-washed to an unearthly brightness.

An open letter lay in Paula's lap. Jim picked it up and ran his eye over the few wavering lines that straggled across cheap ruled paper, in the manner of one who already knows them by heart.

"If you'd shown me this," he said, "I could have told you that it wasn't from Jane. If she'd lived to be a hundred, her handwritin' would be as regular as the rows of dishes in her pantry and as straight as—as the line of her lips." He leaned impulsively and kissed Paula's sweetly-curving Cupid's-bow.

Paula pushed him gently away.

"'S-'sh! How can you say those things, with Jane lying dead this minute in her clean, stiff little parlor?"

"All I hold against Jane will be buried with her. Say, ain't it funny you just can't seem to hold anything against a human the minute they've passed on?"

"And she's tried to atone. To think of her telling Aunt Mandy she wanted you and me to have the old farm and begin all over just where you left off! Will you do it, Jimsy? Will you take me back to Fremont and let's be *real folks?*"

"Do you mean it, girlie? Well, I guess! I've *longed* to square myself with Fremont, many's the time, but I never dreamed you'd stand for Main Street and the Op'ra House and — and, then, there was Jane, of course. Poor old Jane! So she wanted me to take you back to our little old house and begin all over again. Lord! I never yet let myself be surprised at anything in you women, but—*that's goin' some!*"

Paula tucked the letter gently away in her blouse, patted her hair, and straightened her dress, all the time smiling the sphinx-smile of woman when she understands in its fullness those things in the soul of another woman that no man will ever fathom so long as men and women shall be.

"But look here, Paul. Fremont will never stand for me livin' any longer with a woman who's not my wife. When Jed comes back with the doctor we'll send him for a minister."

"Not at all necessary, Jimsy," said Paula lightly.

(Jed and the doctor exchanged glances which vehemently agreed on the need of neither a doctor nor a minister, but a sheriff.)

"The black box was simply a test, dear, an open door for you, or, rather, a door that looked to be open—but really wasn't at all, though I could have arranged for—"

"Was that letter forged?" Jim's black brows came down over his eyes ominously.

"It was not," answered Paula quietly.

Jed and the doctor backed cautiously around the corner of the station to discuss the feasibility of calling up a neighboring lunatic asylum. The rumblings of Jim's deep voice came to them in unintelligible phrases, like: "Married at midnight, June 10th. . . . But your husband . . . three A. M., June 11th. . . . I don't see how you figure it, Paula."

Jed and the doctor had stopped figuring entirely. And they were not a bit wiser when Paula's bird-trill laugh came floating to their bewildered ears, followed by her triumphant:

"Oh, Jimsy, didn't you or Doc Harding ever hear of the difference in time between New York and London?"

INTELLECT in a woman is like the cherry in a cocktail: nice but unessential.

IT is easy enough for a woman to hold a man unless she happens to want him.

THE FLAPPER ORDERS

By Mary Morsell

SHE had rehearsed it many times,
How she would lightly say:
"Yes, let it be a Silver Fizz.
I've not had one to-day!"

Or still, "A Benedictine, please,"
Might lend a worldly touch;
Or why not order—just vermuth,
With absinthe—oh, not much?

But when they went to the café
He didn't ask her aid;
He only said: "I know your drink—
A claret lemonade."

TO A COLLEGE PROFESSOR

By Oriana Torrey MacIlveen

CHALK-DUST, and ashes, and Latin books galore:
When Spring and I come stealing in they should fly out the door!
Hark! the sea is tumbling like a clown upon the sands,
And you sit here with Xenophon held in your listless hands.

My hands in your hands, and my eyes to your eyes,
Where is all your wisdom now, you who are so wise?
Where is all your dignity, Bald-head?—tell me true.
Put aside your dusty books, and let me laugh at you!

High above, the shy veiled moon in Spring clouds seems to float,
Like a little Quaker in a yellow petticoat,
Love calls—and I call—ohé, we have won!
Put your arm about me, and we'll run, run, run!

FEAR

By Robert W. Sneddon

CHARACTERS

JOHN OUTRAM, an American of Scots descent.
HARRY HOLT, an American, his friend.
MARJORIE, an American, fiancée of Harry Holt.
DONALD MCIVER, an old Scots servant, caretaker of Glenshiel Castle.

TIME.—*Sunset in the month of June.*
PERIOD.—*Present day.*

SCENE:—*Scotland. An old, oak-paneled chamber in Glenshiel Castle. At the upper left-hand side is a door with no handle on the inside, leading to corridor. At the centre, recessed, is a long, low, latticed window, through which can be seen branches of ivy, and, farther up-stage, another window in the exterior wall of the parallel corridor, so placed that persons passing through corridor are seen through both windows. To the right is a heavy oal door; down-stage is a wide, empty stone fireplace. At the centre is a heavy oak table, four-legged; by it an old oak chair. On the walls are old portraits in dim frames. The floor is dusty. The beamed ceiling has cobwebs hanging from it. It is plain that the room is not in use. As the curtain rises on an empty stage, the last rays of a red sunset touch the windows of corridor seen without. At once four figures are seen under the light of candle; laughter is heard faintly. They pass to the door at the upper left.*

John is a sturdy man of about thirty-six, muscular, healthy-looking, in tweed suit and soft hat; Harry, aged twenty-nine, the thin, lithe, clean-shaven type of American, carelessly dressed in blue serge suit and soft hat; Marjorie, a pretty girl, summer dress, veil about hat, camera-case suspended by strap; McIver, a clean-shaven old Scot, the superior class of old family servitor, in shabby black suit and carpet slippers; somewhat bent at the knees, and toothless; anxious to please, but never forgetting his position of trust.

JOHN (*off-stage, as they stand outside door*)

Now, then, Mr. McIver, what have you got in here?

MCIVER

Oh, naething much, Mr. Outram. Juist ane o' the rooms o' the auld wing.

MARJORIE

We must see it. Just a peep, Mr. McIver.

MCIVER (*opening door*)

There, noo. It's juist an auld lumber room — naething mair nor less. Weel, weel; you shall hae your peep. (*Pushes*

door wide open. Comes in holding candle over his head, one hand on side of door to prevent entrance of others. Behind him John and Harry. Marjorie leans over their shoulders. They look about them.) There, noo. You see, there's naething there. Juist a wheen auld pictures and, heh, heh! (*laughs uneasily*) some cobwebs and dust. Dust—there's aye a pickle o' that aboot.

MARJORIE

Oh, mayn't we come in? I do love those old paneled walls. Do say yes, Mr. McIver!

JOHN

This is some room, eh, Miss Marjorie? Something in your line. Pity you can't take a snap of it.

MARJORIE (*pleading—lays hand on McIver's arm*)

You're going to let us in, aren't you, Mr. McIver?

JOHN (*pushing in*)

Of course Mr. McIver will let us see it. There's no harm in it. He knows we won't take any of the family heirlooms as souvenirs.

(*McIver casts apprehensive glance round room and shudders, after which he looks at the visitors, and, finding his action unobserved, laughs foolishly.*)

MCIVER

There's nae saying. Weel, weel! I canna deny you, but ye ken the or'nary visitors are no allooed to come here 'at a'.

HARRY (*entering with Marjorie*)

Then, we're seeing something fresh, eh?

MARJORIE

Oh, can't I go and look at the pictures?

MCIVER

It's growing verra dark, miss, and I'm thinking ye'll get your bonny frock dirty.

MARJORIE

Oh, I don't mind that. It will wash. Come on, Harry.

(*McIver seems about to say something, but stops; sets candle on table, lights another which he takes from pocket and places in old candlestick on table. The others go about room, examining, while McIver stands at the table, apparently listening.*)

JOHN

Queer old shack, isn't it, Miss Marjorie?

MARJORIE

I think it's perfectly charming!

JOHN

I bet this room has seen something in its day. Slick den it would make, eh, Mr. McIver?

MCIVER (*starting*)

Eh, what was that you were saying, sir?

JOHN

This room has a tag of history to it, I should guess.

MCIVER (*as they look at him*)

History? Aye, aye. Nae doot it has a' that. But come awa ben oot o' here, and I'll show you the room where bonny Prince Chairlie, puir lad, sleepit a nicht—juist as it was then, with a fine four-poster and a pair o' braw gloves that he left ahint him.

MARJORIE (*clapping her hands*)

Oh, how romantic! I should love to see it. I bet it's a peach. Come on, Harry. I guess Auntie will be real sorry she didn't come.

JOHN (*who has been staring at the oak door on the right*)

I say, what have you behind here? Pretty solid bit of oak, that.

MCIVER (*nervously*)

Oh, that, Mr. Outram! Juist an empty room. That's a'. Juist that. It's lockit. Ye canna get in.

JOHN (*knowingly*)

Ah! Oho! That's where you keep the family skeleton. So that's the place!

MCIVER (*in hushed tone*)

Oh, wheesht, sir! Dinna be saying that.

MARJORIE (*giving shudder and looking round swiftly*)

What is it, Mr. McIver?

McIver (*picking nervously at table*)

Naething, miss. Naething at a'. But maybes we wud better be gaun.

John (*putting hands in pockets*)

I wonder why you're so keen to get us out, Mr. McIver. (*Goes over to door; is about to try it.*)

McIver (*with frightened look, crosses, catches his arm, stops him*)

Dinna, sir. Dinna dae it. I'll tell you the story later. (*Looks at Marjorie, who has back to him; puts finger on lips. John nods and stares at door as if fascinated.*)

Marjorie

O-oh! (*Shudders.*) I'm getting cold here. It was silly of me to put on this dress. Come away, Harry. Come on, Mr. Outram. You're both unusually interested in the romantic for once.

Harry (*with a laugh*)

John's one of those scientific guys. He doesn't believe in anything till he can see and feel it. I hate those people. They are always so confoundedly matter-of-fact! Come on, Marjorie; we'll go and see if the prince had a rabbit dream or not.

John

Right you are. You two young people can go and explore as much as you want. I don't care a cent for any bed that a prince hit the pillow on. (*To McIver*) You don't come here often. There's a job right here for a vacuum cleaner. Even our feet are making prints in the dust.

McIver (*blowing dust off table*)

Aye, I've nae doot you're richt. We dinna use this room much. You see, sir— (*Stops.*)

John

Well?

McIver

The faimily disna come aboot much. And this wing hasna been used since I came here as a boy. Ye see, there's juist ane o' the faimily left, since the laird and his only son was drooned in the loch a year syne. And he's no to be fund onywhere, they say. Mr. McDonald, the solicitor, is seeking for him. They say he's in America—a distant branch o' the faimily, ye ken, an' juist as like as no, he disna ken he's relatit. Aye, an' a gey queer thing, I heard the pipes the day they were drooned.

Marjorie

The pipes? You mean the music. Oh, I'd love to hear the bagpipes among the hills! They must be dandy.

McIver

Aye, they're brave music. Whenever ane o' the faimily is gaun to dee, they say they hear the pipes playing a lament.

John

And who might this mysterious piper be, eh?

McIver

Ech, ech! It's an auld farrant tale. They ca' him Ian the piper, a puir fallow that has been deid these hunners o' years.

Marjorie

Do you hear that? A real live ghost! I'd just love to hear a ghost.

Harry

And you really heard the piper?

McIver

I did indeed, sir, and a frichtsome soun' it was.

Harry

Gosh, you bet!

Marjorie (*shuddering*)

How perfectly awful! What if we were to hear him now?

McIver

Nae fear o' that. The heir is mony a thousan' mile awa.

Marjorie

Oh, let's go, Mr. McIver; I'm beginning to creep all over! Take me away, Harry.

McIver

A' richt, miss. I'll be wi' ye. (*Harry and Marjorie exit. To John, still staring at door*) Ye'll no touch the door till I win back.

John (*with puzzled expression*)

The door?

McIver (*pointing with shaking finger*)
That ane ower there—the closed door.

John (*carelessly*)
Bluebeard's cupboard? Oh, not if you don't want me to.

McIver
I'll no be a minute gone, Mr. Outram. (*Calls*) I'm coming, miss. (*Exit with candle and speaks off-stage as sound of lock turning is heard*) In here, miss. Juist go richt in. Min' your claes. (*Returns without candle.*)

John (*having dusted table, sits on it with dangling legs, filling pipe*)
Now, Mr. McIver, I guess there is some fancy fairy tale about this room—and this door. (*Points over shoulder with pipe*) What is it?

McIver (*slowly*)
There is a story, but, God help us a', it's nae fairy story!

John (*laughs good-humoredly*)
Well, anyway, let's have it.

McIver (*listening*)
I wudna for worlds hae the young leddy hear it.

John
That's all right.

McIver
Weel, hae it your ain way, but it's no for a' ears, ye ken. There is some secret o' the faimily—a bit earlier in its history, ye ken, sir — conneckit wi' that verra door. Something accurst—whit it was nae man can jalouse—happened in that room there, and they say that whaever seeks to find oot the awfu' secret comes to a sudden and terrible en'.

John
And has it ever been opened?

McIver
But aince so far as I ken. Ane o' the members o' the faimily had been haein' a drop ower muckle, and gets a mad thocht to come up here one nicht a' his lanesome. My faither, what was caretaker afore me, heard a screech, and when they came up they found the young man lying by the door wi' a terrible face—stane deid. My faither never wud talk o't—and the strangest thing o' a'—though the door was still shut ticht, the dust line on the flair showed that the door had opened. It has never been touched syne.

John (*with air of semi-belief*)
Oh, come on, Mr. McIver. You don't tell me that you think it was something supernatural that did for the man—not that I believe in such things. Steam and electricity have done for all that nowadays.

McIver
Maybes. Maybes. But there's mair things nor that that canna be explained by rule o' thoomb.

John
You ask the doctors. Imagination or too much to eat. Now, here's a proposition, Mr. McIver. I'm a bit of a scientist myself. Electricity—that's my business in New York. You can't fool me into believing that there are such things as spirits or ghosts — or whatever you call them. They only keep them going for the magazines and the research societies—and even there they're a drug on the market now. Say (*with a quick glance at him*) what d'ye say if I stay in the haunted chamber all night? I might lay my hands on the ghostly piper or some other relic. I'll try and bottle them for you.

McIver (*starting in agitation*)
Na, na, Mr. Outram! Na, na! I canna—I canna. Think what wud happen if onything were to—

John
To what? Oh, come; out with it.

McIver
To—to—disturb you, likes.

John
To lay me out, you mean. Why, man alive, I'm the champion middle-weight of our week-end club. Say, just feel that muscle, McIver. That speaks, doesn't it?

McIver (*feeling arm, shakes head*)
Muscle is nae guid, sir, against what's here. Ye'll no fecht the pooers o' darkness wi' a sinfu' body.

JOHN

See here, McIver, here's a—what d'ye call it?—a sovereign—

McIVER

Oh, 'deed, no, sir! Put it awa (*putting up his hands*). Put it oot o' sicht.

JOHN (*pressing it into his hands*)

Come on, Mr. McIver. Be a sport. I'll answer for the consequences.

McIVER (*hesitating*)

Weel, sir, if you insist. If you insist—(*taking it and putting it into vest pocket*). But—wheesht!

(*Harry and Marjorie enter with candle.*)

MARJORIE

Whatever are you two talking about so earnestly? We rubbered everywhere. You did miss a treat, Mr. Outram! Do you know they have everything just as it was (*imitating*) twa hunner and fifty year syne. (*Going over to McIver affectionately*) That's right, isn't it? My, but this place is some old! It's just bully to see it! I do wish Auntie hadn't camped at the hotel.

HARRY (*looking at his watch*)

I think we'd better be trotting along to her. I'm about due for a good square meal.

JOHN

Well, I'll see you in the morning. Good night, both of you.

MARJORIE (*who has made for the door with Harry*)

Why, aren't you coming with us, Mr. Outram?

JOHN

No, I'm staying here with Mr. McIver.

MARJORIE (*looking from one to other*)

Whatever for? To hear the bagpipes play? Oh, can't I stay, too?

JOHN (*with a half-laugh*)

You're going to have a laugh. Mr. McIver tells me this room is haunted.

MARJORIE

Oh, joy! Harry, go to the hotel and fetch Auntie here to stay.

McIVER (*shaking his head*)

'Deed no, miss. I'll no hear o' that. This is nae place for leddies. The Lord forbid!

(*Marjorie shrinks back and takes Harry's arm.*)

HARRY (*roughly*)

Don't be a fool, John. You're usually such a level-headed chap. What do you want to monkey with this business for? Wherever did you get this ghost bug?

JOHN (*in strained voice, holding to table*)

I don't know. I'm waiting, though. That's all there is to it, old man.

HARRY

Ah, well, we'll see. I bet you a new hat to a box of Pall Malls you don't catch anything but a cold.

JOHN

Don't you worry about me. And say: tell them to have a trout and some of that bully ham and eggs for breakfast in the morning. I'll be there about eight.

HARRY (*slyly, with a grin*)

Perhaps you'll run over for supper.

JOHN (*shortly*)

No; I'm not hungry. I'll see you in the morning. I said I'd stay, and I'll stay. Good night.

McIVER (*hesitatingly*)

Maybes it micht be as weel after a' if you did gae, sir.

JOHN (*planting himself in chair*)

No; I'll be all right here.

HARRY (*with a shrug*)

Have it your own way. That's the Scotch in you.

McIVER

Scotch, said you? Aye: Outram—Outram—Imphm. (*Looks at him closely*) I wunner, noo—(*earnestly*). Ye hae a look— (*Stops. To himself*) But it's no possible. (*John smiles to himself.*)

MARJORIE

I shan't forget about your breakfast. And, oh, what sort of hair-dye will I get at the drug-store? Say, Mr. Outram, do you know that lovely poem Mr. Byron wrote? (*Declaiming*) "My hair grew white in a single night"—"The Prisoner of Chile," isn't it?

(*Rain heard . . . faint wind.*)

HARRY

Gee! It is raining hard now. Listen.

MARJORIE

And I've no rubbers. Ouch, it is shivery here! Say, do you know what they call rubbers here? (*Explodes with laughter.*) *Goloshes!* It's too funny! Well, by-by.

(*Harry and Marjorie wait at door. McIver leaves one candle on table, picks up another, and follows as Harry and Marjorie go out. On the threshold he turns, points to door, and shakes head. They go down the corridor chattering, and are seen to stop at back of window, then pass. . . . There is silence. John, who has watched them go and pass carelessly, lights his pipe and, seated in chair, puts feet on table.*)

JOHN

I expect I am more or less of an ass to stay here when I could sit in front of a good square meal. But, dash it all, one doesn't get a chance like this every day—and—well, I've thought a lot about it. It's all right — warm enough. . . . Raining like fury! (*Listens.*) How that wind seems to catch in the eaves of the wing!

(*Rises; walks to door to corridor; stands.*) They must be out by now. I suppose old man McIver will come back. (*Walks slowly over to window and looks out.*) Nothing much on show out there. (*Tries window, giving hasp a shake; stands, slowly puffing at pipe . . . nodding head.*) I don't suppose it's possible for any joker to hide himself. I'd be a hot proposition for a joker now. (*Turns; looks at fireplace.*) I wonder if there's room for anyone there. (*Hesitates, then walks down-stage, round the table to fireplace at right, puts his arm up and seems to be testing whether there is a place of concealment. A tapping is heard at window. He seems to become suddenly conscious of the noise. His back tightens . . . he slowly withdraws his arm, but does not turn round.*)

Is that you, McIver?

(*Tapping repeated. Rises erect, turns sharply to window, hesitates, then walks firmly up to it.*)

That's very strange. I could have sworn I heard someone tap.

(*Looks through window, then tries to open it. After wrench he pulls it open, breaks off ivy branch. A gust of wind blows in, extinguishing candle.*)

Damn!

(*Is heard to slam window too; comes down stage.*)

Where are my matches? (*Fumbles.*)

(*McIver is seen advancing in corridor, carrying candle so as to shine on face. In other hand he supports a tray with sandwiches, whisky decanter, tumbler, water-jug. Enters.*)

MCIVER

Mr. Outram, are ye there? Mr. Outram!

JOHN

Here I am. No damage done.

MCIVER

I didna see ye. Your can'le has gaed oot, sir.

JOHN

Yes. I opened the window to break off this piece of ivy. It kept tap-tapping.

MCIVER (*in relieved tone, laying tray and candle on table*)

It did gie me quite a nasty turn to see the room a' black.

JOHN

Thought the goblins had got me this time sure, eh?

MCIVER

God forbid, sir! I've brocht ye some whisky and sandwiches, but I think you wud be as comfortable in my wee room. There's a cheery bit fire there and a wheen books, if you care for reading.

JOHN (*at table*)

No, thank you. I'll be as right as right here. Don't worry about me. You leave me and come up in the morning. I'll make your hair stand on end then.

MCIVER (*solicitously*)

You'll eat a bit, sir. You'll no forget.

The whisky is the rael thing and weel worth haein' a taste o'.

JOHN

Oh, yes; thank you for that. I'll tackle them later on. Now if you'll leave me, I'll try and doze in the chair. Say, leave me a candle and a box of matches, will you? I don't expect I'll go walking in my sleep.

McIVER

Verra weel, sir. Only, you'll no be wanting—

JOHN

Wanting what?

McIVER (*pointing with trembling hand to door at the right*)

No be wanting to try the door.

JOHN

I might do it accidentally if I were walking about.

McIVER

You'll no, sir! I hate the verra sicht o't since I heard my faither tell aboot it when I was mere lad. I remember it was a fine nicht in June when it happened— (*Stops suddenly.*)

JOHN (*carelessly*)

A night in June, eh? That's interesting. It might have been a night like this.

McIVER

Aye. (*Solemnly.*) Do you ken, sir, it was aboot this verra date. I never thocht o' that till the noo. Let me see. It was the nineteenth o' June. Aye, that was it.

JOHN (*as if struck by some sudden fear*)

Good God, man! . . . to-day's date—to-day!

McIVER (*with a half-scream*)

Whit cantrip's this? The verra date. Oh, sir, will ye no come awa? You can sit wi' me, and not a body need be the wiser. Oh, there's something frichtsome in this! The same date. Lord help us a' this nicht!

JOHN (*fighting against himself inwardly*)

No! Don't ask me, McIver. I'm not going to funk it now. I'm a sportsman, I am, and I keep to my word.

McIVER (*with a sigh*)

Verra weel; dae as you please. Only, dinna open that unhaly door. (*John is silent. McIver picks up his candle; walks slowly to door out; stops, looks at John; has hand on door; turns.*) I canna dae it, Mr. Outram. You maun promise me no to go near it.

JOHN (*uneasily*)

Don't be afraid. I can look after myself.

McIVER (*walking back to him and putting hand on his arm*)

Gie me your promise, sir. Gie me your promise.

JOHN (*with stupid air of dignity*)

Oh, all right, McIver. I won't. Good night.

(*McIver opens door, holding candle overhead. Suddenly there is a wail of wind and a faint sound of bagpipes.*)

McIVER (*stepping into room again, trembling*)

God save us! Mr. Outram, Mr. Outram, heard ye that?

JOHN

What? The wind seems to be rising. I guess you'll find some of your slates gone in the morning.

McIVER

Oh, sir, dinna ye hear it? Harken! (*Holds up hand for silence. Pipes heard wailing very faintly.*)

JOHN

Why, that's some of your music! He's taking a fine night to serenade his girl.

McIVER

Oh, sir — oh, sir! It's the lament. Dinna ye understaun'? It's the lament. That's Ian the piper. That's no mortal tune, Mr. Outram!

JOHN

Pshaw, Mr. McIver! You hear laments every time you hear some drunken man in the village blowing his breath away. Don't try to frighten me, for I won't be frightened. Come on, cheer up! (*Crosses to him and claps him on shoulder.*)

McIver

It's no often I'm feart, but this is nae mortal music. My heart is sair for the last heir o' the Glenshiels. Oh, wae is me! Wae is me! There is a curse ower this hoose. Come awa wi' me, sir. Oh, be advised, and come awa!

McIver

Tush, tush, Mr. McIver! I'm above all that nonsense. You go and have a dram in your little room, and get to bed. This lonely life is preying on your imagination—I can see that. Let your piper play till he bursts.

(*McIver looks at him, shakes his head sadly, goes out, closes door, and is seen to pass at back. John watches him pass. As candlelight fades away, gives sudden shudder. Turns round. In hushed tone*)

Alone!

(*Walks over to table, seats himself in chair; eats sandwich in silence.*)

Upon my soul, old McIver was beginning to get on my nerves, if I have any. But, by God, isn't it lonely here!

(*Pauses, thinking.*)

What did that damned piper mean by chiming in so aptly? What if . . . Oh, rubbish . . . rubbish!

(*Pours out whisky and water; sips it.*)

Why is he so afraid of the door! You can't expect bricks, mortar, and a few planks to do you any physical harm, unless they fall on you . . . and they're hardly likely to do that here.

(*Swings round in chair to face audience.*)

Here am I, John Outram, citizen of the United States, age thirty-six: healthy, sane, never had a day's illness, never knew what fear was—sitting in a room, waiting—waiting for what? Shadows? (*Thoughtfully.*) Who was it said that substances are merely shadows of real things? (*Throwing off mood.*) Oh, it's too ridiculous! What a laugh this would hand to the boys! . . . But, by God, it *is* lonely!

(*Becomes uneasy; casts glance at the door, at right.*)

It's growing cold too. I might have asked the old man to light a fire before he went. There's nothing like a fire or a laugh for company.

(*Listens: the wind is rising and it rains. A door creaks somewhere eerily.*)

What a rickety old show it is! Those doors should be seen to.

(*Rises; about to look at door at the right. Hesitates.*)

I suppose if anything . . . of course it's absurd, but if— Anyway, I'll keep an eye on the door.

(*Shifts chair round to left side of table, settles himself. Drinks again; lights pipe.*)

That door must have cost a pretty wad of bills. All that carving wasn't done for love. . . . I don't feel as if I could sleep one bit. (*Lays down pipe, nibbles at sandwich.*) I haven't lost my appetite. (*Drinks, emptying tumbler; puts it down.*) That puts mettle into me. McIver was right. This is the real stuff. I wish I hadn't got my feet wet crossing the grass. This chill is creeping. (*Shudders.*) Ough! What a draught there is!

(*Puts up collar of jacket. The door at the left has blown open. There is a wail of wind. The candle flickers. He puts out his hand to protect the flame; upsets and breaks tumbler; knocks over candlestick. Stage is plunged in darkness.*)

Oh, confound it! I thought the door was closed. I could have sworn it was. Where are those matches? (*Is heard fumbling about.*) Ah, thank goodness, here they are! (*Strikes match, lights candle, sheltering flame so as to shine on face. Looks about him apprehensively.*) It's electric light for Glenshiel castle. I'll see to that.

(*Goes to door on left; hesitates; closes it. It shuts with a click; he bends and looks at it.*)

Damn! What have I done now? There's no handle on the inside, and I'm locked in for the night. (*Stands.*) I don't half like the idea. (*Tries door.*)

It's no good. I am locked in, sure enough. Well, I suppose I'd better make the best of a bad job. (*Comes down to table.*) It's a queer business, though. (*Sets candle down.*) I'll have another drink. There's something raw in the air that chills me. It can't be fear, I know. Fear! (*Stares into space for a second, looks at table.*) Oh, hang it all, I've broken the glass! (*Puts out hand to decanter, then draws it back; laughs sheepishly.*) After all, I needn't stand on ceremony. There is no one to see me. (*Stops; laughs uneasily, with look at door on the right.*) No one to see me. No . . . one.

(*Looking about steadily, musing.*) Inhabited silences. (*Recovering.*) Oh, damn! (*Picks up decanter and drinks from it.*)

Ah, that's better. That door was worrying me. What a silly idea for a sane man! (*Sits down, looking about; listens to wind and rain.*) Funny pictures these! I must have a good look at them—something to do.

(*Takes up candle, goes up-stage; holds candle to examine picture of cavalier.*)

Quaint old guy! Bad eyes, though. I bet he knew something in his day! There's not much resemblance between us.

(*Going to next picture: lady of same period.*)

Another of the family. Same eyes and a hole through the canvas over the heart. She has queer eyes. Seems to be laughing.

(*Goes to picture of gentleman of* 1745 *period.*)

And who might you be? Sir Ronald, heh? A bit of a buck you were—holding a pack of cards. Same eyes—they seem to run in the family. My God, have I eyes like that? (*Looks steadily and shudders.*) They almost make me think a devil is peering out through the eyeholes. So these are my ancestors! Gee, it is funny! I guess old lawyer McDonald will be surprised to find the lost heir has turned up. I wonder if McIver guessed; he seemed to be wondering. I've kept it pretty quiet.

(*Starts at creak.*)

'Sh-'sh! Lord, I'm breaking out in a cold sweat now. I must have an imagination, after all. I won't look at those pictures . . . there's something evil in them—bad—bad! (*Knocks idly at paneling.*) Sounds hollow. I wonder if there can be anything behind.

(*Goes round wall tapping till he comes to door at right; is about to rap unconsciously, when he remembers and shrinks back, with uplifted hand.*) No—no; I can't!

(*Shivers and stands staring at it in shrinking attitude.*) I forgot it might—eh!—(*laughs hoarsely*)—open. (*Stares at it in silence, then steals back to table, keeping eyes on door. Puts candle down; passes hand over hair.*) I believe . . . I—I am growing afraid. What deviltry went on—in—in there? Curse old McIver and his prattling! I must have another drink.

(*Seizes decanter, lifts to lips; then, with significant gesture, almost throws it away from him and empties its contents on the floor.*)

I guess I inherited that. (*Sets decanter down; sinks back in chair, covering eyes with hands, but peering through fingers at door on right; then springs up.*)

I can't sit. I mustn't let my fancies conquer me. (*Crosses to door at left, tries it again.*) They've locked me in. A fine joke—a fine joke that!

(*Runs his hand over door slowly; crosses rapidly to window, looks out.*) Not much good that—a long drop. (*Puts hand to head.*) Guess I'll have another drink. (*Comes down to table, lifts decanter, staring at door; puts decanter to lips, then shrugs his shoulders.*)

You're still shut, eh? . . . We'll knock—knock. Oh, yes, we'll knock at you!

(*Shrinks.*) No—no— (*Then, in sudden transport of fury, raises himself*

erect and hurls decanter at door. It crashes against it and is broken.) There, and be damned to you! You can't frighten me . . . you great — ugly, black . . .

(*Stands biting nails—staring at door. Nothing breaks the silence but occasional gusts of wind.*)

Heh! (*Laughs.*) That doesn't rouse you.

(*Seems to see something; with both hands on table, bends forward with intent face — then begins to back away from table, till his back is against left wall, as though driven by something unseen—arms half outstretched, palms on wall, legs moving as though weighted with lead—until he reaches door at the left. With his back against it, he stands upright, then he turns suddenly, beats upon the door.*)

McIver! (*Shouts.*) McIver! . . . McIver! . . . In God's name, why don't you come? . . . Why don't you come?

(*Waits, suddenly tearing off collar.*) I can't breathe! This air is choking me . . . it's—it's full of—of horrors. . . . I can hear my heart beating. My eyes . . . that's it. My ancestors . . . I'm afraid . . . I'm—

(*With sudden fury*) Damn you! What are you hiding behind that cursed door? What is it? You are killing me with fear . . . fear . . . fear. . . . What are you hiding? I mustn't open it. Why not, eh? I am the heir.

(*Moves toward door at right, as though drawn to it.*)

Damn you — damn you! I must — I must see what is behind it! (*Reaches edge of table; rests hand on it, breathing hard. Then cries out.*)

I must—! (*Seizes candle and rushes across to door at right, beating on it furiously with his clenched fist.*)

Open . . . open . . . open! . . .

(*Candle falls. Lights black out. A stifled cry in the dark. Bagpipes heard loudly in wailing lament.*

A light is seen at the back as McIver passes, in his dressing gown. . . . A fumbling at the lock . . . the door opens. A pencil of light from the candle held by McIver strikes upon the door at the right, showing it ajar, with the huddled body of John by it.)

McIver (*giving a terrible cry*)

It was him—deid—deid! The last o' the Glenshiels.

(*Drops candle. Black stage.*)

CURTAIN

IN THREES

By Mary Carolyn Davies

LAST year, in the springtime—
Oh, the changing trees!—
You and I and Happiness
Always walked in threes!

Happiness walked far too fast;
Soon she passed us by.
Now there are but two of us—
Only you and I.

ONE ANSWER FOR THE WOMAN

By Viola Brothers Shore

I

WHEN Marbury Pattison finished reciting his poem there was a self-conscious, uncomfortable silence in the large, Chinese blue and green living-room of the Nords' English basement house in the lower Forties. And for the first time that hilarious evening nobody had anything to say. Although he did not once look in her direction, everybody knew that the lyric had been written to beautiful Zelda Nord. Zelda knew it and kept her vivid gray eyes carefully away from her husband.

Nicholas Tate, the critic, finally recovered himself and asked Doctor Nord whether he was a member of the Red Cross. Whereupon, the silence having been broken, Octave de Cannes, the pianist, wheeled around once more to the massive walnut piano and commenced to play with enthusiasm the Chopin Ballade in A minor. Zelda, with a little shrug of her exquisitely expressive shoulders, said something inconsequential to Jack Marten, who was seated on the blue brocade fireside divan beside her, and gradually around the room a vague hum of conversation made itself heard.

But the evening never attained its former tone. The hostile attitude of Doctor Nord toward the bohemian aspects of his wife's career, and especially towards these bohemian friends of hers, kept making itself felt in spite of Nicholas Tate's redoubled attempts to keep him interested, and everybody's else frantic attempts to be lively and natural.

They had been married two years, Doctor Nord and Zelda Bearn. They had just come to New York from a little town called Pottersville. As a general practitioner in his home town, Nord had been very successful for so young a man. But he had dreamed of metropolitan success as a specialist. He was a man with a one-track imagination. He dreamed only one dream at a time. But he made up for this lack of breadth by an intensity of purpose—a power of concentration. He knew how to make his dream come true.

The sudden deaths of an aunt and a grandmother, by giving him all at once a large sum of money, merely hastened what would ultimately, by dint of hard work and saving, have been the consummation of his big dream. With a swift sureness of decision he sold his house and his practice in Pottersville and came to New York.

After a careful study of conditions, he put up a little four-by-seven brass nameplate in what he considered the most desirable section of the city. He paid without a qualm what must have seemed to his thrifty, country-trained mind an exorbitant sum for his house, and he gave Zelda, who had a genius for decoration, a free hand in furnishing it. He left entirely to her all questions of color, style, pattern, and design; only qualities and values he himself carefully inspected.

Then, with plenty of money to play a waiting game, he began attacking his specialty from the top, instead of crawling in slowly through the door of general practice. It is a way which takes, beside an unfailing eye for opportuinity, an infinite capacity for sitting still, as well as for doing a tremendous amount

of hard work without any visible reward. Emil Nord was of the type which possesses these: big, dark, high-headed, with heavy, wavy hair, rather coarse, and a thick set to his large frame. Even his features, though well molded, were of coarse texture. Only his hands were fine; firm, smooth, pliable, surgeon's hands with which he meant to wrest from New York two things: recognition and a great deal of money.

But he had not figured on New York's wresting anything in return from him. It had, however, in the six months they had been established there, made great inroads on one of his most valued possessions: his domestic peace. Both he and Zelda realized that the bark of their marriage was not sailing smoothly in city waters, and that the rocks in the course were her former friends, who on her return to the city had gathered round her as of old. Emil did not fit in with them. But she did not see why she should not have her friends about her, since she did not object to, nor pry into, any of Emil's friendships or professional relations.

And she did not see, since he was forever busy at clinics and lectures and meetings, and, moreover, did not care for the things which interested her, why she could not go with her friends. She did not want him to make a martyr of himself and accompany her. But she thought it unreasonable that he should feel as he did; felt that his was a selfish, narrow, dog-in-the-manger policy. Above all, she resented the implication that she was not now able to care for herself as well as she had when a girl. And, viewed in the light of these new developments, and compared analytically with other men, he did not seem able to offer her enough to make her willing to live all her life brightened only by the light of his companionship and the reflected interest of his career.

Zelda had few woman friends. But the sort of men to whom she had been used all her free, untrammeled girlhood —Marbury Pattison, Nicholas Tate, and the rest of them—filled a large place in her life; she liked them — she needed them.

In the two years she had lived in Pottersville she had not written a thing. She had hardly played a note. The desire seemed to have gone from her completely. She had been content to keep her house, to plant her garden, and live the little life of a country practitioner's wife. She had even enjoyed this merging of her personality into her husband's. But the first return of the old enthusiasms, the old fire and sparkle, had convinced her that she could not again go back to that other way of living. It had been a lovely idyl, she had been very happy—but it was over. Ambition was stirring in her. She wanted to write, to live, to conquer. And her friends helped her, stimulated her.

But Emil would never fit in with them. He could not get their point of view. He believed in working at one thing—loving one woman—living one life. To him, people were either good or bad. He suspected all the women of laxity, all the men of immorality. He had been raised where the ideal of the family came first, and all this intermixing of husbands and wives seemed dangerous, undermining—demoralizing. He came from a home where the women controlled their feelings, and this continual dabbling in emotions revolted him.

He had consented to the party Zelda wanted to give because he could not see any way of refusing her. He had met most of these people singly and at other parties, and he disliked them. He stood aloof all evening, without making any attempt to play host. But Zelda, in the beginning, was radiant.

De Cannes, a young musician of the short-haired, sack-coated school, insisted that she play the violin for them, and mournfully reiterated his conviction that she was a musician and not a writer, that she was committing a crime in neglecting

her violin, that she was the most talented performer in the city. She knew she was not, but she played wonderfully under the stimulus of his admiration.

Jack Marten praised the poems she had sold, and she told him of others she was planning. It was good to have him there, agreeably ugly old Jack, who at thirty-five considered himself a veteran because he had been in the newspaper game for fifteen years. He had always been a brother to her—petting her, cuddling her, scolding and even bullying her, but always making her work.

And Nick Tate, a little man with a dark, pointed mustache and sharp, pointed features, had always given her real, constructive advice. He felt that she showed great promise, but that she must not be spoiled; and with his cynical, unenthusiastic manner counteracted some of the too gushing optimism of her other friends.

There were in all about twenty-four present: eight women, and the rest former admirers of Zelda's. The most conspicuous among them, perhaps, was Marbury Pattison, lean, handsome, clever, whom Zelda had not married because he lacked stability; because he was too much like herself—volatile, temperamental, too easily led by new enthusiasms.

Because she had suddenly become engaged, while away in the summer, to this unknown doctor, when everyone knew that they were made for each other—he and Zelda—cut from the same cloth, destined for marriage from time before time, it was natural that Marbury Pattison should feel little love for the Doctor when he met him. In the two years that she was away, Pattison had found nobody to take her place. And she had come back mellower, more mysterious, more subtly alluring, more altogether desirable. He considered Nord entirely unworthy of her—too narrow, prejudiced, selfish, utterly unable to understand or appreciate the jewel he had stolen.

He felt it so keenly that it showed in his manner. Zelda knew it and felt torn between both of them. Doctor Nord knew it, and Pattison's presence alone would have been enough to spoil the evening for him.

Nicholas Tate sensed the trouble at once. He saw how the freedom and unrestraint of Zelda's friends worried the Doctor, and he tactfully avoided any freedom of manner when addressing her and carefully refrained from any references to former conditions and former gayeties. Also, he tried hard to interest the Doctor, in some way to bring him to the surface, draw him from behind that impenetrable reserve of his. But Emil was suspicious, and his reserve remained intact.

Zelda, watching, began to feel oppressed. Every time she became natural—exuberant—she saw from his manner that it would not do. Little by little she began to act a part—reserved, dignified, wholly unnatural. And a knell for the old freedom, for the old naturalness and lack of reserve, sounded in her heart. Little by little her radiance wore off.

The culmination was reached when, after she had read some of her poems, short-haired Christine Paulsen asked Marbury to recite his. Whatever gayety the evening held after that was forced—came chilled through the ice which the Doctor's manner cast over the room. Zelda was glad when her friends were gone.

II

Zelda Nord's hair was not long—it scarcely reached below her waist—but it had a subtle magnetism, a personality of its own. It was almost the first thing you noticed when you looked at her. Brown-black, with vague, indefinite hints of copper color along the edges of long, loose waves, it was like a cloudy October night broken by festoons of red crêpe lanterns twinkling obscurely in the distance.

As she sat and brushed it before the mirror of her lavender lacquer dressing-table, after the party, the yellow, transparent softness of her negligée, slipping away with the motion of her arm, allowed it to fall like a live, caressing thing about her wonderful shoulders.

Emil stood leaning against the doorway, his dinner coat and collar removed, and, with an old, blackened pipe cupped lovingly in his fine, flexible hand, watched her in unseeing silence.

At last he spoke.

"Zelda," he began, with elaborate offhandedness, regarding his pipe critically with one eye, "I do not think you ought to be so free with other men."

"Free?" she exclaimed sharply, her brush suspended in midair. "Free?"

"Well," he amended, "so friendly."

She brushed vigorously for thirty strokes in agitated silence. She was furious. And yet, even as every atom of her feeling power rose in wrathful revolt at thus being called to account, somewhere in the knowing chamber of her mind a small eye, the calm, dispassionate, critical eye of the self-analytical writer, saw his side of it, too. Under the stimulus of the sex clash, she was apt to be wilfully challenging. She was conscious of her gestures—of a trick of raising her provocative shoulders, of letting the look in her vivid gray eyes grow intense, of deliberately inviting admiration. But she was extremely high-spirited, and any tightening of the reins made her rear dangerously.

"Surely you do not mean," she asked, the volcano barely concealed by the icy crispness of her voice, "that you object to my having friends?"

His pipe did not seem to be drawing well. He emptied it with deliberate little shakes into the basket.

"It's not that I don't want you to have friends," he answered slowly, without looking at her. "It's just that I don't think you should be so familiar with them."

Inside her the same conflict went on again. She knew that her relations with men were different, for instance, from Emil's relations with women. But according to her standards it was not wrong. And she knew that she would never be otherwise — could never be otherwise. She was constituted so. At last she said, more because she had been bridling all evening than because she meant to say it:

"You seem to find a great deal of fault with me lately."

"Shucks! I'm not finding fault," he said, trying to speak lightly and avoid the emotional storm that threatened. He packed the fresh tobacco tightly down in the bowl of his pipe, and repeated it: "Shucks, no! I'm not trying to find fault!" And he looked in her direction with a little smile, as though seeking to reprove and conciliate her at the same time.

She felt nothing but a sense of injury and a vast hopelessness. Yet the detached part of her mind went quickly over the events of the evening. At just what had he taken umbrage? The way De Cannes had played to her? Marbury's poem? Had anybody looked too long and eagerly at the whiteness of her shoulders?

"I'd like to know just what you mean by—familiar," she said with narrowed eyelids.

"Well," he replied with an obvious effort, "the poems you recited—"

Instantly the door which had opened in her mind to show her his side of things snapped shut. He was narrow—absurdly narrow!

"I don't think it was wise to read those —aloud—before strangers. Perhaps to me—or—"

Her sense of injury began to choke her. She had read the same poems to him, and he had not even glanced up from his paper. And he had given an obviously perfunctory smile at the close.

"Or—your friends—woman friends—

but not when there are men present. It isn't *nice.*"

His voice went up and down on the last word. He felt keenly on the subject. He was not a prude, even in regard to his wife. He would have taken her with him to a medical meeting, or even to a burlesque show, if she had cared to go. Only this free discussion of sex subjects, this reveling in the sensationalism of erotic poetry, seemed to him shameless—like going around with insufficient clothes.

He was well into his subject now, and he plunged on regardless of her as she sat there, turned to marble.

"And that Mr. Pattison—he was your rejected lover, and yet he has so little respect for himself and you that he still comes here."

Her grip tightened on the brush until her hand trembled from the strain. Marbury was her friend, and she could find it in her to hate anyone who spoke disparagingly of him.

"And the way that Mr. Marten kept calling you 'old dear'—"

The tightness in her chest threatened to suffocate her. The hopelessness of ever being able to speak to him in a language they would both understand!

"—it's familiar!" and, closing his right hand tightly about the bowl of his pipe, he commenced to smoke with ardor.

Zelda began with agitated fingers to draw the hair over her shoulders into two glistening braids. Tears over the uncompromising uselessness of it all smarted her eyes. He kept making it harder and harder for that part of her which understood and felt sorry for him. Such a thing to quarrel over! And again neither sympathy nor understanding, but a surface emotion—her habit of pride—or merely temper—made her say:

"You talk like a country parson!"

Manlike, he had no conception of the currents that were seething inside her. He took cognizance only of the spoken word.

"Indeed!" he said, and banged his pipe angrily against the side of the basket. "Many fine things come from the country. You were different yourself in the country! I don't know what's come over you since we came to the city. You're not yourself!"

Very deliberately and calmly, but with a dangerous tautness of the muscles of her neck and mouth, she laid the brush and comb in the drawer of the dressing-table. He had made it easy for her. She would tell him that she *was* herself, that this was the way she had always been—would always be—that any other set of characteristics would be pretense. She could not go on with this sort of thing all her life. He might just as well know whom and what he had married. Her hand still on the open drawer, she tried to frame in her mind just how she would go about making it clear to him.

Something in her silence called his attention to her, and the poise of her head drew him up suddenly. It was the first time they had ever quarreled like this, and he grew a little frightened. Perhaps he had gone too far. He had not meant to scold her really. He began to feel helpless before her silence. He did not know what to say next. Awkwardly he came and stood behind her and laid his hand on her arm.

At his touch all the stiffness went out of her. She crumpled up in her chair and let her head fall on her arm on the drawer. A gasp like a sob came from between her indrawn lips.

He knew what to do then. He leaned over and put his arm around her.

"Oh, come on, Baby! Don't cry. Oh, I say—I'm a dog! Don't cry!" And he raised her and held her close to him.

Physically, emotionally, she yielded to him with a glad, tumultuous rush of feeling. But even in the exaltation of that yielding she was conscious of a stubborn something in her mind that stood apart with cynical aloofness and did not yield to the grand emotional holocaust.

III

EMIL was disappointed in the next six months to find no marked change in Zelda's habits. She still went about with Tate and Jack Marten and De Cannes and a dozen others. But she was a little chastened, a little more serious-minded, a little less apt to chase off to this exhibit or that concert—a little less free with her smiles when they did accept an invitation to a dinner or a dance. And Nord was glad that he had succeeded in getting Pattison to feel that he was unwelcome in their home, so that Zelda did not see so much of him as formerly.

But Zelda did see as much of long, lean, good-looking Pattison as ever. Only, she did not tell Emil about it. She did not tell him anything unless he asked her directly. Little by little he had developed the habit of questioning her: where she had been—with whom—who had been there. And his questions, from being purely interrogatory, took on an accusing tone. So it became hard for her to tell him, without a strain in their relations, that Tate had sent her tickets for a matinée, or that Jack Marten had brought a friend in for tea.

She found it simpler to fail to mention that sort of thing to him, or merely to tell him that she had dropped in at Christine Paulsen's studio, without adding that Pattison had been there. And she developed a guarded way of speaking to him, weighing the effect on him of everything she had to tell him. She would talk animatedly about the price of food, the cut of a new dress, his cases, his lectures—anything to fill up space when she did not want him to ask her what she had been doing.

She would say:

"Oh, I worked like a major on the miserable end of my story! Another three days of grinding and I'll have it ready for Holtson."

It was true enough, only, it gave him the impression that she had been writing all day, whereas at four she had met Pattison and gone in his low blue racer for a quick, happy ride through the country.

Emil thought of her many times, when he could tear his mind from the fascinating thraldom of his work. And he tried to take her with him to meetings and lectures, so that she would not feel that he did not want her to have any pleasure. He really wanted her to go out as much as she chose, but to go with the right kind of people—other doctors' wives, or any serious-minded, intelligent women.

He played for, and finally succeeded in securing, an invitation to dinner at the home of Doctor Thurley Robertson, head visiting surgeon at one of the hospitals where Emil was working. Doctor Robertson's wife was Elizabeth Deering Robertson, editor-in-chief of one of the largest, women's periodicals in the country.

Zelda was thrilled at the prospect. Elizabeth Deering Robertson, who had accomplished all that she hoped to accomplish, and who had been able to combine what she herself despaired of combining: her work and an ideal home life. There were to be other people there whom she was anxious to know. Madame Heinrich, the contralto; Mrs. Paley, the famous explorer—women whose names were in large type on the front page, where her friends were glad to secure a line under Arts and Music.

Zelda looked forward to it with almost a feeling of awe. It seemed as though it might be a turning-point in her life, as though Providence had sent her a means of discovering the answer to many things. It was a wonderful thing to which to look forward. Yet from the moment the Irish maid opened the door for them and she caught a glimpse of the typical hall chandelier, she was conscious of a feeling of disappointment — of the bursting of a fairy bubble. Once inside, she found Mrs. Robertson's home merely a brownstone house, done in excellent taste by a woman decorator, with interesting books and pictures, but with none of that exotic

charm which her own home possessed. And the dinner itself, though good, was not at all extraordinary.

The conversation started off interestingly enough. Doctor Paley, a little man with a triangular head and a red Vandyke, had done a great deal of work abroad, and the talk was of world movements. Zelda listened eagerly, for she was not quite sure of herself. She did not know how she would feel among these people who were doing work which joined continents—she with her little local popularity, her sale of poems and stories to the magazines. But Emil seemed quite at his ease. He had clear, well-digested ideas, and Zelda felt a thrill of pride and affection as she remarked how well his opinions stood up among these big, clever people.

He was plainly pleased, was Doctor Nord. These were the sort of people Zelda should cultivate. He liked the gentle air of Mrs. Robertson, the fond way she had of letting her clear, wide blue eyes rest on her husband, her manner of deferring to his opinion. He was thinking that a woman like that would be a good example and a fine influence for Zelda—and, besides, could do more for her, in a practical way, than could Nicholas Tate, for instance.

He was silent after the talk turned from economics and world politics to arts and letters, but he sat back and listened to Zelda. He was happy to see that she shone easily among these people. Here he could let himself enjoy her vivacity, her enthusiasm, her exuberance, and appreciate the keen judgment and logic behind them.

And he was pleased to find out for certain what he had always believed: that people could be great artists and still not lose sight of the family ideal. Madame Heinrich was one of the world's finest contraltos, Mrs Robertson was a wonderfully successful journalist; yet neither of them needed any man hovering about her; neither of them dragged her husband to this opening or that tea, only to lose herself in a fire of raillery, repartee, sex patter, talk of this book or that picture, this success or that fiasco, while her husband stood in moody silence watching her.

He asked Doctor Robertson what his wife had done in their early married life, while he had been working.

Done? Why, she had stayed home and studied and written—kept her house and looked after the children. No time for anything much. The other doctors' wives used to come over—they had a women's bowling club, he remembered, and a sewing circle.

Emil looked over at Zelda to see if the lesson were striking home. But he could not tell. Her face was noncommittal.

At first Zelda had felt shy—timid about her grasp on the actualities of life. Perhaps there were broad streams where these famous people drank, while she had been sipping at babbling brooks.

But during coffee, while the men went back to the talk of war and war methods, the women discussed their children, their servants, their automobiles. And then it struck Zelda that in the matter of life they knew no more than she—they had drunk of no hidden springs. And she looked at Mrs. Robertson again, and noticed that, apart from her work, she was just a plain, sweet-faced, youngish old woman, with her graying hair brushed straight back from a wide, high brow and her plain gray silk dress filled in with net at the yoke, making it even plainer. And Zelda realized that for Mrs. Robertson the problem had not been the same as for her—that the older woman had none of those undercurrents of feeling that tormented her. And Mrs. Paley, with her broad, big face and her eyeglasses, had seen the world, but she had never seen *life*—seen it—and felt it—as she, Zelda, had. And stout Madame Heinrich was at heart like any of the women of Pottersville—only she had been gifted with a magnificent voice.

And while they continued to talk about their homes, Zelda looked at them and could not envy them their success—no, not at that price. Only one thing she envied them: that they had found themselves, and she was still drifting, rudderless, through the cross-currents.

It was a pleasant evening, but it was, on the whole, a keen disappointment to her. She had not found anything. She had not learned anything vital. She had not been moved—nor stimulated. She had been listened to—they had even been a little fascinated by her—but she had gained nothing; she had not even used herself up.

Emil, on the way home, could not contain his satisfaction.

"Well," he said stroking her hand under the lap-robe, "it was a wonderful evening, wasn't it?"

"Yes, indeed," she said, and nodded eagerly. But she was oppressed by the sense of playing a part. She thought, with a sickening numbness, that she was always playing a part with Emil lately. And she wondered whether it would always be so—all her life.

It continued to be so for another year. But in spite of it, and in spite, too, of the fact that she frivoled away so much of her time, she was writing steadily, brilliantly, successfully. And her home ran smoothly. Zelda had a genius for making people work for her—her friends, her tradespeople, her servants. Even out of herself she got a tremendous amount of work. She was so quick to learn and so quick to give off again. She played splendidly — she was taking lessons again—and she worked, war work, on this committee or with that group. And with it all she wrote and wrote.

At last Nicholas Tate introduced her to a publisher who was willing to bring out a volume of her love poems.

To celebrate, they gave a party. There was about Zelda a feverish abandon, a complete letting-go of herself—more marked, more unrestrained, than Emil had ever witnessed. In fact, looking at her, he seemed not to recognize her at all, so changed she was from the Zelda he had known. It seemed as though all the things he had been hearing all along had suddenly crystallized in this new Zelda. He could not stand it. When they were alone he said:

"It's no use, Zelda. There's no use in trying to go on any longer. You will have to choose between them and me."

She was carrying a vase of white flowers from the room, and she set it down on the table with such force that some of the water jerked over the side on her trembling, pallid hands.

Emil, standing at the window, had his back turned, so that he did not see how her face grew white as the flowers, nor how she clung to the edge of the table for support. He did not care to see. He had set out deliberately to pull his house down about his ears, and he repeated sullenly:

"You will have to choose. Surely," he added with passion, "it should not be hard for you! These people are nothing to you. But I am your husband, and if you really care for me—"

A little cold smile curled up one corner of her full-lipped mouth. But she still clung to the table. Care for him! That steady, inner eye of hers marveled at how little feeling she had for him. None at all. Even less than that. But there was that which she had meant to tell him tonight, and because of that she must not even think how little she cared.

"Care for you? Of course I—care for you—Emil." She said it haltingly, without conviction. "What—what's the matter?"

"Everything!" he said with terrible bitterness, and closed his hand relentlessly about the thin, defenseless edge of the curtain. "I can't stand it any longer. Either I've got to have you—or I've got to let you go!"

She could feel how much he cared, and suddenly a wave of pity swept over her.

She had *known* that he loved her, but she had never *felt* it so—never felt what he must be going through as he stood by, watching the currents of life carry her away from him, helpless to follow or retard. Her eyes grew moistly tender.

She went over and stood beside him and put her hand tentatively on his taut left arm.

"Emil," she said with a little, childlike inflection, "what makes you think—you—haven't got me?" She smoothed an imaginary wrinkle on his coat sleeve. "Have I—have I done anything?" Her voice trailed upwards into a wistful silence.

"No," he answered sombrely, his eyes fixed on the darkness outside; "you haven't done anything. I just felt tonight that you had changed towards me—and I can't stand it. I can't go on living with you and know that I don't mean anything to you—that every Tom, Dick, and Harry from the street means more in your life than I do." Fiercely he crushed the corner of the curtain into inert shapelessness.

The look in her eyes deepened into yearning. Oh, he was suffering—and she was so sorry—so sorry! But whose fault was it that she had ceased to care? Hers? His? Life's? Must she, then, forego her slice of life so that he might enjoy his in peace? Or must he suffer—terribly—in order that she might live? How cruel life was!

"Dear," she said, her voice vibrant with tenderness, "that isn't so. You do mean a great deal to me. Why, nobody means more in my life than you. Why, Emil, you *are* my life!" And her long, caressing fingers moved up and down his coat sleeve.

For a moment the shadow seemed to be lifting from his still averted eyes. But it settled back again, and a vertical furrow puckered the skin between his brows.

"No, I'm not. Your writing is your life—not me. I'm just a hindrance. I keep you from doing the things you want to do and seeing the people you want to see. You could get along better without me." His hand trembled with the tenseness of his grip on the limp, twisted curtain.

"Oh, no, Emil! Don't say that!" There was a ringing earnestness in her voice, and the mist in her eyes turned into unshed tears. "Don't say that. I couldn't live without you. This is my real life—here with you. The other is the froth. I need it for my work. I need to touch other lives. I must take those things where I find them. But this is my real life—this is what means the most to me!" As she spoke, her voice gained in intensity and power until it thrilled through the stillness of the room.

He seemed to be weighing—considering. Suddenly, with an impulsive abandon, she flung her arms about his neck.

"Honey," she sobbed, "we mustn't let anything come between us now! We mustn't quarrel now! I do love you, Emil, I do! I do! I meant to tell you to-night! Emil—I'm—I'm—"

Almost roughly he took her head between his hands and bent it back until he could look into her eyes. Long and searchingly he looked, as though the man could not trust himself to believe what he saw there. But the physician saw and realized. And with almost a sob of happiness his arms closed about her, and he held her to him. They clung together so for an eternity of wordless, passion-filled moments, her head against his breast, his face buried in the fragrance of her hair.

"Oh, Baby!" he murmured inarticulately. "Baby! I thought you didn't care! I thought you didn't care!"

Long, long after he had fallen asleep she lay in bed wide-eyed and sleepless. Had she meant what she had said to him? No. She had been acting a part. Only, this time she had acted so well that she herself had been carried away. But was it not right to act such a part? Would

it not have been wrong to be terribly truthful at such a time?

Motherhood! The great Unknown! Perhaps therein lay the answer to the tangled problem of her life. Perhaps not. But, at any rate, it should have a fair chance. She had thought that in marrying Emil, a big, true man, she was answering the call of the bigger, higher things, and that life would repay her by giving her surcease from all the vexing turmoil of her stormy girlhood. Yet her marriage had been a mistake. It had not been the solution to the tangle—only another dangerous twist.

Yet, on the whole, life had been very good to her. She had had very little suffering—and many happy hours. And now, when her problems had threatened to become too much for her, life had sent her motherhood. And perhaps that was the answer—perhaps—perhaps. . . .

WHEN SLEEP COMES

By Harold Cook

(To E. Q.)

AND at night we reach a city
Where the pirate junks slide in,
Sailing low with bags of silver,
Persian kittens from Al Kiver,
Slipping silently, Chinesely, without any noise or din.

Then we watch them at unloading,
You and I upon the quay,
And your great eyes, gray as powder,
When they bow to me, grow prouder,
As they soil their tarry pigtails in their bowing down to me.

For your hair like blue-black swallows
They've a sapphire turban brought;
And an ivory tusk for fluting;
Jars of musk, an evening's looting,
Whose perfume makes a twilight with its magic, out of naught.

This were all but barren dreaming—
Ivory, musk, and turbans blue,
Forty yellow men a-thieving,
Were there not, for this achieving,
A jet-haired princess waiting. But there is, and she is you!

THIS MAGIC SHADOW-SHOW

By Gladys E. Johnson

A Two-Part Story—Part II

VII

THE short afternoon was drawing to a close. The sky was sullen, the Bay beaten level by the rain; Oakland and Berkeley were lost to view in the driving mist. The Hill was at its ugliest. The rows of dreary gray houses flanking the narrow cross streets were indescribably depressing. The very top was a deserted mass of sticky mud. A line of neglected clothes, stretched entirely across one straggling street, flapped dismally in the gusts of wind.

Down the pavements were running little rivulets of water, while along the gutter of the round-cobbled street a fair imitation of a mountain torrent gurgled.

Allegra had reached the wooden sidewalk and was carefully picking her way on the cleats to keep from slipping. The sound of hurrying footsteps wheeled her about in the unreasoning hope that it was Sewell.

It was Emmanuel — Emmanuel, who seldom came to the Hill now, save in the hope of seeing Allegra. He had obtained a "gran'" position attending a cigar store in the Mission district, and thereby much honor on the Hill.

With a feeling of dislike too strong to be concealed, the girl drew away from the hand he slipped under her elbow. Her eyes flashed. This the man affected not to see. He began, with a poor attempt at ease, to speak:

"I could not be sure at first it was you. You should have an umbrella; you will be quite wet. See, even my shoes are wet."

He carelessly drew attention to his own feet, immaculately shod in new, expensive shoes. There was, in fact, a wonderful change in Emmanuel. That the cigar business prospered was shown in the new suit that had replaced the poorly dyed one of other days. His very vocabulary was Americanized to the point of snobbishness. In spite of the girl's evident hostility, he had nerved himself to an assured manner he had never before adopted toward her.

"Allegra, I have been trying to see you for a long time. Why won't you marry me? You know your uncle—"

The girl started walking more rapidly, a crease of displeasure between her fine brows.

"I told you before, and I tell you again, not to talk that way to me. I don't like it; I couldn't *dream* of marrying you if you were the last man on earth!" She did not want to be cruel, but the mere presence of the man disgusted her.

"You are in love with someone else?" The man's tone was ominously quiet. A smoldering fire sprang into his black eyes.

Allegra contented herself with an imperious look. They had reached the top of the hill now, and stood for a second to gain their balance against the wind sweeping off the Bay. Emmanuel suddenly lunged forward and snatched at her hand.

"You think I am blind! It is that man — Sewell. You have never been one of us, and now he has made you grow entirely away. You are in love with him!"

"Let me go!" The girl's eyes blazed.

"To him?" The Italian's lips curled

in an ugly sneer. "Posing for statues! Ha! Shut up with him long hours so he can make love to you! No; tell me I lie! See, you cannot!"

The hot color flooded the girl's face. "You — do — lie!" She twisted her hands viciously to free them. The man's grasp was pressing cruelly into the flesh; his face was so close that she felt his hot breath pass her cheek. Curious eyes watching from the houses about them increased her angry mortification.

"Alone with him every day! No one not a fool would swallow such a story. Posing—posing— Ha!"

A stinging blow fell across his cheek. The color had seeped from Allegra's face, leaving it a furious white. Had Emmanuel been less carried away by his own anger, those blazing eyes would have checked him.

"You think I am blind; that I have no good sense! I'll show you; I'll show him too! If he is wise he will stay away from you. You tell him that. If he doesn't"—a cold, murderous fury came into the man's glittering eyes, and they narrowed ominously—"I will make him —I, myself!"

Another stinging blow was the answer—a blow with all the force of Allegra's lithe young body behind it. And before he reeled back again she had sped away, running through the rain.

A sleepless night had left Sewell torturing himself by picturing Allegra waiting for him in the studio the next morning as usual. Instead, only the clay image was there to tantalize him by the resemblance. The man stood regarding it sombrely. The very poise was indicative of the girl; it seemed impossible for clay to appear so light, so full of motion. The streaming hair, the outstretched arms, the eager face and parted lips, all filled him with the miserable longing to send for her. It was only now, when he knew that she would not come again, that he realized what the girl had grown to mean to him in these months.

He fought the unequal battle for a couple of hours, then flung the modeling tools impatiently down and started in the direction of Telegraph Hill.

He took a fierce delight in the gusty wind blowing off the Bay, bracing his strength against it, fighting it inch by inch as if it had been a living thing. It took the first keen edge off his emotions, and in their place came the old cynical lassitude. Over and over in his mind he rolled the skeptical utterance that summed his whole belief, drawing a queer comfort from its hopelessness:

For in and out, above, about, below,
'Tis nothing but a Magic Shadow-Show
Play'd in a box whose Candle is the Sun,
Round which we Phantom Figures come and go.

He was right—the old Tentmaker was right. After all, a few short years, and it was over. Animated shapes flickering for a brief time in disorder and believing that about their own little puny ambitions the universe clung. . . .

The thought gave him strange relief; it made him one of millions, stilled for a moment that terrible personal longing.

He had come up the long west slope of the Hill, that slides in a gradual green descent to the streets at its base. At the top, where the land falls abruptly away in a breath-taking cliff, he paused and let his gloomy eyes travel over the city spread below.

The streets were dreary, the asphalt shining wetly from the rain. Long rows of steamship docks ran out into the Bay like the fingers of an investigating hand. Without realizing its meaning, he stared at the lettering on the side of one; then, almost as if it sounded in his ears, the name broke through his abstraction:

THE CHINA MAIL

Like a clap of thunder came his decision. He would go beyond the ocean, away from the temptation to see Allegra. It was not a heroic thing to do—to run away; but if he remained in San

Francisco he knew that sooner or later the overwhelming longing to see her again would discover a weak place in his wall of defense.

Then came the reaction—a fierce desire to have her near once more, to feel her cool fingers pressed against his face, to resume again the sweet comradeship that had grown up within the last months. Swept along by this, he actually took a couple of steps toward the south side of the Hill, then stopped to reason bitterly with himself.

After all, they were only two among millions. Surely there must be some forgotten corner of the world where they could be left alone to find happiness. He tortured himself by playing with the fancy for a moment. There was a South American paradise he knew, a place of vast moonlit spaces and still waters; there was a little cherry-crowned village in Japan; or, even more suited to the tingling energy within them, a log cabin up near the snow-line of the Sierras, where the fir trees sing in their branches for the sheer joy of living. He pictured Allegra there, and his nails bit deeply into his palms. The mountain wind touching the yellow hair, her vivid face tilted in the strong, clear sunshine . . . She would go—that happiness could be his, if he would only dare!

The eucalyptus trees in the lonely little park behind him lashed their branches together in swishing despair. Impelled by the sound, Sewell, obeying some instinct, stepped perilously close to the edge of the cliff and looked over.

His gaze plunged abruptly down. The Hill dropped away straight as a die, as the quarrymen had left it years ago. One little overgrown footpath zigzagged to the very edge and abruptly ended, mute testimony of the awful day when the rest of it had taken the dizzying plunge. The rain was driving against the gray rock with fascinating regularity. Driven still by that compelling motive, Sewell leaned farther over, balancing himself by his arms outstretched behind him. A fresh gust of wind bowed the eucalyptus, and one flying leaf madly wrenched free and slapped itself wetly across Sewell's eyes.

Instinctively he flung himself back, brushing at the obstruction, then went numb with horror as he realized that the land beneath his feet was sinking. It was not reason that prompted him to risk all on a frantic backward leap—he had no time to reason.

Slightly sick with the narrowness of his escape, he watched the new, raw wound of black earth that appeared on the edge of the cliff. Large in his consciousness loomed the lettering on the China Mail dock. It was something tangible and stable to which his eyes clung gratefully.

Sewell was shaken, not only physically, but with a supernatural fear which suddenly crystallized the events of the past minutes into a symbolic warning of the future. The whole scene became pregnant with meaning for him; it had the aspect of hushed waiting—waiting for his decision.

The yawning cliff at his feet, or the long ocean steamer beyond—the roads of destiny were forking before his gaze, and it was given to him to choose.

The wind, after that one furious gust, had sunk to a sullen silence. The eucalyptus trees were hushed as if listening intently between the raindrops. Ages of culture dropped away from Sewell; a paganism in him recognized a personal message in these omens. It was this that he answered in his inner consciousness. His white face turned to the swaying branches, and one eyebrow was lifted in derision. Then he shrugged with the defiant submission of one who accepts Fate's terms under compulsion.

The next moment he was swinging down the long grassy descent to the west.

VIII

In the three days that followed, Allegra was tossed miserably between two

emotions, now high on the crest of ecstasy, thrilled with the knowledge that Sewell loved her, alternately paling and flushing at the memory of that scene in the studio; now down in the trough, sick with the futility of it all, raging with ineffectual despair.

"It's unfair," she thought bitterly. "For a woman I've never seen—a woman who doesn't care. And—I love him!"

She stayed in the dingy little house, avoiding even Lin, her face set stoically, but her heart aching. Late on the third day the longing to see Sewell drove her forth from the four walls, away from curious eyes, to fight it out in the open, where she could lower her guard.

Back and forth, under the eucalyptus trees on the Hill crest, she walked, her clasped hands tightly pressed to her breast, stopping now and then to look over the city.

Little things impressed themselves on her consciousness in queerly detached fragments, easing for a moment the torture within. There was a new scar on the edge of the cliff, a raw, black break where the earth had fallen from the edge, doubtless broken off in some recent rainstorm.

For a moment her eye fell on it, speculating idly upon the manner in which it must have gone over. An invisible hand seemed pulling her toward the spot, and to rid herself of the morbid fancy her gaze wandered beyond and fell on the docks.

A China steamer was ready to sail; she could see the blue flag at the bow. There was something fascinating about the boat. For a long moment Allegra stared at it, unwinking, watching the freight going on board. An intent little frown formed between her brows, there came over her a vague feeling of unrest which eventually became a settled conviction of need for haste.

She must see Sewell again—right then. She had to see him! No sooner did she become aware of this feeling than it became an obsession, bringing in its wake a very fever of impatience.

She obeyed it blindly, thrilling to the impatient command in her brain. The ride to Sewell's studio was the agony of a lifetime. Only once the reproachful realization of what she was doing rose to confront her, and it was instantly flooded out by the vague fear that she would be too late—for what?

She caught her breath painfully when the car stopped at crossings, weak with relief when the wheels turned again. By the time she was running up the stone steps of the house, the unknown fear had sapped all caution from her. She flung herself on the door, and a sob of relief broke from her when the knob turned beneath her fingers and she found herself looking into the startled face of Sewell.

The reaction left her cold, her hands outstretched as if grasping at an invisible support, her eyes staring with the strain. Then they were wrenched from the man's face to race madly about the hall; to flood with a sick terror when she noticed Sewell's overcoat, the suitcases piled in the corner, the steamer rug flung on top.

"Chan! You're going away!" She went so limp that Sewell was afraid that she had fainted. In the white light slanting above the old-fashioned fanlight over the door, her lips were bloodless. He lifted her in his arms as lightly as though she were a child, and held her close. When he spoke it was in a low tone, and his gaze evaded hers.

"Dearest, I've got to. Can't you see? It's for you. I don't dare risk staying."

Her answer was a long, shuddering breath, her wet cheek pressed fiercely against his. Finally Sewell could stand it no longer.

"Sweetheart"—his hand stole up and smoothed her hair with the old, caressing gesture—"there's nothing else to do."

The girl was calmer now, and as Sew-

ell finished she raised her face, her arms still convulsively gripping him.

"Chan, please don't leave me behind. If you go away, I think—my heart—will—break!"

The look of devotion hurt the man. "Allegra—Allegra dear, you must think of yourself."

"Chan, listen." She stopped him with an earnest little gesture. "If you go away, I don't care for anyone or anything. Maybe you think I'm shameless—no, that's false modesty; I know you don't—you know how I love you. Take me with you, Chan. I don't care what anyone says. I think I'll almost die if you go."

For a long moment Sewell looked back into the brave brown eyes, his own very tender. Then he slowly shook his head.

"Dearest, I want you with all my heart, but I'm not quite such a cad as that. You don't realize what you're saying. Oh, you think you mean it now, but the world is bigger than both of us, sweetheart. You're a child: you can't realize what it means to oppose all the world openly."

"As if I cared! You're all that matters; Chan, you *can't* leave me." Her eyes looked up with unwavering sincerity.

A tortured groan was wrung from the man. "Allegra—help me!"

"I can't help you to leave me." She had lifted his hand and was pressing it to her lips. "Dear, I'm not a child, although you called me that just now. I've loved you—oh, ever since I saw you, I believe. I loved you before I even realized it. I'll give up anything, *everything* to be with you. Oh, won't you believe me? Can't I *make* you know that I mean what I say?"

"Hush, dear, hush! I mustn't let you say that." Sewell tried gently to force her away. "You'll be glad I stayed firm some day."

A bitter little laugh stopped him.

"Oh, good God, how can I make you believe!" Allegra's arms dropped from him and as quickly clung to him again. "Chan dearest, don't leave me—don't!"

"But, Allegra—" His words were suddenly smothered on his lips; his arms pressed her to him fiercely. It dawned on him what it would mean to leave this girl behind and to torture himself later with the knowledge that he could have taken her. Everything combined to break down the wall of his defense. It was impossible to reason clearly with her tear-wet face pressed to his, with those pleading brown eyes begging him to do what all the desire in him was crying out to do.

"No, no, dear! No!" He hardly recognized his own voice.

It was late; he must send her away: the chauffeur would be coming for him in a couple of minutes. With a sick contempt, he became aware that his resolution was crumbling. After all, they were but two, and the Orient was wide and secretive.

"Dear"—his voice was steady, but oddly hollow—"won't you go, please? I can't stand much more."

There was another silence; the girl's head was bent on his shoulder.

"Allegra"—God, how weak his voice was!—"I'm afraid for you. If I could take the consequences alone, I wouldn't hesitate. I want you—oh, I want you, Allegra!"

The silence seemed to shriek aloud.

"You're sure you won't regret?"

In answer she raised her lips to his solemnly, and quite as solemnly Sewell bent his head.

"With all my might I'll try to be good to you." His words had the hush of a prayer.

On the ride to the dock the girl sat with her hand in his, both of them gazing fixedly ahead. Only once their eyes met, when a cobbled crossing flung them rudely against each other. A smile flashed between them, then their gazes returned to the vanishing streets outside.

Allegra tried to realize that she had crossed her bridge, but a strange apathy weighed her down. At the dock she shrank sensitively away from the crowd, closer to Sewell. Her head turned from the carelessly inquisitive glances flung their way. At the involuntary gesture, a shadow crossed the man's face. Allegra had never seemed so frail and helpless. All the old imperiousness was gone. Sewell wondered sadly if after to-day it would ever return.

The whole scene was unreal to the girl, even when she preceded Sewell across the gangplank and followed a deck steward down to the stateroom assigned to them. She walked over to the porthole and stood gazing stonily ahead, not daring to turn around while the steward placed the suitcase on the rack. Was it always to be like this, she wondered; always this dull shame, this fear of meeting people—for her, who had tilted her chin against the whole world? Or would it go away? Would she get used to the hunted feeling?

Her lips were quivering when, after the steward had closed the door, she crept into Sewell's arms again.

Sewell held her close and with one hand lifted her face until he could look into her eyes.

"I'll wait until we cast off, then I'll fix things with the purser. We'll have to say that we got married at the last minute. You can get some clothes and things in Honolulu." He looked with narrowed eyes into the girl's face. "Allegra, do you regret it? There's time to back out even yet."

The brown eyes did not flinch.

"Do you want me, Chan?"

The man's gaze was lit by a blue flame.

"You know I do, Allegra," he answered simply.

After that they stood silently by the porthole, Sewell's arm protectingly around her. Allegra tried to realize that she was gazing across the familiar Bay, perhaps for the last time, as her mother had. Like the dark-eyed Benedetta, her daughter knew what it was to leave everything for the man she loved. Before her tear-blinded gaze the blue water danced in a glare of light. She was glad she could not see Telegraph Hill from the porthole. The old Allegra had lived there. Sometimes she would like to imagine that other self still there on the Hill, romping and laughing under the eucalyptus trees, innocent of such problems as life and love. That old Allegra was still half a child, and Allegra knew that after this day she would never be a child again. Had Benedetta known this choking, half wistful happiness when she ran away?

A laughing party passed the door, talking excitedly about going ashore.

"Next stop China! Better hurry!" called a voice, and a series of agitated squeals answered him.

In Sewell's heart a hot impatience was dawning to have it all over, to be irrevocably committed to this mad plan. He resented the seemingly unending loading of cargo which was holding them back; the gabbling, inane chatter of the crowd. Several times he reached for his watch, convinced that the sailing time had been reached. At each footfall on the passage outside, his body stiffened, his embrace about the girl became rigid, relaxing as the sound died away.

"Sailing time. We should be off immediately." His voice shook ever so slightly.

Again hurrying footsteps came down the passageway. Nearer and nearer—now they were directly before the door. Sewell's shoulders rose in a mighty, excited breath, and he waited tensely for the steps to follow their predecessors up the companionway.

Instead, the door burst roughly open, and a man nearly fell into the room.

"Allegra! Oh, thank God!"

But Allegra had gone sick and white at the sound of Lin's voice.

IX

THE deathly silence which followed in the next moment was shattered by the first distant signal for "All ashore!" It seemed to break the tense pose of Lin and arouse in him the need for action.

"Allegra, come with me." He walked over to the girl and attempted to take her hand.

"No, no! . . . Chan!"

"It's all right, dear; it'll be all right." But Sewell's voice was suddenly dead. His eyes searched Bradley's face hopelessly, as if reading in his averted gaze the verdict of the world.

At Allegra's involuntary gesture of shrinking away, Lin had winced, but his voice was still very gentle. Except for the unusual flush over the high cheekbones, no one would have guessed at the murderous rage within him. Sewell he had ignored.

"Allegra, quick! The visitors are leaving the ship now. Hurry, dear."

Sewell's arm suddenly tightened about the girl as if he would keep her by force. A light of fighting desperation had come into his eyes. "Lin—let me explain; you don't know how things are."

Bradley whirled on him with blazing eyes.

"You keep your mouth shut. You've made a bad enough mess of things already!"

A little, frightened whisper broke from the girl.

"Don't, oh, don't, please! It's my fault, Lin. Chan didn't want to take me. I had to beg and beg before he would. But—I love him, and—I don't want him to leave me."

Again Sewell hushed her by a touch. At Bradley's curt command a dark flush had swept across his face, but no trace of resentment sounded in his voice.

"I don't blame you for that, Lin. I probably seem pretty rotten to you; but I don't think any man could attempt what I am doing with a purer ideal. Oh, I know"—as the other's lip curled slightly—"I seem like a damn' liar! I—I suppose some day I'll be glad that you came, but I can't just now. I can't say anything that will excuse me. Only—God! I wish you'd stay away."

Allegra leaned forward and put her hand pleadingly on Lin's arm. There was something so brave, yet so forlorn, about the earnest, upraised face that both men felt a tightening in their throats.

"Lin, I'm going with Chan. I can't help it. He was going away; he loves me, and he was going away—without even saying good-by, because he couldn't marry me. You'll hate me and be ashamed of me, but I couldn't let him go. I made him take me."

Lin's voice was very patient, as one would reason with a child.

"It can't be done, Allegra. Believe me, dear, I'm thinking only of you. Come, dear; come quickly! They'll be casting off."

"No, no, no!" Allegra was clinging to Sewell in desperation, filled with terror at the indecision in his face. "Chan, don't listen to him! Don't send me away."

Sewell kissed her, regardless of Bradley's watchful eyes, then gently unclasped her protesting hands.

"I might have known it!" His laugh grated. "You can't get away with it—bluffing the world!"

"You can! You can!" Allegra sobbed it. A long yellow strand of hair slipped from under the brim of her hat and spread itself in a golden mesh on Sewell's coat. "I'm not afraid, Chan. Let me stay with you." Gone were the disturbing thoughts of a few minutes before. She was sure she would brave the universe now for the chance to remain with Sewell.

"You have no right!" Lin sharply answered the resolution dawning in the other's eyes. Across the room his gaze fenced with the other man's. "I'm sorry I said that, a little while ago." His tone was stiff. "I can see your viewpoint—

but not with Allegra. You've had your chance for happiness before; you can't take Allegra."

The silence almost stung as his sharp tone ceased. The last call for visitors ashore was echoing down the companionway. Sewell suddenly put the girl away and walked to the porthole, his back to the others.

"You're right. I can't take Allegra."

"Chan!"

At that loyal little cry, Sewell's head bent lower, but he did not turn.

"Quick, dear! We've got to run."

In spite of her struggles to remain, she was swept along by Lin's arm. She hung back and looked around once before the companionway hid Sewell from view.

He was standing in the doorway, one hand outstretched as if to recall her; his eyes met hers with an intensity of love which wrung a little cry from her lips. Then the whole scene swam in a haze of tears.

X

THE winter rains were a thing of the past on the Hill. Once more the trade winds roared unrestricted through the long, disagreeable summer afternoons, and the fog stole up from the Bay each night, blotting out the stars and wrapping the city in a heavy, wet silence.

But once in a long while would come a spell of exhaustively warm weather, San Francisco's proverbial "three hot days" swooping upon the unaccustomed native and wringing his energy from him before they died a cold and foggy death. On such nights the stars elbowed each other for room in the sky, and the Bay was a maze of brilliant lights, throwing red and green reflections into the inky water.

Then Allegra would climb alone to the place beneath the eucalyptus and watch the lights of the steamers. There was nothing childish about Allegra now. A gravity that should have been foreign to her eighteen years checked the old impulsiveness. It was not a temporary mood of angelic sweetness; rather, it was the calm of one whose grief is spent, whom lack of hope has exhausted.

Sometimes, looking at her in miserable helplessness, Lin would wonder if the real Allegra had not gone away, after all. Even in those first few weeks after Sewell's departure, when she raged in hopeless despair and refused to have anything to do with Lin, she had more of the old fire.

Allegra was in demand as a model now. Alicia Woodruff, the fresco painter, had seized her eagerly and refused to release her. Allegra posed as she lived, quietly acquiescent, her ability to hold a pose making Mrs. Woodruff fairly rave over her "new jewel of a model."

"Tell me, my dear," she asked one day, daubing at the canvas with a brushful of ochre and then studying the effect of Allegra's hair through squinted eyelids—"I'm a curious old woman, I know, but why do you continue to live on the Hill? It's picturesque, of course, but you should take that little apartment I told you of. There's no question that you can get along. Rainey's crazy to get you to pose for that statue of his—if I ever let him," she finished with malicious enjoyment.

"I suppose there's no good reason," Allegra replied slowly. "I am simply used to it."

But there were two reasons, sufficiently good to herself. One was that Lin lived there. After that first terrible time, Allegra had come to be more and more with Lin. They did not talk so freely; that scene in the steamer's cabin was never mentioned, and its effects were too far-reaching to admit of any other confidences not touching on it. But there was a peculiar pleasure in knowing that Lin was there, near; ready to walk silently beside her whenever she chose.

The other reason was the China boats. She felt a melancholy comfort in seeing

them come to dock; but never did one pull out that her eyes did not flood with tears.

But Allegra finally found herself compelled to consider Mrs. Woodruff's plan. She spoke of it to Lin as they walked under the eucalyptus trees one evening.

"Enrichetta is going to be married and go to Half Moon to live. Her mother is going with her. I'll have to take that little apartment of Mrs. Woodruff's."

Lin did not answer for a moment, but in the dark his hand tightened on her arm.

"It will be awfully lonely without you, Allegra. It was bad enough when Tom went away. The Hill's changing, for me."

Allegra's hand slipped slowly over his, with such a sad little gesture that the man's eyes smarted.

"There's nothing else to do. It will really be better in the long run. Mrs. Woodruff says she'll look out for me."

They had walked to the open space above the cliff and stood looking at the harbor below.

"Allegra"—Lin's voice was suddenly husky—"don't go."

The girl glanced quickly up at him, but his gaze had not wandered from the lights of the Sausalito ferry-boat swinging into the channel.

He continued:

"Marry me, instead. I love you; you know that. Oh, I've loved you for years, ever since you used to run around on the Hill in short skirts. Allegra, isn't there any chance? I used to think there was. But now—I don't know—"

"Lin, please—"

"Don't stop me, Allegra. I've wanted to tell you this for a long time. Can't you say yes, dear? You're alone, and I'm lonely."

In the starlight her face was lifted, a wistful, pitying little smile on her parted lips. She raised one hand and laid its back gently against his cheek.

"Lin, I'm so awfully sorry—"

He had told himself to expect this, yet not until she started to speak did he realize what her refusal meant.

"Lin dear, I wish I could. Oh, it's the only thing you've ever asked me to do, and I care so much for you."

He raised his head sharply, then dropped it again at the look in her eyes.

"It wouldn't be fair to you. There isn't any more love in me," the girl continued, "except for"—she choked over the name—"Chan. I couldn't stop loving him just because he's gone away. I don't expect ever to meet him again, but I'll never love anyone else like that."

The man suddenly turned away. Allegra sprang after him, her hand touching his shoulders. "Lin dear, don't!"

"I don't mean to," he answered thickly, "but, Lord! dear, I've loved you for years. It hurts to give up hope. Allegra, if—if Chan—hadn't come along, would it have made any difference?"

She was silent for a moment, then her eyes steadily returned his glance.

"Yes, I think it would have. I have always loved you in a way. It might have turned into that sort of love."

"Maybe it will yet, Allegra."

The little note of revived hope in his voice hurt her.

"I'm afraid not, dear."

"Allegra—I'm willing to take a chance on that."

The girl was silent, standing with bent head.

"Would it be so awfully impossible—being married to me?"

The bent head slowly shook.

"Of course not, Lin dear. But I don't love you the way I do Chan. You don't want me on those terms."

"Yes, I do, Allegra; I want you on any terms, so long as they are your own. I think you'll forget all that. You're so young. I'll love you so much that I'll make you love me in return."

The girl was touched. She raised her eyes to his again; wonderfully sad eyes in the starlight.

"Lin, does it matter so much to you—just having *me?*"

"It means all the happiness in life to me, dear."

"But afterward—if I should be silent sometimes, and you were afraid I was thinking of — him? Wouldn't you be more unhappy?"

"Not as unhappy as I'll be without you. Allegra, is there a chance?"

The girl stood with averted head in the circle of his arms. Her wistful gaze had wandered to the shadowy mail docks below. The China dock was empty. As if it were a symbol, she raised her eyes to the man's once more.

"If you want me, knowing this; if you'll be more happy with me than without me—why—I want you to be happy, Lin."

For the first time the man kissed her on the lips, and the sudden flood of gladness that illuminated his face comforted the girl.

In the nights that followed, their walks were no longer silent, for Lin planned happily, his face filled with a quiet content that transfigured it. Watching him then, the girl felt the reflected warmth of his happiness and came to tell herself that maybe he was right.

On a night shortly before the one set for the wedding, she went over to the little gray cottage to help him pack his books. The Hill was to be deserted, so far as they were concerned. Neither had analyzed their decision; each was surprised to know the other favored it.

Allegra glanced about her, trying to realize that she was seeing the familiar little house perhaps for the last time. There was the corner where she had sat hunched over books, waiting for Lin and Tom Trevor to come home. It was in this room that she first saw Sewell. At the thought a little gasp was wrung from her, and she nearly dropped the book she was holding.

"Well, Butterfingers!" Lin, sitting cross-legged on the floor beside the bookcase, laughed up at her. She smiled back, with an effort, at his tenderly happy expression and reached for another volume.

"'The Member for Arcis'—that finishes Balzac. Here's—" She stopped and stood staring in front of her, one hand holding out the heavy volume.

"What's the matter!" Lin's startled voice recalled her.

Her eyes turned on him, wide and strained, the pupils black and distended almost to the rim of the iris. A chill little feeling of dread began at the base of Lin's scalp. Allegra's eyes did not have the "seeing" expression of the ordinary person. He was getting to his feet in alarm when the girl shook herself slightly as if to rid herself of something that was trying to envelop her.

"Ah-h!" A shudder swept her from head to foot. "What a horrible feeling! I can't describe it. I felt the way a person feels on the edge of a chasm."

"Are you ill? Sit down, dear, and rest. You've been posing too long for Mrs. Woodruff. You sit here and talk to me; I'll finish the books."

But the girl protested stoutly.

"No, it was just an odd feeling. See! It's gone now. I'm all right, really, Lin."

But her eyes still wore the staring look of a sleepwalker. The hand that reached for the next book was icy.

"Here—*'Les Miserables.'* Remember the time you came and found me crying over this, and the potatoes all burnt and sticking to the pan?"

"You were an awful little nut," replied Lin tenderly, if not complimentarily.

He reached for the book, placed it in the packing case, and turned to receive the next one from her. Allegra was staring straight at the door, an intent little frown between her eyebrows, her forehead tense in concentration. Even as he looked at her, she took one faltering step.

"Allegra!"

The girl's blank eyes turned toward him, and he saw that her lips were slowly growing bloodless. "Allegra, you're ill!"

He sprang forward to catch her, but the girl put him aside almost fiercely.

"No, I've felt this way before—up on the Hill — the day the China steamer sailed. It's something—I don't know what. Outside the door, Lin—I've got to go. Something's happened, there, outside the door — something — horrible. . . ."

Her voice trailed off in an eerie whisper. She walked to the door, stiff-limbed, like a hypnotized subject; one hand slightly in advance, as if guided by an invisible wire.

The uncanniness of it held the man rooted to the spot; it was not until, suddenly galvanizing into life, she flung the door open, that he was able to break through the spell.

Then he leaped across the room and tore at the knob. With such force Allegra had flung the door open that it had bumped against the wall behind it and slammed shut again. When Lin rushed from the house she had disappeared, not even the dim white of her waist showing through the gloom.

The fog was thick outside, choking the lungs like wet cotton. The eye could barely see across the street. In spite of this, Allegra ran unfalteringly in the direction of the park, that outstretched hand still following the invisible wire.

She was climbing now, her breath burning her lungs with the sudden strain. Just before she reached the crumbling entrance wall something black rose in her path, something that moaned her name in fright.

The girl stifled a scream and jerked both hands over her pounding heart. Her eyes were straining through the fog at the figure, and the relief of recognition left her weak-kneed.

It was Emmanuel, Emmanuel on his knees in the dust, moaning and rocking to and fro in his terror.

"Emmanuel, what is it?" His fright had the effect of steadying the girl. "Hush! You'll have the whole Hill up here. What is it?"

The man was completely unnerved. In the unnatural light his face showed a chalky white blot. He was like a child full of fantastic terrors of the night; and, like a child, the sound of a human voice seemed to give him comfort. He began to babble at the girl in his relief.

"I don't know why I did it—I was crazy, I guess. Yes, crazy; that was it. But they won't believe me; they won't believe me when I say I'm sorry. And I'm afraid—I'm afraid! Allegra, you'll believe me—I didn't mean to do it!"

He was frantically snatching at her hand, shuffling along on his knees in the dust to reach her, as the girl instinctively drew away.

"Allegra, don't let them find out! I didn't mean to do it."

"Hush!"

Low as was the girl's voice, the man obeyed it. He fell to muttering, and there could be heard the dreary drip of moisture from the long leaves of the eucalyptus.

"Emmanuel" — she forced herself to touch him on the shoulder with one finger—"what is it? What have you done?"

At the words the man began to moan and rock again, and his speech tumbled over itself incoherently. He was half crazed with fright, imploring her to save him, connecting her in some freakish way with his safety.

"Stop!" Allegra shook the shivering wretch slightly, and her tone grew stern. "Answer me and stop that noise. What have you done? What are you afraid of?" She leaned over, her eyes forcing him to look at her.

Emmanuel stumbled to his feet, one imploring hand clutching at her. The girl's eyes fell on the other one, and she

went sick and cold. It held a stiletto, its slender blade, halfway up, stained dark and shiny in the halflight.

"Emmanuel!" She conquered the almost overpowering instinct to turn and flee, forcing herself to shake the man's arm. "Whom have you hurt? Answer me!"

"Allegra, I swear I did not mean to do it! I swear it, by the mother of God! I went mad. Among the trees I waited; I did not think to hurt him, I wanted him to go—to make him afraid. Then I thought of you, and this madness came upon me. I did not mean to hurt him—I was surprised when I saw him fall. I went down, too, because I still had hold of the stiletto. The blood came so quick—I never thought it came so quick. I never killed a man before — I am afraid. I pushed him over the cliff. I was afraid to have him found lying there. Oh, Santa Maria, have mercy! I am afraid—"

"Emmanuel, whom — whom did you kill?"

Before he answered she knew what he would say, but she must be sure—she must be sure!

She heard his reply far away—the slow words mingling in some horrible way with the moisture and dripping upon her consciousness.

"That man—I hated him because you loved him and laughed at me — you laughed at me—and it was because of him—Sewell."

XI

It was not the spot she feared; it was not that place where the raw, black wound ran along the edge of the cliff. It was further toward the north. The trees seemed to step before her to delay her as she ran between them. Twice she narrowly escaped collision in the thick whiteness, where they clustered like shrouded ghosts. They sent down showers of drops upon her in spiteful retaliation. In the open she was forced to go more slowly, the edge of the cliff came so soon.

Then through the fog came a sound which stopped her heart for a moment. A shout feeble, but still a cry for help, there in the thick white chasm below. She threw herself flat on the earth and looked over, regardless of the crumbling edge.

For perhaps twenty-five feet the side of the Hill sloped gently out, terminating in a sharp, rocky point, after which it plunged inward down to the streets far below.

To the girl's straining eyes something seemed to be on the point, something thicker than the fog and the night.

"Chan! Chan!"

It seemed an eternity until the faint answer floated up out of the void:

"Allegra—get help!"

"Maria be praised! He is not dead! I have not killed a man!" Emmanuel sobbed behind her.

The sound of Sewell's voice filled the girl with a sense of relief which left her almost light-headed. Chan was alive. There was a chance—a chance— She checked the sudden desire to cry hysterically and wheeled about on the cowering Emmanuel.

"Run! Get Mr. Bradley. Tell him to bring a flashlight and that long rope he was going to tie the trunks with. Don't stop to explain. Go—hurry! It means his life."

She started the white-faced Emmanuel on his way with a shove, then leaned over the cliff again.

"Chan, are you hurt badly?"

The reply was so long in coming that the girl's heart sank with dread. Then the words floated slowly up:

"I don't know—somebody stabbed me. My foot twisted, so I fell. I fainted, I think—until just—now — before — you came."

"Listen, dear. I've sent for Lin. Don't move; I'm coming down there. It's going to be all right, dear."

"Better not — come." Sewell's voice was faint and labored. "Too—steep."

But, undaunted, the girl had swung her feet over the edge, feeling for a footing with her heels, letting herself down cautiously, bit by bit, as one would go down a ladder backward.

Little pebbles and loosened dirt broke loose and clattered down the face of the cliff, carrying others with them, in their mad flight, until they reached the slight promontory in a miniature landslide and bounded gleefully into space.

Dirt that seemed solid rock broke off in Allegra's hand, causing her to cling to the cliff with flattened palms, digging her heels in, breath suspended, until the scattering particles had rattled into silence and she felt it safe to go on. Once her foot slipped. She slid a few feet, only to stop with a jerk as her heel found a cranny. Her hands were torn with the friction over the rough rock. She was physically sick, gulping desperately, her throat tight and dry.

Still she kept on, calling cheerily to the man, below, faint with terror until she heard his slow reply. Emmanuel must be at the house by now, she assured herself. Lin would come quickly. There was a chance — Chan would be saved—he must be saved. Oh, God, why didn't Lin hurry?

It suddenly occurred to her that it was æons of time since she had heard the voice of the wounded man. Had his strength given out? Had he fainted or—

"Chan!" She screamed it in frenzy.

His reply came so near that she sobbed aloud in relief. The next moment she felt the ground slope out abruptly under her feet, and she found Sewell wedged beside a boulder which had not quite made up its mind to continue on down the hill. The force of Sewell's fall had scattered the dirt from the base of the stone, but the parent rock still hung on the face of the precipice, seemingly held by the strength of a hair.

The girl dropped cautiously on her knees beside him; a little, inarticulate prayer in her heart that the extra weight would not prove too much for the slight refuge and send them hurtling into the void below.

Through the darkness Sewell's eyes fluttered open to look into hers briefly before they wearily closed again. The girl impatiently brushed the damp hair back from her own face and bent close to him, her eyes strained and intent.

"Dearest, where are you hurt?"

"In—back. Don't bother. Can't turn over. Think it's — stopped — bleeding now."

The effort of talking exhausted him. There was silence then, thick, white silence that seemed tangible, pressing in upon them from all sides. There was nothing to do but wait. The girl's nerves seemed strained to the breaking-point. Would Lin never come?

She bent down through the darkness, conscious of Sewell's gaze upon her. His eyes were open, looking into hers with an intensity which brought back with a rush that last glimpse of him on the boat. His fingers moved slightly. She put her own bleeding palm over them, and his eyes closed once more.

Again the horrible silence. Allegra checked the desire to talk to Sewell, aware that each word sapped his strength. Surely Emmanuel had had time to run to the cottage and back by now. Suppose he had lost his nerve and run away to hide. Then she must climb up that cliff again and go herself. But could she? Would she dare to leave that helpless, limp figure beside her?

A noise sounded through the fog; a footstep, people walking under the trees. She tried to scream, and the sound stuck in her dry throat.

"Allegra! All right?"

It was Lin's voice—Lin's voice at last, and straight above her head. The girl turned sick and dizzy again. She had never fainted; she must not do it now when Chan's very life depended on her

cool head. But her voice, when it came, was so feeble that it barely reached Lin's strained ears.

"Yes, yes! Only, hurry!"

"Have you found him? Is he alive?" The voice was nearer; evidently Lin was lying on the edge.

Allegra had her nerves more under control now.

"Yes."

"Listen: I'm lowering the rope to you. There's a slip-noose in it. Get it under Chan's arms somehow. Be sure it holds. Here, catch the end of it. Emmanuel and I will pull him up."

Even as he spoke the end of the rope came wriggling down the cliff, hitting her on the shoulder.

"Chan!" She leaned over Sewell; his eyes were open and looking up in the darkness.

"I—heard." He was speaking with terrible effort now, his face chalky. "I'll try—help—but can't—turn over—" As he spoke he put all his strength in an attempt to help her by raising his shoulders and went limp with the pain of it. But that brief moment had been enough for Allegra. She had forced the rope between his body and the rock, and was drawing it tautly under his arms.

"All ready?" came Lin's voice above them.

"Wait, wait!" The girl felt the tears rolling down her face. She leaned over Sewell, brushing his forehead with her lips. Then she was on her knees, straining to raise him, as the rope tightened and began to pull.

At the first movement he had fainted. Allegra was grateful for that. Her heart seemed to stand still as she heard his body brushing against the side of the cliff. She had thrown herself flat to keep from pitching below with the vertigo which seized her. The ground seemed to be swaying and heaving like the waves of the ocean. The cliff rose and sank—and suddenly became stationary with Lin's voice.

"All right, Allegra. Now put the noose under your own arms."

The rope slapped on the ground before her, and she obeyed, moving stiffly, as one very tired.

XII

THE shaded light painted grotesque shadows on the walls, tracing Lin's anxious profile on the white plaster with libelous caricature. It deepened the shadows around Allegra's watching eyes. Her face was still smeared with dried blood and dirt, for she had never left the white-swathed figure on the bed, although the haunted look had gone out of her eyes at the doctor's encouraging verdict.

Lin had been watching her at that time, and the transfiguration of her face had caused his own eyes to drop sadly.

He was watching her now, and it was from her changed expression that he knew Sewell had regained consciousness. In the long look that passed between the two, Lin felt himself cruelly an outsider.

Allegra had dropped to her knees, her cheek pressed softly to Sewell's inert hand lying on the counterpane.

"Don't try to talk, dear," she whispered.

"I must." The strength in Sewell's voice amazed them both. His hungry gaze never left the girl's face. "There's so much to say, dear—I came back to tell you that I'm free. It was a motor accident. She was killed instantly—two months ago, in London." Both knew that he was speaking of his wife; he had never called her by name, even to Lin. "Allegra—there's nothing in the way now."

His hand was raised with an effort and dropped on the girl's bent head. She had begun crying silently, her gaze averted. Slowly, as he looked at her, a shadow dawned in Sewell's eyes; a shade of hopelessness seemed to settle over his face.

"Allegra"—his voice was suddenly

drained of strength—"you—don't care any more?"

Lin's face had gone white; his throat ached with the silence; the ticking of the tiny clock sent sledge-hammer blows on his eardrums.

"Chan—" Was that Allegra's voice—that husky sound that suddenly broke the tension? "Chan—I have to tell you—I never thought you'd come back—Lin—we—we're going to be married."

Wasn't Sewell ever going to speak! Why didn't he say something? Why didn't Allegra speak? Good God, wouldn't anybody drown that beastly ticking? This silence was ridiculous—silly! Why didn't they break it?

And then Sewell's whisper shattered the silence as if it had been a shout.

"I—I'm glad—it's—Lin."

Lin turned a sudden sob into a laugh, a laugh that brought tears to his eyes.

"What a tragedy we're mouthing! Do you think I'd stand for that? Ridiculous! Ridiculous! Ridiculous—" He was about to repeat the word again when their startled eyes recalled him. He caught his breath painfully and laughed again, because it steadied him.

"Look here, Allegra: do you think I'd let such a—a Balzac ending as that take place?" He stopped suddenly, unable to go on; but the girl struggled to her feet in excitement, mercifully unaware of that. His smile was deceptively calm.

"Lin—do you mean that it won't make so awfully much difference, after all? I thought—"

He interrupted her, because he had this to say before he lost the strength.

"It's your welfare, Allegra, that counts with me. It's all that counts, dear." Again he caught his breath. "I'm not posing as a martyr. With—Chan—away, I was worried about you. I thought you'd be safer married—to me. It would give me the right to take care of you, you know. It's different now. Chan's back, and everything's going to be as it should be."

"But, Lin—you said you—loved me. That day on the Hill—" Her voice trembled into silence, but her face was pleading to be convinced.

He said very quietly: "I've always loved you, Allegra; you're the little yellow-haired kid I've always known, and of course I wanted to take care of that youngster."

She believed him because she wanted to, because all her heart was crying out for Sewell, staring at his friend with startled blue eyes. With the old childish gesture, Allegra crept into Lin's arms.

"And I thought you loved me, like Chan does. Oh, I'm so glad you don't care, Lin—so glad!"

Lin reached up and unlaced her fingers as though they burnt him, but in her relief the girl did not notice this. When he reached the door he looked back. She was already on her knees beside the bed, her lips on Sewell's.

He wished she'd waited. . . . Up under the eucalyptus trees the fog hung thick, like Spanish moss. It dripped from the long, still leaves; the ground beneath, bare of grass as it always is under this vampire tree, was soggy with moisture. The fog shrouded the Bay, blotting out the stars, hiding the lights of the city. Even the revolving searchlight on Alcatraz Island could not penetrate its density. From the harbor came the lonely calls of the fog horns, some shrill from the clamorous river boats, down from the interior country; some, those on the ocean steamers, so deep as to be more felt than heard.

Lin was sorry it was so foggy. If the lights of San Francisco had been twinkling back they might have obliterated that last scene. Instead, it was plain wherever he looked, stamped on the fog. . . . God, what must it be like to have her kiss one like that! He had found her kisses grateful, acquiescent.

He nearly ran into a tree. Surely the fog was getting thicker. A person had to be careful, walking around the Hill

on a night like this. It had been so different on that night she had said she would marry him. . . .

Unconsciously he turned to the right to avoid another tree.

So Chan had come back, after all—in the nick of time, as they did in books—as he himself had come that day on the steamer.

He wished he could blot out that last scene. It made a fellow feel so alone—so deeply, unutterably lonely and forgotten. . . .

A black void yawned before him. He did not see it. He was mentally watching Allegra kiss Sewell. It wouldn't be so bad if he could only forget the other man's look of happiness. He wished she'd waited. . . .

Something cold and wet suddenly slid into his hand, bringing him to himself with a nervous jump. The edge of the cliff was almost under his feet. He stared down at the object beside him, a little mongrel dog that lived on the Hill, a little yellow pup he always petted as it came whirling along in the dust to hurl itself on him each evening.

It was sitting up on its haunches now, strangely quiet; wistful eyes fixed pleadingly upon him; begging mutely for the encouraging pat it had come to expect from this one friend.

Lin suddenly choked.

WITHIN THE CHARMÈD CIRCLE OF YOUR ARMS

By George B. Jenkins, Jr.

WITHIN the charmèd circle of your arms,
My cares and petty troubles fall away,
And leave me with but one desire,
To press my lips against your lips, and there to let them stay.

The myriad annoyances of life
All vanish when your warm embrace
Enfolds me to your heart. I wish
To press my lips against your lips, my cheek against your face.

And I am torn between this soft desire
And others of more manly kind.
I strive to steal away, but pause
And come back to my slavery when you call down the wind.

CLOTHES MAKE THE MAN

An Uncritical Review

By Thomas Grant Springer

THACKERAY once wrote: "Oh, for the bold days when we were twenty-one!" But it remained for Booth Tarkington to write: "Alas, the tragic time when we were seventeen!" His picture of Youth, "standing with reluctant feet where the brook and river meet"—no, standing on his own foot at that interesting junction—was one never to be forgotten. As for dramatizing it, even a weary reviewer who had seen put upon the dramatic board so many things that should never have left the library shelf was amazed that such a sacrilege should even have been contemplated. However, Hugh Stanislaus Stange and Stannard Mears had rushed in where angels—that is, dramatic angels—should fear to tread, and the angel, dramatically, who was bold enough to back them was Stuart Walker. In spite of the fact that dramatic angels usually deserve, and receive, a crown of thorns, in this instance all I can say is that a halo would be the only fitting crown that I should desire to place upon his brow. For once, one who came to laugh derisively, remained to laugh tenderly, whimsically, with a catch in his throat every now and then at the ghost of his own, and every other man's, dead youth, stalking before him with all the calfish pathos of that intermediate stage between boyhood and manhood, a thing until now seen upon the stage of life, but never upon the mimic one.

Dear male reader, do you remember the time when you were seventeen? Do you remember when you wanted a dress suit above everything in life—a dress suit? And then do you remember that first girl, that first *real* girl, who came to waken in you those first vague, sweet, and as yet unknown, impulses of sex? Oh, sex, sex, sex! I have seen it dramatically in all stages on many stages, save one: that dear stage of puppy love, all paws and joints, all sentiment, and, ah, so clean, so idyllic, so sweetly and awkwardly boyish. And so, for once, away with all sophistication, let us seat ourselves before the sweet, ghostly tragedy of our own dim youth and follow the fortunes and misfortunes of William Sylvanus Baxter.

William lives in a small town. All real boys have lived in small towns. We see the living hall of the Baxter home, and we meet the family—Mr. Baxter, Mrs. Baxter, and Jane. Jane is one of those sisters who are little pitchers with big ears. She is all ears and mouth; you know the kind at that age. What comes into Jane's ears, and almost everything you don't want to does, must come out of that mouth at the most unexpected and most inconvenient time. Jane is a human phonographic record that faithfully records everything that should not be recorded. Mr. Baxter is just the ordinary American father. He can't see what the matter is with "Willie." "Willie" seems suddenly to have become a puzzle. He doesn't want to be called "Willie," he doesn't want to go to college, and he *does* want a dress suit. Of course Mr. Baxter never was *that* kind of boy. No man in his forties ever was. Mrs. Baxter says there is just one thing the matter with Willie—he is seventeen.

And then Willie appears on the scene. There is no doubt that he is seventeen. He has all the earmarks: gawky, ungainly, serious, and dignified. In one hand he holds a heavy book, in the other a green apple. Of course he drops the apple; of course it rolls down the stairs. Of course it spoils his entrance, and of course Father calls him "Willie."

WILLIE: I don't see why you can't quit calling me Willie. I'm seventeen. Willie sounds like ten.

MRS. B.: I should think you'd rather be called Willie than Silly Bill.

WILLIE: Who told you they called me Silly Bill? I bet Jane told you. That's a nickname, and it doesn't mean what it sounds like. Bill is short for William, and Silly is short for Sylvanus. I'm breaking the boys of the habit. They admit it sounds too young.

MR. B.: What is the matter with you?

WILLIE: You know—you want me to go to college, and I don't want to. You always call me Willie, and you won't give me a dress suit.

MR. B.: You'd look fine in a dress suit when you're still growing like a tadpole!

WILLIE: I'm as big as you were when you were married. Mother told me so. You didn't get fat until you were thirty-five. I can remember when you were a skinny geezer. You had a dress suit when you were married.

MR. B.: You're not thinking of marrying, are you?

WILLIE: No, but I'll have to begin to think about it soon. Besides, I graduate next year—and sometimes I got to go to dances—and I can't go looking like a bum—and I ought to have a dress suit.

MR. B.: You'll have a dress suit when you're twenty-one and not a day sooner.

And there begins the tragedy.

But the talk of the dress suit reminds Mrs. Baxter that her husband has to get his out, the one he wore as a "skinny geezer," and have it taken to the tailor's to be let out so he can get into it. It is in the closet on the hall stairs—and as Willie mounts the stairs we see the great idea taking form in his mind.

Father departs to business, and Johnny Watson, one of Willie's cronies, comes in. Johnny is quite excited, for May Parcher has returned to town and brought a new girl to visit her. But Willie does not care for girls—oh, no! He is full of "A Tale of Two Cities," and, seeing in *Sidney Carton* much of himself, he is busy living up to an ideal. Of course he *may* call on May, but if he does it will be in the evening and in a dress suit. Johnny reminds him that he hasn't one; he replies that he "almost has one," and we know he *will* have.

But on Johnny's departure fate comes to meet Willie. May brings the new girl over. She is fluffy and ruffly and continually talking baby talk to a fluffy little dog, and while May is upstairs with Mrs. Baxter, Willie and Lola Pratt meet. It is just for a moment. She is on her way upstairs, he on his way down, and as she passes him she murmurs, in that baby talk he is soon to know so well: "Indifferink." He gazes after her and knows at last it is "the real thing." It *is* the real thing. He has never known it before; he will never know it again. It comes to all of us once, just once—at seventeen. It inspires him. He seizes a pencil and paper and writes:

I do not know her name—
I do not know her name,
But it would be the same,
Where roses—

And at that comes Jane bawling: "Willie, Mama wants you!"

And what do you think Mama wants? She wants her son to help Genesis, the negro man-of-all-work, to go down to the second-hand man's and bring home some washtubs. Think of it—to bring home washtubs from a second-hand man's with a dirty negro at a moment like this! But, alas, seventeen must obey! He is not yet his own master, and so, with much protest, he goes.

But his return is most ignominious. Genesis owns a dog, a most awful dog, and as Willie, a wash-boiler over his head, enters, Genesis's dog attacks the fluffy pet of the baby-talk lady. Willie, thanks to the wash-boiler, escapes recognition, and the fluffy dog, thanks to prompt interference, escapes injury. Lola departs in a huff, but Willie, sneaking out for a last look at her from the porch, mounts the stairs, takes the dress

suit out of the closet, and as he retires to his room mutters in the hoarse accents of a lover: "Oh, eyes of blue, eyes of blue!" and so the curtain falls.

Act Two finds us in the same room two weeks later. It is evening, and we learn that the dress suit is missing, but not missed by Mr. Baxter. Mrs. Baxter can't imagine where it is. Willie sheds no light on its disappearance. Jane, for the moment, is silent and slightly disheveled. As his father goes out, Willie turns on Mrs. Baxter.

WILLIE: You've got to do something about that child. I *cannot* stand it! I just want to say this: if you don't do something about Jane, I will. Just look at her! That's the way she looked half an hour ago when I came by here with Miss *Pratt*. That was pleasant, wasn't it? To be walking with a lady on the public street and meet a member of my family looking like that. And then she *hollered* at me. She hollered: "Oh, Will-ee!" She hollered and rubbed her stomach and sloshed apple sauce all over her face, and she kept hollering with her mouth full. She kept *following* us. And just look at her! Why, she hasn't got enough *on!* I don't see how you can stand having her going around like that and people knowing it's your child.

MRS. B.: Oh, for this hot weather I really don't think people notice much.

WILLIE: Notice! I guess Miss *Pratt* noticed. Hot weather's no excuse for outright obesity!

MRS. B.: I don't think you mean obesity, Willie.

WILLIE: What I mean is, half of what she *has* got on has come unfastened. Why, you can see her spinal cord!

MRS. B.: Column—spinal column, Willie.

WILLIE: Well, people aren't supposed to go around with it *exposed,* whichever it is. Miss Pratt wanted to know who "that curious child" was. I had to tell her it was my only *sister.*

MRS. B.: Willie, *who* is Miss Pratt, that she should impress you so deeply?

WILLIE (*to Jane*): Now, you quit looking at me that way. She looks as if she knew something awful.

JANE: Well, it ain't awful, but it's *something.* Willie's in love with her, and she wears false side curls. The Parchers are awful tired of her. They wish she'd go home, but they don't like to tell her so.

WILLIE: Now if you don't punish her, it's because you've lost your sense of duty. You stand there and allow her to speak as she does of one of the—one of the—the noblest—

MRS. B.: Oh, Jane didn't mean anything. Don't get upset, Willie.

WILLIE (*rushing upstairs*): Upset—ye gods!

But, left alone with her mother, Jane bubbles over. She has overheard Mr. and Mrs. Parcher talking. Lola has filled their house with boys day and night, and there is no rest from those young mule colts braying in the alfalfa patch of sentiment. And Willie is the worst one of the bunch. Of course Mrs. Baxter silences Jane, with difficulty, and takes her off to bed, and with that Willie sneaks down, attired in a bathrobe.

He encounters Genesis pottering about. The encounter might have been fruitless if the conversation hadn't turned on parenthood.

GENESIS: My pappy had three children 'fo' he 'uz twenty. He had two when he was eighteen.

WILLIE: He did? How old was he when hed the first one?

GENESIS: He 'uz jest your age. He 'uz seventeen. I 'uz de youngest—bawn when he 'uz sixty-one.

WILLIE: How old was he when he was married?

GENESIS: Well, suh, dat 'pen's. I reckon he 'uz ma'ied once in Looavle.

WILLIE: I heard of people getting married even younger'n he was. Why, they get married in India when they're twelve. For that matter, there was a young couple got married in Pennsylvania the other day. The girl was only fifteen, and the man was sixteen. It was in the papers, and their parents said it was a good thing. And somewhere in Iowa a boy began shaving when he was thirteen, and shaved every day for four years, and now he's got a full beard, and he's going to get married this year, before he's eighteen. Right up to about a hundred years ago there were more people married at those ages than there was along about twenty-four or -five, the way they are now. For instance, take Shakespeare —I mean, take the olden times—hardly anybody got married after they were nineteen or twenty, unless they were widowers, because they were married all that time. Then there was a case in California—

GENESIS (*chuckling*): Mr. Willie, when you begin to talk you cert'ly kin travel.

WILLIE: Genesis, do you remember when your father was married? How did he feel about it? Was he kind of nervous or anything beforehand?

GENESIS: Some time he wuz, an' some time he wuzn't. I guess I better go now—you goin' to bed early?

WILLIE: I'm starting out.

And he was, in more ways than one. Well, Genesis leaves, and then Willie

removes the bathrobe. He had on the dress suit. There is a long mirror in which he surveys himself and puts on the finishing touches to his toilet. Oh, how it took me back! Do you, dear reader, remember that first dress suit, that first great sense of importance, that first great touch of the thing that you but vaguely understood, long before you knew matrimony, its discomforts, its disillusions, its mornings after—its ultimate trip to Reno? But let us not go on; let us go out with Willie, out into the summer night, out to the girl waiting for him on the Parchers' front porch. And so the stage grows dark, to lighten again with moonlight and reveal that porch and Willie—Willie in the modern trappings of Romeo, vaguely groping to express what his heart is so full of.

The sufferings of poor Mr. Parcher need only to be seen. Nowhere can he go to sit and read quietly. Everywhere the summer night is full of the whisperings of love, the baby-talk of Lola, the yapping of her dog and the boys who dog her footsteps. With much difficulty and the aid of May Parcher, who drags off a rival, Willie manages to get a tête-à-tête with his lady love. As befits a dress-suit-clad carpet knight, he becomes serious. He has something on his mind which he must get off. The first part of the conversation is led up to by the stage.

WILLIE: What do you think about actors and actresses making love to each other? Do you think they have to really feel it, or do they just pretend?

LOLA: Well, sometimes one way—sometimes the other.

WILLIE: Yes, but how can they pretend? Don't you think love is a sacred thing? I do. I don't mean *some* kinds of love, I mean *real love*. You take some people, they don't know what real love means. They may talk about it, but they don't understand. Love is something nobody can understand unless they feel it—and if they don't understand it they don't feel it. Love is something nobody can ever have but one time in their lives, and if they don't have it then, why, probably they never will. Don't you think love is the most sacred thing there is—that is, if it's *real* love?

LOLA: Ess.

WILLIE: *I* do. I'm—I'm glad you feel like that, because I think real love is the kind nobody could have but once, but if it isn't real love, why—why, most people never have it at all, because the *real* love a man feels for a girl and a girl for a man, if they *really* love each other, and you look at a case like that, of course they would *both* love each other, or it wouldn't be *real* love—well, it's sacred, isn't it?

LOLA: Ess.

WILLIE: How—how do you—how do you think of me when I'm not with you?

LOLA: Think nice-ums.

WILLIE: I mean, what name do you have for me when you're thinking of me? I mean like this. F'instance, when you first came I always thought of you as "Milady." I wrote a poem about it.

LOLA: Ooh, a poem for me! P'ease read it, p'ease read it!

WILLIE: Well—I have an old copy of it. I just dashed it off. (*Reads*)

MILADY

"I do not know her name,
Though it would be the same
Where roses bloom at twilight
And the lark takes his flight;
It would be the same anywhere
Where music sounds in air.
I was never introduced to the lady.
So I could not call her Lass or Sadie,
So I will call her Milady.
By the sands of the sea,
She will always be
Just Milady to me."

LOLA: Boofums! An' you kept it from me so long!

WILLIE: You can have this.

LOLA: Ooh, thank you! "Milady"—boofums!

WILLIE: But now I don't call you that any more. Now I think of you by another name. It—it sort of came to me. I was kind of just standing by this evening, and I didn't know I was thinking about anything at all very much, and then, all of a sudden, I said to myself out loud. It was about as strange a thing as I ever knew of. Don't you think so?

LOLA: Ess. It 'us dest *weird*. What *are* dat pitty name?

WILLIE: I called you—I called you "My Baby-Talk Lady!"

There! Doesn't it all come back to you. Oh, come, be honest! I'm willing to admit that at seventeen — of course now—but *then*, ah, wasn't it just "boofums?"

But of course another one of the boys, Joe Bullitt, has to come over. And then Johnnie and May come back from a walk, and it is all spoiled, for, really, Lola didn't seem to care how many were around. Girls used to be just like that,

didn't they? So everyone sits around and sings, just as we sang once in those golden summer nights back in—oh, never mind where; let's just say back in our youth. And then they have to go, but, after the boys have taken their way home, and the girls have taken themselves upstairs, Willie and Johnny come back armed with a guitar and a ukulele for a serenade. And so the curtain goes down on their improvising:

"Oh, Lolá Pratt, sweet Lola Pratt!
I wonder what you're gazing at."

But of course the course of true love never did run smooth, and the course of our first love never ran to a fitting end. Somewhere, somehow, that stream was always diverted. Where is that girl, that first girl, we loved back there in our home town? Not by our side now. Perhaps a happy wife (as wives go, and a lot of them *do* go) but not our wife. First love is always tragic, so let us hasten on to Willie's tragedy.

The next act shows us the Baxter home once more, and the serpent has entered Willie's Eden in the shape of Johnny Watson's cousin, George Crooper, who has come over in his own car. George is nineteen, and a gilded youth. Even before we see him, we feel his dazzling presence in Willie's nervousness.

But the worst is yet to come. Jane, the ever-present, seeing but unseen, has solved the mystery of the missing dress suit and pours it out to her mother. Mrs. Baxter sees that Willie has been making the family, and himself, a laughing-stock, and resolving to save him, and them, tells him she has found his father's missing dress suit and has sent it to the tailor to have it let out. That lets Willie out, but he holds his grief in.

Genesis is the one who solves his problem. It seems that Genesis in his odd moments does waiting for a dusky lady caterer. He tells Willie about a beautiful, waiter's dress suit to be had at a second-hand store in exchange for other articles. Soon Willie disappears, and with him most of his wardrobe. Jane, as usual, reports this. Mr. and Mrs. Baxter, prepared for the worst, madly telephone to the Parchers' to see where Lola is. She too is gone, but just then Willie arrives alone. Baxter is for taking him to task, but Mrs. Baxter asks to talk with her son alone. All she can get out of him is that he wants to get a loan out of her of three dollars and sixty-five cents. We imagine what for, but she cannot, and the arrival of the auto party puts an end to the discussion.

But, alas, it is only the beginning of the end. There is not room for everybody on the ride, and someone must stay behind. With George, the newcomer, they are one man over, and Willie is the man. Of course Lola settles it by coyly hinting that the noble Willie will stay. He decides to be a martyr, for her sake. He sees how the ground lies, but he is prepared to sacrifice himself for her happiness. For a moment, the others having run out, they are alone.

LOLA: Ooh, ickle-boy-Baxter, so wonderful!
WILLIE: It is better that you go. You'll have a better time without me.
LOLA: Good-by.
(*He stands watching her off, then starts up the steps, stopping with one foot above, the other below, in a most majestic pose.*)
WILLIE: It is better for them to go without me. It is far, far better— It is a far, far better thing that I do than I have ever done—

But of course Genesis has to come in just then and spoil the curtain by asking: "What did you done, Mr. Willie?"

The last act shows us the Parchers' porch in festive attire. In mad desperation Mr. Parcher has given a farewell party, so that his daughter's guest will *have* to go. But alack, alas! how about Willie and his dress suit? In fact, where *is* Willie? His mother and father are helping with the decorations, and he should be, but isn't. Inquiry of Genesis discloses the fact that their son is counting shingles in the lumbervard to get

three dollars and sixty-five cents. Further inquiry discloses that he is just that much short, after pawning most of his clothes, to pay for a second-hand dress suit.

At that Mr. Baxter goes up in the air, but his wife takes matters into her own tender hands. She has held out on the old dress suit, instead of having it let out, and it is now lying on Willie's bed to teach him a lesson. She sends the faithful Jane for her brother. When Willie comes his mother commands him to go and bring his clothes home from the pawnshop and dress himself for the party. It is late—yes, yes, it is *too* late as far as Willie is concerned, for in his haste to get away he does not know that his day is saved—and it isn't.

We are asked to wait an hour. The party is in full swing when in rushes Willie, clothed and, by now, in his right mind, but too late. By the time he has dressed Lola's dance card is full. So is everyone's else—that is, everybody's but a new girl's, a fat girl's, a girl with whom no one wants to dance, not even Willie. Why go on? The fickle Lola is surrounded on all sides. There is not even a stolen moment alone. Time flits; at last she does, too, in George's car to the depot, and while the party goes on Willie sits alone on the porch, holding a box of candy, the departing gift he has not even had a chance to present.

There his mother finds him. She knows. She puts a tender arm about him at his Waterloo. He turns to her and in a brave voice that breaks at the end says: "Mother, I think I'd better go to college," and down goes his head on the shoulder where so many of us, even in these later days, would love to lay ours. And so the curtain.

Ah, youth, dead youth! We can laugh at it now, but could we then? Are our later tragedies any keener, if as keen? No; for youth has a capacity for suffering that we outgrow. We get out dress suits, and they are often an armor, for have women hurt us as much since as that first deep thrust into our boyish heart? No; now we know them, or rather know what to expect of them, and are more or less — usually less — ready for them. And so the moral we could not accept then we know now: "Let women play with everything but your heart." But, after all, who was it said: "Men are only boys grown tall"?

SNAPPY STORIES

FIRST JUNE NUMBER

THIS is the time of year when, for some unaccountable reason, the sales of magazines usually show a falling-off. Reports from our good friends the newsdealers, however, indicate that the First May Number is selling even better than the winter numbers, which were record-breakers. This has encouraged us to put forth our best efforts to make the First June Number a memorable one.

Those of us who have to content ourselves, as a rule, with trolley cars and the subway are sometimes envious of the stylishly clad men and women who roll smoothly past us in expensive motor-cars. Were we to know the inside history of these people, we might at times be moved to pity rather than envy; for doubtless not a few of them find thorns in their bed of roses—just as did young, pretty, luxury-loving Evelyn Fair. Brent Chester also found that association with the very rich had its disagreeable side. Milly Van Veit liked it, and so did Peter—but, then, they would. These are all characters in the complete novelette, "The Web of Indiscretion," by Katherine Leiser Robbins and Lorne H. Fontaine who give us an interesting, if not altogether alluring, picture of that unhealthily artificial circle known as "smart society." The people in it are so lifelike and the society details so realistically drawn that one might be led to believe that the story is founded on fact, although this the authors refuse to confirm. Anyhow, it's an uncommon tale and a very absorbing one.

Lillian Bennet-Thompson and George Hubbard, whose story "The Coward" was listed among the best short stories of 1917, are the authors of "Symbols," a wonderful two-part story which begins in this issue. The theme has to do with a dangerous situation in which many a modern, self-reliant young woman finds herself. We wish we could persuade our woman readers to write and tell us whether they would or would not have acted as did the youthful heroine—and why.

Ellis Parker Butler has had a number of fine short stories in this magazine, but never one better than "The Symbol of Success." F. Roney Weir's odd tale, "Freedom," is another story which you won't be able to forget very soon. Then there are Florence Ryerson's "Cowardy Cat," Nancy Noon Dickson's "Her Good Job," Margaret Barton's "Unburied Dead," Harold de Polo's "Señor Rawhide," Murray Leinster's "The Locust Dance," and Clarence Van Jones' "A Son of Crœsus." The last of Mr. Springer's "Chinatown Beat" series is a corking story called "The Phœnix." We wish we had space to tell you about them in detail.

Edith Kissam Young, a new writer of great promise, contributes the one-act play, "Sneer of the Gods." This is not only a great little play, but it would make an extraordinary motion-picture drama. Enterprising directors, please take notice.

Edwin Markham and other well-known poets are likewise represented.

Don't forget the date of issue—May 4th. THE EDITORS.

Statement of the ownership, management, circulation, etc., required by the Act of Congress of August 24, 1912, of "Snappy Stories," published twice a month at New York, N. Y., for April 1, 1918. State of New York, County of New York. Before me, a Notary Public, in and for the State and county aforesaid, personally appeared W. P. Voorhees, who, having been duly sworn according to law, deposes and says that he is the Business Manager of "Snappy Stories," and that the following is, to the best of his knowledge and belief, a true statement of the ownership, management, etc., of the aforesaid publication for the date shown in the above caption, required by the Act of August 24, 1912, embodied in Section 443, Postal Laws and Regulations, to wit: 1. That the names and addresses of the publisher, editor, managing editor, and business managers are: Publisher, The New Fiction Pub. Co., 35 W. 39th St., New York; Editor, W. M. Clayton, 35 W. 39th St., New York; Managing Editor, Robert Thomas Hardy, 35 W. 39th St., New York; Business Manager, W. P. Voorhees, 35 W. 39th St., New York. 2. That the owners are: The New Fiction Pub. Co., 35 W. 39th St., New York; W. M. Clayton, 35 W. 39th St., New York; A. M. Clayton, Kew Gardens, L. I.; W. L. Daniels, 8 Linden Court, Jersey City, N. J.; Mary A. Lorber, 220 Wadsworth Ave., New York. 3. That the known bondholders, mortgagees, and other security holders owning or holding 1 per cent. or more of total amount of bonds, mortgages, or other securities are: none. 4. That the two paragraphs next above, giving the names of the owners, stockholders, and security holders, if any, contain not only the list of stockholders and security holders as they appear upon the books of the company but also, in cases where the stockholder or security holder appears upon the books of the company as trustee or in any other fiduciary relation, the name of the person or corporation for whom such trustee is acting, is given; also that the said two paragraphs contain statements embracing affiant's full knowledge and belief as to the circumstances and conditions under which stockholders and security holders who do not appear upon the books of the company as trustees, hold stock and securities in a capacity other than that of a bona fide owner; and this affiant has no reason to believe that any other person, association, or corporation has any interest direct or indirect in the said stock, bonds, or other ecurities than as so stated by him. Signed, W. P. Voorhees, Business Manager. Sworn to and subscribed oefore me this twenty-first day of March, 1918. Gust. Frenzel, Notary Public, Rockland County. Certificate filed in New York County No. 139. (My commission expires March 31st, 1919.)

PRESS OF ISAAC GOLDMANN COMPANY, NEW YORK

How do Your Sacrifices Compare with These?

THE American boy who goes to war gives up the position which means so much to his future, or the little business which has just begun to show promise of success.

He severs home ties; gives up home comforts; leaves behind parents, friends, wife, or sweetheart.

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