PAST MASTERS 255

Sydney Holder
F Britten Austin
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Katharine Tynan
Mrs. Belloc Lownes
Robert Benchley
Beatrice Gimshaw
Elisabeth Sanxay Holding

and more

Past Masters 255

Produced and Edited by Terry Walker from short stories in magazines, newspapers and other sources, and all in the Life + 70 years public domain.

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Contents

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1: The Christmas Goose

Sydney Horler

1888-1954

Australasian (Melbourne) 17 Dec 1927

IT was Simpkins who proposed the thing.

Simpkins is the secretary of our local golf club, and it's part of his job, of course, to propose things. The fact that five out of six things he proposes are turned down hasn't anything to do with the present story.

What Simpkins said was this: "Let's have a Christmas handicap and play for a goose."

It was a bright, frosty day when he said it— that sort of day you feel you could eat an ox if it were well roasted— and the cheers that went up must have been heard a good mile away.

"Let it be a fat one," commented Hopwood. Hopwood weighs nearly 18 stone, but still eats four square meals a day. The catering committee always charge him 5/ for the 2/6 lunch because he sends his plate back three times for everything.

Simpkins beamed.

"Hayward, the tanner, who supplies us with eggs and butter, tells me he has a goose which has beaten all records for weight. He is willing to reserve it for us if—"

"Send him a wire to that effect, Mr. Secretary," put in Swainson. Swainson is a struggling solicitor with a large family. When he comes to the club he lunches off bread— and— cheese and a pint of beer. He says he cannot afford anything better.

It is surprising what the thought of a little food will do to a body of men. When it was definitely decided to follow out Simkins's suggestion and hold the Christmas handicap— the biggest goose ever reared in the district to be the prize— the chance that the different members were considered to have became the principal topic of conversation. Hopwood, who had a booming voice that fitted his huge body, could talk of nothing else.

"I shan't trouble to order the usual turkey," he said.

That didn't make him any more popular than he was already, let me tell you. The trouble with Hopwood was that he talked too much. As Harper once said, "Hopwood was the most exhausting conversationalist he had ever met." Strictly speaking, Hopwood, however, wasn't a conversationalist at all. A conversationalist generally allows another man to put in a word. Hopwood never gave you that chance. He was a monologuist.

Also, he was the luckiest man in the club. In spite of his great bulk and ungainly golfing style, Hopwood wanted terrible lot of beating, let me tell you.

Because he was so stout Hopwood's tee shots were really nothing better than push strokes— the man cannot possibly take a full swing— but all the same he gets a fair distance and is never off the line. There is- always a special golfing Providence watching over Hopwood— or so it would seem. The same kindly fate which prevents drunken sailors from breaking their necks, and blind men being run over when crossing Piccadilly Circus, keeps Hopwood's ball from going out of bounds or getting into the rough

And the flukes the man gets! Of course, Hopwood doesn't call them flukes; when he gets a more than usually glaring bit of luck he turns to his opponent and remarks sapiently: "That's what making a careful study of this game does, you see!" What with his luck and his incessant talking— but, oh, I must make that last statement quite clear before we get any further.

I have already mentioned that friend Hopwood is a steady talker in private life. But his efforts in the clubrooms are nothing compared to his vocal work on the links. Years ago Hopwood became imbued with the idea that he could take at least six strokes off his handicap— he plays to a steady ten— if he kept up an incessant chatter whilst going round.

That day he beat Doc. Murdoch, a scratch man, by four and three. After that he never looked back. Ever afterwards those he couldn't beat with his clubs he whacked with his tongue.

Perhaps it was because every other member of the club would cheerfully have given a fiver out of his own pocket to prevent Hopwood winning that Christmas goose, that the handicap committee held a special meeting just about now with the result that three strokes were knocked off Hopwood's handicap. When he heard about it he tore what remained of his hair and raved.

"It's a plot to keep that Christmas goose from me," he declared— "nothing but a plot!"

Well, no doubt it was that all right— but we simply had to do some thing: Hopwood was just the sort of man who, after winning the goose, would come round to the club on Boxing Day and describe how succulent and tasty every mouthful was.

THE WEEK before Christmas was set apart for the most popular event that the club had ever arranged. On the first morning of the event a stranger could have been seen sitting in a corner of the clubroom. He was a faded-looking individual with a yellowish complexion and a sad expression.

"He's my wife's uncle," explained Simpkins; "he's staying with us over Christmas. Been abroad a lot, y'know, and got a touch of the sun. Anyway, he never talks— just sits there like an owl. Poor old chap, but quite harmless. He's heard about this Christmas handicap of ours, and says he would like to enter."

"What's that— what's that?" roared Hopwood, who was standing by; "we can't have visitor butting in. This is purely a members' thing."

Simpkins fished out a little red book.

"Under By-law 12A," be said, "provision is made for visitors entering any competition arranged by the committee providing they are properly introduced by a member and play under their handicap."

"What is his handicap?" blared Hopwood.

A gale of laughter prevented Simpkins from replying.

"Good Lord, you aren't afraid of a man who looks as though he hasn't got sufficient strength to get out of a bunker, are you?" cried Jannaway.

But there was no shame about Hopwood. Going over to the corner, he stared at the stranger and then boomed: "What's your handicap, eh?"

While the rest of us were saying that the fellow's manners were deplorable and that he ought to be ashamed of himself, Simpkins's uncle by marriage rose from his chair and deliberately turned his back on the questioner.

"Nice, chatty sort of fellow, that relative of yours!" snorted Hopwood; "All I hope is that I meet him in the final. I'll knock his head off!"

"You mean you'll talk his head off!" rejoined Jannaway.

ii

THE SOUNDEST SAYING that is, is the one about many a true word being spoken in jest. As it happened, it was Hopwood's fate to meet Mr. Arthur Wells— that was the sad-faced stranger's name— in the final for the Christmas goose. But I am before my story.

It was arranged that not more than 10 couples should participate in the qualifying round. Hopwood got into the last 10 all right, no fear of that, but to the general surprise Simpkins's uncle by marriage also struggled through. When Hopwood heard the news he went straightaway search of the club secretary.

"Look here," he blared, "what is the handicap of this precious uncle of yours?"

Simpkins struggled clear of the enveloping grasp.

"I understand that it used to be 8— I that is, when he played. Of course, he hasn't handled a club for years."

Hopwood sniffed.

"Eugh! Well, all I can say is, judging from what Sam Hollins has told us, he's come back to form in a remarkable fashion— after all these years! Do you know he did the long fourth in 3 today?"

"Must have been a fluke," commented Simpkins; "don't let it worry you, Hoppy. As a matter of fact, this handicap is a certainty for Jim Harvey. From

what I can hear you haven't a chance, Hoppy— you're short with your iron shots and weak on the greens."

"Fudge!" snapped the other, and went off in a huff.

Even if he hadn't handled any clubs for a good many years, the sad-faced Arthur Wells played sufficiently good golf to get into the final. There, as I have already stated, he met Hopwood.

"Now we shall see some fun!" declared Jannaway. "The question is whether Simpkins's respectable relative will be able to stand the conversational strain."

Simpkins, who strolled up in time to overhear the remark, smiled.

"Hoppy, possibly, will get a surprise in that direction," he said.

THE FINAL was played on Christmas Eve. At 2.30 in the afternoon the approach to the first tee was crowded. Looking like an overweight Napoleon, Hopwood frowned at his opponent, who came twittering up to take the honour.

While he was getting his feet into the proper position. Hopwood touched him on the arm.

"You're my opponent, and I'm going to do my damndest to beat you," he said; "but all the same I should like to give you a tip just before you drive.... Oh, very well," as Arthur Wells, brushing the hand off his arm, uncoiled a very workman-like drive and swatted the ball a good 200 yards straight down the course.

Someone chuckled. It gave the rest of us entire satisfaction to see that there was one golf player in the world on whom Hopwood's "advice" had no effect.

The first four holes were halved. If the club's greatest teacher was determined to assail his opponent with speech, Wells was obviously equally determined not to let the torrent of talk affect his game. Whenever Hopwood approached, he waved him away.

The beginning of the end was seen at the long seventh.

At this stage of the game the position was this: Whilst Hopwood still talked incessantly at his opponent, Simpkins, on behalf of his uncle by marriage, lost no opportunity of "chipping" Hopwood. The only difference was that whilst Wells's game remained undisturbed by Hopwood's torrent of words, Hopwood just about this time began to show unmistakable signs of becoming nervously irritated. Thus, he pulled his brassie shot into the rough at the seventh, and, although he put his fourth on the green, the sad-faced gentleman from the tropics was there in 3, and, with a wonderful putt of 20 ft., got a par 4.

"Lovely!" declared Hopwood; "I'll bet you a sovereign that you wouldn't get that putt down again— no, not once in a thousand years!"

"That once was enough, Hoppy," replied Simpkins; "how do you fancy your self now? What's the betting?"

"I'll lay you a level fiver I win!" was the instant reply to this challenge.

"Done!" Simpkins went off chuckling.

He chuckled a good many more times before the end of the match. Hopwood halved 3, but he could not win another hole.

The end came at the seventeenth when he overran the green with his approach, was too strong with his return, and then took three putts to his opponent's two.

"Well, of all the abominable luck!" he shouted, in the very ear of the winner.

Simpkins touched him on the arm.

'"You're wasting your breath— you have been wasting it all the afternoon, he said. "I haven't told you before, but my uncle is stone deaf!"

"Deaf!" roared the loser.

"As a post," replied Simpkins. "Let this be a lesson to you, my lad!"

THE CHRISTMAS GOOSE was a splendid success. I ought to know, because I was invited to the feast.

Glass in hand, I proposed a brief toast.

"To the Christmas Handicap," I add.

"Coupling with it the name of Harry Hopwood— I mean the Christmas Goose," supplemented Simpkins.

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2: Vogue la Galère!

William Le Queux

1864-1927

In: *Stolen Souls*, 1895

Set in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870

YES, yes, this is the very spot! Here the great tragedy of my life was enacted. Twenty-four weary years of my existence have passed, and until this moment I have never summoned sufficient courage to visit it. Ah, *Dieu*! how all has changed! Paris is herself again.

You may perhaps know the place. Near the Porte de la Muette, a little way down the Boulevard Suchet, in the direction of Passy, the fortifications of the city recommence after the open space which gives access to the Bois. The ponderous walls are the same, though the breaches made by the German shells have been repaired, and the stones on which I tread bear no traces of the men's blood that once made them so slippery. One hundred paces from the corner of the Boulevard there is a steep little path running up the grass-grown mound, beside a railing. Ascend it, and you will find yourself on the top of the great wall, below which, deep down in the fosse, on the outside towards the Bois, there is a well-kept market garden. The only noises on this sunny afternoon are the twittering of birds and the rustling of leaves— different sounds and a different outlook indeed to that which is indelibly impressed upon my memory. All are gone, gone! and I alone remain— aged, infirm, forsaken, and forgotten!

What matters, though I still wear my faded scrap of yellow and green ribbon upon the lapel of my shabby coat— what matters if I am an exile, an outlaw; that here, in Paris, after all these years, I dare not inscribe my proper name in the register? To both friends and enemies I am dead!

As I stand looking away over the market garden, towards the shady wood, a film gathers in my eyes, and I am carried back into the terrible past, to those black, fateful days when France lay helpless under the iron heel of the invader, who had encamped around St. Cloud and Suresnes. Paris— fettered, existing upon black bread and horse-flesh— shivered under an icy mantle. The black branches of the leafless trees over in the Bois stood out distinctly against the grey, stormy sky, and upon the ground snow was lying thickly. Hour after hour, day after day, week after week, we had held those walls, regardless of the hail of shell poured upon us from beyond the trees, and replying with monotonous, unceasing regularity. Hundreds of our gallant comrades were, alas! lying dead; hundreds were in the temporary hospitals established in the neighbouring churches; but we, the survivors— half-starved, with the biting wind chilling our bones, and so weak that our greatcoats felt as heavy as millstones,— resolved,

every one of us, to face death and do our duty. We knew well that to hold out much longer would be impossible. In those dark December days the city was starving. Our country had been overrun by the Prussian legions, and sooner or later we must succumb to the inevitable.

The night was dark and moonless, as to and fro I paced on sentry duty. My post was a lonely one, under the strongest portion of the wall, at the point I have already indicated. Away in the direction of Courbevoie there was a lurid glare in the sky, showing that the enemy had committed another act of incendiarism; and now and then the booming of artillery echoed like distant thunder. In our quarter the guns of the enemy had ceased their fire— a silence that we felt was ominous. Under my feet the snow crunched as I marched slowly up and down; and with rifle loaded, and ready for any emergency, I waited patiently for relief, which would come at dawn. As I tramped on, I thought of my home away in the centre of the inert, trembling city; of my young wife, blue-eyed, fair-haired, from whom I had been torn away ere our honeymoon was scarcely over. How, I wondered, was she faring? As an advocate I had been distinctly successful, having been entrusted with quite a number of *causes celèbres*; but on the outbreak of war my chances of fortune had been suddenly wrecked, and I had been called upon to serve with the 106th Regiment of Infantry, first under General Chanzy on the Loire, and afterwards taking part in the defence of Paris.

Though now so near the woman I loved, I saw very little of her; indeed, I had not been able to snatch an hour to run home for the past fortnight. Yet, while I trudged on, I knew that one of the truest and best women on earth was awaiting me *au troisième* in the great old house in the Rue St. Sauveur.

I think that for some time I must have been oblivious to my surroundings, for on turning sharply, my eyes suddenly detected some indistinct object, moving cautiously in the shadow. Something prompted me to refrain from challenging, and, with rifle ready, I quickly hurried to the spot. With a cry of surprise, a man in a workman's blouse sprang forward right up to the muzzle of my gun.

I challenged, and presented my rifle.

"Hold!" he gasped in French, in a low, hoarse tone. "Louis Henault, don't you know me? Have you so soon forgotten your fellow-student, Paul Olbrich?"

The voice and the name caused me to start.

"*You*!" I cried, peering into his face, and in the semi-darkness discovering the scar upon his cheek that he had received in the fencing school at Konigswinter. "You, Paul, my best friend! Alas that you are a Prussian, and we meet here as enemies!"

"As enemies?" he repeated, in a strange, harsh tone. "Yes, Louis, you are right," he added bitterly,— "as enemies."

"Why are you here?" I inquired breathlessly. "Why are you disguised as a French workman? It is my duty to arrest you— to—"

"But you will not. Remember, we were friends beside the Rhine, and we can only be enemies to the outside world. Surely you, of all men, will not betray me!"

"When last I heard of you, two years ago," I said, "you were a lieutenant of dragoons. To-night you are here, inside Paris, disguised."

"To tell the truth," he replied quickly, "it is a love escapade. Let me get away quickly beyond the walls, and no one will know that you have detected me. See, over there," and he pointed to a portion of the wall deep in the shadow. "There is my *fiancée*. I have dared to pass through your lines to rescue her before the final onslaught."

I peered in the direction indicated, and could just distinguish a figure, hidden by a cloak, and closely veiled.

"Quick," he continued; "there is no time for reflection. If you raise an alarm, my fate is sealed; if you allow us to proceed, two lives will be made happy. Do you consent?" Grasping my hand, he pressed it hard, adding, "Do, Louis, for *her* sake!"

Muffled footsteps and the clank of arms broke the quiet. Three officers were approaching.

"Go. May God protect you!" I replied; and, turning sharply, tramped onward in the opposite direction, while my old friend, and the woman he had rescued from starvation, were a second later lost in the darkness in the direction of the Prussian camp.

Scarcely had I taken a dozen paces when there were shouts, followed by shots rapidly exchanged.

"Spies!" I heard one of our men exclaim; "and, *sacre*! they've escaped!"

At that moment the officers who had approached ordered me to halt, and proceeded to question me as to whom I had been speaking with. I admitted that the man was a stranger, and that I had allowed him to pass out of the city. Thus all was discovered, and I was at once arrested as a traitor— as one who had rendered assistance to a Prussian spy!

The penalty was death. The stern, grey-haired general before whom I was taken half an hour later pronounced sentence; and, without ceremony, I was hurried off to execution. Bah! Fate has always been unkind to me. It would have been better had I fallen with four of my comrades' bullets in my breast, than that I should have continued to drag out an existence till to-day. But the bombardment had recommenced vigorously; and as I was being led along, a shell fell close to my escort, and, bursting, killed two of the poor fellows, and demoralised the rest.

I saw my chance, and darted away. A moment later, I was lost among the trees.

THREE hours later.

Breathlessly I mounted the long flights of stairs that led to my home, and opened the door with my key. Entering our little salon, I looked around. In the cold, grey light of dawn, the place looked unutterably cheerless, and the thunder of the guns was causing the windows to rattle. Passing quickly into the bedroom, I found the ceiling open to the sky, and a huge gap in the wall. A shell had fallen, and completely wrecked it.

"Rose!" I cried. "Rose, I have returned."

There was no response. Another roar like the roll of thunder, and the whole place vibrated, as though an earthquake had occurred.

Where was Rose? I dashed back into the salon, and there, upon a table, I found a letter addressed to me in her familiar hand. Tearing it open, I read eagerly the three brief lines it contained, then staggered back, as if I had received a blow. A second later, I felt conscious of the presence of some one at my elbow; and, turning, found Mariette, our maid-of-all-work.

"My wife— where is my wife?" I gasped.

"Madame has gone, m'sieur," the girl replied in her Gascon accent. "Last night a man called for her, and she went out, leaving a note for you."

"A man?" I cried. "Describe him. What was he like?"

"I only caught one glimpse of him, m'sieur. He was fair, and had a long red scar across his cheek."

"*A scar*?" I shrieked in dismay, as the terrible truth dawned suddenly upon me. Rose, whom I had first met in Cologne, when a student on the Rhine-bank, had told me that I was not her first love; and now I remembered that she had long ago been acquainted with my fellow-student, Paul Olbrich.

It was my own wife whom I had assisted to elope with my enemy!

Ah! time has not effaced her memory. My sorrow is still as bitter to-day as it was in that cold December dawn, with the horrors of war around me. My life has become soured, and my hair grey. Since that eventful night, I have wandered in strange lands, endeavouring to stifle my grief; for, still under sentence of death as a spy, I have been an exile and an outlaw until to-day.

WHAT, you ask, has become of *her*?

Far away, in a secluded valley in the Harz, under the shadow of the mystic Brocken, there is a plain white cross in the village burying-ground, bearing the words, "Rose Henault, 1872."

My enemy, Paul Olbrich, a year after the war had ended, succeeded to the family title and estates; and to-day he is one of the most prominent men in

Europe, and acts as the diplomatic representative of Germany at a certain Court that must be nameless.

Truly, Fate has been unkind to me. To-day, for the first time, I have taken my skeleton from its cupboard. Would that I could bury it forever!

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3: Why They Married

Mrs. Belloc Lowndes

1868-1947

Scribner's Magazine Dec 1912

Collected in: *Studies in Love and Terror*, 1913

"God doeth all things well, though by what strange, solemn, and murderous contrivances."

JOHN COXETER was sitting with his back to the engine in a first-class carriage in the Paris-Boulogne night train. Not only Englishman, but Englishman of a peculiarly definite class, that of the London civil servant, was written all over his spare, still active figure.

It was late September, and the rush homewards had begun; so Coxeter, being a man of precise and careful habit, had reserved a corner seat. Then, just before the train had started, a certain Mrs. Archdale, a young widowed lady with whom he was acquainted, had come up to him on the Paris platform, and to her he had given up his seat.

Coxeter had willingly made the little sacrifice of his personal comfort, but he had felt annoyed when Mrs. Archdale in her turn had yielded the corner place with foolish altruism to a French lad exchanging vociferous farewells with his parents. When the train started the boy did not give the seat back to the courteous Englishwoman to whom it belonged, and Coxeter, more vexed by the matter than it was worth, would have liked to punch the boy's head.

And yet, as he now looked straight before him, sitting upright in the carriage which was rocking and jolting as only a French railway carriage can rock and jolt, he realized that he himself had gained by the lad's lack of honesty. By having thus given away something which did not belong to her, Mrs. Archdale was now seated, if uncomfortably hemmed in and encompassed on each side, just opposite to Coxeter himself.

Coxeter was well aware that to stare at a woman is the height of bad breeding, but unconsciously he drew a great distinction between what is good taste to do when one is being observed, and that which one does when no one can catch one doing it. Without making the slightest effort, in fact by looking straight before him, Nan Archdale fell into his direct line of vision, and he allowed his eyes to rest on her with an unwilling sense that there was nothing in the world he had rather they rested on. Her appearance pleased his fastidious, rather old-fashioned taste. Mrs. Archdale was wearing a long grey cloak. On her head was poised a dark hat trimmed with Mercury wings; it rested lightly on the pale golden hair which formed so agreeable a contrast to her deep blue eyes.

Coxeter did not believe in luck; the word which means so much to many men had no place in his vocabulary, or even in his imagination. But, still, the

sudden appearance of Mrs. Archdale in the great Paris station had been an agreeable surprise, one of those incidents which, just because of their unexpectedness, make a man feel not only pleased with himself, but at one with the world.

Before Mrs. Archdale had come up to the carriage door at which he was standing, several things had contributed to put Coxeter in an ill-humour.

It had seemed to his critical British phlegm that he was surrounded, immersed against his will, in floods of emotion. Among his fellow travellers the French element predominated. Heavens! how they talked—jabbered would be the better word—laughed and cried! How they hugged and embraced one another! Coxeter thanked God he was an Englishman.

His feeling of bored disgust was intensified by the conduct of a long-nosed, sallow man, who had put his luggage into the same carriage as that where Coxeter's seat had been reserved.

Strange how the peculiar characteristics common to the Jewish race survive, whatever be the accident of nationality. This man also was saying good-bye, his wife being a dark, thin, eager-looking woman of a very common French type. Coxeter looked at them critically, he wondered idly if the woman was Jewish too. On the whole he thought not. She was half crying, half laughing, her hands now clasping her husband's arm, now travelling, with a gesture of tenderness, up to his fleshy face, while he seemed to tolerate rather than respond to her endearments and extravagant terms of affection. "*Adieu, mon petit homme adoré!*" she finally exclaimed, just as the tickets were being examined, and to Coxeter's surprise the adored one answered in a very English voice, albeit the utterance was slightly thick, "There, there! That'ull do, my dear girl. It's only for a fortnight after all."

Coxeter felt a pang of sincere pity for the poor fellow; a cad, no doubt—but an English cad, cursed with an emotional French wife!

Then his attention had been most happily diverted by the unexpected appearance of Mrs. Archdale. She had come up behind him very quietly, and he had heard her speak before actually seeing her. "Mr. Coxeter, are you going back to England, or have you only come to see someone off?"

Not even then had Coxeter—to use a phrase which he himself would not have used, for he avoided the use of slang—"given himself away." Over his lantern-shaped face, across his thin, determined mouth, there had still lingered a trace of the supercilious smile with which he had been looking round him. And, as he had helped Mrs. Archdale into the compartment, as he indicated to her the comfortable seat he had reserved for himself, not even she—noted though she was for her powers of sympathy and understanding—had divined the delicious tremor, the curious state of mingled joy and discomfort into which her sudden presence had thrown the man whom she had greeted a little

doubtfully, by no means sure that he would welcome her companionship on a long journey.

And, indeed, in spite of the effect she produced upon him, in spite of the fact that she was the only human being who had ever had, or was ever likely to have, the power of making him feel humble, not quite satisfied with himself—Coxeter disapproved of Mrs. Archdale. At the present moment he disapproved of her rather more than usual, for if she meant to give up that corner seat, why had she not so arranged as to sit by him? Instead, she was now talking to the French boy who occupied what should have been her seat.

But Nan Archdale, as all her friends called her, was always like that. Coxeter never saw her, never met her at the houses to which he went simply in order that he might meet her, without wondering why she wasted so much of the time she might have spent in talking to him, and above all in listening to him, in talking and listening to other people.

Four years ago, not long after their first acquaintance, he had made her an offer of marriage, impelled by something which had appeared at the time quite outside himself and his usual wise, ponderate view of life. He had been relieved, as well as keenly hurt, when she had refused him.

Everything that concerned himself appeared to John Coxeter of such moment and importance that at the time it had seemed incredible that Nan Archdale would be able to keep to herself the peculiar honour which had befallen her,—one, by the way, which Coxeter had never seriously thought of conferring on any other woman. But as time went on he became aware that she had actually kept the secret which was not hers to betray, and, emboldened by the knowledge that she alone knew of his humiliating bondship, he had again, after a certain interval, written and asked her if she would marry him. Again she had refused, in a kind, impersonal little note, and this last time she had gone so far as to declare that in this matter she really knew far better than he did himself what was good for him, and once more something deep in his heart had said "Amen."

When he thought about it, and he went on thinking about it more than was quite agreeable for his own comfort or peace of mind, Coxeter would tell himself, with what he believed to be a vicarious pang of regret, that Mrs. Archdale had made a sad mistake as regarded her own interest. He felt sure she was not fit to live alone; he knew she ought to be surrounded by the kind of care and protection which only a husband can properly bestow on a woman. He, Coxeter, would have known how to detach her from the unsuitable people by whom she was always surrounded.

Nan Archdale, and Coxeter was much concerned that it was so, had an instinctive attraction for those poor souls who lead forlorn hopes, and of whom—they being unsuccessful in their fine endeavours—the world never

hears. She also had a strange patience and tenderness for those ne'er-do-wells of whom even the kindest grow weary after a time. Nan had a mass of queer friends, old protégés for whom she worked unceasingly in a curious, detached fashion, which was quite her own, and utterly apart from any of the myriad philanthropic societies with which the world she lived in, and to which she belonged by birth, interests its prosperous and intelligent leisure.

It was characteristic that Nan's liking for John Coxeter often took the form of asking him to help these queer, unsatisfactory people. Why, even in this last week, while he had been in Paris, he had come into close relation with one of Mrs. Archdale's "odd-come-shorts." This time the man was an inventor, and of all unpractical and useless things he had patented an appliance for saving life at sea!

Nan Archdale had given the man a note to Coxeter, and it was characteristic of the latter that, while resenting what Mrs. Archdale had done, he had been at some pains when in Paris to see the man in question. The invention—as Coxeter had of course known would be the case—was a ridiculous affair, but for Nan's sake he had agreed to submit it to the Admiralty expert whose business it is to consider and pronounce on such futile things. The queer little model which its maker believed would in time supersede the life-belts now carried on every British ship, had but one merit, it was small and portable: at the present moment it lay curled up, looking like a cross between a serpent's cast skin and a child's spent balloon, in Coxeter's portmanteau. Even while he had accepted the parcel with a coolly civil word of thanks, he had mentally composed the letter with which he would ultimately dash the poor inventor's hopes.

To-night, however, sitting opposite to her, he felt glad that he had been to see the man, and he looked forward to telling her about it. Scarcely consciously to himself, it always made Coxeter glad to feel that he had given Nan pleasure, even pleasure of which he disapproved.

And yet how widely apart were these two people's sympathies and interests! Putting Nan aside, John Coxeter was only concerned with two things in life—his work at the Treasury and himself—and people only interested him in relation to these two major problems of existence. Nan Archdale was a citizen of the world—a freewoman of that dear kingdom of romance which still contains so many fragrant byways and sunny oases for those who have the will to find them. But for her freedom of this kingdom she would have been a very sad woman, oppressed by the griefs and sorrows of that other world to which she also belonged, for Nan's human circle was ever widening, and in her strange heart there seemed always room for those whom others rejected and despised.

She had the power no human being had ever had—that of making John Coxeter jealous. This was the harder to bear inasmuch as he was well aware that jealousy is a very ridiculous human failing, and one with which he had no

sympathy or understanding when it affected—as it sometimes did—his acquaintances and colleagues. Fortunately for himself, he was not retrospectively jealous—jealous that is of the dead man of whom certain people belonging to his and to Nan's circle sometimes spoke of as "poor Jim Archdale." Coxeter knew vaguely that Archdale had been a bad lot, though never actually unkind to his wife; nay, more, during the short time their married life had lasted, Archdale, it seemed, had to a certain extent reformed.

Although he was unconscious of it, John Coxeter was a very material human being, and this no doubt was why this woman had so compelling an attraction for him; for Nan Archdale appeared to be all spirit, and that in spite of her eager, sympathetic concern in the lives which circled about hers.

And yet? Yet there was certainly a strong, unspoken link between them, this man and woman who had so little in common the one with the other. They met often, if only because they both lived in Marylebone, that most conventional quarter of old Georgian London, she in Wimpole Street, he in a flat in Wigmore Street. She always was glad to see him, and seemed a little sorry when he left her. Coxeter was one of the rare human beings to whom Nan ever spoke of herself and of her own concerns. But, in spite of that curious kindliness, she did not do what so many people who knew John Coxeter instinctively did—ask his advice, and, what was, of course, more seldom done—take it. In fact he had sometimes angrily told himself that Nan attached no weight to his opinion, and as time had gone on he had almost given up offering her unsought advice.

John Coxeter attached great importance to health. He realized that a perfect physical condition is a great possession, and he took considerable pains to keep himself what he called "fit." Now Mrs. Archdale was recklessly imprudent concerning her health, the health, that is, which was of so great a value to him, her friend. She took her meals at such odd times; she did not seem to mind, hardly to know, what she ate and drank!

Of the many strange things Coxeter had known her to do, by far the strangest, and one which he could scarcely think of without an inward tremor, had happened only a few months ago.

Nan had been with an ailing friend, and the ailing friend's only son, in the Highlands, and this friend, a foolish woman,—when recalling the matter Coxeter never omitted to call this lady a foolish woman—on sending her boy back to school, had given him what she had thought to be a dose of medicine out of the wrong bottle, a bottle marked "Poison." Nothing could be done, for the boy had started on his long railway journey south before the mistake had been discovered, and even Coxeter, when hearing the story told, had realized that had he been there he would have been sorry, really sorry, for the foolish mother.

But Nan's sympathy—and on this point Coxeter always dwelt with a special sense of injury—had taken a practical shape. She had poured out a similar dose from the bottle marked "Poison" and had calmly drunk it, observing as she did so, "I don't believe it *is* poison in the real sense of the word, but at any rate we shall soon be able to find out exactly what is happening to Dick."

Nothing, or at least nothing but a bad headache, had followed, and so far had Nan been justified of her folly. But to Coxeter it was terrible to think of what might have happened, and he had not shared in any degree the mingled amusement and admiration which the story, as told afterwards by the culpable mother, had drawn forth. In fact, so deeply had he felt about it that he had not trusted himself to speak of the matter to Mrs. Archdale.

But Mrs. Archdale was not only reckless of her health; she was also reckless—perhaps uncaring would be the truer word—of something which John Coxeter supposed every nice woman to value even more than her health or appearance, that is the curiously intangible, and yet so easily frayed, human vesture termed reputation.

To John Coxeter the women of his own class, if worthy, that is, of consideration and respect, went clad in a delicate robe of ermine, and the thought that this ermine should have even a shade cast on its fairness was most repugnant to him. Now Nan Archdale was not as careful in this matter of keeping her ermine unspoiled and delicately white as she ought to have been, and this was the stranger inasmuch as even Coxeter realized that there was about his friend a Una-like quality which made her unafraid, because unsuspecting, of evil.

Another of the cardinal points of Coxeter's carefully thought-out philosophy of life was that in this world no woman can touch pitch without being defiled. And yet on one occasion, at least, the woman who now sat opposite to him had proved the falsity of this view. Nan Archdale, apparently indifferent to the opinion of those who wished her well, had allowed herself to be closely associated with one of those unfortunate members of her own sex who, at certain intervals in the history of the civilized world, become heroines of a drama of which each act takes place in the Law Courts. Of these dramas every whispered word, every piece of "business"—to pursue the analogy to its logical end—is overheard and visualized not by thousands but by millions,—in fact by all those of an age to read a newspaper.

Had the woman in the case been Mrs. Archdale's sister, Coxeter with a groan would have admitted that she owed her a duty, though a duty which he would fain have had her shirk or rather delegate to another. But this woman was no sister, not even a friend, simply an old acquaintance known to Nan, 'tis true, over many years. Nan had done what she had done, had taken her in and

sheltered her, going to the Court with her every day, simply because there seemed absolutely no one else willing to do it.

When he had first heard of what Mrs. Archdale was undertaking to do, Coxeter had been so dismayed that he had felt called upon to expostulate with her.

Very few words had passed between them. "Is it possible," he had asked, "that you think her innocent? That you believe her own story?"

To this Mrs. Archdale had answered with some distress, "I don't know, I haven't thought about it— As she says she is—I hope she is. If she's not, I'd rather not know it."

It had been a confused utterance, and somehow she had made him feel sorry that he had said anything. Afterwards, to his surprise and unwilling relief, he discovered that Mrs. Archdale had not suffered in reputation as he had expected her to do. But it made him feel, more than ever, that she needed a strong, wise man to take care of her, and to keep her out of the mischief into which her unfortunate good-nature—that was the way Coxeter phrased it to himself—was so apt to lead her.

It was just after this incident that he had again asked her to marry him, and that she had again refused him. But it was since then that he had become really her friend.

AT LAST Mrs. Archdale turned away, or else the French boy had come to an end of his eloquence. Perhaps she would now lean a little forward and speak to him—the friend whom she had not seen for some weeks and whom she had seemed so sincerely glad to see half an hour ago? But no; she remained silent, her face full of thought.

Coxeter leant back; as a rule he never read in a train, for he was aware that it is injurious to the eyesight to do so. But to-night he suddenly told himself that after all he might just as well look at the English paper he had bought at the station. He might at least see what sort of crossing they were going to have to-night. Not that he minded for himself. He was a good sailor and always stayed on deck whatever the weather, but he hoped it would be smooth for Mrs. Archdale's sake. It was so unpleasant for a lady to have a rough passage.

Again, before opening the paper, he glanced across at her. She did not look strong; that air of delicacy, combined as it was with perfect health—for Mrs. Archdale was never ill—was one of the things that made her attractive to John Coxeter. When he was with a woman, he liked to feel that he was taking care of her, and that she was more or less dependent on his good offices. Somehow or other he always felt this concerning Nan Archdale, and that even when she was doing something of which he disapproved and which he would fain have prevented her doing.

Coxeter turned round so that the light should fall on the page at which he had opened his newspaper, which, it need hardly be said, was the *Morning Post*. Presently there came to him the murmuring of two voices, Mrs. Archdale's clear, low utterances, and another's, guttural and full.

Ah! then he had been right; the fellow sitting there, on Nan's other side, was a Jew: probably something financial, connected with the Stock Exchange. Coxeter of the Treasury looked at the man he took to be a financier with considerable contempt. Coxeter prided himself on his knowledge of human beings,—or rather of men, for even his self-satisfaction did not go so far as to make him suppose that he entirely understood women; there had been a time when he had thought so, but that was a long while ago.

He began reading his newspaper. There was a most interesting article on education. After having glanced at this, he studied more carefully various little items of social news which reminded him that he had been away from London for some weeks. Then, as he read on, the conversation between Nan Archdale and the man next to her became more audible to him. All the other people in the carriage were French, and so first one, and then the other, window had been closed.

His ears had grown accustomed to the muffled, thundering sounds caused by the train, and gradually he became aware that Nan Archdale was receiving some singular confidences from the man with whom she was now speaking. The fellow was actually unrolling before her the whole of his not very interesting life, and by degrees Coxeter began rather to overhear than to listen consciously to what was being said.

The Jew, though English by birth, now lived in France. As a young man he had failed in business in London, and then he had made a fresh start abroad, apparently impelled thereto by his great affection for his mother. The Jewish race, so Coxeter reminded himself, are admirable in every relation of private life, and it was apparently in order that his mother might not have to alter her style of living that the person on whom Mrs. Archdale was now fixing her attention had finally accepted a post in a Paris house of business—no, not financial, something connected with the sweetmeat trade.

Coxeter gathered that the speaker had at last saved enough money to make a start for himself, and that now he was very prosperous. He spoke of what he had done with legitimate pride, and when describing the struggle he had gone through, the fellow used a very odd expression, "It wasn't all jam!" he said. Now he was in a big way of business, going over to London every three months, partly in connection with his work, partly to see his old mother.

Behind his newspaper Coxeter told himself that it was amazing any human being should tell so much of his private concerns to a stranger. Even more amazing was it that a refined, rather peculiar, woman like Nan Archdale should

care to listen to such a commonplace story. But listening she was, saying a word here and there, asking, too, very quaint, practical questions concerning the sweetmeat trade. Why, even Coxeter became interested in spite of himself, for the Jew was an intelligent man, and as he talked on Coxeter learned with surprise that there is a romantic and exciting side even to making sweets.

"What a pity it is," he heard Nan say at last in her low, even voice, "that you can't now come back to England and settle down there. Surely it would make your mother much happier, and you don't seem to like Paris so very much?"

"That is true," said the man, "but—well, unluckily there's an obstacle to my doing that—"

Coxeter looked up from his paper. The stranger's face had become troubled, preoccupied, and his eyes were fixed, or so Coxeter fancied them to be, on Nan Archdale's left hand, the slender bare hand on which the only ring was her wedding ring.

Coxeter once more returned to his paper, but for some minutes he made no attempt to follow the dancing lines of print.

"I trust you won't be offended if I ask whether you are, or are not, a married lady?" The sweetmeat man's voice had a curious note of shamed interrogation threading itself through the words.

Coxeter felt surprised and rather shocked. This was what came of allowing oneself to become familiar with an underbred stranger! But Nan had apparently not so taken the impertinent question, for, "I am a widow," Coxeter heard her answer gently, in a voice that had no touch of offence in it.

And then, after a few moments, staring with frowning eyes at the spread-out sheet of newspaper before him, Coxeter, with increasing distaste and revolt, became aware that Mrs. Archdale was now receiving very untoward confidences—confidences which Coxeter had always imagined were never made save under the unspoken seal of secrecy by one man to another. This objectionable stranger was telling Nan Archdale the story of the woman who had seen him off at the station, and whose absurd phrase, "*Adieu, mon petit homme adoré*," had rung so unpleasantly in his, Coxeter's, ears.

The eavesdropper was well aware that such stories are among the everyday occurrences of life, but his knowledge was largely theoretical; John Coxeter was not the sort of man to whom other men are willing to confide their shames, sorrows, or even successes in a field of which the aftermath is generally bitter.

In as far as such a tale can be told with decent ambiguity it was so told by this man of whose refinement Coxeter had formed so poor an opinion, but still the fact that he was telling it remained—and it was a fact which to such a man as Coxeter constituted an outrage on the decencies of life.

Mrs. Archdale, by her foolish good-nature, had placed herself in such a position as to be consulted in a case of conscience concerning a Jewish

tradesman and his light o' love, and now the man was debating with her as with himself, as to whether he should marry this woman, as to whether he should force on his respectable English mother a French daughter-in-law of unmentionable antecedents! Coxeter gathered that the liaison had lasted ten years—that it had begun, in fact, very soon after the man had first come to Paris.

In addition to his feeling of wrath that Nan Archdale should become cognisant of so sordid a tale, there was associated a feeling of shame that he, Coxeter, had overheard what it had not been meant that he should hear.

Perforce the story went on to its melancholy and inconclusive end, and then, suddenly, Coxeter became possessed with a desire to see Nan Archdale's face. He glanced across at her. To his surprise her face was expressionless; but her left hand was no longer lying on her knee, it was supporting her chin, and she was looking straight before her.

"I suppose," she said at last, "that you have made a proper provision for your—your friend? I mean in case of your death. I hope you have so arranged matters that if anything should happen to you, this poor woman who loves you would not have to go back to the kind of life from which you took her." Even Coxeter divined that Nan had not found it easy to say this thing.

"Why, no, I haven't done anything of that sort. I never thought of doing it; she's always been the delicate party. I am as strong as a horse!"

"Still—still, life's very uncertain." Mrs. Archdale was now looking straight into the face of the stranger on whom she was thrusting unsought advice.

"She has no claim on me, none at all—" the man spoke defensively. "I don't think she'd expect anything of that sort. She's had a very good time with me. After all, I haven't treated her badly."

"I'm sure you haven't," Nan spoke very gently. "I am sure you have been always kind to her. But, if I may use the simile you used just now, life, even to the happiest, the most sheltered, of women, isn't all jam!"

The man looked at her with a doubting, shame-faced glance. "I expect you're right," he said abruptly. "I ought to have thought of it. I'll make my will when I'm in England this time—I ought to have done so before."

Suddenly Coxeter leant forward. He felt the time had come when he really must put an end to this most unseemly conversation.

"Mrs. Archdale?" he spoke loudly, insistently. She looked up, startled at the sharpness of the tone, and the man next her, whose eyes had been fixed on her face with so moved and doubting a look, sat back. "I want to tell you that I've seen your inventor, and that I've promised to put his invention before the right quarter at the Admiralty."

In a moment Nan was all eagerness. "It really is a very wonderful thing," she said; "I'm so grateful, Mr. Coxeter. Did you go and see it tried? *I* did, last time I

was in Paris; the man took me to a swimming-bath on the Seine—such an odd place—and there he tested it before me. I was really very much impressed. I do hope you will say a word for it. I am sure they would value your opinion."

Coxeter looked at her rather grimly. "No, I didn't see it tested." To think that she should have wasted even an hour of her time in such a foolish manner, and in such a queer place, too! "I didn't see the use of doing so, though of course the man was very anxious I should. I'm afraid the thing's no good. How could it be?" He smiled superciliously, and he saw her redden.

"How unfair that is!" she exclaimed. "How can you possibly tell whether it's no good if you haven't seen it tried? Now I *have* seen the thing tried."

There was such a tone of protest in her voice that Coxeter felt called upon to defend himself. "I daresay the thing's all right in theory," he said quickly, "and I believe what he says about the ordinary life-belts; it's quite true, I mean, that they drown more people than they save: but that's only because people don't know how to put them on. This thing's a toy—not practical at all." He spoke more irritably than he generally allowed himself to speak, for he could see that the Jew was listening to all that they were saying.

All at once, Mrs. Archdale actually included the sweetmeat stranger in their conversation, and Coxeter at last found himself at her request most unwillingly taking the absurd model out of his bag. "Of course you've got to imagine this in a rough sea," he said sulkily, playing the devil's advocate, "and not in a fresh water river bath."

"Well, *I* wouldn't mind trying it in a rough sea, Mr. Coxeter." Nan smiled as she spoke.

Coxeter wondered if she was really serious. Sometimes he suspected that Mrs. Archdale was making fun of him—but that surely was impossible.

ii

WHEN AT LAST they reached Boulogne and went on board the packet, Coxeter's ill-humour vanished. It was cold, raw, and foggy, and most of their fellow-passengers at once hurried below, but Mrs. Archdale decided to stay on the upper deck. This pleased her companion; now at last he would have her to himself.

In his precise and formal way he went to a good deal of trouble to make Nan comfortable; and she, so accustomed to take thought for others, stood aside and watched him find a sheltered corner, secure with some difficulty a deck chair, and then defend it with grim determination against two or three people who tried to lay hands upon it.

At last he beckoned to her to sit down. "Where's your rug?" he asked. She answered meekly, "I haven't brought one."

He put his own rug,—large, light, warm, the best money could buy—round her knees; and in the pleasure it gave him to wait on her thus he did not utter aloud the reproof which had been on his lips. But she saw him shake his head over a more unaccountable omission—on the journey she had somehow lost her gloves. He took his own off, and with a touch of masterfulness made her put them on, himself fastening the big bone buttons over each of her small, childish wrists; but his manner while he did all these things—he would have scorned himself had it been otherwise—was impersonal, businesslike.

There are men whose every gesture in connection with a woman becomes an instinctive caress. Such men, as every woman learns in time, are not good "stayers," but they make the time go by very quickly—sometimes.

With Coxeter every minute lasted sixty seconds. But Nan Archdale found herself looking at him with unwonted kindliness. At last she said, a little tremulously, and with a wondering tone in her voice, "You're very kind to me, Mr. Coxeter." Those who spend their lives in speeding others on their way are generally allowed to trudge along alone; so at least this woman had found it to be. Coxeter made no answer to her words—perhaps he did not hear them.

Even in the few minutes which had elapsed since they came on board, the fog had deepened. The shadowy figures moving about the deck only took substance when they stepped into the circle of brightness cast by a swinging globe of light which hung just above Nan Archdale's head. Coxeter moved forward and took up his place in front of the deck-chair, protecting its occupant from the jostling of the crowd, for the sheltered place he had found stood but a little way back from the passage between the land gangway and the iron staircase leading to the lower deck.

There were more passengers that night than usual. They passed, a seemingly endless procession, moving slowly out of the darkness into the circle of light and then again into the white, engulfing mist.

At last the deck became clear of moving figures; the cold, raw fog had driven almost everyone below. But Coxeter felt curiously content, rather absurdly happy. This was to him a great adventure....

He took out his watch. If the boat started to time they would be off in another five minutes. He told himself that this was turning out a very pleasant journey; as a rule when crossing the Channel one meets tiresome people one knows, and they insist on talking to one. And then, just as he was thinking this, there suddenly surged forward out of the foggy mist two people, a newly married couple named Rendel, with whom both he and Mrs. Archdale were acquainted, at whose wedding indeed they had both been present some six or seven weeks ago. So absorbed in earnest talk with one another were the bride and bridegroom that they did not seem to see where they were going; but when

close to Mrs. Archdale they stopped short, and turned towards one another, still talking so eagerly as to be quite oblivious of possible eavesdroppers.

John Coxeter, standing back in the shadow, felt a sudden gust of envious pain. They were evidently on their way home from their honeymoon, these happy young people, blessed with good looks, money, health, and love; their marriage had been the outcome of quite a pretty romance.

But stay,—what was this they were saying? Both he and Nan unwillingly heard the quick interchange of words, the wife's shrill, angry utterances, the husband's good-humoured expostulations. "I won't stay on the boat, Bob. I don't see why we should risk our lives in order that you may be back in town to-morrow. I know it's not safe—my great-uncle, the Admiral, always said that the worst storm at sea was not as bad as quite a small fog!" Then the gruff answer: "My dear child, don't be a fool! The boat wouldn't start if there was the slightest danger. You heard what that man told us. The fog was much worse this morning, and the boat was only an hour late!" "Well, you can do as you like, but *I* won't cross to-night. Where's the use of taking any risk? Mother's uncle, the Admiral—" and Coxeter heard with shocked approval the man's "Damn your great-uncle, the Admiral!"

There they stood, not more than three yards off, the pretty, angry little spitfire looking up at her indignant, helpless husband. Coxeter, if disgusted, was amused; there was also the comfort of knowing that they would certainly pretend not to see him, even if by chance they recognized him, intent as they were on their absurd difference.

"I shall go back and spend the night at the station hotel. No, you needn't trouble to find Stockton for me—there's no time." Coxeter and Nan heard the laughing gibe, "Then you don't mind your poor maid being drowned as well as your poor husband," but the bride went on as if he hadn't spoken—"I've quite enough money with me; you needn't give me anything—*good-bye*."

She disappeared into the fog in the direction of the gangway, and Coxeter moved hastily to one side. He wished to save Bob Rendel the annoyance of recognizing him; but then, with amazing suddenness, something happened which made Coxeter realize that after all women were even more inexplicable, unreasonable beings than even he had always known them to be.

There came the quick patter of feet over the damp deck, and Mrs. Rendel was back again, close to where her husband was standing.

"I've made up my mind to stay on the boat," she said quietly. "I think you are very unwise, as well as very obstinate, to cross in this fog; but if you won't give way, then I'd rather be with you, and share the danger."

Bob Rendel laughed, not very kindly, and together they went across to the stair leading below.

Coxeter opened his mouth to speak, then he closed it again. What a scene! What a commentary on married life! And these two people were supposed to be "in love" with one another.

The little episode had shocked him, jarred his contentment. "If you don't mind, I'll go and smoke a pipe," he said stiffly.

Mrs. Archdale looked up. "Oh yes, please do," and yet she felt suddenly bereft of something warm, enveloping, kindly. The words formed themselves on her lips, "Don't go too far away," but she did not speak them aloud. But, as if in answer to her unspoken request, Coxeter called out, "I'm just here, close by, if you want anything," and the commonplace words gave her a curious feeling of security,—a feeling, though she herself was unaware of it, which her own care and tenderness for others often afforded to those round whom she threw the sheltering mantle of her kindness.

Perhaps because he was so near, John Coxeter remained in her thoughts. Almost alone of those human beings with whom life brought her in contact, he made no demand on her sympathy, and very little on her time. In fact, his first offer of marriage had taken her so much by surprise as to strike her as slightly absurd; she had also felt it, at the time, to be an offence, for she had given him no right to encroach on the inner shrine of her being.

Trying to account for what he had done, she had supposed that John Coxeter, being a man who evidently ordered his life according to some kind of system, had believed himself ripe for the honourable estate of marriage, and had chosen her as being "suitable."

When writing her cold letter of refusal, she had expected to hear within a few weeks of his engagement to some "nice" girl. But time had gone by and nothing of the sort had happened. Coxeter's second offer, conveyed, as had been the first, in a formal letter, had found her in a very different mood, for it had followed very closely on that done by her of which he, John Coxeter, had so greatly disapproved. She had been touched this second time and not at all offended, and gradually they had become friends. It was after his second offer that Nan began making use of him, not so much for herself as on behalf of other people.

Nan Archdale led her life without reference to what those about her considered appropriate or desirable; and years had gone by since the boldest busybody among them would have ventured a word of rebuke. Her social background was composed of happy, prosperous people. They had but little to do with her, however, save when by some amazing mischance things went wrong with them; when all went well they were apt to forget Nan Archdale. But John Coxeter, though essentially one of them by birth and instinct, and though it had been through them that she had first met him, never forgot her.

Yet though they had become, in a sense, intimate, he made on her none of those demands which endear a man to a woman. Living up on a pleasant tableland of self-approval, he never touched the heights or depths which go to form the relief map of most human beings' lives. He always did his duty and generally enjoyed doing it, and he had no patience, only contempt, for those who shirked theirs.

The passion of love, that greatest of the Protean riddles set by nature to civilized man and woman, played no part, or so Nan Archdale believed, in John Coxeter's life. At the time she had received the letter in which he had first asked her to marry him, there had come to her, seen through the softening mists of time, a sharp, poignant remembrance of Jim Archdale's offer, "If you won't have me, Nan, I'll do something desperate! You'll be sorry then!" So poor Jim Archdale had conquered her; and looking back, when she recalled their brief married life, she forgot the selfishness and remembered only the love, the love which had made Jim so dependent on her presence and her sympathy.

But if John Coxeter were incapable of love, she now knew him to be a good friend, and it was the friend—so she believed, and was grateful to him for it,—who had asked her to accept what he had quixotically supposed would be the shelter of his name when she had done that thing of which he had disapproved.

To-night Nan could not help wondering if he would ever again ask her to marry him. She thought not—she hoped not. She told herself quite seriously that he was one of those men who are far happier unwedded. His standard, not so much of feminine virtue as of feminine behaviour, was too high. Take what had happened just now; she had listened indulgently, tenderly, to the quarrel of the newly married couple, but she had seen the effect it had produced on John Coxeter. To him it had been a tragedy, and an ugly, ignoble tragedy to boot.

THE DECK was now clear of passengers. Out in the open sea the fog had become so thick as to be impenetrable, and the boat seemed to be groping its way, heralded by the mournful screaming of the siren. Mrs. Archdale felt drowsy; she leant back and closed her eyes. Coxeter was close by, puffing steadily at his pipe. She felt a pleasant sensation of security.

She was roused, rather startled, by a man bending over her, while a voice said gruffly, "I think, ma'am, that you'd better get into shelter. The deck saloon is close by. Allow me to lead you to it."

Nan rose obediently. With the petty officer on one side and Coxeter on the other, she made a slow progress across the deck, and so to the large, brilliantly lighted saloon. There the fog had been successfully shut out, and some fifteen to twenty people sat on the velvet benches; among them was the sweetmeat merchant to whom Nan had talked in the train.

Coxeter found a comfortable place for Nan rather apart from the others, and sitting down he began to talk to her. The fog-horn, which was trumpeting more loudly, more insistently than ever, did not, he thought, interfere with their conversation as much as it might have done.

"We shan't be there till morning," Coxeter heard a man say, "till morning doth appear, at this rate!"

"I suppose we're all right. There's no *real* danger in a fog—not in the Channel; there never has been an accident on the Channel passage—not an accident of any serious kind."

"Yes, there was—to one of the Dieppe boats—a very bad accident!"

And then several of those present joined in the discussion. The man who had recalled the Dieppe boat accident could be heard, self-assertive, pragmatical, his voice raised above the voices around him. "I've been all over the world in my time, and when I'm caught in a fog at sea I always get up, dress, and go up on deck, however sleepy I may be."

Coxeter, sitting apart by Nan's side, listened with some amusement. His rather thin sense of humour was roused by the fact that the people around him were talking in so absurd a manner. This delay was not pleasant; it might even mean that he would be a few hours late at the Treasury, a thing he had never once been after a holiday, for Coxeter prided himself on his punctuality in the little as well as the great things of life. But, of course, all traffic in the Channel would be delayed by this fog, and his absence would be accounted for by the fact.

Sitting there, close to Mrs. Archdale, with no one sufficiently near to attract her attention, or, what was more likely, to appeal to her for sympathy, he felt he could well afford to wait till the fog cleared off. As for the loud, insistent screaming of the siren, that sound which apparently got on the nerves of most of those present in the deck saloon, of course it was a disagreeable noise, but then they all knew it was a necessary precaution, so why make a fuss about it?

Coxeter turned and looked at his companion, and as he looked at her he felt a little possessive thrill of pride. Mrs. Archdale alone among the people there seemed content and at ease, indeed she was now smiling, smiling very brightly and sweetly, and, following the direction of her eyes, he saw that they rested on a child lying asleep in its mother's arms....

Perhaps after all it was a good thing that Nan was so detached from material things. Before that burst of foolish talk provoked by the fog, he had been speaking to her about a matter very interesting to himself—something connected with his work, something, by the way, of which he would not have thought of speaking to any other woman; but then Mrs. Archdale, as Coxeter had good reason to know, was exceptionally discreet.... She had evidently been

very much interested in all he had told her, and he had enjoyed the conversation.

Coxeter became dimly conscious of what it would mean to him to have Nan to come back to when work, and the couple of hours he usually spent at his club, were over. Perhaps if Nan were waiting for him, he would not wish to stay as long as two hours at his club. But then of course he would want Nan all to himself. Jealous? Certainly not. He was far too sensible a man to feel jealous, but he would expect his wife to put him first—a very long way in front of anybody else. It might be old-fashioned, but he was that sort of man.

COXETER'S thoughts leapt back into the present with disagreeable abruptness. Their Jewish fellow-traveller, the man who had thrust on Mrs. Archdale such unseemly confidences, had got up. He was now heading straight for the place where Mrs. Archdale was sitting.

Coxeter quickly decided that the fellow must not be allowed to bore Mrs. Archdale. She was in his, Coxeter's, care to-night, and he alone had a right to her interest and attention. So he got up and walked down the saloon. To his surprise the other, on seeing him come near, stopped dead. "I want to speak to you," he said in a low voice, "Mr.—er—Coxeter."

Coxeter looked at him, surprised, then reminded himself that his full name, "John Coxeter," was painted on his portmanteau. Also that Mrs. Archdale had called him "Mr. Coxeter" at least once, when discussing that life-saving toy. Still, sharp, observant fellows, Jews! One should always be on one's guard with them. "Yes?" he said interrogatively.

"Well, Mr. Coxeter, I want to ask you to do me a little favour. The truth is I've just made my will—only a few lines—and I want you to be my second witness. I've no objection, none in the world, to your seeing what I want you to witness."

He spoke very deliberately, as if he had prepared the form of words in which he made his strange request, and as he spoke he held out a sheet of paper apparently torn out of a notebook. "I asked that gentleman over there"—he jerked his thumb over his shoulder—"to be my first witness, and he kindly consented. I'd be much obliged if you'd sign your name just here. I'll also ask you to take charge of it—only a small envelope, as you see. It's addressed to my mother. I've made her executor and residuary legatee."

Coxeter felt a strong impulse to refuse. He never mixed himself up with other people's affairs; he always refused to do so on principle.

The man standing opposite to him divined what was passing through his mind, and broke in, "Only just while we're on this boat. You can tear it up and chuck the pieces away once we're on land again—" he spoke nervously, and with contemptuous amazement Coxeter told himself that the fellow was *afraid*.

"Surely you don't think there's any danger?" he asked. "D'you mean you've made this will because you think something may happen to the boat?"

The other nodded, "Accidents do happen"; he smiled rather foolishly as he said the words, pronouncing the last one, as Coxeter noted with disapproval, "habben." He was holding out a fountain pen; he had an ingratiating manner, and Coxeter, to his own surprise, suddenly gave way.

"All right," he said, and taking the paper in his hand he glanced over it. He had no desire to pry into any man's private affairs, but he wasn't going to sign anything without first reading it.

This odd little will consisted of only two sentences, written in a clear, clerkly hand. The first bequeathed an annuity of £240 (six thousand francs) to Léonie Lenoir, of Rue Lafayette, Paris; the second appointed the testator's mother, Mrs. Solomon Munich, of Scott Terrace, Maida Vale, residuary legatee and executor. The will was signed "Victor Munich."

"Very well, I'll sign it," said Coxeter, at last, "and I'll take charge of it till we're on land. But look here—I won't keep it a moment longer!" Then, perhaps a little ashamed of his ungraciousness, "I say, Mr. Munich, if I were you I'd go below and take a stiffish glass of brandy and water. I once had a fright, I was nearly run over by a brewer's dray at Charing Cross, and I did that—took some brandy I mean—" he jerked the words out, conscious that the other's sallow face had reddened.

Then he signed his name at the bottom of the sheet of paper, and busied himself with putting the envelope carefully into his pocketbook. "There," he said, with the slight supercilious smile which was his most marked physical peculiarity, but of which he was quite unconscious, "your will is quite safe now! If we meet at Folkestone I'll hand it you back; if we miss one another in the—er—fog I'll destroy it, as arranged."

He turned and began walking back to where Nan Archdale was sitting. What a very odd thing! How extraordinary, how unexpected!

Then a light broke in on him. Why, of course, it was Nan who had brought this about! She had touched up the Jew fellow's conscience, frightened him about that woman—the woman who had so absurdly termed him her "*petit homme adoré*." That's what came of mixing up in other people's business; but Coxeter's eyes nevertheless rested on the sitting figure of his friend with a certain curious indulgence. Odd, sentimental, sensitive creatures—women! But brave—not lacking in moral courage anyway.

As he came close up to her, Mrs. Archdale moved a little, making room for him to sit down by her. It was a graceful, welcoming gesture, and John Coxeter's pulse began to quicken.... He told himself that this also was an extraordinary thing—this journey with the woman he had wished to make his wife. He felt her to be so tantalizingly near, and yet in a sense so very far away.

His eyes fell on her right hand, still encased in his large brown glove. As he had buttoned that glove, he had touched her soft wrist, and a wild impulse had come to him to bend yet a little closer and press his lips to the white triangle of yielding flesh. Of course he had resisted the temptation, reminding himself sternly that it was a caddish thing even to have thought of taking advantage of Nan's confiding friendliness. Yet now he wondered whether he had been a fool not to do it. Other men did those things.

* * * * *

There came a dragging, grating sound, the boat shuddering as if in response. Coxeter had the odd sensation that he was being gently but irresistibly pushed round, and yet he sat quite still, with nothing in the saloon changed in relation to himself.

Someone near him exclaimed in a matter-of-fact voice, "We've struck; we're on a rock." Everyone stood up, and he saw an awful look of doubt, of unease, cross the faces of the men and women about him.

The fog-horn ceased trumpeting, and there rose confused sounds, loud hoarse shouts and thin shrill cries, accompanying the dull thunder caused by the tramping of feet. Then the lights went out, all but the yellow flame of a small oil lamp which none of them had known was there.

The glass-panelled door opened widely, and a burly figure holding a torch, which flared up in the still, moist air, was outlined against the steamy waves of fog.

"Come out of here!" he cried; and then, as some people tried to push past him, "Steady, keep cool! There'll be room in the boats for every soul on board," and Coxeter, looking at the pale, glistening face, told himself that the man was lying, and that he knew he lied.

They stumbled out, one by one, and joined the great company which was now swarming over the upper deck, each man and woman forlorn and lonely as human beings must ever be when individually face to face with death.

Coxeter's right hand gripped firmly Mrs. Archdale's arm. She was pressing closely to his side, shrinking back from the rough crowd surging about them, and he was filled with a fierce protective tenderness which left no room in his mind for any thought of self. His one thought was how to preserve his companion from contact with some of those about them; wild-eyed, already distraught creatures, swayed with a terror which set them apart from the mass of quiet, apparently dazed people who stood patiently waiting to do what they were told.

Close to Nan and Coxeter two men were talking Spanish; they were gesticulating, and seemed to be disagreeing angrily as to what course to pursue. Presently one of them suddenly produced a long knife which glittered in the torchlight; with it he made a gesture as if to show the other that he meant to cut

his way through the crowd towards the spot, now railed off with rope barriers, where the boats were being got ready for the water.

With a quick movement Coxeter unbuttoned his cloak and drew Nan within its folds; putting his arms round her he held her, loosely and yet how firmly clasped to his breast. "I can't help it," he muttered apologetically. "Forgive me!" As only answer she seemed to draw yet closer to him, and then she lay, still and silent, within his sheltering arms,—and at that moment he remembered to be glad he had not kissed her wrist.

They two stood there, encompassed by a living wall, and yet how strangely alone. The fog had become less dense, or else the resin torches which flared up all about them cleared the air.

From the captain's bridge there whistled every quarter minute a high rocket, and soon from behind the wall of fog came in answer distant signals full of a mingled mockery and hope to the people waiting there.

But for John Coxeter the drama of his own soul took precedence of that going on round him. Had he been alone he would have shared to the full the awful, exasperating feeling of being trapped, of there being nothing to be done, which possessed all the thinking minds about him. But he was not alone—

Nan, lying on his breast, seemed to pour virtue into him—to make him extraordinarily alive. Never had he felt death, extinction so near, and yet there seemed to be something outside himself, a spirit informing, uplifting, and conquering the flesh.

Perceptions, sympathies, which had lain dormant during the whole of his thirty-nine years of life, now sprang into being. His imagination awoke. He saw that it was this woman, now standing, with such complete trust in the niceness of his honour, heart to heart with him, who had made the best of that at once solitary and companioned journey which we call life. He had thought her to be a fool; he now saw that, if a fool, she had been a divine fool, ever engaged while on her pilgrimage with the only things that now mattered. How great was the sum of her achievement compared with his. She had been a beacon diffusing light and warmth; he a shadow among shadows. If to-night he were engulfed in the unknown, for so death was visioned by John Coxeter, who would miss him, who would feel the poorer for his sudden obliteration?

COXETER came back into the present; he looked round him, and for the first time he felt the disabling clutch of physical fear. The life-belts were being given out, and there came to him a horrid vision of the people round him as they might be an hour hence, drowned, heads down, legs up, done to death by those monstrous yellow bracelets which they were now putting on with such clumsy, feverish eagerness.

He was touched on the arm, and a husky voice, with which he was by now familiar, said urgently, "Mr. Coxeter—see, I've brought your bag out of the saloon." The man whose name he knew to be Victor Munich was standing at his elbow. "Look here, don't take offence, Mr. Coxeter, I think better of the—" he hesitated—"the life-saver that you've got in this bag of yours than you do. I'm willing to give you a fancy price for it—what would you say to a thousand pounds? I daresay I shan't have occasion to use it, but of course I take that risk."

Coxeter, with a quick, unobtrusive movement, released Mrs. Archdale. He turned and stared, not pleasantly, at the man who was making him so odd an offer. Damn the fellow's impudence! "The life-saver is not for sale," he said shortly.

Nan had heard but little of the quick colloquy. She did not connect it with the fact that the strong protecting arms which had been about her were now withdrawn,—and the tears came into her eyes. She felt both in a physical and in a spiritual sense suddenly alone. John Coxeter, the one human being who ever attempted to place himself on a more intimate, personal plane with her, happened, by a strange irony of fate, to be her companion in this awful adventure. But even he had now turned away from her....

Nay, that was not quite true. He was again looking down at her, and she felt his hand groping for hers. As he found and clasped it, he made a movement as if he wished again to draw her towards him. Gently she resisted, and at once she felt that he responded to her feeling of recoil, and Nan, with a confused sense of shame and anger, was now hurt by his submission. Most men in his place would have made short work of her resistance,—would have taken her, masterfully, into the shelter of his arms.

There came a little stir among the people on the deck. Coxeter heard a voice call out in would-be-cheery tones, "Now then, ladies! Please step out—ladies and children only. Look sharp!" A sailor close by whispered gruffly to his mate, "I'll stick to her anyhow. No crowded boats for me! I expect she'll be a good hour settling—perhaps a bit longer."

As the first boat-load swung into the water, some of the people about them gave a little cheer. Coxeter thought, but he will never be quite sure, that in that cheer Nan joined. There was a delay of a minute; then again the captain's voice rang out, this time in a sharper, more peremptory tone, "Now, ladies, look sharp! Come along, please."

Coxeter unclasped Nan's hand—he did not know how tightly he had been holding it. He loved her. God, how he loved her! And now he must send her away—away into the shrouding fog—away, just as he had found her. If what he had overheard were true, might he not be sending Nan to a worse fate than that of staying to take the risk with him?

But the very man who had spoken so doubtfully of the boats just now came forward. "You'd best hurry your lady forward, sir. There's no time to lose." There was an anxious, warning note in the rough voice.

"You must go now," said Coxeter heavily. "I shall be all right, Mrs. Archdale," for she was making no movement forward. "There'll be plenty of room for the men in the next boat. I'd walk across the deck with you, but I'm afraid they won't allow that." He spoke in his usual matter-of-fact, rather dry tone, and Nan looked up at him doubtingly. Did he really wish her to leave him?

Flickering streaks of light fell on his face. It was convulsed with feeling,—with what had become an agony of renunciation. She withdrew her eyes, feeling a shamed, exultant pang of joy. "I'll wait till there's room for you, too, Mr. Coxeter." She breathed rather than actually uttered the words aloud.

Another woman standing close by was saying the same thing to her companion, but in far more eager, more vociferous tones. "Is it likely that I should go away now and leave you, Bob? Of course not—don't be ridiculous!" But the Rendels pushed forward, and finally both found places in this, the last boat but one.

Victor Munich was still standing close to John Coxeter, and Mrs. Archdale, glancing at his sallow, terror-stricken face, felt a thrill of generous pity for the man. "Mr. Coxeter," she whispered, "do give him that life-saver! Did he not ask you for it just now? We don't want it."

Coxeter bent down and unstrapped his portmanteau. He handed to Nan the odd, toy-like thing by which he had set so little store, but which now he let go with a touch of reluctance. He saw her move close to the man whose name she did not know. "Here is the life-saver," she said kindly; "I heard you say you would like it."

"But you?"—he stammered—"how about you?"

"I don't want it. I shall be all right. I shouldn't put it on in any case."

He took it then, avidly; and they saw him go forward with a quick, stealthy movement to the place where the last boat was being got ready for the water.

"There's plenty of room for you and the lady now, sir!" Coxeter hurried Nan across the deck, but suddenly they were pushed roughly back. The rope barriers had been cut, and a hand-to-hand struggle was taking place round the boat,—an ugly scrimmage to which as little reference as possible was made at the wreck inquiry afterwards. To those who looked on it was a horrible, an unnerving sight; and this time Coxeter with sudden strength took Nan back into his arms. He felt her trembling, shuddering against him,—what she had just seen had loosed fear from its leash.

"I'm frightened," she moaned. "Oh, Mr. Coxeter, I'm so horribly frightened of those men! Are they all gone?"

"Yes," he said grimly, "most of them managed to get into the boat. Don't be frightened. I think we're safer here than we should be with those ruffians."

Another man would have found easy terms of endearment and comfort for almost any woman so thrust on his protection and care, but the very depth of Coxeter's feeling seemed to make him dumb,—that and his anguished fear lest by his fault, by his own want of quickness, she had perhaps missed her chance of being saved.

But what he was lacking another man supplied. This was the captain, and Nan, listening to the cheering, commonplace words, felt her nerve, her courage, come back.

"Stayed with your husband?" he said, coming up to them. "Quite right, mum! Don't you be frightened. Look at me and my men, we're not frightened—not a bit of it! My boat will last right enough for us to be picked off ten times over. I tell you quite fairly and squarely, if I'd my wife aboard I'd 'a kept her with me. I'd rather be on this boat of mine than I would be out there, on the open water, in this fog." But as he walked back to the place where stood the rocket apparatus, Coxeter heard him mutter, "The brutes! Not all seconds or thirds either. I wish I had 'em here, I'd give 'em what for!"

LATER, when reading the narratives supplied by some of the passengers who perforce had remained on the doomed boat, Coxeter was surprised to learn how many thrilling experiences he had apparently missed during the long four hours which elapsed before their rescue. And yet the time of waiting and suspense probably appeared as long to him as it did to any of the fifty odd souls who stayed, all close together, on the upper deck waiting with what seemed a stolid resignation for what might next befall them.

From the captain, Coxeter, leaving Mrs. Archdale for a moment, had extracted the truth. They had drifted down the French coast. They were on a dangerous reef of rock, and the rising of the wind, the lifting of the fog, for which they all looked so eagerly, might be the signal for the breaking up of the boat. On the other hand, the boat might hold for days. It was all a chance.

Coxeter kept what he had learnt to himself, but he was filled with a dull, aching sensation of suspense. His remorse that he had not hurried Mrs. Archdale into one of the first boats became almost intolerable. Why had he not placed her in the care even of the Jew, Victor Munich, who was actually seated in the last boat before the scramble round it had begun?

More fortunate than he, Mrs. Archdale found occupation in tending the few forlorn women who had been thrust back. He watched her moving among them with an admiration no longer unwilling; she looked bright, happy, almost gay, and the people to whom she talked, to whom she listened, caught something of her spirit. Coxeter would have liked to follow her example, but though he saw

that some of the men round him were eager to talk and to discuss the situation, his tongue refused to form words of commonplace cheer.

When with the coming of the dawn the fog lifted, Nan came up to Coxeter as he stood apart, while the other passengers were crowding round a fire which had been lit on the open deck. Together in silence they watched the rolling away of the enshrouding mist; together they caught sight of the fleet of French fishing boats from which was to come succour.

As he turned and clasped her hand, he heard her say, more to herself than to him, "I did not think we should be saved."

iii

JOHN COXETER was standing in the library of Mrs. Archdale's home in Wimpole Street. Two nights had elapsed since their arrival in London, and now he was to see her for the first time since they had parted on the Charing Cross platform, in the presence of the crowd of people comprised of unknown sympathisers, acquaintances, and friends who had come to meet them.

He looked round him with a curious sense of unfamiliarity. The colouring of the room was grey and white, with touches of deep-toned mahogany. It was Nan's favourite sitting-room, though it still looked what it had been ever since Nan could remember it—a man's room. In his day her father had been a collector of books, medals, and engravings connected with the severer type of eighteenth-century art and letters.

In a sense this room always pleased Coxeter's fancy, partly because it implied a great many things that money and even modern culture cannot buy. But now, this morning—for it was still early, and he was on his way to his office for the first time since what an aunt of his had called his mysterious preservation from death—he seemed to see everything in this room in another light. Everything which had once been to him important had become, if not worthless, then unessential.

He had sometimes secretly wondered why Mrs. Archdale, possessed as she was of considerable means, had not altered the old house, had not made it pretty as her friends' houses and rooms were pretty; but to-day he no longer wondered at this. His knowledge of the fleetingness of life, and of the unimportance of all he had once thought so important, was too vividly present....

She came into the room, and he saw that she was dressed in a more feminine kind of garment than that in which he generally saw her. It was white, and though girdled with a black ribbon, it made her look very young, almost girlish.

For a moment they looked at one another in constraint. Mrs. Archdale also had altered, altered far less than John Coxeter, but she was aware, as he was not aware, of the changes which long nearness to death had brought her; and for almost the first time in her life she was more absorbed in her own sensations than in those of the person with her.

Seeing John Coxeter standing there waiting for her, looking so like his old self, so absolutely unchanged, confused her and made her feel desperately shy.

She held out her hand, but Coxeter scarcely touched it. After having held her so long in his arms, he did not care to take her hand in formal greeting. She mistook his gesture, thought that he was annoyed at having received no word from her since they had parted. The long day in between had been to Nan Archdale full of nervous horror, for relations, friends, acquaintances had come in troops to see her, and would not be denied.

Already she had received two or three angry notes from people who thought they loved her, and who were bitterly incensed that she had refused to see them when they had rushed to hear her account of an adventure which might so easily have happened to them. She made the mistake of confusing Coxeter with these selfish people.

"I am so sorry," she said in a low voice, "that when you called yesterday I was supposed to be asleep. I have been most anxious to see you"—she waited a moment and then added his name—"Mr. Coxeter. I knew that you would have the latest news, and that you would tell it me."

"There is news," he said, "of all the boats; good news—with the exception of the last boat—" His voice sounded strangely to himself.

"Oh, but that must be all right too, Mr. Coxeter! The captain said the boats might drift about for a long time."

Coxeter shook his head. "I'm afraid not," he said. "In fact"—he waited a moment, and she came close up to him.

"Tell me," she commanded in a low voice, "tell me what you know. They say I ought to put it all out of my mind, but I can think of nothing else. Whenever I close my eyes I see the awful struggle that went on round that last boat!" She gave a quick, convulsive sob.

Coxeter was dismayed. How wildly she spoke, how unlike herself she seemed to-day—how unlike what she had been during the whole of their terrible ordeal.

Already that ordeal had become, to him, something to be treasured. There is no lack of physical courage in the breed of Englishmen to which John Coxeter belonged. Pain, entirely unassociated with shame, holds out comparatively little terror to such as he. There was something rueful in the look he gave her.

"The last boat was run down in the fog," he said briefly. "Some of the bodies have been washed up on the French coast."

She looked at him apprehensively. "Any of the people we had spoken to? Any of those who were with us in the railway carriage?"

"Yes, I'm sorry to say that one of the bodies washed up is that of the person who sat next to you."

"That poor French boy?"

Coxeter shook his head. "No, no—he's all right; at least I believe he's all right. It—the body I mean—was that of your other neighbour;" he added, unnecessarily, "the man who made sweets."

And then for the first time Coxeter saw Nan Archdale really moved out of herself. What he had just said had had the power to touch her, to cause her greater anguish than anything which had happened during the long hours of terror they had gone through. She turned and, moving as if blindly, pressed her hand to her face as if to shut out some terrible and pitiful sight.

"Ah!" she exclaimed in a low voice, "I shall never forgive myself over that! Do you know I had a kind of instinct that I ought to ask that man the name, the address"—her voice quivered and broke—"of his friend—of that poor young woman who saw him off at the Paris station."

Till this moment Coxeter had not known that Nan had been aware of what had, to himself, been so odious, so ridiculous, and so grotesque, a scene. But now he felt differently about this, as about everything else that touched on the quick of life. For the first time he understood, even sympathized with, Nan's concern for that majority of human beings who are born to suffering and who are bare to the storm....

"Look here," he said awkwardly, "don't be unhappy. It's all right. That man spoke to me on the boat—he did what you wished, he made a will providing for that woman; I took charge of it for him. As a matter of fact I went and saw his old mother yesterday. She behaved splendidly."

"Then the life-saver was no good after all?"

"No good," he said, and he avoided looking at her. "At least so it would seem, but who can tell?"

Nan's eyes filled with tears; something beckoning, appealing seemed to pass from her to him....

The door suddenly opened.

"Mrs. Eaton, ma'am. She says she only heard what happened, to-day, and she's sure you will see her."

Before Mrs. Archdale could answer, a woman had pushed her way past the maid into the room. "Nan? Poor darling! What an awful thing! I *am* glad I came so early; now you will be able to tell me all about it!"

The visitor, looking round her, saw John Coxeter, and seemed surprised. Fortunately she did not know him, and, feeling as if, had he stayed, he must have struck the woman, he escaped from the room.

AS COXETER went through the hall, filled with a perplexity and pain very alien from his positive nature, a good-looking, clean-shaven man, who gave him a quick measured glance, passed by. With him there had been no parleying at the door as in Coxeter's own case.

"Who's that?" he asked, with a scowl, of the servant.

"The doctor, sir," and he felt absurdly relieved. "We sent for him yesterday, for Mrs. Archdale seemed very bad last night." The servant dropped her voice, "It's the doctor, sir, as says Mrs. Archdale oughtn't to see visitors. You see it was in all the papers about the shipwreck, sir, and of course Mrs. Archdale's friends all come and see her to hear about it. They've never stopped. The doctor, he says that she ought to have stayed in bed and been quite quiet. But what would be the good of that, seeing she don't seem able to sleep? I suppose you've not suffered that way yourself, sir?"

The young woman was staring furtively at Coxeter, but, noting his cold manner and imperturbable face, she felt that he was indeed a disappointing hero of romance—not at all the sort of gentleman with whom one would care to be shipwrecked, if it came to a matter of choice.

"No," he said solemnly, "I can't say that I have."

He looked thoughtfully out into what had never been to him a "long unlovely street," and which just now was the only place in the world where he desired to stay. Coxeter, always so sure of himself, and of what was the best and wisest thing to do in every circumstance of life, felt for the first time unable to cope with a situation presented to his notice.

As he was hesitating, a carriage drove up, and a footman came forward with a card, while the occupant of the carriage called out, making anxious inquiries as to Mrs. Archdale's condition, and promising to call again the same afternoon.

Coxeter suddenly told himself that it behoved him to see the doctor, and ascertain from him whether Mrs. Archdale was really ill.

He crossed the street, and began pacing up and down, and unconsciously he quickened his steps as he went over every moment of his brief interview with Nan. All that was himself—and there was a good deal more of John Coxeter than even he was at all aware of—had gone out to her in a rapture of memory and longing, but she, or so it seemed to him, had purposely made herself remote.

At last, after what seemed a very long time, the doctor came out of Mrs. Archdale's house and began walking quickly down the street.

Coxeter crossed over and touched him on the arm. "If I may," he said, "I should like a word with you. I want to ask you—I mean I trust that Mrs. Archdale is recovering from the effect of the terrible experience she went through the other night." He spoke awkwardly, stiffly. "I saw her for a few minutes just before you came, and I was sorry to find her very unlike herself."

The doctor went on walking; he looked coldly at Coxeter.

"It's a great pity that Mrs. Archdale's friends can't leave her alone! As to being unlike herself, you and I would probably be very unlike ourselves if we had gone through what this poor lady had just gone through!"

"You see, I was with her on the boat. We were not travelling together," Coxeter corrected himself hastily, "I happened to meet her merely on the journey. My name is Coxeter."

The other man's manner entirely altered. He slackened in his quick walk. "I beg your pardon," he said; "of course I had no notion who you were. She says you saved her life! That but for you she would have been in that boat—the boat that was lost."

Coxeter tried to say something in denial of this surprising statement, but the doctor hurried on, "I may tell you that I'm very worried about Mrs. Archdale—in fact seriously concerned at her condition. If you have any influence with her, I beg you to persuade her to refuse herself to the endless busybodies who want to hear her account of what happened. She won't have a trained nurse, but there ought to be someone on guard—a human watchdog warranted to snarl and bite!"

"Do you think she ought to go away from London?" asked Coxeter in a low voice.

"No, I don't think that—at least not for the present," the medical man frowned thoughtfully. "What she wants is to be taken out of herself. If I could prescribe what I believe would be the best thing for her, I should advise that she go away to some other part of London with someone who will never speak to her of what happened, and yet who will always listen to her when she wants to talk about it—some sensible, commonplace person who could distract her mind without tiring her, and who would make her do things she has never done before. If she was an ordinary smart lady, I should prescribe philanthropy"—he made a slight grimace—"make her go and see some of my poorer patients—come into contact with a little *real* trouble. But that would be no change to Mrs. Archdale. No; what she wants is someone who will force her to be selfish—who will take her up the Monument one day, and to a music-hall the next, motor her out to Richmond Park, make her take a good long walk, and then sit by the sofa and hold her hand if she feels like crying—" He stopped, a little ashamed of his energy.

"Thank you," said Coxeter very seriously, "I'm much obliged to you for telling me this. I can see the sense of what you say."

"You know, in spite of her quiet manner, Mrs. Archdale's a nervous, sensitive woman"—the doctor was looking narrowly at Coxeter as he spoke.

"She was perfectly calm and—and very brave at the time—"

"That means nothing! Pluck's not a matter of nerve—it ought to be, but it isn't! But I admit you're a remarkable example of the presence of the one coupled with the absence of the other. You don't seem a penny the worse, and yet it must have been a very terrible experience."

"You see, it came at the end of my holiday," said Coxeter gravely, "and, as a matter of fact"—he hesitated—"I feel quite well, in fact, remarkably well. Do you see any objection to my calling again, I mean to-day, on Mrs. Archdale? I might put what you have just said before her."

"Yes, do! Do that by all means! Seeing how well you have come through it"—the doctor could not help smiling a slightly satirical smile—"ought to be a lesson to Mrs. Archdale. It ought to show her that after all she is perhaps making a great deal of fuss about nothing."

"Hardly that," said Coxeter with a frown.

They had now come to the corner of Queen Anne Street. He put out his hand hesitatingly. The doctor took it, and, oddly enough, held it for a moment while he spoke.

"Think over what I've said, Mr. Coxeter. It's a matter of hours. Mrs. Archdale ought to be taken in hand at once." Then he went off, crossing the street. "Pity the man's such a dry stick," he said to himself; "now's his chance, if he only knew it!"

John Coxeter walked straight on. He had written the day before to say that he would be at his office as usual this morning, but now the fact quite slipped his mind.

Wild thoughts were surging through his brain; they were running away with him and to such unexpected places!

The Monument? He had never thought of going up the Monument; he would formerly have thought it a sad waste of time, but now the Monument became to John Coxeter a place of pilgrimage, a spot of secret healing. A man had once told him that the best way to see the City was at night, but that if you were taking a lady you should choose a Sunday morning, and go there on the top of a 'bus. He had thought the man who said this very eccentric, but now he remembered the advice and thought it well worth following.

By the time Coxeter turned into Cavendish Square he had travelled far further than the Monument. He was in Richmond Park; Nan's hand was thrust through his arm, as it had been while they had watched the first boat fill slowly with the women and children.

TO LOVERS who remember, the streets of a great town, far more than country roads and lanes, hold over the long years precious, poignant memories, for a background of stones and mortar has about it a character of permanence

which holds captive and echoes the scenes and words enacted and uttered there.

Coxeter has not often occasion to go the little round he went that morning, but when some accidental circumstance causes him to do so, he finds himself again in the heart of that kingdom of romance from which he was so long an alien, and of which he has now become a naturalized subject. As most of us know, many ways lead to the kingdom of romance; Coxeter found his way there by a water-way.

And so it is that when he reaches the turning into Queen Anne Street there seems to rise round him the atmosphere of what Londoners call the City—the City as it is at night, uncannily deserted save for the ghosts and lovers who haunt its solitary thoroughfares after the bustle of the day is stilled. It was then that he and Nan first learnt to wander there. From there he travels on into golden sunlight; he is again in Richmond Park as it was during the whole of that beautiful October.

Walking up the west side of Cavendish Square, Coxeter again becomes absorbed in his great adventure,—a far greater adventure than that with which his friends and acquaintances still associate his name. With some surprise, even perhaps with some discomfiture, he sees himself—for he has not wholly cast out the old Adam—he sees himself as he was that memorable morning, carried, that is, wholly out of his usual wise, ponderate self. Perhaps he even wonders a little how he could ever have found courage to do what he did—he who has always thought so much, in a hidden way, of the world's opinion and of what people will say.

He could still tell you which lamp-post he was striding past when he realized, with a thrill of relief, that in any case Nan Archdale would not treat him as would almost certainly do one of those women whom he had honoured with his cold approval something less than a week ago. Any one of those women would have regarded what he was now going to ask Nan to do as an outrage on the conventions of life. But Nan Archdale would be guided only by what she herself thought right and seemly....

And then, as he turns again into Wimpole Street, as he comes near to what was once his wife's house, his long steady stride becomes slower. Unwillingly he is living again those doubtful moments when he knocked at her door, when he gave the surprised maid the confused explanation that he had a message from the doctor for Mrs. Archdale. He hears the young woman say, "Mrs. Archdale is just going out, sir. The doctor thought she ought to take a walk;" and his muttered answer, "I won't keep her a moment...."

Again he feels the exultant, breathless thrill which seized him when she slipped, neither of them exactly knew how, into his arms, and when the sentences he had prepared, the arguments he meant to use, in his hurried rush

up the long street, were all forgotten. He hears himself imploring her to come away with him now, at once. Is she not dressed to go out? Instinct teaches him for the first time to make to her the one appeal to which she ever responds. He had meant to tell her what the doctor had said— to let that explain his great temerity— but instead he tells her only that he wants her, that he cannot go on living apart from her. Is there any good reason why they should not start now, this moment, for Doctors' Commons, in order to see how soon they can be married?

So it is that when John Coxeter stands in Wimpole Street, so typical a Londoner belonging to the leisured and conventional class that none of the people passing by even glance his way, he lives again through the immortal moment when she said, "Very well."

TO THIS DAY, so transforming is the miracle of love, Nan Coxeter believes that during their curious honeymoon it was she who was taking care of John, not he of her.

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4: Under the Lens

F. Britten Austin

1885-1941

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THE TALK in our corner of the club gathered itself suddenly into a common focus. The waiter had brought over the evening papers, filled with the last phases of a sensational murder-trial and headlined with the verdict— a death-sentence.

One of us— Collins, unsentimental, like the lawyer he was— curtly expressed the opinion that the fellow had got his deserts. Fergusson, the only medico in our coterie of assorted professionals, of course took him up at this (they lost no opportunity of chipping at each other) and promptly challenged, in pseudo-serious protest, the competence of Collins, or indeed any one of us, to pronounce on any man's deserts. He justified his provocative argument by a neat little exposition of the obscurities of human psychology.

"None of your psycho-analytic profundities, doctor!" It was Thompson who protested. "Keep to things the plain man can understand."

"I'll try," submitted Fergusson, with a factitious humility that did not conceal the twinkle behind his pince-nez. "But you would none of you be the worse for a little intellectual exercise. However, there's nothing beyond average comprehension in my remarks. All I'm trying to do is to give you a glimpse of human beings as they really are— machines in subtle inter-reaction with a highly-variable point of consciousness which is itself the effective end of a vast, extraordinarily complicated mass of psychic impulses, inhibitions and conflicts altogether unsuspected by the individual himself "

"Thank you, doctor!" laughed Thompson, "no plain man can have the smallest excuse for failing to understand you fully."

"Don't take any notice of him, Doc!" said Mcllwraith. "He's but an ignorant, dull-witted Saxon! Let's see what you're driving at."

"Merely at opening your eyes for a minute or two," smiled Fergusson. " Here you are, all of you, going about the world and taking each other at face-value, passing glib judgments on each other, even bored with each other— when, in fact, you are moving about in perpetual contact with the most fascinating of mysteries— you are each of you an unfathomable mystery yourself. What are you? You think you are just yourselves. Think again! How many ancestors have each of us had in the millions of years between us and the arboreal simian? They are beyond computation, tangled in an inextricable confusion of intermarriage. Those innumerable ancestors, yours and mine, comprise every possible variety of human type— saint and sinner, cowards, murderers, heroes, idealists,

martyrs, parasites, emperors and slaves— everything you can think of. Every crime that was ever committed, every virtue that ever ennobled humanity, has been incarnated, not once, but over and over again, in those countless forebears who live again in you. You are all compact of their conflicting characteristics."

"And you assert as a scientific fact," demanded Collins, "that none of those strains ever dies out?"

"Some— differing in all of us— are pushed into the background and remain latent," replied Fergusson. " But the psychologist, digging into the human mind, can point to strata that are older than humanity itself. The biologist, Weissman— I don't suppose you have read his 'Germ-Plasm'— likewise asserts that you carry in your body a microscopically minute but highly vital speck of protoplasm that has lived immortally, handed down from generation to generation, modified to some extent by each, imposing its latent characteristics upon the organism in which it dwells, a focus-point of converging lines of descent, from perhaps the very beginning of organic life itself."

"I don't quite see where all this is tending," said Thompson. "We're a long way from that murder-case, or whatever it was we started from."

"Not so far," said the doctor. "I merely protested against glibly superficial judgments on our fellow-creatures, and I've tried to give you a hint of my reasons. We look at life with blind eyes— just, for example, as we look at, say, yeast in ferment. To the unaided vision a lump of yeast is simply a mass of dirty-coloured substance that boils over by some inexplicable innate property of its own. Put it under a microscope and you get at least a step nearer the heart of the mystery— the lens reveals the swarming millions of bacteria which are at work to produce the phenomenon. Think, if we could only put human creatures under such a lens— a psychological one, making plain all the myriad germs of impulse which are latent or potential in them!"

"Fascinating— but impossible!" said one of us.

"Quite impossible," agreed Fergusson. "You can never know all the factors."

"Not impossible to a clever fellow like you, surely!" said Collins, with mock incredulity.

Much obliged for the compliment," returned Fergusson, impeturbably. "But even I, immense as my knowledge must seem to your ignorance," he smiled blandly, "have something less than universal vision. But I don't mind admitting that I have, from time to time, amused myself with an attempt to put my fellow-creatures under the microscope— within the limits of the possible, of course. Do you remember that Warburton case, Collins?"

"Fellow who shot the husband of a woman he was in love with— practically no defence," answered Collins promptly.

"You've summed it up admirably— just as the judge and jury saw it," said Fergusson. "That case to-night reminded me of it. I was an expert witness in the

Warburton affair— a purely negative one on the question of insanity— and my own private elucidation was, of coarse, judicially worthless and not even put forward by the defence. But I could not help thinking how different things looked from the standpoint of the judge and jury as compared with even the limited amount of magnification I was able to bring in this particularly instance upon— shall we call it, the bacteria in the yeast?"

"It sounds interesting," remarked McIlwraith critically. "Go ahead!"

"Oh, I'm not going to tell you the story," said Fergusson. "At least"— he hesitated, his eyes twinkling— "not without a Havana at your expense. This one's finished." He threw away the stub.

McIlwraith answered by calling up the waiter. Fergusson carefully selected one of the largest and most expensive brands, with a pious deprecation of such extravagance on the part of a fellow Scotsman.

"I want that story," said McIlwraith. "And I've paid for it— so start right in!"

"Well, I suppose I am under contract," said the doctor, lighting his cigar. "But don't expect too much. It's merely a yarn of murder— under the lens of an imperfect psychological analysis."

"Go ahead— fire away," we said encouragingly, thrilling pleasantly with a sense of mysteries to be unveiled.

Fergusson considered his cigar for a moment or two.

YOU ALL remember the case, of course. It caused a sensation at the time. Chisholm Warburton, a young man of good family, with a personal record that was blameless to the point of austerity, shot and killed a certain Mike Haverfield— a gentleman who lived expensively by his wits. There were a good many young men who had played cards with Mr. Haverfield— a very costly amusement, by the way— but Warburton was not one of them. It was difficult to assign any reason for personal animus between the two men, except the one alleged by the prosecution— that Warburton was in love with Haverfield's wife. But the prosecution could prove no intrigue, for the simple reason that no intrigue existed. Warburton was an ascetically moral young man. Reason or no reason, however— his excuse that he acted in protection of Mrs. Haverfield was dismissed as insufficient— he frankly admitted having shot Mike Haverfield.

The Judge, I think, fairly summed up the case as it appeared to him. He said something like this before he proceeded to sentence— "Prisoner at the bar, you confess to having wantonly, on what you describe as a blind, uncontrollable impulse, shot the man Haverfield. You can urge nothing sufficient in extenuation of that crime. Your sanity has never been in question. Whatever may be the real reasons, known only to yourself, which urged you to this dreadful act, they cannot palliate it. You have brought disgrace— and I think that this aggravates your crime, if anything can aggravate it— upon a family that for generations has

held high among its fellow-men an exalted ideal of conduct. From their graves they must cry out upon you."

That judge had a weakness for the picturesque, but it was no unfair comment. The Warburton family, in fact, from that Roundhead ancestor who was a friend of Hampden and of Prynne, had kept alive a very conscious tradition of private morality and public example. In almost every generation, it had produced a preacher, a philanthropist or a social reformer— all of the distinctly Puritan type. Sitting there in the court, we could almost see those sternly righteous ancestors rising in indignant repudiation of their last degenerate descendant, this young man who listened, with bowed head, without excuse, to the scathing condemnation of the judge. The whole court , I think, felt a wave of sudden, blind resentment in sympathy with those outraged ghosts. I almost felt it myself— and then I caught myself smiling with a perception of grim irony. I saw some ghosts that neither judge nor prisoner guessed at.

Both judge and prisoner alike looked back in imagination upon a line of severely impeccable moralists now dishonoured. To the one, the crime was inexcusable. To the other, it was really inexplicable. Neither knew, neither could possibly suspect, the subtle influence which had flared suddenly into tins disaster. I'll try to reconstruct for you, under that lens we spoke of, the story of the crime as it appeared to me.

I want you to see that young man as he stood in the dock, not— as he imagined himself— a brand-new created individual, modified only by his immediate environment, but as he really was— the focus-point of innumerable ancestral tendencies alive in him, each and all striving for expression.

A man's own body is not his own. Every characteristic: his nose, his mouth, the colour of his eyes, the proportions of his limbs, even his resistance to disease, is the inherited reminiscence of an ancestor. Every bit of that young man's physical tissue was conditioned by his inheritance from a phalanx of ancestors stretching away in ever- broadening multitudes from yesterday's civilisation to beyond savagery. His mental make-up, quite unknown to himself, was a similar compound of inherited impulses and associations. His own will?— *Fergusson turned to meet Mcllwraith's murmured obje*ction— A man's own will, in so far as that is not a self -created illusion, reacts against some of his inherited impulses and accepts and puts new force into others.

What a man's spirit is in itself, I don't pretend to say. No one has solved that problem. But the point to remember is that this selective point of consciousness which a man calls himself is an infinitely sensitive and, within limits, variable thing. Weather, for example, will affect it. Even Collins here is a different man in an east wind! Young Warburton's point of consciousness, throughout the quarter-century of life since he had emerged from babyhood, had

conscientiously made its selections in accordance with a high code of ethics. He could scarcely have framed a criticism of himself.

In this, he was a worthy descendant of all the ancestors of whom he knew anything. From father to son, the Warburtons had passed on their carefully-guarded lamp of virtue. Repression of all the wilder instincts must itself have become almost an instinct with them. They married women of either congenial or adaptable temperament. At any rate, the rigid uniformity of type does not appear to have been modified by these importations into the stock. Of the ancestral potentialities of the Warburton wives for the past hundred years, I can tell you nothing. Their dossiers are blank, but potentialities they must have had. In that phalanx of ghosts behind Chisholm Warburton there wore many with veiled faces.

The Warburton records are monotonous in their consistent reproduction of the dominant type. (I delved into them pretty deeply, I may say, for my own interest.) I had to go back nearly eighty years before I came across the first black sheep, a younger son who kicked over the traces and disappeared, after a career of dissipation in the Paris of the forties. My interest quickened as Chisholm Warburton told me of this bad hat— the family still kept his moral skeleton in the cupboard as a kind of bogey, it appeared, for the admonishment of their young. I welcomed him like a detective does his first clue.

What was the explosive material behind this startling divergence from type? The father of this young reprobate, I discovered, was one of Wellington's Presbyterian colonels. He marched to Paris in 1815 with his victorious general and remained with the Army of Occupation for a good many months. Whilst in Paris he evidently experienced that occasional violent attraction of opposites for each other which is one of Nature's compensating principles. This rimly pious old soldier fell in love with, of all people, dancer at the Opera, a Mdlle. Courtois, and married her. Now, Mdlle. Courtois herself is not particularly remarkable. She was apparently reformed and absorbed by the dominant Warburton type; one hears no more of her.

But go back one step further. Her father flames out like a conflagration in the night. Courtois père was a member of the revolutionary tribunal during the Terror, and Lenétre has made him the subject of one of his vivid little studies in the period. In that mob of sanguinary ruffians who preyed on France, he certainly had equals but no superior. There is a portrait-sketch of him in the French National Archives— a leering, wicked face under the red Phrygian cap that seems stained with the blood he shed. The man was a homicidal maniac realising a madman's dream of unrestrained assassination. Thanks to Lenétre, his antecedents are known. He was the son of a criminal hanged for murder, and an Italian dancing-girl. The mother of that Italian girl you will find mentioned in Casanova and other of the eighteenth century *chroniques scandaleuses*.

Here was a pretty dash of scarlet staining the drab succession of the Warburton respectability! Dour old Colonel Warburton little dreamed with what a price he purchased from the devil the soul of that charming little Parisian ballet-dancer. Chisholm himself, of course, had no idea of that leering blood-stained ruffian with the red cap dangling over his ear who stood in the shadowy phalanx of his ancestors. I spared him the shock of what to him would have been a most humiliating and disturbing revelation.

I won't weary you with particulars of the earlier Warburton genealogy. It is devoid of any human note. But the details I have inflicted on you are indispensable. We're identifying a few of the bacteria in the yeast.

So far as Chisholm Warburton was concerned, the story opened with the night young Everard Franklin came to him in his rooms.

Everard was in bad trouble. He had been lured round to the Haverfield's apartment by the fascinating Mrs. Haverfield— Warburton had frowned at this— had played cards with Mike Haverfield and had left behind him not only all his cash but a cheque that could not be met. An ugly scandal threatened him. Would Chisholm help? Warburton, who had inherited to the full the ancestral instinct for moral salvage, having exacted a pledge from young Franklin to abjure such company henceforth, promised to do his best. The ironic fates which set the trap for him baited it well. You could always appeal to the Warburton conscious sense of altruism.

Chisholm, of course, kept his word. It was late the next afternoon when he was ushered into a luxurious apartment and left alone to await Mr. Haverfield who would, said the servant, be with him in two minutes. There was something in the atmosphere of the place, he told me, that made him feel subtly uneasy. It was furnished in a taste altogether alien to his upbringing, more like a voluptuous boudoir than a reception-room, the air impregnated with an evasive scent, the walls hung with eighteenth-century prints of shepherds and shepherdesses in languid dalliance. He remembered suddenly that Everard had said that Mrs. Haverfield was really French. The fact presented itself to him as an explanation of his environment. He hoped, with a curiously emphatic little aversion, that he should not meet her.

Chisholm Warburton, although nearly thirty, had always instinctively held himself aloof from women. He did not care for them, he said. Such an instinctive avoidance— whether of women or wine or what-not— is generally pretty sure proof of a danger-spot subconsciously guarded. The Warburton habits of repression had kept the nigger sitting on the safety-valve for a good many generations, remember, and Chisholm's nigger was a particularly stout fellow. Withholding himself for an austerely refined ideal of marriage which no woman had yet incarnated, he had never allowed himself to kiss a girl in his life. As he stood there— a virile, rather handsome figure of stern, uncompromising virtue,

resolved to deal faithfully with the knavish Mr. Haverfield— he experienced none of that pleasant little thrill of anticipation with which the unrege-nerate would have contemplated the possibility of meeting a woman so fascinating as Everard had alleged Mrs. Haverfield to be. He felt, on the contrary, a distinct hostility to her in the abstract.

"A moment later, and the curtain over the door was drawn aside. He found himself staring at a tall, dark, startlingly beautiful woman who stood, gowned in a rich and vivid red, against the dark hangings she had let fall behind her. The entire apartment was suddenly an artistically-staged background for her; everything found its justification in her appearance. He remembered Everard's enthusiastic description as he stared at her— the face of a Madonna! A pair of lustrously liquid dark eyes looked at him from the ivory-pale oval under her massed hair— eyes that seemed full of unutterable significances remote from the sordid world. She smiled, and it was almost a shock to him. Her voice as she spoke was tinged with a foreign accent, nch and deep.

"Mr. Warburton?" she said. The commonplace enquiry seemed charged with an esoteric value as she uttered it.

He bowed a stiff acknowledgment, explained, with an ungracious note in his voice which surprised himself, that he was awaiting Mr. Haverfield. That ungracious note was eloquent if he had but known it. The Warburton instincts asserted themselves harshly over an obscure commotion in the depths of him. He told me that it was as if someone asleep in him had suddenly waked up, to be held down by a firm and unseen hand. The touch of foreignness in his environment seemed oddly familiar to him, as if he had been there before

"Mr Haverfield will be here presently," said the woman, her smile seeming for the moment to illumine the brooding mystery in her eyes. Her tone was vibrant in him, as though he were a silent instrument with a string keyed to the same pitch as the voice that spoke. "Won't you sit down?"

He did so awkwardly, following her example, feeling himself, as he said, an uncouth crop-eared Puritan, absurdly intolerant of the refinement which was the blameless associate of vice, under the calm scrutiny of those inscrutable eyes.

That was a curious little note of self-criticism to make itself heard in him. Looked at through our lens, the bacteria in the yeast were multiplying themselves suddenly in a point of ferment. Can you identify the germ? Chisholm Warburton knew nothing of that arch-great -grand-mother, effaced in her Scottish Presbyterian home, who had ached with nostalgia for the glamour of the footlights and the little soupers intimes at the Cafe Voisin. He found himself without a word to say to this beautiful creature who sat like a Madonna with mystically enigmatic eyes in front of him. He was suddenly resentful of— of the little stirrings in his blood.

"You have business with my husband?" she asked, startling him again with the measured richness of that slightly foreign tone.

He brought himself to speech. "I have come on behalf of Mr. Everard Franklin," he said, with a bluntness that annoyed himself.

She smiled, wistfully, helplessly pathetic.

"That poor young Mr. Everard!" she exclaimed in full, deep commiseration, piquant with the French tang. "He has been losing money to my husband?— Oh!" her regret voiced itself in the exclamation, profoundly sincere,— "And I warned him!"

It was true. She had warned him! Everard had said so. Involuntarily, he seized on the exculpation with an immense relief. That pure oval face, with the unfathomable eyes, eloquent of things sublimely higher than sordid gambling squabbles, could not— it was impossible— mask the willing participant of vice! He saw suddenly not an accomplice but a silent, tragic victim. Some infernal wickedness held her to the man Haverfield, he was sure of it. A romance, Andromeda-patterned, formed itself in his mind. It was on the tip of his tongue— himself a knight-errant prompt for rescue at all costs (that Presbyterian colonel behind the scenes of the Opera must have known the feeling)— to appeal to her for confirmation . Something in him checked the question, substituted another.

"You are French, madam?" he asked lamely enough.

She smiled with her answer, winningly frank. "Yes. Do you know France? My own name was Lavoisiere."

The name meant nothing to him. But Lenotre, in his study of the red-capped ruffian Courtois, has a curious little story of an aristocrat named Lavoisiere condemned by his infamous tribunal who, as he was dragged from the court to the guillotine, turned and shouted: "Scoundrel, my blood shall come and call for yours!" I doubt whether Chisholm Warburton had ever heard of his arch-great-grandmother's father, who died, despite this unamiable prophecy, quite peacefully as the Mayor of a commune under the Empire.

The conversation terminated there. The next moment the hangings over the door parted again and Warburton found himself confronting Haverfield.

A violent antipathy leaped up automatically in him as his eyes fell on the white, mean little face with the turned-up black moustache. He said the man looked at him like a carrion-fed rat. To Warburton, he was instinctively vermin deserving only extermination— he held your theory of a man's deserts, Collins— and he found it difficult to talk to him with patience. Warburton could not see— as we see them under our lens— that Haverfield also was the unwitting focus-point of generations of an ancestry held rat-like from the sun in the dark prison-cells of every variety of penal code, that he— as well as that crimson-gowned woman who looked upon them with unfathomable eyes from the pale purity of

her face— that Warburton himself— the trio who stood there in a juxtaposition of latent drama— were virtually automata swayed by instincts and impulses beyond their ken.

Haverfield was stubbornly obdurate when it came to business. He had accepted Everard Franklin's cheque believing him to be a man of honour. They had played cards as between gentlemen— can you magine the Warburton disgust at this profanation of their sacred ideal?— and as between gentlemen such obligations must be met. Of course, if Everard Franklin was only a common little swindler— Warburton nearly struck him in the face— then he must be dealt with by the processes of the law. It was a serious matter to give worthless cheques, particularly when one received a balance of cash in exchange for them.

Mrs. Haverfield stood in silence, her dark eyes enigmatically fixed upon the young man, the fine virility of his well-cut features touched into a subtle accentuation of appeal by the suggestion of asceticism in the lines of cheek and mouth, who argued, with temperate firmness, his side of the case. Warburton contemptuously avoided the pretence of an appeal to honour. He based his argument upon a plain business proposition. No matter what Haverfield did, Everard Franklin's cheque would not be met. The sensible thing for Haverfield to do was to accept his, Warburton's, cheque for a percentage of the amount. He, Warburton, in fact, would buy back a worthless piece of paper. Haverfield laughed the idea to scorn, professed to consider Warburton as an accomplice in a fraud.

In the instant in which Warburton was mastering his temper, Mrs. Haverfield interposed.

"I think, Mike," she said, and the name lost its vulgarity in the piquantly foreign charm of her tone, "you ought to accept the proposal Mr. Warburton is generous enough to offer on behalf of his friend." Her eyes swept round upon him. Was there sympathy, understanding, in them? Something obscure in him leaped up, claiming an allegiance with her. A Warburton censor relaxed its suspicion. She turned again to her husband. "Mr. Warburton may do you the injustice of thinking that you exploited the weaknesses of young Mr. Franklin."

Something assured Warburton that she was diplomatically playing his game. He remained silent. Haverfield relaxed grudgingly.

"Well, Renee,' he said, "if you wish it—"

"I do!" she urged, in earnest entreaty.

"Very well, then." He turned to Warburton. "I accept your offer. But I can't give you the cheque to-day. It is at the bank. Let me have your address and I will send it round to-morrow in exchange for your own. And you can't say I haven't met you fairly."

Mrs. Haverfield's eyes dwelt upon Warburton, exchanged an almost imperceptible glance of mutual comprehension.

Warburton gave his address, and left.

THE NEXT afternoon Warburton 's man announced a visitor— "A lady, sir— Mrs. Haverfield."

"Show her in," said Warburton, rising with almost an involuntarily reflex action of his muscles. He checked a curious little stir within himself. It was absurd that he should feel a personal interest in this woman.

Mrs. Haverfield entered. She was dressed in dark clothes, but (he remembered afterwards) there was a little touch of red about her somewhere. That touch of red woke a responsive note that lingered in him vaguely. He invited her to a comfortable seat.

The business part of the interview was soon disposed of. She had brought Everard Franklin's cheque. He handed her his own in exchange for it. She put it in her bag and then sat looking at him in silence with those dark, unfathomable eyes, made no motion to go.

There are moments when time seems arrested, the tick of the clock no longer measuring the cumulative experience of the soul. In the silence of that room, that immobile woman sitting regarding him with eyes fixed mutely upon him: such a moment did this appear to Chisholm Warburton.

He stood near her, oddly embarrassed, waited for words he felt were imminent. It seemed curiously to him that they were already old acquaintances, linked by a subtle, unspoken intimacy.

The words came.

"I wonder what you think me?" she said, in her slow, deep, piquant tones. The eyes were suddenly pathetic, in unison with the sigh that escaped her.

He hesitated. "I don't quite know what to think," he said at last, frankly.

She sighed again. "You think I am— my husband's accomplice?" she got the words out with difficulty, her eyes upon his face.

This implicit avowal of Haverfield's dishonesty startled him, evoked an instantaneous background of horror for the hint of pathos in her beauty. The Andromeda-romance leaped from possibility into certainty. All that was Warburton in him was suddenly reinforced— the old colonel who had plucked a brand from the burning would have recognised his descendant— was suddenly vivified by a surge of unknown forces from deeps in himself. That nigger on the safety-valve had to sit tight in sternly maintained repression. Unsuspected instincts, eager for recognition at long last, boiled up in unseen ferment.

"But you're not!" he exclaimed. His voice betrayed an eagerness that amazed himself. He tried to attribute the timbre of that phrase, ringing in his

ears long after she had gone, to his aesthetic intolerance of such exquisite beauty linked to such mean turpitude.

"Don't talk about it!" she said, her rich tones suddenly tremulous, and shuddered, pathetic eyes upon his face. "There are things— things one cannot talk about!"

There was a world of secret anguish in her sigh.

"But, surely!" he protested. "You need not stay with him! Something can be done!"

She shook her head hopelessly.

"Nothing, *mon ami*!"— she checked herself, smiled pitifully. "You see I call you my friend— although we have but just met. But you understand. You are" — her eyes rested flatteringly upon the clean-cut virility of his head and figure— "*sympathique*!" Her smile confessed her inability to find an exact English equivalent for the word.

"But," he cried, and something in him failed to recognise this ardent transformation of himself, ' it is unthinkable that you should be tied to a man like that!"

Her gesture of the hand was eloquent.

"Sometimes it is almost more than I can bear," she admitted, with what he honoured as a fine reluctance. "But, what would you?— it is my fate!" She shrugged her shoulders, rose from the chair. Her English lapsed quaintly into the unidiomatic, piquant with her accent. "I must suffer it." She held out her hand to him. "You will come and see me— sometimes?" she asked, the wistful smile divorced from the gravity of her eyes.

The Warburton cohorts marshalled themselves in his soul.

"Not unless I can help you," he replied.

"Help me!" she echoed; shook her head. "Ah! No, that is impossible!"

She turned towards the door, stopped, held out her hand again.

"*Mon ami*, I will remember what you said." Her voice was thrillingly contralto. "If I should need your help— I will ask it."

He bowed over her hand, checked an insane impulse to kiss it as it lay between his fingers. He straightened himself, looked into her eyes.

"You may count on me," he said, simply.

The next moment she was gone, the room strangely empty.

The remainder of that day was wasted for Warburton. He could settle to nothing. The night that followed was a purgatory of insomnia punctuated by startlingly vivid dreams. He told me some of them— those dramatic masquerades of secret desires and instincts, hitherto repressed, had acted themselves with such vehement force in the theatre of his dream-consciousness as to leave an abiding impression on his memory— and were I to subject them to the Freudian method of psycho-analysis I could fill a book with the deductions

they implied. Every element of his psychic entity, that compound of unknown inheritances of repulsions, sympathies, unsatisfied cravings and long-practised associations, had been wakened into unwonted activity by the mysterious reagent of a particular personal propinquity. You should be able to see for yourselves some of those ferments vitalised in the yeast.

The next day he half -expected to see or hear of her. But there was silence and no sign. He jeered at himself, maintaining his lucidity; dissociated himself, with an exercise of his volition, from a problem that was no concern of his. The Warburton delicacy shrank from the sordid complications latent in the Haverfield menage, asserting itself over the Warburton chivalry so prompt to act the knight-errant. Under both, something ached with a vague nostalgia. There was a fever in his blood that he would not confess to himself. Pervading him was an atmosphere of expectation, of imminent event.

But the days passed, lengthened to a week, without hint of her. Deprived of stimulus, the ferment in him began to subside, disappointed elements to recede into obscurity. And yet something in him waited.

The event came suddenly. Late on the seventh night, the sharp summons of his telephone-bell startled him from the book he was reading. He sprang across to the instrument— his heart seeming to check in the shock of an inexplicable certitude— lifted the receiver. He heard a voice— her voice!— there was no mistaking it, but gasping, choking, it seemed, with some violent emotion.

"Come!" it said. "Come at once!" Her utterance was interrupted. He thought he caught the sound of a scuffle in that distant room. He heard a man's voice, vaguely, in an angry hoarseness— heard hers clearly curt, "Get away! Or I shoot!" and then with startling distinctness direct into his own ear, "Oh, come!... Save me!... Ah, *amour de Dieu* ."

The voice ceased abruptly on a sharp cry. There was silence.

He threw down the receiver and dashed for the door, snatching up his hat as he went. The Haverfields' apartment was not a quarter of a mile away. In a few seconds he was in the street. A minute later he was in a taxi racing at furious speed along a clear road. Three minutes— and a bell in the Haverfield flat was ringing violently under the frenetic pressure of his fingers. It seemed not himself, but a strange Warburton that raged impatiently at that closed door. This was an unknown self of primitive passions, suddenly released, sweeping through him like a storm in the night. The door opened— a scared maid-servant behind it. He pushed past her, went swiftly as by instinct to the room in which he had originally been received.

He flung open the door. The room was in full light— cushions, hangings strewn about the floor, the overturned telephone trailing its cord across the divan, and beyond, shrinking into a corner, her hands still half-up in an instinctive guard to her face, the woman in the gown of rich and vivid red. Standing

away from her, in an attitude of interrupted menace, was Haverfield, a riding-whip in his hand. Upon a table near the telephone a silver-plated revolver gleamed under an electric-lamp.

Both of them turned at his irruption: the woman with a glad cry, the man with an angry snarl.

"What is all this?' demanded Warburton, his voice quivering, strange in his own ears.

"She tried to shoot me, the she-devil!" replied Haverfield, beside himself with fury, indicating the revolver on the table. "But what's that to you, anyway? What's your business?"

"My business is to protect this woman!" answered Warburton. It seemed that the whole of himself was molten into unison as he uttered the explicit definition.

The little white face with the turned-up black moustache seemed to flame evilly as it glared at him.

"Beat it!" he said hoarsely, pointing to the door with his riding-whip. "Beat it while the going's good!"

"No!" The woman almost screamed her appeal. "No! Don't go! Don't leave me with him! Look— look what he has done!" She dropped the hand from her face, revealed a great red weal, ugly across neck and bosom.

"You cad!" cried Warburton, in a fury of indignation that swept up from the depths of him. "You deserve to be flogged for that!" In just such accents had that old colonel formulated his wrath in the days when flogging was the panacea in Wellington's army.

"You won't do it!" Haverfield sneered at him. "Get out— quick! And as for this woman— she's mine!— and I'll do what I like with her!" He raised his whip in menace.

The woman shrank back with a cry of terror.

"Drop that!' commanded Warburton.

Haverfield's answer was a sickening, vicious lash across the head guarded by the quivering hands.

Warburton himself did not quite know what happened next. He saw red, as he expressed it. A sudden overmastering impulse to inflict death— a lust for annihilation of this evil thing— a savage lust for blood— blood shed by himself— leaped up in him. His ears sang, the room went blurry, he saw only that white vicious face shrinking back in startled alarm— he scarcely realised that he had snatched up the revolver.

As it detonated deafeningly under the pressure of his finger on the trigger, he had— he puzzled over it afterwards— a queer little mental picture of a guillotine silhouetted against a blood-red sky.

"HE EXPLAINED THIS fleeting little hallucination himself to me as an immediate reaction of his own conscience, an involuntary spontaneous visualisation of the retribution he incurred, perverted, dream-like, with memories of the book on the French Revolution he had been reading.

"That's as it may be— but if there are such things as ghosts, other than those we carry in ourselves, I think the leering, evil countenance of Courtois under his red cap looked out at the elbow of young Chisholm Warburton as he stood on trial for his life in that gloomy court. And from the witness-box where Mrs. Haverfield gave evidence, the spectre of that guillotined aristocrat Lavoisiere made him, perhaps, an ironic bow."

"And Mrs. Haverfield?" interjected Thomspon. "Was she in love with young Warburton?"

Dr. Fergusson smiled grimly. "She had another lover. That was what the row was about. She married him afterwards."

"And Warburton? Hanged, I suppose?"

"No," he said. "We haven't quite done with heredity. You remember young Warburton 'saw red' at the fatal crisis? That is almost literally true. Warburton— I diagnosed it the first time I saw him in his cell— suffered from a cerebral aneurism, a dilatation of an artery in the brain. The sudden increase of blood pressure on the wave of a strong emotion was liable to set up motor impulses far more powerful than the normal. More than that, his life was lived under a menace of which he was happily unconscious. It was an inherited trait. Several of his forbears had died as though poleaxed by the sudden rupture of an aneurism.

"I watched him as he stood there in the dock and listened to the judge's pitiless summing-up. His face went white and red with shame as those immaculate ancestors were recalled. I saw the vein on his forehead swell out suddenly, the blood-vessels of his neck get congested in the surge of his bitter emotion as the arraignment proceeded. Then, without warning, he went down as though he were shot. The strain was too great. The aneurism had burst. For once, his heredity was merciful. Well, Mr. McIlwraith, it lasted longer than your cigar— but there's your story!"

"I don't like it," said McIlwraith. "It makes a man feel unsafe. I'm going to look up my family tree."

"Rubbish!" commented Collins, with judicial asperity. "If wicked ancestors influenced us, we should all be hanged for murder."

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5: The Undoing of Smiles

Con Drew

Conway T Drew, 1875-1942
The Lone Hand, 2 Aug 1920

The writer was in the Australian contingent that fought in the Boer War at the beginning of the 20th century, later becoming a hotelier, a bookmaker, author and playwright. One of his ventures was the shortlived surfing magazine, "The Surf", 1917-1918, which while it lasted less than a year is believed to be the first surfing paper ever published. He published numerous short stories, often set in the more dubious side of the sporting world.

"THE MOST GREVIOUS spectacle in the world barrin' a broken straight, is a flash jockey," said Paddy in tones forbidding dispute. "For instance, there was that country jockey me and Finger Campbell struck out west.

"You've heard of Finger Campbell," went on Paddy presently: "him as got the stretch for breakin' into a house at Mosman?"

"Well, there's some as says he never done it, and likely as not he didn't either, but he loomed up big in the story I'm goin' to tell you, and the way it come about was this way."

AT THE TIME of the '90 strike, me and Finger Campbell blew into a little out-back town for a three days' race meetin' and put up at one of the pubs. We were only about ten bob strong, but we reckoned on showin' a profit out of the crowd that had come in for the races. And, believe me, there was some crowd, too. All the people from the surroundin' districts was there, and the town was like a bee-hive, swarming with farmers. They were sleepin' four in a room at our pub, and there was dozens had to put up with shake-downs in the dinin'-room, on the verandah and any other old place where they could squeeze their frames into.

Me and Finger fluked a shake-down in the bathroom, and were flamin' lucky to get there, considerin' we was owin' it to them. Well, we snared some sugar at billiards that night, and the next day out we goes to the racecourse. Its one of them tin plate, half mile affairs, a couple of miles from the town, with no Leger or nothin', the crowd bein' all in the one enclosure. The officials were a real scratch lot, most of them havin' been dug up from among the local talent, and they were the queerest lookin' gang that ever you slung your lamps on. One of them was a Sydney bloke named Johnson, but I'll tell you about him later.

After a whisky we roamed around lookin' at the bookmakers, who were saddlin' up to bet on the first race. They, too, was a rummy-lookin' crowd, blokes that had travelled round the country meetin's since Carbine won his Madden. You could hear the dice-box rattlin' just to look at them. Presently a bell rung somewhere, and they stood up on their stands to bet. Deuces the field

they offered. But, would you believe me, although there was only five or six runners, not a soul went near them. The whole flamin, racecourse was standin' near the scratchin'-joint, eyes glued on the blackboard. Finger and me strolls over and mingles with them.

"What's the strong of this?" I said to a bloke. "Ain't no one goin' to have a bet?"

"Oh, yes," answered the bloke; "they'll bet alright directly. They're waiting to see what Smiles is ridin'."

"Smiles?" I says. "I never heard of him."

"Oh, you'll hear of him directly," says the chap. "He rides more winners than any ten jockeys around these parts, and as soon as the mob find out what he's on they'll bump their heads together tryin' to back it."

"H'm," says I. "He must be some rider."

"No," says the bloke, "I won't have him to be a good rider. He's too flash, for one thing."

"Well, maybe he gets the best mounts," I says.

"No, it ain't that either," says the cove. "They shoved him on a terrible lookin' crock the other day and he won in a canter. He can win on anythin'."

"Spare me days, he must be a good rider if he can win on anythin'," I says.

But the bloke won't have it at all. "No," he persists, "he ain't a good rider. He's just a ball of flashness with the luck of a flamin' chow."

Just then a wire-whiskered gent in a hat as big as a buggy-wheel comes down to the blackboard and starts writin' up the jockeys' names. He writes a name or two opposite the horses they are goin' to ride, and when he comes to No. 4 he writes up Smiles' name.

Spare the crows, you never seen such a rush. Without waitin' to see what the other boys were ridin', the crowd gives one wild whoop and stampedes over to the bettin' ring. Me and Finger was on their wheels, but by the time we hit the ring, Smiles' mount was three to one on.

"That's funny," says Finger. "I've seen some corn-beef rushes on the different Sydney courses when a crack jockey gets aboard a favourite, but I ain't ever seen such a stampede as this."

We moved in and out among the bookies, pricing a horse or two just to see how things were goin' but, as far as the favourite was concerned, the bettin' was completely paralysed. Presently the horses came out on to the track to do their preliminary and I kept me eyes skinned for the favourite. He came out on to the course at the tail of the field, a light-coloured chestnut, with silvery mane and tail. There weren't much chance to see the jockey close, for as soon as he hits the course, Smiles turns him round and canters him down to the startin'-post, but the little I did see of him he looked as flash as lightnin'.

Well, the race starts, and a skinny-lookin' grey hops out and around the course like a skyrocket. The others don't find their feet so easily, but I sight Smiles' mount runnin' well up with them. Of course, I know that the grey will come back to them. He's one of them hoppy, short-movin' crocks that rattle the teeth out of the bloke on top. In the course of a furlong they grab him and the grey drops back to where he rightly belongs. Next, a brown horse takes the lead. He's a big, strong-lookin' bloke and a stayer, but the course is too small for him and he gallops out wide at the turn. Then comes a bloke that looks like a racehorse. He's one of them long stridin' roans, and movin' as free as the air.

"This bloke will give them some trouble," I says to Finger. "Whatever beats him will win." And I was right. Into the straight he leads them, increasin' his lead at every stride. It's up-hill now and the others are pretty well steadied, exceptin' Smiles' mount, which is gallopin' round on the outside. Up the straight races the roan, a good three lengths in front of anythink else, and I'm thinkin' the race is as good as over, when there's a yell from the crowd and Smiles gets busy. Ridin' his horse like a circus jockey, he sets sail after the roan. He's usin' his hands as if he wore boxin' gloves and fumblin' the reins somethin' terrible. Fifty yards from home he collars the roan, and it's a ding-dong go until close to the winnin' post. Then Smiles puts in a grandstand finish and squeezes home by a whisker.

Well, over we whips to the weighin' enclosure and waits for the horses to come in. It's a small piece of ground roped off from the main ground, with a set of ordinary grocers' scales plumped down in the middle. Presently the clerk of the course rides in, leadin' the chestnut, and Smiles dismounts, whips off the saddle and steps on the scales. We see the bar rise up steady and stay there. He was exactly the weight.

Well, in the next race they go through the same performance. The boys' names go up on the board, the punters back Smiles' mount, and home it duly lobs; Smiles doin' the grandstand act and winnin' by a nose. He wins two more races after dinner, and after the last race was over we spread our wings for home. Ridin' home in the drag I'm sittin' opposite Smiles and I have a reai good screw at him. He's a cocky-lookin' bloke, dolled out like a dancin' master, with an inch or two of handkerchief showin' below his sleeve. Between his knees he's got his racin' saddle, with his name painted big across the seat and his whip has a mush-room handle like the brolleys women carry.

Now, I never did like flash blokes at any time, and it starts me thinkin'. This Smiles, thinks I, is gettin' all the sugar and me and. Finger's gettin' nothin'. How would it be if someone singed his wings a little? There's a chance that it might be done. I'll think it over. That night I interviews a bloke I'd seen on the racecourse, and we agrees to do a little business together.

Next day we're out at the races again, and Smiles rides in three— the Encourage, the Flyin' and Handicap— and cops the lot. He don't have much to

spare in the Flyin' because there's a horse called Mohawk, belongin' to the local publican, that runs him pretty close for it. This Mohawk and Smiles' mount rattle up the straight on their own and it looks like Mohawk winnin', when along comes Smiles and pips him by a whisker. Me and Finger has been spearin' some coin, too, don't forget, for we've followin' Smiles' mounts and backin' up on them. At the finish of the day we counts up the money we had won and finds ourselves about twenty quid strong.

Well, that night, just as Finger's saddlin' up for bed, I floats in on him. I'm a bit late in arrivin' as I'd been seein' a cove about some business.

"You know that publican's horse, Mohawk, that just got beat in the Flyin' to-day?" I says to Finger.

"Yes," he says.

"Well, we'll be backin' him in the Handicap to-morrer," says I. "I know he's goin' to try."

"You know he's goin' to try," says Finger.

"What difference does that make? Whatever Smiles is ridin' will win, won't it?"

"No, it won't," I says. "The publican's horse will win and Smiles ain't ridin' him. He's the best horse in the race."

"I know he is," says Finger, "but that won't make him win. Smiles will ride whatever wins the Handicap."

"Well, he won't beat Mohawk to-morrer," I says, "for I know something;" and with that I went to bed.

AT THE RACES next day, Smiles wins two races before lunch-time and at dinner he sits in at the tucker table under the liquor booth with the heads. Finger's missing somewhere, so I pushes me frame in lower down the table and bogs into the scran. Everybody talks of nothin' else but Smiles. It's Smiles this, and Smiles that, until a man would have though that the whole wide world was smilin'. The publican bloke that owns Mohawk is sittin' next to me, and I have a chin to him.

"Do you like your chance in the Handicap this afternoon?" I asks him.

"I'd like it a ton better if Smiles was ridin' my horse," he says doleful like. "I tried to engage him but someone else got in ahead of me."

"Smiles!" I snorts. "He can't stop a horse from winnin' if he ain't on him, can he?"

"No, but he's got the knack of ridin' winners," says the publican, "and he's pretty hard to beat."

"That may be," I says, "but I think I'll have my bit on Mohawk. He ain't too easy to beat either."

After dinner I strikes Finger. "Everything's right," I says. "The Handicap's next on the programme and as soon as the bookies find a favourite we'll step in and back Mohawk."

"That's alright," he says, "but I've just been chinnin' to Doreen's trainer and he tells me Smiles is ridin' Doreen."

"Rats!" says I. "I know what I'm doin'. Come on over and we'll back Mohawk."

Well, the bookies open up on the Handicap, and Finger and me take up a position in the bettin' ring, where we can dive down on them handy as soon as the market settles a bit. The same old routine is gone through over agen. The punters don't back nothin' until they sees what Smiles is ridin', then there's a corn-beef rush and Smiles' mount comes to 3 to 1 on. Mohawk is 4 to 1 against, bein' the next best horse in the bettin' and we hops in and empties out on him. The bookies thought we was mad.

"It's money from home," they cackled as we put our sugar in, and by the hair of the great Saint Carbine it looked as if it was.

Well they comes out on to the track, a field of seven starters. A boy named Jacobs was ridin' Mohawk and Smiles was ridin' Doreen. The others didn't count, it bein' a sort of two horse race as it were.

There's no need to describe the race in full. It was like most other races we'd seen Smiles win. Mohawk spurted to the front with Smiles two lengths behind, and they kept in that position until they reached the home turn. Half-way up the straight Smiles runs up to Mohawk's girth and they hammer it out until near the winning post. Then Smiles comes like a gale of wind and lands the bacon.

Well, talkin' of swearin', perhaps Finger didn't say nothin' to me. His jaws creaked like a loose screen-door at first, and when he loosens up he slates me properly.

"You shovel-nosed, wall-eyed, know-all goat," he says. "What do you think of yourself now? You get us into a tom-fool scheme and make us do our money, when we ain't got no more chance of winnin' than the man in the Iron Mask. You ought to talk about knowin' somethin'. You ought to have a nurse with you, that's what you ought to have."

"Grab hold of yourself," I says. "We ain't lost our money yet, have we?"

"Ain't lost!" roars Finger, "Strike a light! I know we ain't won."

"Oh, alright," says I soothingly. "Come on over to the weighin' machine and I'll convince yer."

We stroll over to the weighin' enclosure, Finger embellishin' the air with surprisin' flights of profanity, and me chucklin' inwards to meself, and when we gets there Smiles is just gettin' on the scales. He has his saddle on his arm, and he steps up as if he was mountin' the throne of England, and the crowd watch the lever bar to see it rise. But nary a rise does it make. It sticks down solid as if

it was glued there. Smiles stepped down off the scales, inspected his saddle and hops on again, but the bar lay as dead as a Randwick hurdler and wouldn't budge an inch.

"Great snakes!" says Finger, "they'll have to send for the bridle," and sure enough they did, but the bridle made no more difference than a handful of feathers and Smiles was declared short weight.

Then things happened. Smiles' backers tore down the ropes and rushed the weighin' machine like a pack of hungry wolves. Punters who had backed Mohawk and had separated themselves from their tickets raced around w ; th their lamps skinned on the ground in the hopes of findin' them again. The news spread to the crowd at the liquor booth and those that was interested stamped over to the weighin' enclosure like a cyclone. The usual bunch of sharp-shooters sprung from nowhere and galloped round the ground in search of Mohawk tickets.

Takin' it altogether, it was a fine boil-over.

When the whirlwind had somewhat subsided, Finger and me cashes our Mohawk tickets and floats out through the gate, for I'd got an idea in me nut that nothin' was to be gained by lingerin'. A bit along the road we overtakes another man and he falls into line and travels with us. Finger don't say nothin' for a mile or two, and, after we passes the township, he puts it to me.

"I ain't over curious as a rule," he says, ''but I wouldn't mind knowin' how it was worked."

''That's dead easy," says I, turnin' to the other bloke. ''Shake hands with Mr. Johnson, the clerk of the scales."

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6: A Crook in Arcady

Sydney Horler

1888-1954

Chronicle (Adelaide) 13 June 1935

AS HE RAISED HIS HEAD and looked in through the open window, Courtnay gasped. But for the solid feel of the rung of the ladder beneath his feet, and the evidence of his eyes, he would not have thought this thing possible. He must act quickly— and ruthlessly. It was not the time for niceties.

With the stealth that had brought him so many successes In the past, he put a leg over the window-sill and entered the room.

The boy— mad-brained fool!— was still at the wall safe. So intent was he on his amateurish joto that he did not look round. Courtnay had one dread, that the girl who was sleeping in the next room would be awakened; that would be fatal.

Lunging silently forward, he put both hands over the boy's mo.uth and forced him backward.

'Keep quiet— or I'll kill you!' he hissed.

Basil Friston's legs gave way beneath him. The lad was evidently in the last stages of nervous collapse, due to the tension, and he offered little resistance. But as he feared he was being reduced to unconsciousness, he looked upwards at his assailant's face.

'You!'

Although Courtnay could not catch the word, he knew what the boy had tried to frame with his tongue.

'Yes— this is my sort of job,' he replied. 'I am a professional crook. That was the reason I accepted your very kind invitation to come down here.'

Better let the young fool have it between the eyes. The truth would hurt, but it would be a warning to him not to be so free with his company.

'Do you realise what would happen if you were caught?' he went on. 'It would mean prison—'

'But you?' He had released hold of the boy's throat sufficiently to allow Friston to speak.

'It doesn't matter about me; I'm used to this sort of thing. Now, listen, and don't attempt to play the fool because I'm desperate. There's the ladder; walk down it quickly and quietly and get back into the house. You will be able to get in through the study window which I have left open. But be careful not to shut it, because I want to get back that way myself. Understand?'

'Yes, Courtnay.' The boy was still dazed. 'That's all right, then. Now get.' He watched the youth descend unsteadily, fearing every moment that he would lose his grip, and then turned. How much noise had been made? At any other

time in his career he would have remained in complete control of himself, but now, worried by the thought of Susan Friston's brother, he temporarily lost his nerve. The ladder must not be seen: it was the first thought that came to his mind.

Catching hold of the top, he exerted all his strength. The sound that the heavy wooden appliance made as it slumped against the branches of the tree that grew at the edge of the lawn was not louder than the rustling.that might have been caused by a gust of wind. Yet he waited, his heart now ihudding out great hammer strokes. And then—

'I thought as much!'

Standing clearly outlined in the doorway opposite to the one which led to Susan Friston's bedroom was Hector Maine. The man's heavy, florid face was lit by a triumphant sneer.

'I'll trouble you to put your hands up, Mr. Crook,' he whispered. 'Don't make a noise; Miss Friston is sleeping in the next room.'

There was nothing else for it; he could not hope to reach the weapon in his own pocket in time. Besides he must not draw a gun.

As he raised his hands, Maine continued to gloat.

'Caught red-handed! I recognised you as Courtnay the jewel thief from the beginning, my friend, and here is the actual proof!'

Jim Courtnay, formerly of Eton and Magdalen, and now professional crook, smiled back into the eyes that blazed with satisfaction.

'Quite a smart capture. I congratulate you.'

All the time he kept repeating to himself that, whatever happened to him, the boy must be shielded.

'YOU'RE NOT attempting to get away?' sneered Maine.

Once again, Jim Courtnay smiled into the face of his enemy.

'Why should I? You made a fair cop, as crooks say; and besides, what chance should I have? You've got my gun.'

'Yes, and I intend to keep it. You're going to stop here, Mr. crook, until the morning— and then I aim going to call the police.'

Courtnay yawned.

'Well, you don't mind if I try to get a wink of sleep beforehand, I hope? You see, I have heard that prisons still leave a good deal to be desired in the way of comfort. Good night.'

He had the pleasure of hearing Maine spit out an oath. They were both in the other's bedroom, to which he had been shepherded.

After locking the door, his captor had pointed to the second bed and told him that he could use it if he liked. 'But I shall be watching you all the time— there won't toe any sleep for me tonight,' he had supplemented.

As he closed his eyes, Courtnay's mind wandered back over the events of the evening. He had come to Greystones, the Hertfordshire Tudor home of Susan Friston, at the direct invitation of her young scapegoat brother, Basil. He had been able to read the youngster's mind from the beginning. Friston wanted to get him down and partake of his sister's hospitality in order that he might broach the subject of a loan from Courtnay. But, once in the house to which, it was plain, he was a very unwelcome visitor, a greater temptation had come his way— a temptation to which the fool had yielded.

At dinner that night the radiant beauty of Susan Friston was enhanced by her wearing the famous Friston pearls. A rich haul, these, for any crook, however highly placed and however cultivated and sophisticated was his taste, and Basil, desperate through his heavy debts, had tried his bungling, amateur's hand. Thank God he had been in time to stop him.

It had been a small house party, but one member of it had found himself almost as unwelcome as the young brother of his hostess. This man, Hector Maine by name, had gone out of his way to be unpleasant from the moment of introduction, almost to the point of being openly rude. Apart from storming incessantly, he had questioned the legality of one of his fellow guest's rulings at bridge, and it was only the intervention of his young and charming hostess that had prevented trouble.

The voice of Hector Maine broke in brusquely upon his thoughts.

'No, no, you don't, Mr. Crook— you don't kid me that way. Asleep or not, I'm going to watch you every minute until the dawn,

Courtnay made no reply. Had Hector Maine been an actor, this assuredly would have been his most successful role. 'I had my suspicions of this gentleman'— stressing the word— 'from the first moment I met him,' he stated.

The burly police-sergeant interjected a question.

'What made you suspicious of Mr. Courtnay?' he asked.

Across the room the 'prisoner' caught sight of Susan Friston's pain-sickened face and wished the ordeal over.

'Well, my first impression was that he was a polished crook,' was the reply, 'an impression that has been confirmed. As a matter of fact, he was pointed out to me in London a short while ago as being a noted jewel thief. I wondered how he had come to be invited down here, and then realised he must have cultivated young Mr. Friston's acquaintance for a very definite purpose. You see,' he went on, 'I have read in the papers about the Friston pearls.'

There was a second interjection, but this time it came from Courtnay. 'I think you will agree. Sergeant,' he said, 'that it was very clever of Mr. Maine to put two and two together in this way. I hope that when the case comes to court the judge will compliment him upon his acumen.'

'Oh!' It was Susan Friston who made the exclamation. The sound tore at Courtnay's heart, but he had to go on.

'Well, now, Sergeant, having heard all the evidence, isn't it time that we adjourned? By the way, I hope your local police-station isn't too cold— I've been having one of two twinges of rheumatism lately.'

The police sergeant put a hand up to his straggling moustache.

'I must say you're a cool 'and, sir,' he vouchsafed.

Courtnay shrugged his Immaculately tailored shoulders.

'There comes a time in every crook's life, Sergeant, when he recognises he's right up against it. With you and Mr. Maine arrayed against me, what possible chance have I got? By the way,' he added, as though it were an afterthought, 'didn't I see Detective-Inspector Milgate of the C.I.D. yesterday afternoon at Lulswell station?'

As he spoke he slipped behind Maine and stood between his accuser and the door.

'Funny thing you should say that, sir,' replied the police sergeant, 'for here is the detective inspector.'

What followed was very confusing. Instead of evidencing pleasure that a distinguished ornament of the Special Branch of Scotland Yard was actually on the premises, Hector Maine, disregarding his company, broke into sulphurous oath and attempted to brush past the man he had hoped to send to penal servitude for a long term. But, perhaps because he was ashamed of being so slow the night before, Jim Courtnay now gave signs of astonishing activity. Before Maine could get past him, he swung a nicely judged right to the other's chin, with the result that his traducer went to the floor with a resounding bang.

'That's very considerate of you, Courtnay,' drawled a voice, 'very kind, indeed.'

Detective-Inspector Stephen Milgate, the particular pride of the C.I.D. according to the newspaper reporters— and they generally know what they are writing about— stepped forward.

Courtnay smiled.

'Perhaps you had better hear what the police-sergeant has to tell you before we go any further.'

'That can wait,' was the succinct answer; 'if you had pulled off a job you wouldn't be hanging around here, and in any case, I want to get this bird along to the station.'

To the complete stupefaction of Susan Friston, he produced a pair of handcuffs and clapped them on the still blaspheming Hector Maine's wrists.

'Sorry to intrude and all that, miss,' said the triumphant detective, as he started to lead his captive away, 'but you shouldn't have such a nasty piece of

work as this blackmailer on your premises without first getting a certificate of good conduct. See you later, Mr. Courtnay?'

'Courtnay' to you. And don't forget, I'm accused of attempting to rob a safe. If you don't believe me, ask the sergeant.'

Milgate stopped.

'Is that correct, miss?' he asked Susan Friston. 'Do you make any accusation against Mr. Courtnay?'

The girl dropped her eyes. 'I don't know what on earth he's talking about,' she said.

THEY WERE ALONE in the room that looked out upon the garden.

'Why did you allow that man Maine to make such an accusation against you?' she enquired. 'And, above all, why did you say that you were a crook?'

'I uttered the simple truth,' was the reply; 'I may or may not look the part— but I am a crook. I have been a jewel thief for the past five years, a fairly successful one, too. Why, it would take too long to tell.'

She gasped. 'But you didn't come down here to rob me?'

'No. I will give myself at least that credit. I came down here because,' he hesitated, 'having seen you once— that was at Lady Sybil Hartree's dinner party, but, of course, you don't remember— I could not resist the temptation to look at you again. It will sound sacrilege, coming from my lips I know— but you are the most beautiful woman I have ever seen. As for your other question, I recognised Hector Maine the moment I saw him, as a blackmailer who was wanted very badly by Scotland Yard. Naturally enough, I asked myself what he was doing in your house.'

She spoke quickly. 'That can be explained. He came here with an introduction from a woman whom I thought was my friend.'

Jim Courtnay waved the rest of her words away.

'I had no right to ask. Please let me continue. I knew the police were close after him; I wanted to keep him tight until Milgate (who I knew had sworn to get him) arrived on the scene. When I saw that C.I.D. inspector on the station yesterday afternoon, I guessed he was down in this district on business.'

'So that was why you could afford to laugh at Maine's accusation? Yet—'

'I know what you are going to say, and you will be correct. Yes, I was in the room next to yours last night, and my fingers were itching to be on the safe in the wall, containing your pearls, when Maine entered.'

'But you didn't intend to steal my pearls?'

He smiled at her. 'How do you know that!'

'Because,' she said proudly, 'you have already told me, and I knew you couldn't.'

'But I'm a crook— I've told you that.'

'Even if you are a crook— you're not the sort who would steal from your friends.'

His face became stern. 'You ought not to say things like that.'

'Why not? I am a free agent.'

'Because—'

'Go on,' she urged.

'I'm not fit to tell you what I should like to say.'

She leaned towards him; he could smell the fragrance of her hair. 'Is that— what you were going to say?— is it something to do with being fond of someone?'

'My God!' he breathed. Then springing up — 'I must go — forgive me.'

But, as he had been quicker than Hector Maine, so she was now quicker than this man whom she could not allow to go out of her life.

'If you love me,' she challenged, 'say so.'

'I'm a crook. Besides, how can you be sure I may not have been lying all the time: that I didn't come down here specially to steal your pearls?'

Her lips parted in a smile. 'I had a telephone message at breakfast,' she replied. 'It was from my brother— Basil. Now do you understand?'

This crook, who had left his old world behind to enter Arcady, understood so well that when she held out her hands to him, he raised them one after the other to his lips.

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7: Dogs Always Know

Elisabeth Sanxay Holding

1889-1955

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THE LOVELY LITTLE MISS SELBY came from Boston, and the large and not unhandsome Mr. Anderson came from New York, and they did not like each other.

Indeed, Miss Selby was not very fond, just then, of any one who did not come from Boston. Sometimes she even went so far as to declare to herself that she did not like any one at all except the members of one certain household in Boston.

It was at night, after she had gone to bed, that she usually made this somewhat narrow-minded declaration, because it was at that time, when she was lying in the dark, that she would most vividly imagine that especial household. Her mother, her grandmother, and her two aunts; they were the kindest, wittiest, most delightful, lovable people who ever breathed, and she compared all other persons with them. And, so compared, Mr. Anderson came out very badly.

As for Mr. Anderson, the reason he did not like Miss Selby was because she obviously did not like him. He was a little sensitive about being liked.

He almost always had been, in the past, and when he saw Miss Selby's eyes resting on him, with that look which meant that she was mentally comparing him with her mother, her grandmother, and her two aunts, he felt chilled to the bone. Not that he looked chilled; on the contrary, his face grew red, and he fancied that his neck, his ears, and his hands did also.

He justly resented this. It was not his fault that he was sitting at her table. It wasn't her table, anyhow; purely by luck had she sat alone at it so long. It was the only place left in the dining room, and the landlady told him to sit there.

As he pulled out his chair he said, "Good evening," with a friendly and unsuspicious smile, and Miss Selby glanced up at him as if she were surprised to hear a human voice issuing from this creature, and bent her head in something probably intended to be a nod.

Naturally, he did not speak again. But, as he sat facing her, and with his back to the room, he could not help his eyes resting upon her from time to time, and it was then that he had encountered that chilly look.

It was very pitiful, he thought, to see one as young as she behaving in such a way— really pitiful. Because she was not unattractive; even a casual glance had informed him of that.

Dark-browed, she was, and dark-eyed; but with hair that was bright and soft and almost blond, and a lovely rose color in her cheeks; the sort of girl a man

would admire, if there had been the true womanly gentleness in her aspect. But after that look, it was impossible to admire; he could only pity.

Strange as it may seem, Miss Selby pitied him, and for a somewhat illogical reason. She saw pathos in the man because he was so large— so much too large. His great shoulders towered above the table; knives and forks looked like toys in his lean, brown hands, and his face was invisible, unless she raised her eyes, which she did not intend to do again.

She had seen him, though, as he crossed the room, and she might have thought him not bad looking, if he had not come to sit at her table. It was an honest and alert young face, healthily tanned, with warm, gray eyes, and a crest of wheat-colored hair above his forehead. But when he did sit down at her table, she immediately began her usual comparisons.

She imagined this young man in that sitting room in Boston, and she saw clearly how much too large he was. It was a small room, and her mother and her grandmother and her two aunts were all of a nice, neat, polite size.

"Like a bull in a china shop," she thought, imagining him among them.

This was unjust. It is never fair to judge bulls by their possible behavior in china shops, anyhow; they seldom go into them, and when seen in the fields, or in bullfights, and so on, they are really noble animals.

But that is what she did think, and as soon as she could finish her dinner, she arose, with another of those almost imperceptible nods, and went away. She went up to her own room, and began to study shorthand.

She did this every evening, with great earnestness, for she was very anxious to get a better position than the one she now had, and she was so far advanced in her study that she could write absolutely anything in shorthand—if you gave her time enough. She could often read what she had written, too.

As for Mr. Anderson, he also went up to his room, but not to study. He had had all he wanted of that at college. Nor did he need to worry about a better position.

The one he had was good, and he was confident that he would have a better one next year, and a still better one the year after that, and so on and on, until he was one of the leading paper manufacturers in the country—if not the leading one. He had just been made assistant superintendent of a paper mill in this little town, and he had come out in the most hopeful and cheerful humor.

The hope and cheer had fled, now. He felt profoundly dejected. He had no friends here, and if other people were like that girl, he never would have any. For all he knew, there might be something repellent in his manner, which his old friends had kindly overlooked.

He began to think sorrowfully of those old friends, of the little flat he had had in New York with two other fellows— such nice fellows— such a nice flat. When you looked out of the window there you saw a façade of other windows,

with shaded lamps in them, and the shadows of people passing back and forth, and down below in the street more people, and taxis, and big, quiet, smooth-running private cars, and all the familiar city sounds. And here, outside this window, there were trees— nothing but trees.

He had heard, often enough, about the loneliness of country dwellers when in a great city, but he felt that it was not to be compared with the loneliness of a city dweller among trees. He got up and went to the window, and he couldn't even see a human creature, only those sentinel trees, moving a little against the pale and cloudy sky.

It was a May night, and the air that blew on his face was May air, a wonderful thing, filled with tender and exquisite perfumes, so cool and sweet that he grew suddenly sick of his tobacco-scented room, and decided to go out on the veranda.

What happened was a coincidence, but it would surely have happened, sooner or later. He met Miss Selby. As soon as he had stepped outside, she opened the door and came out, too.

There was an electric light in the ceiling of this veranda, which gave it a singularly cheerless appearance, rather like the deck of a deserted ship, with the chairs all drawn up along the wall. There was nobody else there, and Mr. Anderson stood directly under the light, so that she could see him very plainly.

She said: "Oh!" and drew back hastily, putting her hand on the doorknob.

This was a little too much!

"Look here!" said Mr. Anderson crisply. "Don't go in on *my* account. I'll go, myself."

Now, Miss Selby was not really haughty or disagreeable. Simply, she had been brought up on all sorts of Red Riding-hood tales, in which all the trouble was caused by giving encouragement to strangers.

She had been taught that it was a mad, reckless thing to acknowledge the existence of persons whose grandparents had not been known, and favorably known, to her grandparents. But certainly she had no desire to offend any one, and this stranger did seem to be offended. So she said:

"Oh, no! You mustn't think of such a thing!"

She meant it kindly, but unfortunately she was utterly unable to speak in a natural way to a stranger. In reality she was a poor, homesick, affectionate, kind-hearted young girl of twenty, who, not fifteen minutes before, had been weeping from sheer loneliness.

But she spoke in what seemed to him an obnoxiously condescending and superior tone. He was a young man of many excellent qualities, but meekness was not one of them, and he resented this tone.

So he spoke with an air of amused indulgence, as if he thought her such a funny little thing:

"I don't want to drive you away, you know."

She raised her eyebrows.

"Why, of course not!" she said, just as much amused as he was, and sat down in one of the chairs against the wall.

She sat there, and he stood opposite her, leaning against the railing, both of them silently not liking each other. Presently the silence became unbearable.

"The spring has come early this year," observed Miss Selby.

Mr. Anderson, the city dweller, knew precious little about what was expected of spring, but he was determined to say something, anything.

"Yes," he agreed. "They were selling violets in the streets yesterday."

Miss Selby looked at him with a sort of horror. Was *that* his idea of spring—violets being sold on street corners?

"But that doesn't mean anything!" she cried. "They were probably hothouse violets, anyway. You can't possibly see the real spring unless you go in the woods."

She needn't think she owned the spring. Every year of his life he had spent several weeks in the country at various hotels. He had seen any number of woods, had walked in them, and admired them, too, with moderation, however.

"Yes, I know," he admitted. "Last June I motored up through Connecticut—"

"Oh, but that's different!" she explained. "Motoring— that's not the same thing at all! There's a little wood near here— I go there almost every Sunday— I wish you could see it!"

"I'd like to," he replied, without realizing the step implied.

They were both dismayed by what had happened. Miss Selby arose hastily.

"Well— good night!" she said, and fled upstairs to her room in a panic.

"Heavens!" she thought. "Did he think I wanted him to come with me to-morrow? Oh, dear! How— how awfully awkward! Oh, I do hope it will rain!"

Mr. Anderson, left by himself, lit his pipe.

"After that," he mused, "of course I'll have to ask her to let me go with her to-morrow. That's only common courtesy."

Very well, he was willing to make the sacrifice.

ii

IT DID NOT RAIN the next day. On the contrary, it was as bright and blithe a day as ever dawned. There was no plausible reason why a person who went into the woods almost every Sunday should not go to-day.

"It would be too rude, just to walk off, if he thinks I meant him to come along," thought Miss Selby. "But perhaps he won't say anything more about it."

He did not appear in the dining room while she ate her breakfast.

"Probably he's still asleep," she thought, with that pardonable pride every one feels at being up before some one else.

He was not asleep. On the contrary, he was looking at her that very moment, as she sat down at her precious table, eating the Sunday morning coffee ring. He had breakfasted early on purpose, hoping that by so doing he would avoid her, for the more he meditated upon her behavior, the more sternly did he disapprove of it, and he had come downstairs this morning resolved to be merely polite.

He could not help sitting at her table; certainly he didn't want to, and she had no right to treat him as if he were an annoying intruder. But, no matter what she did, he intended to be polite.

And, as he sat on the veranda railing and observed her through the window, he thought that perhaps it would not be so very difficult to be polite to her. She looked rather nice this morning, in her neat, dark dress, with the sun touching her brown hair to a warm brightness, and a sort of Sunday tranquillity about her. He felt a chivalrous readiness to take a walk in the woods with her; she might even point out all the flowers and tell him facts about them, if she liked.

She arose, and he turned his head and contemplated the landscape, so that he would not be looking at her when she came out of the door. Only, she didn't come. Although he kept his head turned aside for a long time, he heard no sound of a door opening or of footsteps, nothing but the subdued voices of the four old ladies who sat on the veranda, enjoying the sunshine.

He glanced toward the dining room. She was not there. Very well; probably she had changed her mind, and he would not be called upon to be chivalrous, after all. He would have the whole day to himself, the whole immensely long, blank, solitary day.

Miss Selby, however, had simply gone upstairs to put on her hat. Or, rather, she put on three hats, one after the other, two rather old ones, and one quite new. She decided in favor of an old one, and felt somewhat proud of herself for this, because didn't it show how little she cared about strangers? If it happened to be a singularly becoming hat, she couldn't help it.

She went downstairs and out on the veranda, and there he was, even bigger, she thought, than he had been last evening; a tremendous creature, fairly towering above all the old ladies, and looking most alarmingly masculine and strange.

Something like panic seized her. He was so absolutely a stranger; she knew nothing whatever about him; he might be the most undesirable acquaintance that ever breathed.

But when he said "Good morning," she had to answer, and, in answering, had to look at him, and was obliged to admit that his face was not exactly sinister.

"Off for a stroll?" he asked.

"Yes," she answered. "Yes, I am."

There was a silence, then chivalry required Mr. Anderson to speak.

"Well—" he said. "If you don't mind— I mean— I'd be very pleased—"

"Oh! Certainly!" said Miss Selby.

So off they went, together. They went across the lawn and down the road, and after the first moment of awkwardness, they got on very well.

Indeed, it was extraordinary to see upon how many topics they thought alike. They both agreed that it was a beautiful morning; that the spring was the best time of the year, that the smell of pine needles warm in the sun was unique and delightful, and that Mrs. Brown's coffee was very, very bad.

Then, according to Miss Selby's directions, they turned off the highway and entered the wood. It was not a thick and somber wood, but a lovely little glade where slim silver birches grew, among bigger and more stalwart trees, standing well spaced, so that the sun came through the budding branches, making a delicate arabesque of light and shadow.

And it was all so fresh, so verdant, so joyous, like one of those half-enchanted forests through which knights used to ride, long ago, when the world was younger. It was so serene, and yet so gay, that even Mr. Anderson, the champion of cities, was captivated.

He walked through that wood with Miss Selby, he saw how she looked when she found violets growing, saw her, so to speak, in her natural habitat, where she belonged, and that seemed to him something not easily to be forgotten. There was Miss Selby, down on her knees, picking violets; Miss Selby looking up at him, with that lovely color in her cheeks, and her clear, candid eyes, asking him if they weren't the "prettiest things?"

He answered: "No!" with considerable emphasis, but somehow she did not trouble to ask him what he meant.

She fancied that Mr. Anderson appeared to better advantage in the woods. Seen among the trees he didn't seem too large; indeed, with his blond crest, his mighty shoulders, his long, easy stride, he was not in the least like a bull in a china shop, but a notably fine-looking young fellow.

In short, when Miss Selby and Mr. Anderson returned to the boarding house for the midday dinner, they no longer disliked each other.

iii

THE OLD LADIES had noticed this at once, and it pleased them. They saw Miss Selby and Mr. Anderson talking cheerfully to each other at the little table, and they said to one another: "Young people— young people," and they were old enough to understand what that meant.

The "young people" themselves did not understand. They didn't even know that they were especially young, and certainly they saw nothing charming or interesting in the fact that they were sitting at a small table and talking to each other.

They were, at heart, a little uneasy because they had stopped disliking each other. Dislike was such a neat, definite, vigorous thing to feel, and when it melted away, it left such a disturbing vagueness. Of course, Miss Selby knew that she could not possibly like a stranger; the most she would allow herself was— not to dislike him, and simply "not disliking" a person is a very unsatisfactory state of mind.

It couldn't be helped, however. The dislike was gone. And there they sat, not disliking each other, every single evening at that little table. Naturally, they talked, and naturally, being at such close quarters, they watched each other what time they talked, and when you do that, it is extraordinary what a number of things you learn without being told.

The little shadow that flits across a face, the smile that is on the lips and not in the eyes, the brave words and the anxious glance— these things are eloquent.

For instance, Miss Selby talked about that unique household in Boston. She did not say much, that wasn't her way; yet Mr. Anderson deduced that the mother, the grandmother, and the two aunts were, so to speak, besieged in their Bostonian home, that the wolf was at their door, and that Miss Selby was engaged in keeping him at a safe distance. And that she was probably the pluckiest, finest girl who had ever lived, struggling on all by herself, homesick and lonely, and so young and little.

As for him, he talked chiefly about the manufacture of paper. Until now this subject had not been a particular hobby of Miss Selby's, but the more she heard about it, the more she realized what an interesting and fascinating topic it was. What is more, while Mr. Anderson talked about paper, he told her, without knowing it, many other things.

She learned that he was a very likable young fellow, with a great many friends, and yet was sometimes a little lonely, because he had no one of his own; that he was prodigiously ambitious, yet found his successful progress in the paper business a little melancholy sometimes, because no one else was very much affected by it. He said he had been brought up by an aunt who had given him an expensive education and a great many advantages; he spoke most dutifully of this aunt, and of all that he owed to her, yet Miss Selby felt certain that this aunt was a very disagreeable sort of person, who never let people forget what they owed her.

Very different from Miss Selby's aunts! She had even begun to think that perhaps her aunts, together with her mother and grandmother, might like Mr. Anderson, in spite of his size.

And then he spoiled everything. To be sure, he thought it was she who spoiled everything, but she knew better. It was his lamentable, his truly deplorable, masculine vanity. This man, who appeared so independent, so intelligent—

This disillusioning incident took place on the second Sunday of their acquaintance— the Sunday after that first walk. Almost as a matter of course they set forth upon another walk, and as it was a bright, windy day, rather too cool for sauntering in the woods, they went along the highway at a brisk pace.

The spring had capriciously withdrawn. The burgeoning branches were flung about wildly against a sky blue, clear and cold; the ground underfoot felt hard; everything gentle, promising and beguiling had gone out of the world. And perhaps this affected Miss Selby; her cheeks were very rosy, her eyes shining, and she was in high spirits, even to the point of teasing Mr. Anderson a little.

He found this singularly agreeable. For the most part, he could see nothing but the top of her hat, coming along briskly beside him; but every now and then she glanced up, and each time she did so he felt a little dazzled, because of the radiance there was about her this day. He thought— but how glad he was, later on, that he had kept his thoughts to himself!

There was a steep hill before them, and they went at it with that feeling of pleasant excitement one has about new hills; they wanted to get to the top and see what was on the other side. And very likely they were a sort of allegory of youth, which always wants to get to the top of hills and hopes to find something much better on the other side; but this idea did not occur to them. And, alas, they never reached the top!

Halfway up that hill there was a garden with a stone wall about it; a wide lawn, ornamented with dwarf firs, a fine garden of the formal sort, but not very interesting, and Miss Selby and Mr. Anderson were not interested. They would have passed by with no more than a casual glance, but as they drew near the gate a dog began to bark in a desperate and violent fashion. And a sweet and plaintive voice said:

"Oh, Sandy! Stop, you naughty boy!"

Naturally they both turned their heads then, and they saw Mrs. Granger standing behind the gate. At that time they did not know her name was Mrs. Granger, or any other facts about her; but Miss Selby always believed that, at that first glance, she learned more about Mrs. Granger than— well, than certain other people ever learned, in weeks of acquaintance.

A charming little lady, Mrs. Granger was— dark and fragile, very plaintive, very gentle, the sort of woman a really chivalrous man feels sorry for. Especially at that moment when she was having such a very bad time with that dog.

It was a rough and unruly young dog—a collie, and a fine specimen, too, but ill trained. She was holding him by the collar, and he was struggling to get free,

and barking furiously, his jaws snapping open and shut as if jerked by a string, his whole body vibrating with his unreasonable emotional outburst.

"Keep quiet!" said she, with a pathetic attempt at severity, and when he did not obey, she gave him a sort of dab on the top of the head. It was more than his proud spirit would endure; he broke away from her, jumped over the low gate, and flew at Mr. Anderson.

But not in anger; on the contrary, he was wild with delight; he rushed round and round the young man, lay down on his shoes, licked his hands. And when Mr. Anderson patted him, he was fairly out of his mind, and rolled in the dust.

"Oh!" cried Mrs. Granger. "But— how wonderful!" She turned to Miss Selby. "*Isn't* it wonderful?"

"Isn't what?" inquired Miss Selby. "I'm afraid I don't—"

"That strange instinct that animals have!" Mrs. Granger explained solemnly.

"What instinct?" asked Miss Selby, politely. "I thought he was just a friendly little dog."

"Oh, but he's not friendly with every one!" cried Mrs. Granger. "Not by any means!"

It was at this point that Miss Selby's disillusionment began. She looked at Mr. Anderson, expecting to find him looking amused, and instead of that, he was pleased— a little embarrassed, but certainly pleased!

Then the charming little lady spoke again, addressing Miss Selby:

"What darling wild roses!" she exclaimed. "I do wish I could find some!"

"They're azaleas," said Miss Selby. "And the woods at the foot of the hill— next to your garden— are full of them."

Mr. Anderson was not looking at them just then, but only heard their voices, and he was very much impressed by the contrast. One of them sounded so gentle and sweet, and the other so chill, so curt. It was deplorable that Miss Selby should be so ungracious; he was disappointed.

So he thought that he, at least, would be decently civil to the poor little woman, and he turned toward her with that intention, only he could think of nothing to say. He smiled, though, and Mrs. Granger smiled at him, and Miss Selby observed this.

And Mrs. Granger knew that Miss Selby observed this, and she smiled at Miss Selby. It was a smile that Mr. Anderson would never understand.

"I wish you'd both come in and look at my garden!" said Mrs. Granger, wistfully.

"We—" began Mr. Anderson, cheerfully, but Miss Selby interrupted.

"Thank you!" she said. "But I must go home now. Good morning."

And she actually set off, down the hill. Mr. Anderson, of course, was obliged to follow, and the dog, Sandy, had the same idea.

"Go home, old fellow!" the young man commanded.

Sandy gave a yelp of joy at being addressed, and stood expectantly beside him, grinning dog wise into his face. Mr. Anderson again ordered him home, and Mrs. Granger called him, but he did not go. He had to be dragged back by the collar and held, while Mrs. Granger fastened a leash to his collar.

"I never saw anything like it," she declared. "He's simply devoted to you."

"Dogs generally take to me," the young man admitted.

Mrs. Granger raised her soft dark eyes to his face.

"I think that's a very wonderful thing!" said she, quietly. "Because I'm sure they know. I'd trust Sandy's judgment against any human being's."

"Oh— well—" Mr. Anderson remarked, grown very red.

"You must come and see Sandy again some day," she suggested. "Poor little doggie!"

"I will!" said he. "Yes. Thanks, very much. I will!"

All this had taken considerable time, and Miss Selby was nowhere to be seen. He hurried after her and, turning the corner at the foot of the hill, saw her marching briskly along ahead of him. She must have known that he would follow, yet she did not look back once, and when he reached her side she said nothing— neither did he. They went on.

Presently Miss Selby began to talk, making a very obvious effort to be polite. Mr. Anderson did not like this, but he, too, made an equally obvious effort at politeness, and succeeded quite as well as she did, and they continued in this formal, almost stately tone, for some time.

When she looked back upon it, Miss Selby was always at a loss to understand just how and when this correct tone had vanished from their conversation, and the quarrel had begun. For it was a quarrel— a genuine and a hearty one. And although Mrs. Granger was never once mentioned, yet the quarrel was about her.

Miss Selby declared flatly that dogs did not have any "wonderful instinct" for judging people. Mr. Anderson said he *knew* they did.

"What?" she cried. "You don't mean to say you think a dog knows by instinct whether any one is— good or bad?"

"That's exactly what I do mean," he declared.

Then Miss Selby laughed. She regretted it afterward, but it was done. She had laughed at Mr. Anderson, and he resented it, deeply.

They walked side by side for half a mile, and never said one single word, and by the time they reached the boarding house they had firmly established that worst of all complications, an angry silence. It was now impossible for either of them to speak.

IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE to break that silence without an intolerable sacrifice of pride. Yet, so very, very small a thing would have sufficed; one entreating glance from Mr. Anderson, and Miss Selby would have responded willingly; just a shade of warmth in her smile, and the young man would have made an impetuous apology. But he was not going to give entreating glances to persons who laughed at him, and her smile showed no warmth at all, but instead an extreme chilliness.

They smiled when they met every evening in the dining room, simply to keep up appearances— and it was a complete failure. The old ladies noticed at once that something had gone wrong; they discussed it with unflagging interest all week, wondering what had happened, and whose fault it was. They all hoped that matters would be adjusted by Sunday.

Sunday came, and it was a sweet, bright, warm day. The hour for taking walks came, and Mr. Anderson went out— alone. The old ladies were truly sorry to see this. Miss Selby also saw it. She came out on the veranda just as he was going down the steps and, although she did not turn her head, she had caught a glimpse of his tall, broad-shouldered figure going off— alone. She had a book with her, and, siting down in a sheltered corner, she began to read.

It was impossible. On this gay spring morning nothing printed in books could interest her. Not that she cared what Mr. Anderson did or where he went. Only, she was homesick and so very lonely. There was nobody to talk to, and it would be such a long, long time before she could afford to take a vacation and go back to Boston to see her own people.

"Er— good morning!" said Mr. Quincey, in his apologetic way.

For two months Mr. Quincey had been apologetically making attempts to talk to Miss Selby. He was a most inoffensive young man, a teller in the local bank; he had virtually all the virtues there are: thrift, industry, sobriety, honesty— and he knew people in Boston. Yet hitherto Miss Selby had discouraged him, for no good reason at all, but simply because she wished so to do.

Imagine his surprise and delight when this morning she replied to him with something like cordiality. The old ladies saw him sit down on the railing near her chair, they saw his pleased smile, and they decided that Miss Selby was a fickle and a heartless girl.

Then presently they saw Miss Selby go out for a walk with Mr. Quincey.

In the meantime, Mr. Anderson was striding along the quiet country roads at a tremendous pace. No; he did not like the country.

Except for his unique and wonderful paper mill, he could wish with all his heart that he were back in the city, where there were numbers of people he knew, friendly faces to see, jolly voices to hear. He could think of no particular

person he was especially anxious to see, yet it seemed to him that he missed somebody, badly.

So, he went up that hill again. Again Sandy was there, and Mrs. Granger; again he was invited to look at the garden, and this time he accepted.

v

MRS. GRANGER WAS a widow, and she admitted herself that the loss of Mr. Granger had made her very sympathetic. She told Mr. Anderson that she "understood," and he firmly believed this, without exactly knowing what there was to be understood.

Anyhow, her manner was wonderfully soothing to one who had recently been laughed at, and the young man appreciated it. Twice they strolled round the garden, followed by Sandy, and Mrs. Granger, in a charming and playful way, made a chaperon of Sandy.

"You know you're Sandy's friend," she said. "He discovered you."

Mr. Anderson found this very touching.

Then, when they had come round to the gate for the second time, she said that she would be very pleased to see him if he would like to come in for a cup of tea that afternoon.

"Thank you!" he replied heartily. "That's very kind of you."

And he really did think it was very kind of her, and that she was a charming, gracious, kindly little lady, yet he had not said definitely whether he would come to tea or not.

For all the time, in the back of his mind, there was a queer, miserable feeling he could not define, a sense of guilt, as if he had been very careless about something very dear to him. He thought that he would not make up his mind until— well, until he saw—

What he saw was Miss Selby coming home from a walk with Mr. Quincey. She was carrying a small bouquet of violets, so he supposed that she had been in the woods— in those same woods— and with Mr. Quincey. So Mr. Anderson did go to tea with Mrs. Granger.

Mrs. Granger said he might come on Wednesday evening, and he went. She played on the piano and sang for him, and he praised her music so much that she was charmingly confused. Never did she guess that it was not admiration that moved him, but pity because she made so many mistakes in technique.

And he accounted all these mistakes to her credit; he thought, like many another man, that the worse her performance in any art, the more domestic and womanly she must be. He felt a fine, chivalrous regard for the poor thing.

But still he kept waiting for some sign of relenting on the part of Miss Selby. Every evening, as he crossed the dining room to the little table he thought that

perhaps to-night it would be different; perhaps to-night it would be as it had been during that time when they had talked to each other.

Of course, if she didn't care, he wasn't going to force his unwelcome conversation upon her. She was a woman; it was her place to make the first move.

What had he done, anyhow? Maybe he had been a little hasty, but at least he hadn't laughed at her, or ever had the slightest desire to do such a thing. And if, in her unreasonable feminine way, she wanted him to apologize for things he hadn't done, he was ready so to do— if she would make the first move.

"Very well!" thought Miss Selby every evening when she saw him. "If he's satisfied to— to let things go on like this, I'm sure I don't care."

She was much better able to wear a calm expression of not caring than he was. He looked dejected and sulky. But when out of the public eye, he did better than she, for he merely walked up and down his room, or gazed out gloomily upon those depressing trees, while she, locked in her own room, often cried.

The next Sunday it rained, but nevertheless he went out early in the afternoon, and Miss Selby knew very well where he was going.

"Let him!" she said to herself. "If he's so easily taken in by that— that designing woman and her dog, *I* don't care! She's probably trained the dog to behave like that."

This was unjust. Mrs. Granger had no need to train dogs to bring guests into her house. Undoubtedly she liked Mr. Anderson, but if he had not come there would still have been Captain MacGregor, whom she had been liking for a good many years. Mr. Anderson was soon made aware of the captain's existence by Leroy.

Now, there is no denying that Leroy himself was a shock to the young man. To begin with, it seemed incredible that any one who looked as young as Mrs. Granger should have a son eight years old, and in the second place, if she did have a son, it should have been a different kind of child.

Leroy was a nice enough boy in his way, but completely lacking in the plaintive and poetic charm of the mother. Indeed, he seemed more akin to Sandy, a rough, cheerful, headstrong young thing. But he had none of Sandy's admirable instinct for judging human nature, and in the beginning he did not like Mr. Anderson.

He was frank about it. He said that Mr. Anderson's watch was markedly inferior to Captain MacGregor's, and he expressed a belief that Captain MacGregor could, if he wished, lick Mr. Anderson. He said a good many things of this sort, so that the young man was badly prejudiced against this unknown captain some time before he met him.

And when he did meet him, on that rainy Sunday, nothing occurred to soften the prejudice. He found MacGregor installed as an old friend. He found also that the man had brought to Mrs. Granger, as a gift, six silk umbrellas.

Six! It was an overwhelming gift. Anderson himself had brought a box of chocolates, but this was completely overshadowed by the umbrellas, just as he himself was overshadowed by the impressive silence of the other man.

A big, weather-beaten fellow of forty-five or so was this MacGregor, with the face and the manner of a gigantic Sphinx; he was neither handsome nor entertaining, but it was impossible to ignore or despise him. The solid worth of him, the honest self-respect, and the massive obstinacy, were plainly apparent.

He was not worried by the appearance of a strange young man; on the contrary, he seemed mildly amused. He let Anderson do all the talking, and just sat in a corner of the veranda, smoking his pipe.

This aroused in Anderson an unworthy spirit of emulation. He did not enjoy being so completely overshadowed by this man and his six umbrellas, and he returned the very next evening with four superb phonograph records. He found MacGregor there, just opening a paper parcel containing fourteen pairs of white gloves.

He waited until Wednesday, and then he arrived with a long box of the most costly roses. The captain was not there, but Mrs. Granger showed Anderson a little gift she had received from him the night before— five mahogany clocks.

The unhappy young man was almost ready to give up then, until Mrs. Granger casually explained that Captain MacGregor was a marine insurance adjuster and, in the course of his business, was often able to buy articles which had been part of damaged cargoes and yet were themselves in nowise damaged.

"So that he sometimes brings me the most wonderful things," she said. "He *is* so thoughtful and generous. Don't you like him, Mr. Anderson?"

"Well, you see, I don't know him very well," Anderson replied.

He went home somewhat comforted. Not only had Mrs. Granger been unusually sympathetic and charming, but her words had inspired him with a new idea.

On Friday evening he arrived with a very large package, which he left in the hall. He then entered the sitting room, and found Mrs. Granger sweetly admiring the captain's latest gift— seven handsome black silk blouses, all exactly alike.

He let her go on admiring, and even generously said himself that they were "very nice." Then, after a decent interval— "By the way," he remarked, and went out into the hall and fetched in his package.

It was pretty imposing. He had spoken to the foreman of the paper mill, and the foreman had shown a friendly interest, so that he was now able to present to Mrs. Granger:

1 ream of the finest cream vellum writing paper, with envelopes.
2 reams of gray note paper, with blue envelopes.
1 ream of thin white writing paper, the envelopes lined with dark purple.
And a vast number of small memorandum pads; pink, blue, and yellow.

"Those are for Leroy," he said, with a modest air which failed to conceal his triumph. This time he had won; there was no doubt about it.

vi

ON SATURDAY NIGHT Miss Selby did not appear at the little table.

"Gone out to dinner," he thought.

Why shouldn't she go out to dinner? He simply hoped that she was enjoying herself. And, as he ate his solitary dinner, he thought about this; he imagined Miss Selby enjoying herself somewhere, sitting at some other table, and probably with some other young man sitting opposite her.

He knew how she would look if she were enjoying herself, with that lovely color in her cheeks, and that wonderful smile of hers. Well, it was none of his business— absolutely none of his business.

And yet, after dinner, he found occasion to stop the landlady in the hall, and to say, with an air of courteous indifference:

"That young lady who sits at my table— didn't see her to-night. Has she gone away?"

"No, Mr. Anderson!" answered Mrs. Brown, with stern solemnity. "She has not. She's lying upstairs, sick, at this very moment that I'm speaking to you. And *I* think it's pneumonia, that's what *I* think."

"Pneumonia!" he cried. "But only last night—"

"It takes you sudden," Mrs. Brown asserted. "And Miss Selby— well, people have often said to me how blooming she looked, but well I knew it was nerve, and nerve alone, that kept her going. Nerve strength!" she sighed. "It's a treacherous thing, Mr. Anderson. You live on your nerves, and then, all of a sudden, they snap— like that!"

And her bony fingers snapped loudly, a startling sound in the dimly lit hall. The young man was in no condition to judge of the value of Mrs. Brown's medical opinion; he was simply panic-stricken.

He went out of the house in a sort of blind haste, and began to walk along roads strange to him, under a cloudy and somber sky. He heard the voice of the wind in the trees, and to his unaccustomed ears it held no solace, but was a voice infinitely mournful.

Pneumonia! That little, little pretty thing— so far from home— ill and alone in a boarding house. Such a young, little thing.

He remembered that morning in the woods— her face when she had looked up at him from the violets she was picking— that radiant face, clear-eyed as a child's.

"It's my fault!" he cried aloud. "I ought to have known she couldn't take care of herself properly. It's my fault! The poor little thing! She's done some fool trick— got her feet wet— probably makes her lunch of an ice cream soda— perhaps she can't afford any lunch. And now— pneumonia! She had no *right* to get pneumonia! It's—"

He stopped short, in a still, dark little lane, clenched his hands, stood there shaken by pain, by anger, by all the unreason of grief and anxiety.

"She ought to have known better!" he shouted.

vii

WHEN HE CAME DOWNSTAIRS the next morning, Mrs. Brown regarded his strained and haggard face with profound interest, and she observed to one of the old ladies that she believed Mr. Anderson was "coming down with something."

He made inquiries about Miss Selby's health, and obtained very vague and confused replies, which he interpreted as people jaded and despondent from a bad night are apt to interpret things. He went into the dining room, but he could eat no breakfast. Who could, sitting alone at a little table, opposite an empty chair? Then he went out again.

It was a rainy day, but that was so fitting that he scarcely noticed it. He remembered having seen a greenhouse not far away, and he went there. It was not open on Sunday, but he made it be open. He banged so loud and so long on the door that at last an old man came out of a near-by cottage.

"It's a case of pneumonia!" said the young man, fiercely. "I've got to have some flowers."

So he was admitted to the greenhouse, and he bought everything there was, and then sat down at a little desk to write a card. He never forgot the writing of that card, the rain drumming down on the glass roof, the palms and rubber trees standing about him, and the hot, moist, steamy smell like a jungle. He never forgot what he wrote, or how he felt while he wrote it.

But there would be no use in repeating what he wrote, for nobody ever read that card.

He put it with the flowers, and set off home. When he got there he gave the bouquet, very sodden now, to Mrs. Brown's servant, and said to her:

"Please give this to Miss Selby. Give it to her yourself; don't send it."

Then he went up to his own room and locked the door. And the room was all filled with the gray light of a rainy day.

The clang of the dinner bell startled him; he jumped up, scowling, and muttered: "Oh, shut up!" But, just the same, he had to obey it. He had to go downstairs, and had to sit at the little table.

Scarcely had he sat down when he saw Miss Selby enter the room— Miss Selby in a new dark green linen dress, looking unusually pretty, and not even pale.

He arose; he was pale enough. He couldn't speak. She must have received that card; she must have read it. As she glanced at him, he saw the color deepen in her cheeks, and her smile was uncertain. She was so lovely.

"I thought—" he began.

She sat down, and he did, too. Again their eyes met.

"It's a miserable day," she observed.

He didn't think so. He thought it was the most beautiful day that had ever dawned; and he might have said something of the sort if he had not just at that moment seen an awful thing. He stared, appalled, almost unbelieving.

The waitress was coming across the room, carrying his immense bouquet.

"No!" he cried, half rising.

But it was too late; she had come; she presented the bouquet to Miss Selby with a pleased and kindly smile.

"For you!" she announced.

Every one in the room was watching with deep interest.

"See here!" said the young man, in a low and unsteady voice. "I— I only got them because I thought— they— she told me— you had pneumonia. I thought— Give them back to her. Throw them away! I— I'm sorry—"

"Sorry I haven't got pneumonia?" asked Miss Selby. "It's too bad, but perhaps I can manage it some other time."

Her tone and her smile hurt him terribly. He wished that he could snatch the flowers away from her. She was laughing at him again; every one in the room was laughing at him.

And it didn't occur to him that Miss Selby couldn't possibly know how he felt, but was a very young and inexperienced creature who was also hurt by his strange manner of giving bouquets. She thought he wanted her to know that, unless she were very ill, he wouldn't dream of giving her flowers. She was even more hurt than he was.

"Will you bring a vase, please, Kate?" she asked.

Katie did bring a vase, and the hateful and offensive flowers were set up between them, like a hedge. He leaned over, and with his penknife deliberately cut off the card tied to the stems and put it into his pocket.

And not one more word did they speak all through that dreadful meal.

viii

IN HIS PAIN AND ANGER and humiliation he turned blindly to Mrs. Granger, the charming little lady who never laughed at any one. He couldn't get to her fast enough; he strode on through the mud in the steady downpour of rain, simply longing to see her, and to hear her soft, gracious voice, and to be within the shelter of her friendly home.

That card was still in his pocket; he took it out, and as he walked along, tore it into bits and strewed them behind him. They fell into puddles, where they would lie to be trampled on, those words he had written— a suitable end for them.

He pushed open the gate of Mrs. Granger's garden, and was very much comforted by Sandy's ecstatic welcome. Dogs *did* know. They appreciated it when you meant well; they were not suspicious, not mocking. When you gave them something they accepted it in good faith.

He went on toward the house, walking rapidly, impatient to get in there to the gentle serenity of Mrs. Granger's presence. He rang the bell, and directly the parlor-maid opened the door he knew he was not going to have peace and solace.

Something had gone wrong. He could hear Leroy's voice raised in a loud, forlorn bellow, and Mrs. Granger's voice, tearful and trembling, and Captain MacGregor's voice, with a slightly exasperated note in it. He entered the sitting room, and there was Mrs. Granger, weeping, and Leroy sobbing. Sandy began to bark.

"Oh, Mr. Anderson!" cried Mrs. Granger. "How can you let him do that? Oh, please keep him quiet!"

Anderson put the dog outside, and then returned.

"But what's the matter?" he asked.

"Leroy's been bitten by a m-mad d-dog!" cried Mrs. Granger.

"Was *not* a mad dog!" Leroy asserted.

"See! Here on his leg!" she went on. "And he never told me! It happened late yesterday!"

"There's no reason to assume that the dog was mad," interrupted the captain.

"It was! Animals adore Leroy! Only a rabid dog would dream of biting him!"

"Was *not* a rabid dog," Leroy insisted sullenly.

"Well, see here!" said Anderson. "If you think— if you're worried— why not have his leg cauterized?"

"Oh, I can't!" she cried. "My child burned with red-hot irons!"

Leroy began to bellow at this inhuman suggestion, and Mrs. Granger clasped him in her arms.

"Don't cry, darling!" she sobbed. "Mother won't let them hurt you!" And she looked at Captain MacGregor and Mr. Anderson with unutterable reproach.

They were silent for a time.

"Well, see here!" Anderson suggested. "If you could find the dog, and—keep it under observation for a few days—"

This idea appealed to the child.

"Sure!" he said. "I'll find him, mom. You just let me alone, and I'll find him for you, all right!"

"You said you couldn't remember what the dog was like."

"Yes, I know. But I remember the street where it was, an' I'll go back there to-morrow," Leroy declared. "I could stay out o' school jist in the mornin' and jist— ferret it out. I got lots of clews. An' I bet you—"

"I'll go with you now," said Anderson.

The agitated mother didn't even thank him.

"Perhaps that would be a good idea," she admitted. "You might try it, anyhow, and see."

So Leroy was fortified against the rain in oilskins and rubbers, and he and Mr. Anderson set forth together in quest of the dog. The small boy was highly pleased with the adventure; he did not often have an opportunity to frolic in the rain, and he made the most of it, caracoling before Anderson like a sportive colt. Sandy, too, would have enjoyed it, but he was tied up.

"One dog at a time," said Anderson. "Now, young feller, let's hear about it."

"Aw, it was nothin'," Leroy replied with admirable nonchalance. "Jist a dog ran up an' bit me. I mean, I was runnin', an' I guess I stepped on his paw an' he bit me."

"Did you tell your mother you stepped on the dog?"

"I dunno what all I told her," Leroy admitted. "Anyway, what's it matter? Had to do somethin' to keep her quiet."

Anderson considered that it was not his place to rebuke this child, and he let the disrespect pass.

"Where did it happen?"

"Long ways from here, all right!" said the boy, triumphantly.

He spoke no more than the truth. It was a very long way. They went on and on, down long, quiet suburban streets, lined with dripping trees and houses with no signs of life. They went on and on.

At first Leroy was talkative and cheerful, and found great satisfaction in splashing in puddles, but as time went on he grew silent, and tramped through the puddles more as a matter of principle than through enjoyment.

"What was the name of the street?" asked Anderson.

"Well, I don't know," the boy answered, "but I guess I'd know it if I saw it. Somewheres around here, it was. Might be around the next corner."

They went round the corner, and there was a candy store.

"That's it!" Leroy announced. "It's open, too."

Mr. Anderson said nothing, but walked steadily forward, and Leroy trotted by his side.

"They sure did have good lollypops in there," observed Leroy. "Best I ever tasted."

Still no response from the adult, possessor of all power and wealth. Leroy sighed. And Anderson turned to look at him, and discovered a wet and not very clean face upturned to his, with brown eyes very like Sandy's. Poor little kid, tramping along so bravely in his oilskins! He looked tired, too.

"All right!" said Anderson. "We'd better go back and get a few lollypops."

After that Leroy went on, much encouraged in spirit.

"Here's the street!" he cried at last. "The lil dog ran out o' one of those houses— I don't know which one."

Mr. Anderson rang the bell of the first house. The occupants owned no dog, never had, and never intended so to do. In the second house he was confronted by a very disagreeable old lady. She admitted that she had a dog, and she said, with unction, that her dog could and would bite any persons unlawfully trespassing on her property, as was any dog's right.

"I dare say Rover did bite the boy," she suggested, "if he came in here trampling and stampling all over my flower beds. And serve him right, I say!"

"I did not!" said Leroy, indignantly. "And that's not the dog, Mr. Anderson. I can see him out the window. He's a police dog, and my dog was a little one."

They proceeded to the next house. Nobody came to the door at all. There was only one more house left on the street.

"Well, I hope the right dog's in there," said Leroy, "but—" He paused, then he laid his hand on Anderson's sleeve. "Most any lil dog would *do*," he said, very low, "for *her*."

Mr. Anderson was about to protest sternly against such a dishonest and immoral suggestion, but somehow he didn't. The child's hand looked so very small, and his manner was so trusting. He said nothing at all, simply walked up the path to this last house.

He rang the bell, and the door was opened with startling suddenness by a little man with spectacles and a neatly pointed white beard. He looked like a professor, and he was a professor— of Romance Languages— and because of his scholarly unworldliness, he had been cheated and swindled so many times that he had become fiercely suspicious. He glared.

"This boy has been bitten by a dog," Mr. Anderson explained. "And we want to find the dog, to see—"

"Ha!" said the little man. "And what has this to do with me, pray?"

"I thought perhaps you had a dog here—"

The professor folded his arms.

"Very well!" said he. "I have. And what of it?"

"If you'll let us see the dog—"

"Aha!" said the professor. "I see! A blackmailing scheme! You wish to see my dog. You will then cause this child to identify the dog as the one which bit him, in order that you may collect damages. A ve-ry pret-ty little scheme, I must admit!"

Anderson had had a singularly trying day, and he was very weary of this quest, anyhow.

"Nothing of the sort!" he said curtly. "If you'll be good enough to let us see your dog— or if you'll give me your assurance that the animal is perfectly healthy—"

"Don't you give him a penny, Joseph!" cried a quavering female voice from the dark depths of the hall.

The professor laughed ironically.

"Ve-ry pret-ty!" he repeated. "But you may as well understand, once and for all, that I absolutely refuse to allow you to see my dog, or to give you any assurance of any kind whatsoever."

And nothing could move him. Mr. Anderson argued with him with as much tact and politeness as he could manage just at that time, but in vain.

"See here!" he said at last. "Let me see the dog, and if it's the right one, I'll *buy* it. Now will you believe—"

But the professor would not believe until Anderson had signed a document which he drew up, solemnly promising that, if the dog were identified by Leroy as the dog which had bitten him, he, Winchell Anderson, would purchase the said dog for the sum of twenty-five dollars.

Then, and then only, was the dog brought into the room. And Leroy instantly, loudly and fervently asserted that it was *the* dog. By this time Mr. Anderson was perfectly willing to believe him. He paid the money and stooped to pick up the dog, a small animal, of what might be called the spaniel type.

It snapped at him. He could not pick it up, because on the next attempt his hand was bitten. At last, upon his paying in advance for the telephone call, the professor summoned a taxi. Mr. Anderson could not get the dog into the taxi, but Leroy had no trouble at all with it. It seemed to like Leroy.

They rode home in silence, because every time Anderson uttered a word the animal growled and struggled in the boy's arms.

They reached Mrs. Granger's house, and while Leroy ran ahead with the dog in his arms, Anderson delayed a minute to pay the taxi with the last bill remaining in his pockets. Then he followed. It had been a costly and a

wearisome quest, but Mrs. Granger's relief and gratitude would be sufficient reward.

In the doorway of the sitting room he paused a moment, smiling to himself at the scene before him. Leroy was down on his knees, playing with this quite unexpected and delightful new dog, and Mrs. Granger knelt beside him, one arm about her son's neck.

Captain MacGregor was there, but in a corner, so that one need not consider him in the picture— the peaceful lamp-lit room, the gentle mother and her child.

"I'm very glad—" he began, when, at the sound of his voice, the dog sprang up and rushed at him, and was caught by Leroy just in the nick of time. He growled threateningly.

"I guess I'd better tie him up," said Leroy. "He doesn't like Mr. Anderson."

"Why, how very strange!" Mrs. Granger exclaimed.

Leroy did tie him up to the leg of a table.

"But why doesn't the poor little doggie like Mr. Anderson?" pursued Mrs. Granger, and there was something in her voice that dismayed the young man.

"I don't know," he replied, briefly.

"It's very strange," she remarked. "Very! But sit down, Mr. Anderson. Perhaps you were just a little bit rough in handling him— without meaning to be."

"No, he wasn't!" Leroy asserted, indignantly. "He—"

At this point the dog broke loose, flew at Anderson, and would have bitten him if Anderson had not prevented him—with his foot.

"Oh!" cried Mrs. Granger. "Oh, Mr. Anderson, how could you! You kicked the poor little doggie!"

"I— I simply pushed him— with my foot," said Anderson. "He's a bad-tempered little brute."

"Dogs are never bad-tempered unless they're badly treated," Mrs. Granger declared, with severity. "They always know a friend from a foe."

"All right!" the young man agreed. "Then I'm afraid I'm a foe." He turned toward the door. "If you'll excuse me," he said, "I'll be getting along. I'm— I'm tired. Good evening!"

"Good evening!" said Mrs. Granger and Captain MacGregor in unison.

She let him go! He opened the front door and stepped out into the rain again, and never in his life had he felt so bitter, so disappointed, so cruelly, intolerably depressed. After all he had done, she let him go like this! Not even a word of thanks. Poor little doggie, eh?

Halfway down the path he heard a shout; it was Leroy, rushing after him bareheaded through the rain.

"Say!" he shouted. "You're—"

Words failed him, and he stretched out his hand, a rough, warm little hand, wet from the rain, sticky from lollypops. Yet Anderson was very glad to clasp it tight.

"Good-by, old fellow!" he said.

"Good-by, old fellow, yourself!" answered Leroy.

And he sat on the gatepost, watching, and waving his hand as Anderson went down the road in the rainy dusk.

ix

MR. ANDERSON had finished with women forever. And this resolve gave to his face a new and not unbecoming sternness; the old ladies noticed it directly he entered the dining room that evening. Miss Selby noticed it, too, but pretended not to; she smiled that same chilly, polite smile, and said never a word— neither did he.

Supper was set before them, and they began to eat, still silent. And then she spoke suddenly.

"What's the matter with your hand, Mr. Anderson?" she asked.

"Oh, nothing; thanks!" he answered.

Again a silence. But she could not keep her eyes off that clumsily-tied bandage on his hand.

"I wish you'd tell me!" she said.

It was an entirely different tone, but he was no longer to be trifled with like that. He smiled, coldly.

"No doubt you'll be very much amused," he remarked, "to learn that I've been bitten by a dog!"

He waited.

"Why don't you laugh, Miss Selby?" he inquired. "It's funny enough, isn't it? After I said that dogs always know. It's what you might call 'biting irony,' isn't it?"

"I— don't want to laugh," said she. "I'm— just sorry."

He looked at her.

"Miss Selby!" he cried.

"I took your flowers upstairs," she said. "I think— they're the prettiest— the prettiest flowers— I— ever saw."

"Miss Selby!" he exclaimed again. "See here! Please! When I thought you were ill—"

"I only had a little cold."

"I wrote a note," he said. "I tore it up. I— I wish I hadn't."

Miss Selby was looking down at her plate.

"I wish you hadn't, too," she agreed.

The old ladies had all finished their suppers, but not one of them left the room. They were watching Miss Selby and Mr. Anderson. Surely not a remarkable spectacle, simply a nice looking young man and a pretty young girl, sitting, quite speechless, now, at a little table.

Yet one old lady actually wiped tears from her eyes, and every one of them felt an odd and tender little stir at the heart, as if the perfume of very old memories had blown in at the opened window.

"Let's go out on the veranda," said Mr. Anderson to Miss Selby, and they did.

The rain was coming down steadily, and the wind sighed in the pines. But it was a June night, a summer night, a young night.

Not an old lady set foot on the veranda that evening, not another human being heard what Miss Selby from Boston, and Mr. Anderson from New York had to say to each other.

Only Mrs. Brown, opening the door for a breath of fresh air, did happen to hear him saying something about the "best sort of paper for wedding announcements."

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8: The Picture in the House

H. P. Lovecraft

1890-1937

Weird Tales, Dec 1923/Jan '24

First published in 1919 in an obscure amateur magazine, twice reprinted in Weird Tales*, and reprinted in several later anthologies and collections as recently as 2024. The two named places, the Miskatonic Valley, and the college town of Arkham, are fictional creations of Lovecraft, and located somewhere in Massachussets.*

SEARCHERS after horror haunt strange, far places. For them are the catacombs of Ptolemais, and the carven mausolea of the nightmare countries. They climb to the moonlit towers of ruined Rhine castles, and falter down black cobwebbed steps beneath the scattered stones of forgotten cities in Asia. The haunted wood and the desolate mountain are their shrines, and they linger around the sinister monoliths on uninhabited islands. But the true epicure in the terrible, to whom a new thrill of unutterable ghastliness is the chief end and justification of existence, esteems most of all the ancient, lonely farmhouses of backwoods New England; for there the dark elements of strength, solitude, grotesqueness and ignorance combine to form the perfection of the hideous.

Most horrible of all sights are the little unpainted wooden houses remote from traveled ways, usually squatted upon some damp grassy slope or leaning against some gigantic outcropping of rock. Two hundred years and more they have leaned or squatted there, while the vines have crawled and the trees have swelled and spread. They are almost hidden now in lawless luxuriances of green and guardian shrouds of shadow; but the small-paned windows still stare shockingly, as if blinking through a lethal stupor which wards off madness by dulling the memory of unutterable things.

In such houses have dwelt generations of strange people, whose like the world has never seen. Seized with a gloomy and fanatical belief which exiled them from their kind, their ancestors sought the wilderness for freedom. There the scions of a conquering race indeed flourished free from the restrictions of their fellows, but cowered in an appalling slavery to the dismal phantasms of their own minds. Divorced from the enlightenment of civilization, the strength of these Puritans turned into singular channels; and in their isolation, morbid self-repression, and struggle for life with relentless Nature, there came to them dark furtive traits from the prehistoric depths of their cold Northern heritage. By necessity practical and by philosophy stern, these folks were not beautiful in their sins. Erring as all mortals must, they were forced by their rigid code to seek concealment above all else; so that they came to use less and less taste in what they concealed. Only the silent, sleepy, staring houses in the backwoods can tell

all that has lain hidden since the early days, and they are not communicative, being loath to shake off the drowsiness which helps them forget. Sometimes one feels that it would be merciful to tear down these houses, for they must often dream.

It was to a time-battered edifice of this description that I was driven one afternoon in November, 1896, by a rain of such chilling copiousness that any shelter was preferable to exposure. I had been traveling for some time amongst the people of the Miskatonic Valley in quest of certain genealogical data; and from the remote, devious, and problematical nature of my course, had deemed it convenient to employ a bicycle despite the lateness of the season. Now I found myself upon an apparently abandoned road which I had chosen as the shortest cut to Arkham, overtaken by the storm at a point far from any town, and confronted with no refuge save the antique and repellent wooden building which blinked with bleared windows from between two huge leafless elms near the foot of a rocky hill. Distant though it is from the remnant of a road, this house none the less impressed me unfavorably the very moment I espied it. Honest, wholesome structures do not stare at travelers so slyly and hauntingly, and in my genealogical researches I had encountered legends of a century before which biased me against places of this kind. Yet the force of the elements was such as to overcome my scruples, and I did not hesitate to wheel my machine up the weedy rise to the closed door which seemed at once so suggestive and secretive.

I HAD SOMEHOW taken it for granted that the house was abandoned, yet as I approached it I was not so sure, for though the walks were indeed overgrown with weeds, they seemed to retain their nature a little too well to argue complete desertion. Therefore instead of trying the door I knocked, feeling as I did so a trepidation I could scarcely explain. As I waited on the rough, mossy rock which served as a door-step, I glanced at the neighboring windows and the panes of the transom above me, and noticed that although old, rattling, and almost opaque with dirt, they were not broken. The building, then, must still be inhabited, despite its isolation and general neglect. However, my rapping evoked no response, so after repeating the summons I tried the rusty latch and found the door unfastened. Inside was a little vestibule with walls from which the plaster was falling, and through the doorway came a faint but peculiarly hateful odor. I entered, carrying my bicycle, and closed the door behind me. Ahead rose a narrow staircase, flanked by a small door probably leading to the cellar, while to the left and right were closed doors leading to rooms on the ground floor.

Leaning my cycle against the wall I opened the door at the left, and crossed into a small low-ceiled chamber but dimly lighted by its two dusty windows and

furnished in the barest and most primitive possible way. It appeared to be a kind of sitting- room, for it had a table and several chairs, and an immense fireplace above which ticked an antique clock on a mantel. Books and papers were very few, and in the prevailing gloom I could not readily discern the titles. What interested me was the uniform air of archaism as displayed in every visible detail. Most of the houses in this region I had found rich in relics of the past, but here the antiquity was curiously complete; for in all the room I could not discover a single article of definitely post- revolutionary date. Had the furnishings been less humble, the place would have been a collector's paradise.

As I surveyed this quaint apartment, I felt an increase in that aversion first excited by the bleak exterior of the house. Just what it was that I feared or loathed, I could by no means define; but something in the whole atmosphere seemed redolent of unhallowed age, of unpleasant crudeness, and of secrets which should be forgotten. I felt disinclined to sit down, and wandered about examining the various articles which I had noticed. The first object of my curiosity was a book of medium size lying upon the table and presenting such an antediluvian aspect that I marvelled at beholding it outside a museum or library. It was bound in leather with metal fittings, and was in an excellent state of preservation; being altogether an unusual sort of volume to encounter in an abode so lowly. When I opened it to the title page my wonder grew even greater, for it proved to be nothing less rare than Pigafetta's account of the Congo region, written in Latin from the notes of the sailor Lopez and printed at Frankfurt in 1598. I had often heard of this work, with its curious illustrations by the brothers De Bry, hence for a moment forgot my uneasiness in my desire to turn the pages before me. The engravings were indeed interesting, drawn wholly from imagination and careless descriptions, and represented negroes with white skins and Caucasian features; nor would I soon have closed the book had not an exceedingly trivial circumstance upset my tired nerves and revived my sensation of disquiet. What annoyed me was merely the persistent way in which the volume tended to fall open of itself at Plate XII, which represented in gruesome detail a butcher's shop of the cannibal Anziques. I experienced some shame at my susceptibility to so slight a thing, but the drawing nevertheless disturbed me, especially in connection with some adjacent passages descriptive of Anzique gastronomy.

I had turned to a neighboring shelf and was examining its meager literary contents— an eighteenth century Bible, a *Pilgrim's Progress* of like period, illustrated with grotesque woodcuts and printed by the almanac-maker Isaiah Thomas, the rotting bulk of Cotton Mather's *Magnalia Christi Americana*, and a few other books of evidently equal age— when my attention was aroused by the unmistakable sound of walking in the room overhead. At first astonished and startled, considering the lack of response to my recent knocking at the door,

I immediately afterward concluded that the walker had just awakened from a sound sleep, and listened with less surprise as the footsteps sounded on the creaking stairs. The tread was heavy, yet seemed to contain a curious quality of cautiousness; a quality which I disliked the more because the tread was heavy. When I had entered the room I had shut the door behind me. Now, after a moment of silence during which the walker may have been inspecting my bicycle in the hall, I heard a fumbling at the latch and saw the paneled portal swing open again.

IN THE DOORWAY stood a person of such singular appearance that I should have exclaimed aloud but for the restraints of good breeding. Old, white-bearded, and ragged, my host possessed a countenance and physique which inspired equal wonder and respect. His height could not have been less than six feet, and despite a general air of age and poverty he was stout and powerful in proportion. His face, almost hidden by a long beard which grew high on the cheeks, seemed abnormally ruddy and less wrinkled than one might expect; while over a high forehead fell a shock of white hair little thinned by the years. His blue eyes, though a trifle bloodshot, seemed inexplicably keen and burning. But for his horrible unkemptness the man would have been as distinguished-looking as he was impressive. This unkemptness, however, made him offensive despite his face and figure. Of what his clothing consisted I could hardly tell, for it seemed to me no more than a mass of tatters surmounting a pair of high, heavy boots; and his lack of cleanliness surpassed description.

The appearance of this man, and the instinctive fear he inspired, prepared me for something like enmity; so that I almost shuddered through surprise and a sense of uncanny incongruity when he motioned me to a chair and addressed me in a thin, weak voice full of fawning respect and ingratiating hospitality. His speech was very curious, an extreme form of Yankee dialect I had thought long extinct; and I studied it closely as he sat down opposite me for conversation.

"Ketched in the rain, be ye?" he greeted. "Glad ye was nigh the haouse en' hed the sense ta come right in. I calc'late I was alseep, else I'd a heerd ye— I ain't as young as I uster be, an' I need a paowerful sight o' naps naowadays. Trav'lin fur? I hain't seed many folks 'long this rud sence they tuk off the Arkham stage."

I replied that I was going to Arkham, and apologized for my rude entry into his domicile, whereupon he continued.

"Glad ta see ye, young Sir— new faces is scurce arount here, an' I hain't got much ta cheer me up these days. Guess yew hail from Bosting, don't ye? I never ben thar, but I kin tell a taown man when I see 'im— we hed one fer deestrick schoolmaster in 'eighty-four, but he quit suddent an' no one never heerd on 'im sence—" here the old man lapsed into a kind of chuckle, and made no

explanation when I questioned him. He seemed to be in an aboundingly good humor, yet to possess those eccentricities which one might guess from his grooming. For some time he rambled on with an almost feverish geniality, when it struck me to ask him how he came by so rare a book as Pigafetta's *Regnum Congo*. The effect of this volume had not left me, and I felt a certain hesitancy in speaking of it, but curiosity overmastered all the vague fears which had steadily accumulated since my first glimpse of the house. To my relief, the question did not seem an awkward one, for the old man answered freely and volubly.

"Oh, that Afriky book? Cap'n Ebenezer Holt traded me thet in 'sixty-eight — him as was kilt in the war." Something about the name of Ebenezer Holt caused me to look up sharply. I had encountered it in my genealogical work, but not in any record since the Revolution. I wondered if my host could help me in the task at which I was laboring, and resolved to ask him about it later on. He continued.

"Ebenezer was on a Salem merchantman for years, an' picked up a sight o' queer stuff in every port. He got this in London, I guess— he uster like ter buy things at the shops. I was up ta his haouse onct, on the hill, tradin' hosses, when I see this book. I relished the picters, so he give it in on a swap. 'Tis a queer book— here, leave me git on my spectacles—" The old man fumbled among his rags, producing a pair of dirty and amazingly antique glasses with small octagonal lenses and steel bows. Donning these, he reached for the volume on the table and turned the pages lovingly.

"EBENEZER cud read a leetle o' this— 'tis Latin— but I can't. I had two er three schoolmasters read me a bit, and Passon Clark, him they say got draownded in the pond— kin yew make anything outen it?"

I told him that I could, and translated for his benefit a paragraph near the beginning. If I erred, he was not scholar enough to correct me; for he seemed childishly pleased at my English version. His proximity was becoming rather obnoxious, yet I saw no way to escape without offending him. I was amused at the childish fondness of this ignorant old man for the pictures in a book he could not read, and wondered how much better he could read the few books in English which adorned the room. This revelation of simplicity removed much of the ill-defined apprehension I had felt, and I smiled as my host rambled on:

"Queer haow picters kin set a body thinkin'. Take this un here near the front. Hey yew ever seed trees like thet, with big leaves a floppin' over an' daown? And them men— them can't be niggers— they dew beat all. Kinder like Injuns, I guess, even ef they be in Afriky. Some o' these here critters looks like monkeys, or half monkeys an' half men, but I never heerd o' nothin' like this un." Here he pointed to a fabulous creature of the artist, which one might describe as a sort of dragon with the head of an alligator.

"But naow I'll show ye the best un— over here nigh the middle—"

The old man's speech grew a trifle thicker and his eyes assumed a brighter glow; but his fumbling hands, though seemingly clumsier than before, were entirely adequate to their mission. The book fell open, almost of its own accord and as if from frequent consultation at this place, to the repellent twelfth plate showing a butcher's shop amongst the Anzique cannibals. My sense of restlessness returned, though I did not exhibit it. The especially bizarre thing was that the artist had made his Africans look like white men— the limbs and quarters hanging about the walls of the shop were ghastly, while the butcher with his axe was hideously incongruous. But my host seemed to relish the view as much as I disliked it.

"What d'ye think o' this— ain't never see the like hereabouts, eh? When I see this I telled Eb Holt, 'That's suthin' ta stir ye up an' make yer blood tickle.' When I read in Scripter about slayin'— like them Midianites was slew— I kinder think things, but I ain't got no picter of it. Here a body kin see all they is to it— I s'pose 'tis sinful, but ain't we all born an' livin' in sin?— Thet feller bein' chopped up gives me a tickle every time I look at 'im— I hey ta keep lookin' at 'im— see whar the butcher cut off his feet? Thar's his head on thet bench, with one arm side of it, an' t'other arm's on the other side o' the meat block."

As the man mumbled on in his shocking ecstasy the expression on his hairy, spectacled face became indescribable, but his voice sank rather than mounted. My own sensations can scarcely be recorded. All the terror I had dimly felt before rushed upon me actively and vividly, and I knew that I loathed the ancient and abhorrent creature so near me with an infinite intensity. His madness, or at least his partial perversion, seemed beyond dispute. He was almost whispering now, with a huskiness more terrible than a scream, and I trembled as I listened.

"As I says, 'tis queer haow picters sets ye thinkin'. D'ye know, young Sir, I'm right sot on this un here. Arter I got the book off Eb I uster look at it a lot, especial when I'd heerd Passon Clark rant o' Sundays in his big wig. Onct I tried suthin' funny— here, young Sir, don't git skeert— all I done was ter look at the picter afore I kilt the sheep for market— killin' sheep was kinder more fun arter lookin' at it—" The tone of the old man now sank very low, sometimes becoming so faint that his words were hardly audible. I listened to the rain, and to the rattling of the bleared, small-paned windows, and marked a rumbling of approaching thunder quite unusual for the season. Once a terrific flash and peal shook the frail house to its foundations, but the whisperer seemed not to notice it.

"Killin' sheep was kinder more fun— but d'ye know, 'twan't quite *satisfyin*'. Queer haow a *cravin'* gits a holt on ye— As ye love the Almighty, young man, don't tell nobody, but I swar ter Gawd thet picter begun to make me *hungry fer victuals I couldn't raise nor buy*— here, set still, what's ailin' ye?— I didn't do

nothin', only I wondered haow 'twud be ef I did— They say meat makes blood an' flesh, an' gives ye new life, so I wondered ef 'twudn't make a man live longer an' longer ef 'twas *more the same*—"

But the whisperer never continued. The interruption was not produced by my fright, nor by the rapidly increasing storm amidst whose fury I was presently to open my eyes on a smoky solitude of blackened ruins. It was produced by a very simple though somewhat unusual happening.

The open book lay flat between us, with the picture staring repulsively upward. As the old man whispered the words "more the same" a tiny splattering impact was heard, and something showed on the yellowed paper of the upturned volume. I thought of the rain and of a leaky roof, but rain is not red. On the butcher's shop of the Anzique cannibals a small red spattering glistened picturesquely, lending vividness to the horror of the engraving. The old man saw it, and stopped whispering even before my expression of horror made it necessary; saw it and glanced quickly toward the floor of the room he had left an hour before. I followed his glance, and beheld just above us on the loose plaster of the ancient ceiling a large irregular spot of wet crimson which seemed to spread even as I viewed it. I did not shriek or move, but merely shut my eyes.

A moment later came the titanic thunderbolt of thunderbolts; blasting that accursed house of unutterable secrets and bringing the oblivion which alone saved my mind.

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9: Many Waters Cannot Quench Love

Louisa Baldwin

Mrs. Alfred Baldwin, 1845-1925

In: *The Shadow on the Blind and Other Ghost Stories*, 1895

Wife of industrialist Alfred Baldwin, and mother of Stanley Baldwin, British Prime Minister 1935-1937

DID I NOT KNOW my old friend John Horton to be as truthful as he is devoid of imagination, I should have believed that he was romancing or dreaming when he told me of a circumstance that happened to him some thirty years ago. He was at that time a bachelor, living in London and practising as a solicitor in Bedford Row. He was not a strong man, though neither nervous nor excitable, and as I said before singularly unimaginative.

If Horton told you a fact, you might be certain that it had occurred in the precise manner he stated. If he told it you a hundred times, he would not vary it in the repetition. This literal and conscientious habit of mind, made his testimony of value, and when he told me a fact that I should have disbelieved from any other man, from my friend I was obliged to accept it as truth.

It was during the long vacation in the autumn of 1857, that Horton determined to take a few weeks' holiday in the country. He was such an inveterate Londoner he had not been able to tear himself away from town for more than a few days at a time for many years past. But at length he felt the necessity for quiet and pure air, only he would not go far to seek them. It was easier then than it is now to find a lodging that would meet his requirements, a place in the country yet close to the town, and it was near Wandsworth that Horton found what he sought, rooms for a single gentleman in an old farm-house. He read the advertisement of the lodgings in the paper at luncheon, and went that very afternoon to see if they answered to the tempting description given.

He had some little difficulty in finding Maitland's Farm. It was not easy to find his way through country lanes that to his town eyes looked precisely alike, and with nothing to indicate whether he had taken a right or wrong turning. The railway now runs shrieking over what were then green fields, lanes have been transformed into gas-lighted streets, and Maitland's Farm, the old red brick house standing in its high walled garden, has been pulled down long ago. The last time Horton went to look at the old place it was changed beyond recognition, and the orchard in which he gathered pears and apples during his stay at the farm, was now the site of a public house and a dissenting chapel.

It was on a hot afternoon early in September when Horton opened the big iron gates and walked up the path bordered with dahlias and hollyhocks leading

to the front door, and rang for admittance at Maitland's Farm. The bell echoed in a distant part of the empty house and died away into silence, but no one came to answer its summons. As Horton stood waiting he took the opportunity of thoroughly examining the outside of the house. Though it was called a farm it had not been built for one originally. It was a substantial, four-storey brick house of Queen Anne's period, with five tall sash windows on each floor, and dormer windows in the tiled roof. The front door was approached by a shallow flight of stone steps, and above the fan-light projected a penthouse of solidly carved woodwork. On either side were brackets of wrought iron, supporting extinguishers that had quenched the torch of many a late returning reveller a century ago. Only the windows to right and left of the door had blinds or curtains, or betrayed any sign of habitation. 'Those are the rooms to be let, I wonder which is the bedroom,' thought my friend as he rang the bell for the second time. Presently he heard within the sound of approaching footsteps, there was a great drawing of bolts and after a final struggle with the rusty lock, the door was opened by an old woman of severe and cheerless aspect. Horton was the first to speak.

'I have called to see the rooms advertised to be let in this house.'

The old woman eyed him from head to foot without making any reply, then opening the door wider, nodded to him to enter. He did so and found himself in a large paved hall lighted from the fan-light over the door, and by a high narrow window facing him at the top of a short flight of oak stairs. The air was musty and damp as that of an old church.

'A hall this size should have a fire in it,' said Horton, glancing at the empty rusty grate.

'Farmers and folks that work out of doors keep themselves warm without fires,' said the old woman sharply.

'This house was never built for a farm, why is it called one?' inquired Horton of his taciturn guide as she opened the door of the sitting-room.

'Because it was one,' was the blunt reply. 'When I was a girl it was the Manor House, and may be called that again for all I know, but thirty years since, a man named Maitland took it on a lease and farmed the land, and folks forgot the old name, and called it Maitland's Farm.'

'When did Maitland leave?'

'About two months ago.'

'Why did he go away from a nice place like this?'

'You are fond of asking questions,' remarked the old woman drily. 'He went for two good reasons, his lease was up, and his family was a big one. Nine children he had, from a girl of two-and--twenty down to a little lad of four years old. His wife and him thought it best to take 'em out to Australia, where there's room for all. They were glad to go, all but the eldest, Esther, and she nearly

broke her heart over it. But then she had to leave her sweetheart behind her. He's a young man on a dairy farm near here, and though he's to follow her out and marry her in twelve months, she did nothing but mourn, same as if she was leaving him altogether.'

'Ah, indeed!' said Horton, who could not readily enter into details about people whom he did not know. 'So this is the sitting-room; it's large and airy, and has as much furniture in it as a man needs by himself. Now show me the bedroom, if you please.'

'Follow me upstairs, sir,' and the old woman preceded him slowly up the oak staircase, and opened the door of the back room on the first floor.

'Then the bedroom that you let is not over the sitting-room?'

'No, the front room is mine, and the room next to it is my son's. He's out all day at his work, but he sleeps here, and mostly keeps me company of an evening. I'm alone here all day looking after the place, and if you take the rooms I shall cook for you and wait on you myself.'

Horton liked the look of the bedroom. It was large and airy, with little furniture in it beyond a bed and a chest of drawers. But it was delicately clean, and silent as the grave. How a tired man might sleep here! The walls were decorated with old prints in black frames of the 'Rake's Progress' and 'Marriage à la Mode', and above the high carved mantelpiece hung an engraving of the famous portrait of Charles the First, on a prancing brown horse.

'Those things were on the walls when the Maitlands took the place, and they had to leave 'em where they found 'em,' said the old woman. 'And they found that sword too,' she added, pointing to a rusty cutlass that hung from a nail by the head of the bed; 'but I think they'd have done no great harm if they'd sold it for old iron.'

Horton took down the weapon and examined it. It was an ordinary cutlass, such as was worn by the marines in George the Third's reign, not old enough to be of antiquarian interest, nor of sufficient beauty of workmanship to make it of artistic value. He replaced it, and stepped to the windows and looked into the garden below. It was bounded by a high wall enclosing a row of poplars, and beyond lay the open country, visible for miles in the clear air, a sight to rest and fascinate the eye of a Londoner.

Horton made his bargain with the old woman whom the landlord had put into the house as caretaker, pending his decision about the disposition of the property. She was allowed to take a lodger for her own profit, and as soon as Mrs Belt found that the stranger agreed to her terms, she assured him that everything should be comfortably arranged for his reception by the following Wednesday.

HORTON ARRIVED at Maitland's Farm on the evening of the appointed day. A stormy autumnal sunset was casting an angry glow on the windows of the house, the rising wind filled the air with mournful sounds, and the poplars swayed against a background of lurid sky.

Mrs Belt was expecting her lodger, and promptly opened the door, candle in hand, when she heard the wheels stopping at the gate. The driver of the fly carried Horton's portmanteau into the hall, was paid his fare, and drove away thinking the darkening lanes more cheerful than the glimpse he had had of the inside of Maitland's Farm.

Horton was thoroughly pleased with his country quarters. The intense quiet of the almost empty house, that might have made another man melancholy, soothed and rested him. In the day time he wandered about the country, or amused himself in the garden and orchard, and he spent the long evenings alone, reading and smoking in his sitting-room. Mrs Belt brought in supper at nine o'clock, and usually stayed to have a chat with her lodger, and many a long story she related of her neighbours, and the Maitland family, while she waited upon him at his evening meal.

On several occasions she told him that Esther Maitland's sweetheart, Michael Winn, had come to talk with her about the Maitlands, or to bring her a newspaper containing tidings that their ship had reached some point on its long voyage in safety.

'You see the *Petrel* is a sailing vessel, sir, and there's no saying how long she'll take getting to Australia. The last news Michael had, she'd got as far as some islands with an outlandish name, and he's had a letter from Esther posted at a place called Madeira. And now he gives himself no peace till he can hear that the ship's safe as far as--somewhere, I think he said, in Africa.'

'It would be the Cape, Mrs Belt.'

'That's the name, sir, the Cape, and he werrits all the time for fear of storms and shipwrecks.

But I tell him the world's a wide place, and the sea wider than all, and very likely when the chimney pots is flying about our heads in a gale here, the *Petrel*'s lying becalmed somewhere.

And then he takes up my thought and turns it against me. "Yes," he says, "and when it's a dead calm here on shore, the ship may be sinking in a storm, and my Esther being drowned."'

'Michael Winn must be a very nervous young man.'

'That's where it is, sir, and I tell him when he follows the Maitlands it's a good job that he leaves no one behind him that'll werrit after him, the same as he's werrited after Esther.'

It was the middle of October, and Horton had been a month at the farm. The weather was now cold and wet, and he began to think it was time he returned

to his snug London home, for the autumn rain made everything at Maitland's Farm damp and mouldy. It had blown half a gale all day, and the rain had fallen in torrents, keeping him a prisoner indoors. But he occupied himself in writing letters, and reading some legal documents his clerk had brought out to him, and the time passed rapidly. Indeed the evening flew by so quickly he had no idea it was nine o'clock, when Mrs Belt entered the room to lay the cloth for supper.

'It's stopped raining now, sir,' she said, as she poked the fire into a cheerful blaze, 'and a good job too, for Michael Winn brings me word the Wandle's risen fearful since morning, and it's out in places more than it's been for years. But there's a full moon tonight, so no one need walk into the water unless they've a mind to.'

Horton's head was too full of a knotty legal point to pay much heed to Mrs Belt, and the old woman, seeing that he was not in a mood for conversation, said nothing further. At half-past ten she brought her lodger some spirits and hot water, and his bedroom candle, and wished him good night. Horton sat reading for some time, and then made an entry in his diary concerning a day of which there was absolutely nothing to record, lighted his candle, and went upstairs. I am familiar with the precise order of each trifling circumstance. My friend has so often told me the events of that night, and never with the slightest addition or omission in the telling. It was his habit, the last thing at night, to draw up the blinds. He looked out of the window, and though the moon was at the full, the clouds had not yet dispersed, and her light was fitful and obscure. It was twenty minutes to twelve as he extinguished the candle by his bedside. Everything was propitious for rest. He was weary, and the house profoundly silent. The rain had stopped, the wind fallen to a sigh, and it seemed to him that as soon as his head pressed the pillow he sank into a dreamless slumber.

Shortly after two o'clock Horton awoke suddenly, passing instantaneously from deep sleep to the possession of every faculty in a heightened degree, and with an insupportable sense of fear weighing upon him like a thousand nightmares. He started up and looked around him. The perspiration poured from his brow, and his heart beat to suffocation. He was convinced that he had been waked by some strange and terrible noise, that had thrilled through the depths of sleep, and he dreaded the repetition of it inexpressibly. The room was flooded with moonlight streaming through the narrow windows, lying like sheets of molten silver on the floor, and the poplars in the garden cast tremulous shadows on the ceiling.

Then Horton heard through the silence of the house a sound that was not the moan of the wind, nor the rustling of trees, nor any sound he had heard before. Clear and distinct, as though it were in the room with him, he heard a voice of weeping and lamentation, with more than human sorrow in the cry, so that it seemed to him as though he listened to the mourning of a lost soul.

He leaped up, struck a match, and lighted the candle, and seizing the cutlass that hung by the bed, unlocked the door, and opened it to listen.

So far as all ordinary sounds were concerned, the house was silent as death, and the moonlight streamed through the staircase window in a flood of pale light. But the unearthly sound of weeping, thrilling through heart and soul, came from the hall below, and Horton walked downstairs to the landing at the top of the first flight. There, on the lowest step, a woman was seated with bowed head, her face hidden in her hands, rocking to and fro in extremity of grief.

The moonlight fell full on her, and he saw that she was only partly clothed, and her dark hair lay in confusion on her bare shoulders.

'Who are you, and what is the matter with you?' said Horton, and his trembling voice echoed in the silent house. But she neither stirred nor spoke, nor abated her weeping. Slowly he descended the moon-lit staircase till there were but four steps between him and the woman. A mortal fear was growing upon him.

'Speak! if you are a living being!' he cried. The figure rose to its full height, turned and faced him for a moment that seemed an eternity, and rushed full on the point of the cutlass Horton involuntarily presented. As the impalpable form glided up the blade of the weapon, a cold wave seemed to break over him, and he fell in a dead faint on the stairs.

How long he remained insensible he could not tell. When he came to himself and opened his eyes, the moon had set, and he groped his way in darkness to his room, where the candle had burnt itself out.

When Horton came down to breakfast, he looked as though he had been ill for a month, and his hands trembled like a drunkard's. At any other time Mrs Belt would have been struck by his appearance, but this morning she was too much excited by some bad news she had heard, to notice whether her lodger was looking well or ill. Horton asked her how she had slept, for if she had not heard the terrible sounds that waked him, it still seemed impossible she should not have heard his heavy fall on the stairs. Mrs Belt replied, with some astonishment at her lodger's concern for her welfare, that she had never had a better night, it was so quiet after the wind fell.

'But did your son think the house was quiet, did he sleep too?' asked Horton with feverish eagerness.

Mrs Belt was yearning to impart her bad news to her lodger, and remarking that she had something else to do than ask folks how they slept o' nights, she said a neighbour had just told her that Michael Winn had fallen into the Wandle during the night--no one knew how--and was drowned, and they were carrying his body home then.

'What a terrible blow for his sweetheart,' said Horton, greatly shocked.

'Aye! there's a pretty piece of news to send her, when she's expecting to see poor Michael himself soon.'

'Mrs Belt, have you any portrait of Esther Maitland you could show me? I've heard the girl's name so often I'm curious to know what she is like.' And the old woman retired to hunt among her treasures for a small photograph on glass, that Esther had given her before she went away.

Presently Mrs Belt returned, polishing the picture with her apron.

'It's but a poor affair, sir, taken in a caravan on the Common, yet it's like the girl, it's very like.'

It was a miserable production, a cheap and early effort in photography, and Horton rose from the table with the picture in his hand to examine it at the window. And there, surrounded by the thin brass frame, he recognised the face of all faces that had dismayed him, the face he beheld in the vision of the preceding night. He suppressed a groan, and turned from the window with a face so white, that, as he handed the picture back to Mrs Belt, she said, 'You're not feeling well this morning, sir.'

'No, I'm feeling very ill. I must get back to town today to be near to my own doctor. You shall be no loser by my leaving you so suddenly, but if I am going to be ill, I am best in my own home.' For Horton could not have stayed another night at Maitland's Farm to save his life.

He was at his office in Bedford Row by noon, and his clerks thought that he looked ten years older for his visit to the country.

A little more than three weeks after Horton returned to town, when his nerves were beginning to recover their accustomed tone, his attention was unexpectedly recalled to the abhorrent subject of the apparition he had seen. He read in his daily paper that the mail from the Cape had brought news of the wreck of the sailing vessel *Petrel* bound for Australia, with loss of all on board, in a violent storm off the coast, shortly before the steamer left for England. By a careful comparison of dates, allowing for the variation of time, the conviction was forced upon John Horton that the ill-fated ship foundered at the very hour in which he beheld the wraith of Esther Maitland. She and her lover, divided by thousands of miles, both perished by drowning at the same time---Michael Winn in the little river at home, and Esther Maitland in the depths of a distant ocean.

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10: Rolling Stone

William le Queux

1864-1927

Week (Brisbane), 9 Feb 1906

SOME MONTHS AGO I returned to London after an absence of several years on the continent. Dear old dirty London is ever the Englishman's goal, however far and. wide he may roam or however much of a thorough-going cosmopolitan, he may become. Paris may be the candle to the moth, Petersburg may glitter and attract, and Vienna echo with the laughter of bright-eyed women and bravely uniformed men; but upon him who is doomed by force of circumstances to travel hither and thither over the face of Europe, the charm of change soon palls, and the clatter of the *table d'hôte*, with its habitual chitchat, nauseates.

One night I bad been smoking with Vernon, a friend of old Winchester days who had already made his mark at the Chancery bar, and leaving him at eleven o'clock strolled from Fig Tree Court up Chancery Lane towards the First Avenue Hotel, where I was staying prior to fixing upon a house in the country. With a couple of other old friends whom I had not seen for several years, we had dined at a restaurant, and returning to the Temple had spent a very pleasant evening among old reminiscences. And as I walked along Chancery lane my reflections took entire possession of me. I had only been back a week in the old grimy haunts I loved so well, yet so quickly had I fallen into the groove that it really seemed as though I had never left London at all. My erratic wanderings were just like some half-remembered dream.

It began to rain fast, and as I had no desire to spoil my new silk hat— a. conventional article of dress which I hate, at all times— I hurried forward, and was about to cross Holborn to my hotel, when, of a sudden, a deep cheery voice cried in a strong German accent, but in very fair English:

"Why, only fancy! My dear Lewis! You are— in London!"

Turning quickly, I confronted a big, burly, thick-set man whom I had first met in the Hotel de l'Europe, in Madrid, a German named Carl Schultz, with whom I had, during my stay in the Spanish capital, and afterwards through a winter at Biarritz, been on very friendly terms.

"My dear Carl!" I cried. "How fortunate this meeting. I thought you never came to London?"

"Ah! seldom," he sighed, almost as though the metropolis were full of painful memories.

"Well," I said, "we won't stay here in the rain. I'm staying there, across the road. Come over to the hotel with me."

For a moment he hesitated to accept my invitation, declaring that he had an appointment in Edgware road, but after a little persuasion he crossed the road with me, and we were soon seated together in the smoking-room.

"Well," I asked when the waiter had served us with drinks, "and how has the world been wagging with you? Why, it must be fully three years ago since we last met— at Pau, wasn't it?"

"Yes, just three years. We played whist at the English Club on my last night there, don't you recollect? But I've been travelling a lot since then, mostly in South America. I never remain very long together in any place— that you know. You used to call me the rolling stone," and he smiled,' rather grimly, I thought.

"Yes. You are a rolling stone like myself, Carl," I remarked. "What on earth have you been doing in South America? You always preferred Spain or Southern France, I thought."

"I prefer places where I'm unknown," he declared.

That was-the truth. About him there! had always been a distinct air of mystery. He hated society; at hotels he seldom mixed with the guests, was generally silent at *table d'hôte*, and hazarded but few remarks in the smoking-room. Indeed to all others save myself; he was what is commonly known as a reserved man. Yet to me he was merry, easy-going, even something of a Bohemian in his carelessness. Sometimes it had struck me that he might be a criminal who had escaped justice; but his open face was not that of a thief, and his manner was extremely refined. He was a gentleman in every sense of the word.

But as he sat with me under the bright electric light I noticed that he was not quite so well groomed as formerly, and that his coat was slightly frayed, a fact which puzzled me, for he had always been in possession of ample funds, and lived invariably in the most expensive hotels.

After we had been chatting for some time, he suddenly looked me full In the face, saying:

"I wonder whether you would do me a service?"

"I will, if it is in my power," I replied, promptly. "What is it you require?"

"I'm going out now to keep an appointment, and I want you to accompany me and act as witness, if you will."

There was a strange earnest look in his blue eyes, and I saw that something was sorely troubling him, I had seen a similar expression in his countenance when he had played bacarrat at San Sebastian and lost heavily.

"Witness of what?" I asked.

"Witness of our meeting," he replied, vaguely. "Will you come, or does it inconvenience you too much?"

"Why, of course I'll come, my dear fellow," I responded. "My duties won't be very, arduous, I suppose?"

"No," he assured me with a light laugh, by which I knew he was well pleased with my decision.

We drained our glasses, went outside and, entering a hansom, were driven westward. The rain was now pouring down, making it the height of inconvenience and discomfort for the theatre crowds homeward bound, and as we drove along with the window down my friend turned to me and said:

"Promise me one thing Lewis— that you'll express no surprise as to what you may witness or whom you may meet tonight."

The adventure was growing interesting, and his words aroused my curiosity.

"Do you anticipate anything extraordinary?" I asked.

"Well, no," he replied, not without some hesitation. "But sometimes the unexpected happens; therefore it is best to be forewarned."

THROUGH the splashing mud we turned from the Marble Arch into Edgware road, and thence down Cambridge street until we reached one of the many quiet, genteel squares which abound in that neighbourhood.

The house before which we alighted was a large one with a big portico and deep area, of a character similar, to hundreds of other West End houses. Over the fanlight a gas jet was burning in a crimson globe. A grey-haired manservant opened the door, and, bowing deeply when he recognized my friend, led us into a pretty drawing-room at the rear of the house. It was upholstered in pale blue silk, and bore traces of luxury everywhere. We had scarcely seated a moment when the door was suddenly flung open, and with a loud cry of welcome a woman dashed in and fell upon my friend's neck, shedding tears of joy.

I must confess to feeling myself a little *de trop* in such circumstances, for I had no idea Schultz had ever had any little love affairs. To me he had always appeared utterly indifferent to the charms of the fair sex. Indeed, I had known him to make scathing criticisms upon the scraggy necks and imitation youth as seen in the hotels.

"My Annetta!" he murmured, stroking her wealth of brown hair, tenderly.- "My poor Annetta! Yes, I am here at last at last!"

"But it is too cruel. You must leave me again to-night. I had hoped you would remain here and rest for one single day, or perhaps a week," she said in German, sighing sadly.

"Ah! That, you know, is impossible— utterly impossible. I am not master of my own destiny."

Then, turning to me, he said:

"Lewis, let me introduce you to my wife, Annette; the best and most devoted wife ever man had."

She turned, and, uttering some words in German, bowed, and tried to smile through her tears. She was, I saw, an exceedingly pretty woman, not more than

thirty, with great dark eyes which bore a sad expression, a countenance perfect in contour, and a sweet well-formed mouth with pouting lips. She was dressed beautifully in a décolleté dress of cream, and in the coils of her hair there glittered a fine star of diamonds, while upon the bodice of her dress there was a single touch of colour— a broad, crimson ribbon edged with white.

"I'm delighted to make Madame's acquaintance," I exclaimed in English. "We are old friends and fellow travellers— your husband and I."

"Ah! yes," she answered, also in English. "Carl has written of you, and told me of your long companionship in Biarritz."

"Madame lives here, in London, always?" I inquired, surprised Schultz should never have mentioned her.

"Not always," she laughed, for the first time brightening. "Sometimes I travel, too."

"I must explain," my friend said. "There are circumstances which unfortunately prevent us from living together."

"Yes, unfortunately for both of us," added Madame Schultz, sadly. "My life, is, alas, very dull now that we are always separated."

Her husband, who still had his hand at her waist, drew her to him, and impressed a soft kiss upon her brow. The scene between the pair was very affecting, and I really felt in the way. Why, I wondered, had he brought me there to be witness of that meeting

Of a sudden the door was reopened, and there ran in a pretty, fair-haired boy of about six, dressed in a suit of dark green velvet. When he saw mc, be halted and drew back, but on recognizing Schultz he rushed towards him, and buried his face in my friend's trouser-leg.

"My little Carl!" he cried, bending to him and kissing him tenderly. "You expected me, didn't you? And oh! what a man you are growing."

"Mother said she thought you were never coming to see us again," the boy said. "We went to Paris to find you, but couldn't. Mother cried the whole night through, and then we came home again."

"Ah, it was not my fault, darling— not I my fault," Schultz said, bending and kissing him fondly. "I was compelled to leave Paris the very morning you arrived, and to travel oh!.. so far— across the ocean."

I had always suspected in my friend's life a hidden chapter; but had no suspicion of the real state of affairs. It seemed to me as though he were a criminal forever eluding the vigilance of the police, a suspicion which was strengthened by a remark he let drop a few minutes later.

The family reunion was a touching one. Many were the questions Schultz asked his wife, and many the questions she asked of him regarding his life-during their long enforced separation. He had been absent more than two years, and when I expressed surprise at it he said, in a tone of bitter regret:

"Ah, my dear Lewis. Few married couples have had a stranger or more adventurous life than we have. We married in secret eight years ago, at the registry office in the BIackfriars road. For five weeks we were the happiest pair in all the world, until— well, until I discovered that those whom I ought to evade were close upon me. arid then I was compelled to set out again and travel. Since that day, my dear wife and I have met but seldom. In eight weary years we have only lived together in the aggregate six months. Virtually I have been a widower and she a widow, and my son, poor little Carl, has been fatherless."

"But why?" I asked. "Surely Madame might have followed you to the continent, and have lived at another hotel under an assumed name, if you did not wish it known that you had married?"

"That was impossible," he said, shaking his head.. "Annetta is too well known on the continent. Here, in London, her identity is concealed. Your London is the safest place in all the world in which to hide."

"Is hiding necessary?" I asked, my interest increasing.

"It is imperative." he responded with a sigh. Then he added, in a hard voice: "You will know the reason, Lewis, someday. But for the present you will at least be able to bear testimony that you have me in the bosom of my family."

The latter words had a ring of bitterness in them.

The bright-coloured ribbon at his wife's breast attracted me. If she had placed it there to give the necessary touch of colour to the dead cream of her dress, she surely could not have displayed a more exquisite taste. As I stood locking at her, I could not help remarking what a lovely woman she was. What, I wondered, could be the mystery which held them apart? To me there was only one solution of the problem— my friend Schultz was wanted by the police.

There came a light tap at the door, and the man who had admitted me entered, with a card, which he handed to his mistress.

"It's she at last!" she exclaimed.

Then, to the man, Madame Schultz said:"Show the lady in here."

A few moments later, a short, wizen-faced old lady, attired in a style long out of date, was ushered in, and greeted effusively by both my host and hostess. She was French, and was introduced to me as Madame Delaine. '

"Ah, m'sieur!" she exclaimed, addressing me in her own tongue in a thin, squeaky voice. "What weather! I came from Paris to-day, and we were nearly three hours late in London. I never had such a rough passage— never!"

She allowed Schultz's wife to relieve her of her faded fur-lined cloak, which bore evident traces of moth, and then seated herself in a chair near a small table.

Little Carl, after receiving an approving pat upon the head from the old lady, was sent upstairs on some pretext, and then, when we were alone, Madame glanced inquiringly at Schultz and then at his wife.

"Oh, you may speak perfectly freely, Madame," he laughed. "Monsieur Lewis is one of my most intimate friends, and I have asked him to be present at this interview."

"To act as witness," added his wife.

"*Tres bien* !" squeaked the old lady. "Then it shall be so. Well," she said, fumbling at the bodice of her faded alpaca dress, "I have, brought you the sum, as usual." And after some difficulty she produced from beneath her corsets a bulging envelope, from which she drew a formidable packet of French bank notes. Having taken off the elastic band, she placed them upon the table, remarking: "This time it is not quite so much— only sixty-eight thousand three hundred francs."

Schultz counted the notes quickly with the air of a man whose habit was to deal with large sums. Then he handed them to me, asking how much I made of them.

I counted, and found the sum she had named, whereupon; the old woman handed him over a receipt, which he signed, and to which I added my name as witness.

"And now, Madame; tell me the position of affairs," Schultz asked earnestly when she had safely deposited' the receipt within her corsets and re-buttoned her bodice.

"Unsafe," she answered. "They are still searching for you everywhere. The police of every capital in Europe are still active. I had to exercise all sorts of ruses to avoid any chance of being followed here."

"I thought that in time I should be forgotten," my friend remarked with a sigh. "Yet it seems that I'm doomed to be hunted till the end of my days."

"It is cruel!" declared his wife, with tears in her eyes. "Poor Carl is homeless, and compelled to travel constantly, while I live here, always in suspense— always fearing the worst."

"Ah no, my dear!" exclaimed the old woman, tenderly. "You must bear up. still. Patience— patience. That is the only way in which to baffle them. Remember that you have always a friend in old Madame Delaine."

"You have always been our best friend," declared the unhappy wife. "Without you, we might have starved long ago."

The old Frenchwoman smiled, displaying an uneven row of yellow stumps.

"No, no," she protested. "I want no thanks. It is only the repayment of the old debt of long ago."

The pair pressed her to stay to supper, but she steadfastly declined. She must return to her hotel, she said, for she was compelled to return to Paris by the nine o'clock-train next morning. There were reasons for her return— strong reasons. It was unnecessary for her to refer further to them. They would well

understand. So after a quarter of an hour she took her leave of us, and we heard the wheels of her cab recede into the night.

At Schultz's invitation I remained to supper, and a delightful meal it was; cold game washed down with a choice vintage. Little Carl had been sent to bed with a paternal kiss upon his brow and half a sovereign in his hand to buy a new toy; therefore we were alone. When the meal was almost over, Schultz who sat opposite me, said:

"This is a strange function at which you are assisting, Lewis— stranger than you imagine."

In an instant his wife burst into a torrent of tears, and rising from his seat he bent and kissed her, stroking her hair and urging her to be brave for his sake.

"You know; Annetta, that you are my sole thought. I live only for you. If it were not for you," he said; "I should have allowed my anger to get the better of me long ago— and then— well, the result would be too terrible for us to contemplate."

"Ah, no; don't speak like that, Carl!" she urged, suddenly drying her tears. "You won't act rashly— promise me, dear." And she laid her soft jewelled hand upon his shabby sleeve. "Remember. we both have enemies— bitter ones."

"I have not acted indiscreetly up to the present, although I have had good cause," he answered. "I think you may rely upon me controlling my temper now."

His reply seemed to reassure her, and when he had reseated himself at that well-arranged table with its profusion of hot-house flowers and Georgian silver, husband and wife toasted each other, although in their words there was a tinge of bitterness that was exceedingly puzzling.

The clock out in the hall chimed two upon its silver bells, and Schultz rose, declaring that it was time we depart. He had ordered a cab; he said, and it was at the door. Then again his wife burst into tears, and, flinging her arms wildly around his neck, clung to him, kissing him fondly again and again.

Not caring to witness the parting between the strange pair, I bade her adieu, and crossing to the drawing-room awaited him there. Truly, my night's adventure was a curious one. I must nave waited a full hour, for the leave-taking was a long and painful one. Schultz had remarked that it might be several years before he met his wife again. At last, however, he reappeared, much agitated, and hurried me out, saying in a hoarse voice, full of emotion—

"Let us be gone, Lewis. I can't remain here longer and see my poor wife's grief."

Together we went out in the rainy night, but the cab he had ordered was not awaiting for us; therefore we hurried across the square in the direction of the Edgware road, where he would probably find a conveyance upon the stand. We had not gone far before we saw in front of us the dark figure of a man idling

upon the kerb close to one of the street lamps, and as we passed the fellow turned and eyed us suspiciously.

Schultz started quickly as his eyes met those of the stranger, and an imprecation involuntarily escaped his lips.

The man, who wore a low felt hat, and had the collar of his overcoat turned up against the weather, was a sallow-faced fellow with a pointed black moustache. He glanced at me, and I thought he frowned.

"You know that man?" I suggested, after we had passed.

"Know him!" my friend echoed bitterly. "Yes, I know him, far too well." Then he added from between his teeth, "That man is the cause of my unhappiness in life, and now he has discovered my secret, and the secret of Annetta's whereabouts. He has, no doubt, been watching us to-night, and he means mischief. But, by heaven! I'll be quits with him! He shall not injure her!"

His hands clenched, and I saw that he was driven to desperation.

We found a cab, and he made me descend at his hotel, the Cosmopolitan, in the Strand. The bar there was open all night, and he had something yet to tell. So he ordered a stiff brandy for himself, and a whisky and soda for me, and then we sat down in one of the distant nooks. For some time he remained silent, his grave eyes fixed upon me, as though he hesitated whether to confide in me. At last he bent towards me, and in a low voice said:

"We've known each other a long time, now, Lewis, and l am wondering if you would he willing to do me a favour in case— well, in case I died?"

"You don't anticipate death, do you?" I asked, surprised.

"Well," he smiled, "no one anticipates it, yet it must come sooner or later. But will you do me the favour? You are the only friend I have whom I could trust."

"If it be within, my power I shall be most happy to carry out any wish you may express. Do you desire me to be your executor?"

"No. The task is much easier," he answered. Then, bending down towards me confidentially, he added, "It is only in the event of my death, to first obtain an official certificate of my decease and take it, together with a sealed packet of papers, which I shall give you, to an address in Vienna. It will be necessary to present them, and to make a statement of what occurred to-night. They will probably require it on oath."

"Well." I laughed, "although surprised at his earnestness, "of course I'll carry out your instructions if you give me the address. Only I hope you'll be spared a good many years."

He sighed. His brows knit, and he moved uneasily.

"Yes," he murmured, "I hope so, too. But one never knows. Come me up to my room and I'll give the packet into your care. Remember never allow it to leave your hands. If you go travelling, leave it with your bankers. When I die,

wherever that may be, you will receive first notice of it at your club. I have the address that you gave me when we first met."

I went up in the lift with him, and in his room he unlocked a heavy steel despatch-box and took, out a big, linen-lined, envelope sealed with three black seals hearing a noble coat of arms. Upon the envelope he had written the name "Herr Wilhelm Scherb," with the address in Vienna.

"This," he said as he placed it in my hand, "I intrust to you because I know you are my friend. You will carry out my instructions to the letter. Promise me."

"I promise," I said, grasping his white hand as pledge. "What I have witnessed to-night shows me that you are a hunted man, and you have all my sympathies."

He thanked me, and then we descended the stairs to the hall, where, after some further conversation, I wished him goodnight. promising to call again at three o'clock next afternoon. He shook his head, saying that possibly he might leave the hotel, and hoped that I would not be disappointed if I called and found him gone. Then I took a cab back to the First avenue, full of grave reflections, Schultz was a complete mystery.

NEXT DAY, when at 3 o'clock I called at the Cosmopolitan and asked for my friend, the reception clerk eyed me curiously, and invited me to step into the manager's room a moment.

"Is Mr. Schultz a friend of yours?" inquired the director, "a little, baldheaded foreigner.

"He is."

"Then I much regret to tell you, sir, that he was found in his room at noon to-day, dead."

"Dead!" I gasped.

"Yes," the man said. "There has been a tragedy. In the room with him was a friend who had called, and been shown up an hour before— a tall, dark gentleman."

They had evidently quarrelled, for both were lying dead; the visitor shot through the heart, and Mr. Schultz through the head. The police believe it to be a case of murder and suicide on the part of your friend."

The announcement staggered me; but judge of my surprise when a detective took me to the room and I there recognised Schultz's visitor to be the sallow-faced lurker of the previous night. My friend had paid the mysterious debt, and closed the mouth of the spy for ever.

To the police I gave no information regarding the packet in my keeping, merely making a statement that I had been in his company on the previous evening. The despatch-box stood open, and the theory was that the stranger had tried to snatch something while Schultz had been searching in the box. I was

present when the police went through the contents; but we found nothing of any particular node save two photographs of the dead stranger, one of which I induced the police to lend me, promising to assist them in establishing the man's identity.

I waited until the coroner's verdict had been given, then I obtained a copy of the death certificate at the office of the registrar of the Strand district, and one night started front Charing Cross for Vienna to carry out my promise.

Schultz had evidently anticipated a visit from his enemy, but the reason of the tragedy was a complete mystery. Once I had contemplated calling on my dead friend's widow to break the news to her, but only then it occurred to me that I did not know her address, and had not the slightest idea in which of the many squares the house was situated, or under what name she lived— evidently not Schultz.

So I rocked and rolled in the sleeping car between Ostend and Vienna, but nothing that I dreamed was half so extraordinary as the facts I learned in the Austrian capital. Herr Scherb proved to be one of the chief advocates, and when I handed him the letter in his office, and he recognised the seals, he started, looked across at me suspiciously, and his face blanched.

He opened the envelope with trembling fingers, drew forth several documents, and eagerly read a letter which was inclosed. I saw that what was written there held him absolutely breathless in surprise.

"I have this to deliver to you also," I said, handing him the certificate of death.

He glanced at it, and cried in dismay. "Then he is dead—actually dead!"

"Yes, my poor friend as unfortunately no more. He charged me, before his death, to give the envelope into your keeping"

The lawyer was silent for a long tame, glancing over the documents. Then he asked me if I would mind calling again upon him at four o'clock, and, further, he made a most curious request, that I would wear black or dark clothes.

I agreed, and punctually at four I presented myself again at his office tin a dark grey suit that was almost black. He welcomed me, glanced at his watch, and informed me that his carriage was awaiting us.

"The reason why I asked you to come in black is because, the court is in mourning for the lamented Empress. We are going to the palace to have audience with the Emperor."

"With the Emperor!"

"Yes— he wishes to question you," the lawyer responded, as we entered the conveyance together. "It is a serious matter— very serious. His Majesty wishes to hear the-statement from your own lips."

The affair was growing more extraordinary every moment, but to all my inquiries Herr Scherb remained dumb.

At last we drove into the courtyard of the palace, alighted, passed the sentries and detectives, and being met by one of the Imperial footmen in brilliant blue aud gold livery, were ushered up a broad flight of steps along many echoing corridors of marble until we were shown into a room, before the door of which stood a sentry; who drew up at attention as we entered. It was very plainly furnished, with several maps and plans upon the walls, a huge writing table littered with correspondence, and two or three hard chairs— the workroom of a busy monarch.

Scarcely had we seated ourselves when the door opened, and a servant announced in a loud voice:

"His Majesty, the Emperor!"

The sentry's rifle clanged outside, and we sprang to our feet and bowed in the royal presence.

The Emperor, who was in uniform, having just held a reception of the diplomatic body, sank, into his chair, and then motioning us to be seated, turned, to the lawyer and said:

"So this is the Englishman, Mr. Lewis?"

"He is, your Majesty."

Then the Emperor, turning to me, said:

"First, I have to thank you, sir, for undertaking the mission intrusted to you by— by the dead man." He spoke unevenly, as though unnerved. "Now, will you please tell me the whole circumstances of your acquaintance with him, and the manner in which he died. Tell me everything. I am in no hurry."

I recollected my friend's injunction to tell all I knew; therefore, I described our intimacy from its very beginning, told him of our meeting in London, the strange events at his wife's house, the subsequent encounter at the corner of the square, and the tragic denouement.

"I have a photograph of the man. who was his enemy," I added, drawing the portrait from my pocket.

The Emperor started up and almost snatched it from my hand in his anxiety.

He glanced at it, and, recognizing the face, hurled it angrily upon the floor without a word.

"And his wife— what, did he call her? Annetta— would you recognise her if you saw her picture?" asked his Majesty, after a brief silence.

I responded in the affirmative, whereupon the Emperor led me to a magnificent room, further down the corridor, where I saw hanging upon the wall a full-length portrait in oils of the woman who had been my hostess in the London square. The red and white ribbon was shown across her bodice, and I now saw that it was the ribbon of some Imperial order.

"It is the lady," I said. "Without a doubt."

Again the Emperor was silent, until of a sudden he turned to me again and repeated his thanks, adding:—

"You expressed to me regret that you do no know the address of the princess, Leave that matter to me. I shall discover it through my embassy in London, and she will return home here again. All I would ask you, Mr. Lewis, is that you will regard this matter as entirely confidential. Scherb will explain to you -the identity of the man who was your friend, for no doubt this interview must be puzzling to you. Only I would beg of you to let it remain a secret from your London police."

"I will obey your Majesty's desire in every particular," I answered."

After which he bowed as a signal that my audience was at an end;

While I sat beside Scherb on our drive back to his office, he explained to me that the man whom I had known as Schultz was none other than the long missing Archduke Johann of Austria, nephew of the Emperor, and heir to the Austrian throne. The disappearance, he told me, was the strangest story in the strange annals of the Austrian court.

All that was known about him was that, having quarrelled with Count von Praag, son of the Minister of Finance, and a man of very evil reputation, he had some brier words with the Emperor and left Vienna one night ten years before. He had never since been heard of, although repeated searches had been made by order of the Austrian Emperor and the Hungarian Government. Half the police in Europe and America had been employed, but unsuccessfully.

Two years after the Archduke's disappearance, the Princess Elizabeth— one of the most beautiful girls of the unhappy House of Hapsburg— married von Praag. but after a few months the count was forced to leave Vienna in disgrace, and the marriage was declared void. Then, a short time afterwards, a third sensation occurred, when it became known that the princess herself had disappeared, and from that moment until I had walked into the lawyer s office nothing had been heard of her.

The facts, however, were now beyond dispute. The archduke, whom, I had known as Schultz, had been deeply in love with the princess from early days, but found a rival in von Praag. The Emperor favoured the suit of the latter for political reasons, and would hear no word against the count's character. This enraged the archduke, who openly insulted von Praag and challenged him. Whereupon the Emperor forbade his nephew to fight, and the latter took himself off and disappeared into space. Eventually when the princess, forced by her parents to marry von Praag, at last got free of him, she joined the archduke in London, and they were secretly married. All the time, however, they feared the reappearance of their persecutor, von Praag, who had now fallen to be a common adventurer, and it was the sudden encounter at the corner of the

square which had caused the archduke to decide upon sacrificing himself to preserve his wife's peace and honour.

Madame Delaine, it appeared, was the archduke's old French governess, and used to draw the income left him by his father and convey it secretly to London every six months. It was in order that I should ho in a position to verify the truth that I had been called in as witness. Von Praag had, no doubt, followed us that night to the Cosmopolitan, and had next day called upon my friend. Then either an altercation had taken place or they had struggled for the possession of some document, when the archduke had shot him dead— it may have been in self-defence— and then committed suicide.

The widowed Princess Elizabeth has now returned to Vienna, and with little Carl has apartments in one of the Imperial palaces. She has written to me very often, and has asked me to call upon her next time I go to Austria.

Poor Schultz ! He was the best of good fellows. A trifle pessimistic, perhaps, but a veritable prince among men. I think of him always when I glance at the handsome photograph in its plain silver frame with the Imperial cipher in gold— a photograph the Emperor sent me of himself, with the words written in a bold hand across it:—

"To Charles Lewis— from Francis Joseph."

It is the only souvenir I have of my romantic friendship with Schultz, or, as I used to call him, the Rolling Stone.

———————

11: The Story of the Rippling Train

Mrs. Molesworth

Mary Louisa Molesworth, 1839-1921
Longman's Magazine, Oct 1887
Collected in: *Four Ghost Stories*, 1888

"LET'S TELL ghost stories, then," said Gladys.

"Aren't you tired of them? One hears nothing else nowadays. And they're all 'authentic,' really vouched for, only you never see the person who saw or heard or felt the ghost. It is always somebody's sister or cousin, or friend's friend," objected young Mrs. Snowdon, another of the guests at the Quarries.

"I don't know that that is quite a reasonable ground for discrediting them *en masse*," said her husband. "It is natural enough, indeed inevitable, that the principal or principals in such cases should be much more rarely come across than the stories themselves. A hundred people can repeat the story, but the author, or rather hero, of it, can't be in a hundred places at once. You don't disbelieve in any other statement or narrative merely because you have never seen the prime mover in it?"

"But I didn't say I discredited them on that account," said Mrs. Snowdon. "You take one up so, Archie. I'm not logical and reasonable; I don't pretend to be. If I meant anything, it was that a ghost story would have a great pull over other ghost stories if one could see the person it happened to. One does get rather provoked at *never* coming across him or her," she added a little petulantly.

She was tired; they were all rather tired, for it was the first evening since the party had assembled at the large country house known as "the Quarries" on which there was not to be dancing, with the additional fatigue of "ten miles there and ten back again"; and three or four evenings of such doings without intermission tell even on the young and vigorous.

To-night various less energetic ways of passing the evening had been proposed,— music, games, reading aloud, recitation,— none had found favour in everybody's sight, and now Gladys Lloyd's proposal that they should "tell ghost stories" seemed likely to fall flat also.

For a moment or two no one answered Mrs. Snowdon's last remarks. Then, somewhat to everybody's surprise, the young daughter of the house turned to her mother.

"Mamma," she said, "don't be vexed with me— I know you warned me once to be careful how I spoke of it; but *wouldn't* it be nice if Uncle Paul would tell us his ghost story? And then, Mrs. Snowdon," she went on, "you could always say you had heard *one* ghost story at or from— which should I say?— headquarters."

Lady Denholme glanced round half nervously before she replied.

"Locally speaking, it would not be *at* headquarters, Nina," she said. "The Quarries was not the scene of your uncle's ghost story. But I almost think it is better not to speak about it— I am not sure that he would like it mentioned, and he will be coming in a moment. He had only a note to write."

"I do wish he would tell it to us," said Nina regretfully. "Don't you think, mamma, I might just run to the study and ask him, and if he did not like the idea he might say so to me, and no one would seem to know anything about it? Uncle Paul is so kind— I'm never afraid of asking him any favour."

"Thank you, Nina, for your good opinion of me; you see there is no rule without exceptions; listeners do sometimes hear pleasant things of themselves," said Mr. Marischal, as he at that moment came round the screen which half concealed the doorway. "What is the special favour you were thinking of asking me?"

Nina looked rather taken aback.

"How softly you opened the door, Uncle Paul," she said. "I would not have spoken of you if I had known you were there."

"But after all you were saying no harm," observed her brother Michael. "And for my part I don't believe Uncle Paul would mind our asking him what we were speaking of."

"What was it?" asked Mr. Marischal. "I think, as I have heard so much, you may as well tell me the whole."

"It was only—" began Nina, but her mother interrupted her.

"I have told Nina not to speak of it, Paul," she said anxiously; "but— it was only that all these young people are talking about ghost stories, and they want you to tell them your own strange experience. You must not be vexed with them."

"Vexed!" said Mr. Marischal, "not in the least." But for a moment or two he said no more, and even pretty, spoilt Mrs. Snowdon looked a little uneasy.

"You shouldn't have persisted, Nina," she whispered.

Mr. Marischal must have had unusually quick ears. He looked up and smiled.

"I really don't mind telling you all there is to hear," he said. "At one time I had a sort of dislike to mentioning the story, for the sake of others. The details would have led to its being recognised— and it might have been painful. But there is no one now living to whom it would matter— you know," he added, turning to his sister; "her husband is dead too."

Lady Denholme shook her head.

"No," she said, "I did not hear."

"Yes," said her brother, "I saw his death in the papers last year. He had married again, I believe. There is not now, therefore, any reason why I should not tell the story, if it will interest you," he went on, turning to the others. "And

there is not very much to tell. Not worth making such a preamble about. It was— let me see— yes, it must be nearly fifteen years ago."

"Wait a moment, Uncle Paul," said Nina. "Yes, that's all right, Gladys. You and I will hold each other's hands, and pinch hard if we get very frightened."

"Thank you," Miss Lloyd replied. "On the whole I should prefer for you not to hold my hand."

"But I won't pinch you so as to hurt," said Nina reassuringly; "and it isn't as if we were in the dark."

"Shall I turn down the lamps?" asked Mr. Snowdon.

"No, no," exclaimed his wife.

"There really is nothing frightening— scarcely even 'creepy,' in my story at all," said Mr. Marischal, half apologetically. "You make me feel like an impostor."

"Oh no, Uncle Paul, don't say that. It is all my fault for interrupting," said Nina. "Now go on, please. I have Gladys's hand all the same," she added *sotto voce*, "it's just as well to be prepared."

"Well, then," began Mr. Marischal once more, "it must be nearly fifteen years ago; and I had not seen her for fully ten years before that again! I was not thinking of her in the least; in a sense I had really forgotten her: she had quite gone out of my life; that has always struck me as a very curious point in the story," he added parenthetically.

"Won't you tell us who 'she' was, Uncle Paul?" asked Nina half shyly.

"Oh yes, I was going to do so. I am not skilled in story-telling, you see. She was, at the time I first knew her— at the only time, indeed, that I knew her—a very sweet and attractive girl, named Maud Bertram. She was very pretty— more than pretty, for she had remarkably regular features— her profile was always admired, and a tall and graceful figure. And she was a bright and happy creature too; that, perhaps, was almost her greatest charm. You will wonder— I see the question hovering on your lips, Miss Lloyd, and on yours too, Mrs. Snowdon— why, if I admired her and liked her so much, I did not go further. And I will tell you frankly that I did not because I dared not. I had then no prospect of being able to marry for years to come, and I was not very young. I was already nearly thirty, and Maud was quite ten years younger. I was wise enough and old enough to realise the situation thoroughly, and to be on my guard."

"And Maud?" asked Mrs. Snowdon.

"She was surrounded by admirers; it seemed to me then that it would have been insufferable conceit to have even asked myself if it could matter to her. It was only in the light of after events that the possibility of my having been mistaken occurred to me. And I don't even now see that I could have acted otherwise—"

Here Uncle Paul sighed a little. "We were the best of friends. She knew that I admired her, and she seemed to take a frank pleasure in its being so. I had

always hoped that she really liked and trusted me as a friend, but no more. The last time I saw her was just before I started for Portugal, where I remained three years. When I returned to London Maud had been married for two years, and had gone straight out to India on her marriage, and except by some few friends who had known us both intimately, I seldom heard her mentioned. And time passed. I cannot say I had exactly forgotten her, but she was not much or often in my thoughts. I was a busy and much-absorbed man, and life had proved a serious matter to me. Now and then some passing resemblance would recall her to my mind— once especially when I had been asked to look in to see the young wife of one of my cousins in her court-dress; something in her figure and bearing brought back Maud to my memory, for it was thus, in full dress, that I had last seen her, and thus perhaps, unconsciously, her image had remained photographed on my brain. But as far as I can recollect at the time when the occurrence I am going to relate to you happened, I had not been thinking of Maud Bertram for months. I was in London just then, staying with my brother, my eldest brother, who had been married for several years, and lived in our own old town-house in —— Square. It was in April, a clear spring day, with no fog or half-lights about, and it was not yet four o'clock in the afternoon— not very ghost-like circumstances, you will admit. I had come home early from my club— it was a sort of holiday-time with me just then for a few weeks— intending to get some letters written which had been on my mind for some days, and I had sauntered into the library, a pleasant, fair-sized room lined with books, on the first-floor. Before setting to work I sat down for a moment or two in an easy-chair by the fire, for it was still cool enough weather to make a fire desirable, and began thinking over my letters. No thought, no shadow of a thought of my old friend Miss Bertram was present with me; of that I am perfectly certain. The door was on the same side of the room as the fireplace; as I sat there, half facing the fire, I also half faced the door. I had not shut it properly on coming in— I had only closed it without turning the handle— and I did not feel surprised when it slowly and noiselessly swung open, till it stood right out into the room, concealing the actual doorway from my view. You will perhaps understand the position better if you think of the door as just then acting like a screen to the doorway. From where I sat I could not have seen any one entering the room till he or she had got beyond the door itself. I glanced up, half expecting to see some one come in, but there was no one; the door had swung open of itself. For the moment I sat on, with only the vague thought passing through my mind, 'I must shut it before I begin to write.'

"But suddenly I found my eyes fixing themselves on the carpet; something had come within their range of vision, compelling their attention in a mechanical sort of way. What was it?

" 'Smoke,' was my first idea. 'Can there be anything on fire?' But I dismissed the notion almost as soon as it suggested itself. The something, faint and shadowy, that came slowly rippling itself in as it were beyond the dark wood of the open door, was yet too material for 'smoke.' My next idea was a curious one. 'It looks like soapy water,' I said to myself; 'can one of the housemaids have been scrubbing, and upset a pail on the stairs?' For the stair to the next floor almost faced the library door. But— no; I rubbed my eyes and looked again; the soapy water theory gave way. The wavy something that kept gliding, rippling in, gradually assumed a more substantial appearance. It was— yes, I suddenly became convinced of it— it was ripples of soft silken stuff, creeping in as if in some mysterious way unfolded or unrolled, not jerkily or irregularly, but glidingly and smoothly, like little wavelets on the sea-shore.

"And I sat there and gazed. 'Why did you not jump up and look behind the door to see what it was?' you may reasonably ask. That question I cannot answer. Why I sat still, as if bewitched, or under some irresistible influence, I cannot tell, but so it was.

"And it—came always rippling in, till at last it began to rise as it still came on, and I saw that a figure— a tall, graceful woman's figure— was slowly advancing, backwards of course, into the room, and that the waves of pale silk—a very delicate shade of pearly gray I think it must have been—were in fact the lower portion of a long court-train, the upper part of which hung in deep folds from the lady's waist. She moved in— I cannot describe the motion, it was not like ordinary walking or stepping backwards— till the whole of her figure and the clear profile of her face and head were distinctly visible, and when at last she stopped and stood there full in my view just, but only just beyond the door, I saw— it came upon me like a flash— that she was no stranger to me, this mysterious visitant! I recognised, unchanged it seemed to me since the day, ten years ago, when I had last seen her, the beautiful features of Maud Bertram."

Mr. Marischal stopped a moment. Nobody spoke. Then he went on again.

"I should not have said 'unchanged.' There was one great change in the sweet face. You remember my telling you that one of my girl-friend's greatest charms was her bright sunny happiness— she never seemed gloomy or depressed or dissatisfied, seldom even pensive. But in this respect the face I sat there gazing at was utterly unlike Maud Bertram's. Its expression, as she— or 'it'— stood there looking, not towards me, but out beyond, as if at some one or something outside the doorway, was of the profoundest sadness. Anything *so* sad I had never seen in a human face, and I trust I never may. But I sat on, as motionless almost as she, gazing at her fixedly, with no desire, no power perhaps, to move or approach more nearly to the phantom. I was not in the least frightened. I knew it *was* a phantom, but I felt paralysed, and as if I myself had somehow got outside of ordinary conditions. And there I sat— staring at

Maud, and there she stood, gazing before her with that terrible, unspeakable sadness in her face, which, even though I felt no *fear*, seemed to freeze me with a kind of unutterable pity.

"I don't know how long I had sat thus, or how long I might have continued to sit there, almost as if in a trance, when suddenly I heard the front-door bell ring. It seemed to awaken me. I started up and glanced round, half-expecting that I should find the vision dispelled. But no; she was still there, and I sank back into my seat just as I heard my brother coming quickly upstairs. He came towards the library, and seeing the door wide open walked in, and I, still gazing, saw his figure *pass through that of the woman in the doorway* as you may walk through a wreath of mist or smoke— only, don't misunderstand me, the figure of Maud till that moment had had nothing unsubstantial about it. She had looked to me, as she stood there, literally and exactly like a living woman— the shade of her dress, the colour of her hair, the few ornaments she wore, all were as defined and clear as yours, Nina, at the present moment, and remained so, or perhaps became so again as soon as my brother was well within the room. He came forward addressing me by name, but I answered him in a whisper, begging him to be silent and to sit down on the seat opposite me for a moment or two. He did so, though he was taken aback by my strange manner, for I still kept my eyes fixed on the door. I had a queer consciousness that if I looked away *it* would fade, and I wanted to keep cool and see what would happen. I asked Herbert in a low voice if *he* saw nothing, but though he mechanically followed the direction of my eyes, he shook his head in bewilderment. And for a moment or two he remained thus. Then I began to notice that the figure was growing less clear, as if it were receding, yet without growing smaller to the sight; it grew fainter and vaguer, the colours grew hazy. I rubbed my eyes once or twice with a half idea that my long watching was making them misty, but it was not so. My eyes were not at fault— slowly but surely Maud Bertram, or her ghost, melted away, till all trace of her had gone. I saw again the familiar pattern of the carpet where she had stood and the objects of the room that had been hidden by her draperies— all again in the most commonplace way, but she was gone, quite gone.

"Then Herbert, seeing me relax my intense gaze, began to question me. I told him exactly what I have told you. He answered, as every "common-sensible" person of course would, that it was strange, but that such things did happen sometimes and were classed by the wise under the head of 'optical delusions.' I was not well, perhaps, he suggested. Been over-working? Had I not better see a doctor? But I shook my head. I was quite well, and I said so. And perhaps he was right, it might be an optical delusion only. I had never had any experience of such things.

" 'All the same,' I said, 'I shall mark down the date.'

"Herbert laughed and said that was what people always did in such cases. If he knew where Mrs. —— then was he would write to her, just for the fun of the thing, and ask her to be so good as to look up her diary, if she kept one, and let us know what she had been doing on that particular day— 'the 6th of April, isn't it?' he said—when I would have it her wraith had paid me a visit. I let him talk. It seemed to remove the strange painful impression— painful because of that terrible sadness in the sweet face. But we neither of us knew where she was, we scarcely remembered her married name! And so there was nothing to be done—except, what I did at once in spite of Herbert's rallying, to mark down the day and hour with scrupulous exactness in *my* diary.

"Time passed. I had not forgotten my strange experience, but of course the impression of it lessened by degrees till it seemed more like a curious dream than anything more real, when one day I *did* hear of poor Maud again. 'Poor' Maud I cannot help calling her. I heard of her indirectly, and probably, but for the sadness of her story, I should never have heard it at all. It was a friend of her husband's family who had mentioned the circumstances in the hearing of a friend of mine, and one day something brought round the conversation to old times, and he startled me by suddenly inquiring if I remembered Maud Bertram. I said, of course I did. Did he know anything of her? And then he told me.

"She was dead— she had died some months ago after a long and trying illness, the result of a terrible accident. She had caught fire one evening when dressed for some grand entertainment or other, and though her injuries did not seem likely to be fatal at the time, she had never recovered the shock.

" 'She was so pretty,' my friend said, 'and one of the saddest parts of it was that I hear she was terrifically disfigured, and she took this most sadly to heart. The right side of her face was utterly ruined, and the sight of the right eye lost, though, strange to say, the left side entirely escaped, and seeing her in profile one would have had no notion of what had happened. Was it not sad? She was such a sweet, bright creature.'

"I did not tell him *my* story, for I did not want it chattered about, but a strange sort of shiver ran through me at his words. *It was the left side of her face only* that the wraith of my poor friend had allowed me to see."

"Oh, Uncle Paul!" exclaimed Nina.

"And— as to the dates?" inquired Mr. Snowdon.

"I never knew the exact date of the accident," said Mr. Marischal, "but that of her death was fully six months after I had seen her. And in my own mind, I have never made any doubt that it was at or about, probably a short time after, the accident, that she came to me. It seemed a kind of appeal for sympathy— and— a farewell also, poor child."

They all sat silent for some little time, and then Mr. Marischal got up and went off to his own quarters, saying something vaguely about seeing if his letters had gone.

"What a touching story!" said Gladys Lloyd. "I am afraid, after all, it has been more painful than he realised for Mr. Marischal to tell it. Did you know anything of Maud's husband, dear Lady Denholme? Was he kind to her? Was she happy?"

"We never heard much about her married life," her hostess replied. "But I have no reason to think she was unhappy. Her husband married again two or three years after her death, but that says nothing."

"N—no," said Nina. "All the same, mamma, I am sure she really did love Uncle Paul very much,— much more than he had any idea of. Poor Maud!"

"And he has never married," added Gladys.

"No," said Lady Denholme, "but there have been many practical difficulties in the way of his doing so. He has had a most absorbingly busy life, and now that he is more at leisure he feels himself too old to form new ties."

"But," persisted Nina, "if he had had any idea at the time that Maud cared for him so?"

"Ah well," Lady Denholme allowed, "in that case, in spite of the practical difficulties, things would probably have been different."

And again Nina repeated softly, "Poor Maud!"

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12: The Officer's Lady

"Tauwarra"

Gilbert Munro Turnbull (1890–1938)

The Australian Woman's Mirror 31 May 1927

Writer, architect and civil servant, who contributed much to the development of Port Moresby, Papua, in the 1920s. He wrote numerous short stories, all set in Papua, mostly under the name "Tauwarra", which means "fighting man" in the Motu language.

LEYLAND, the district magistrate, was a likeable young fellow and his wife was charming. Old Jim Welldon was a wealthy planter and his wife had helped to make Papuan history. Nevertheless, between the ramshackle, tin-roofed residency on the hill and the spacious modern bungalow on the waterfront, there was no intercourse whatever. Leyland was not a snob, neither did he wish to appear unneighborly; he was merely very young, very sure of himself and very intolerant.

At first Jim Welldon had sought the magistrate's friendship with an eagerness which, in a lesser man, would have been pathetic. He had tried hard to find some common ground upon which they, quite apart from their wives, could meet; but always Leyland had rebuffed him, not rudely, not even unfeelingly, choosing rather to adopt an attitude of frigid reticence and reserve from which the old man had dropped back, keenly disappointed, but not resentful. Resentful! What right had he, Jim Welldon, to harbor resentment when a man of his own race classified him according to the white man's code? Had he not known, had he not even gloried in the knowledge that when he took Loana to wife thirty years ago he had very definitely invited social damnation?

If Leyland had paused to think he might have discerned something fine, something splendid in old Welldon's attitude to his brown-skinned spouse. Welldon was rich; he was a man of education and refinement; the whole wide world was open to him, and native women are notoriously complaisant, easily pensioned off. Any of the "old hands" could have told Leyland that Welldon and Loana his wife were united by a tie which, to Welldon, was far more binding though less tangible than the yellowing book entry in the Registrar-General's office at Port Moresby. How, in the bad old days of British New Guinea, when human heads decorated the ridge-poles of the "long-houses" and Death lurked in the jungle, Welldon, sick and near his end, had fallen into the hands of the treacherous Ikoroa people. How Loana, the chief's daughter, had succored him, nursed him back to health, and, defying the age-old traditions of her people, had smuggled him out of the village into the jungle under cover of night. How, weeks later, a gaunt, haggard native girl, carrying a half-naked, delirious white man on

her back, had tottered into a Government station, and how But Leyland was the last man to make allowances, and Welldon was the last man to invite sympathy.

Leyland, of course, could not avoid meeting the old man. In fact, they encountered each other in a business way regularly and frequently, Welldon was a large employer of native labor. Always there were "boys" to be signed on and paid off, licenses and fees to be accounted for; and it was also Leyland's duty to inspect and report upon Welldon's labor force at monthly intervals. Never for a moment, however, did Leyland forget that he was the district magistrate; never for a moment did he permit the other to forget that they belonged to different worlds.

With Doris Leyland, the magistrate's wife, Welldon had no direct contact whatever. Once, however, they came face to face when, in the cool of the evening, Welldon was strolling along the narrow strip of hard beach below high-water mark. Wclldon gave the girl right of way, raising his helmet with a grave inclination of the head like the fine old gentleman he was. Mrs. Leyland acknowledged his courtesy with a stiff, formal little nod and hurried by without a word. Welldon turned and regarded her retreating form with puzzled interest. Then he pursed his lips and nodded thoughtfully.

Next morning 'he visited Leyland's office.

"I say, Leyland," he began diffidently, "I hope I'm not butting in, but—er —er—in short—er —don't you think you ought to send your wife away?"

Leyland looked up, an expression of cool enquiry in his eyes.

"Indeed," he replied drily, "may I ask how my wife's movements can possibly interest— you?"

Welldon drew back, amazed at the sudden gust of anger that shook him.

"You insufferable young pup!" he blazed. "Don't you understand that I'm offering you friendly advice? That I'm old enough to be your father? That I've lived more years in New Guinea than you have months? You— you damned young fool!"

Then he was out of the office, stumping angrily down the path. Leyland watched him go and his lip curled in faint contempt. Nevertheless, Leyland must have had some understanding of the danger that threatened him, for he spent the rest of the day aboard the station launch, and through his glasses Welldon saw a file of native prisoners carrying fuel and stores aboard. The old man nodded wisely. Evidently his bitter outburst, his unprecedented breach of good manners, was already bearing fruit.

"Loana," he called to his wife, "to-day the Government *sinabada* goes to Samarai."

"It is good, Jim," she replied from the kitchen. "She should have gone many days ago."

But next morning the launch was still at her moorings, and the next morning, and the next. Welldon, risking another snub, strolled down to the jetty. From the tiny engine-room there arose the sound of a heated argument in pidgin-English and bad Motuan, and presently Leyland, his face trickling perspiration and grease, thrust his head through the open scuttle.

"Ah, good-day, Welldon," he drawled. "If your business is important, I'll join you in the office in a few minutes. Slight engine trouble," he added carelessly.

To Welldon his air of cool indifference seemed a trifle overdone, and he had a fleeting impression that the man was a little uneasy, a little uncertain.

"Perhaps I can help," replied Welldon, and, without waiting for a reply, he climbed aboard and squeezed himself down the narrow companion. Roughly he elbowed the native engineer to one side and bent over the engine, Leyland watching him sombrely. Welldon straightened himself, cleansing his hands on a piece of waste.

"Leyland," he said grave, "sack your engineer. He has allowed the pump to choke, the water circulation is out of action and she's cracked her cylinder."

Leyland's face went suddenly white.

"Can't it be fixed—patched up, somehow to—"

Welldon shook his head, eyeing him gravely and intently. "This craft is of less use to you than a nigger's dug-out," he replied. Moved by a sudden impulse he laid a hand upon the vounger man's shoulder. "Is it as bad as that, my lad?" he asked.

Leyland nodded miserably. "As bad as that, Welldon!" he said in a low voice.

There was a mission station forty miles down the coast and th.ther they despatched a swift runner with an urgent call for help. The boy returned exhausted on the third day and reported that the Padre was visiting his flock in the back country, and that his launch was stuck on a mud bank many days' journey up the river.

They heard the messenger's glib story in stony silence, each eyeing the other qucerly, both afraid to put their scarce-admitted thoughts into words.

And that night the Terror leapt upon them. Welldon was at dinner when he heard the crunch of footsteps on the coral path and Leyland stumbled into the room. His face was drawn and white and, though the night was cool, tiny beads of perspiration stood out on his forehead. He steadied himself against the table edge. For a moment he stared dully, dumbly at Welldon, then he slumped into a vacant chair.

"My God, Welldon!" he muttered brokenly. "Doris— my wife! She's not well— she's— she's" His voice trailed off in a terrified gasp. The haughty, rather overbearing young district magistrate had suddenly become a frightened, miserable boy.

Welldon stood up and smiled with a confidence he was far from feeling. "I have an idea, Leyland." he said briskly. Then called, "Loana!"

Leyland made a swift, rebellious gesture.

"No, Welldon, no!" he muttered. "What—what can she do? An ignorant ni—"

"She is a woman, you fool!" said Welldon sternly. Then called again, "Loana!"

The woman appeared in the open doorway.

"The Government *sinabada* needs you, Loana. You and the corporal's wife, I think."

Leyland started to rise, but Welldon checked him. "Go quickly, Loana," he said. "You understand?"

"I understand, Jim," returned Loana softly.

They heard her for a few seconds moving about rapidly in the kitchen and then she was gone.

Leyland made to follow her, but Welldon laid a restraining hand upon his shoulder.

"Not yet, my lad," he said gently, "not yet." He brought out a whisky decanter and glasses. "Take a bracer Leyland," he invited; "a good one."

They moved out on to the verandah, Welldon smoking calmly, the magistrate pacing up and down restlessly, feverishly, casting frightened glances at the flicker of lights showing on the hillside. There was no moon, no breeze. Smouldering bushfires on far distant ridges seemed merely to emphasise the blackness of the night, and the pounding of the surf on the reef came to their ears as a mournfully haunting murmur.

Presently Leyland halted.

"I'm— I'm going, Welldon," he muttered. His lips quivered, but he brought them tightly together. "I— I can't stand this! I— I—"

Welldon nodded, and slowly they left the bungalow and climbed the hill to the residency. Leyland paused at the head of the steps. The lights still showed in the bedroom, but over the house there hung a grim, brooding silence. Leyland shivered and made to go back. Suddenly there came a sound— a thin, quivering, agonising cry that made Welldon wince. Leyland went to pieces. He stumbled, whimpering, down the steps and Welldon led him away.

Hour after hour they tramped up and down the beach —the young magistrate now brought so low and the tired, patient old man whose friendship he had spurned. Streaks of pale gold, faintly tinged with vermilion were flushing the eastern sky when, with lagging steps, fearfully and in grim silence, they approached the house on the hill.

Loana met them at the threshold, her wrinkled brown face drawn and worn, but her eyes glowing with a new yet age-old light. She checked them with a

warning gesture and tiptoed into the bedroom. Presently she returned carrying in her arms a squirming little bundle.

"Master," she said in her own tongue. Her voice was low yet vibrant with the emotion that all women of all races have thrilled to since the beginning of time.

"Master, behold your son!"

The christening mug was inscribed "James Welldon Leyland."

13: Cemetery Bait

Damon Runyon

1880-1946

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ONE PLEASANT morning in early April, a character by the name of Gentleman George wakes up to find himself in a most embarrassing predicament.

He wakes up to find himself in a cell in the state penitentiary at Trenton, N.J., and while a cell in a state penitentiary is by no means a novelty to George, and ordinarily will cause him no confusion whatever, the trouble is this particular cell is what is known as the death house.

Naturally, George is very self-conscious about this, as it is only the second time in his life he ever finds himself in such a house, and the first time is so far back in his youth that it leaves scarcely any impression on him, especially as he is commuted out of it in less than sixty days.

Well, George sits there on the side of the cot in his cell this pleasant April morning, thinking what a humiliating circumstance this is to a proud nature such as his, when all of a sudden he remembers that on the morrow he is to be placed in Mister Edison's rocking-chair in the room adjoining his cell, and given a very severe shock in the seat of his breeches.

On remembering this George becomes very thoughtful to be sure, and sighs to himself as follows: Heigh-ho, heigh-ho, heigh-ho. And then he sends for me to come and see him, although George is well aware that I have no use for penitentiaries, or their environs, and consider them a most revolting spectacle.

In fact, I have such a repugnance for penitentiaries that I never even glance at them in passing, because I am afraid that peepings may be catchings, but of course in a situation such as this I can scarcely deny the call of an old friend.

They let-me talk to George through the bars of his cell, and naturally I am somewhat perturbed to observe him in this plight, although I can see that his surroundings are clean and sanitary, and that the hacks seem kindly disposed towards him, except one big doorknob who is inclined to be somewhat churlish because George just beats him in a game of two-handed pinochle.

Furthermore, I can see that George is in pretty fair physical condition, although a little stouter than somewhat, and that he looks as if he is getting some rest.

He is at this time about forty-five years of age, is known far and wide as the handsomest and most genteel character on Broadway. His brown hair now has some grey in it along the edges, and there are lines of care in his face, and, of course, George is not dressed as fashionably as usual.

In fact, his clothes need pressing, and he can stand a haircut, and a shave, and when I mention this to George he says he understands they are going to give him all the haircutting he requires before morning, and maybe a close shave, too.

In the old days, Gentleman George is very prominent in the jewellery trade with Tommy Entrata and his associates, and anybody will tell you that Tommy and his crowd are the best in the country, because they pursue strictly business methods, and are very high-principled.

They generally work with a character by the name of Lou Adolia, who is a private fuzz often employed by big insurance companies that make a speciality of insuring jewellery for wealthy female parties, a fuzz being a way of saying a detective, although the chances are Lou Adolia cannot really find his hip pocket with both hands.

But when Tommy Entrata and his associates come into possession of jewellery belonging to these wealthy female parties, they notify Lou Adolia, and he arranges with the insurance companies to pay a certain sum for the return of the merchandise, and no beefs, and everybody is satisfied, especially the insurance companies, because, of course, if they do not get the goods back, the companies will have to pay the full amount of the insurance.

As Tommy Entrata is generally very reasonable in his fees on jewellery that comes into his possession, it really is a most economical arrangement for the insurance companies, and for everybody else concerned, and it is also very nice for Lou Adolia, as he always gets a reward from the companies, and sometimes a piece of what Tommy Entrata collects.

Then a piece always goes to the stout fellow in the city in which Tommy Entrata and his associates are operating, the stout fellow being the local fix, because, of course, you understand that in a business as large as this carried on by Tommy Entrata it is necessary to take care of all angles. So the stout fellow looks after the local law to see that it does not interfere with Tommy Entrata any more than is absolutely necessary.

To tell the truth, when Tommy Entrata and his associates go into a town, it is generally as well-organised from top to bottom as Standard Oil, and Tommy not only has a complete roster of all the local jewellery owners, and what they are insured for, from Lou Adolia, but also a few diagrams as to where this jewellery is located, and Tommy never fails to make ample provision for one and all in the town who may be concerned before he turns a wheel. In fact, I hear that in a spot up in the North-west Tommy once even declares the mayor and the commissioner of public safety in on one of his transactions, just out of the goodness of his heart, and this unselfishness in his business operations makes Tommy highly respected far and wide.

Anyway, Gentleman George is one of Tommy Entrata's experts in the matter of coming into possession of jewellery, and Tommy appreciates George no little, as George is strictly a lone hand at his work, and he never carries that thing on him, and considers all forms of violence most revolting, so he never gets into trouble, or at least not much.

I am telling you all this so you will understand that Tommy Entrata conducts his business in a high-class, conservative manner, and personally I consider him a great boon to a community, because he teaches people the value of insurance, and now I will return to Gentleman George in his cell in the death house in Trenton, N.J.

'Well,' George says, 'there you are, and here I am, and you are the only friend that comes to see me since the judge mentions the date that now becomes of some importance in my life, and which is in fact to-morrow. And now I wish to tell you a story, which will be the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, and the object of this story is to show that I once perform a great service to the public.'

At this, I become uneasy, because I am afraid it may be a tedious story, and I do not care to remain in such surroundings listening to reminiscence, so I request George to epitomise as much as possible, and to omit all reference to low characters and sordid situations, and then George states as follows, and to wit, viz.:

In the winter of 1935, I am going southward by train on business bent, and the reason I do not reveal my destination at this time is because I do not wish to be recalled as ever hollering copper, even on a city, but I will say that it is a certain winter resort spot about as far below the Mason & Dixon's line as you can get before you start swimming, and a very pleasant spot it is, at that.

The first night out on the train, I go into the diner and partake of a fish that is on the menu, because the steward of the diner weighs in with a strong shill for this fish, and the next thing I know I am back in my compartment as sick as anything, and maybe a little bit sicker.

To tell the truth, I am so sick that I think I am going to pass away, and this thought disturbs me no little, as Tommy Entrata is looking forward to my arrival with keen interest, and I know that he is apt to take my passing away as a personal affront.

Well, while I am lying in my bench as sick as stated, all of a sudden the door of my compartment opens, and a pair of specs and a short, scrubby, grey tash appear, and behind the specs and the tash is a stern-looking character of maybe fifty-odd who speaks to me in a gruff voice, as follows:

'See here, now,' he says, 'what is all this runting and grunting about? Are you sick?'

'Well,' I say, 'if I am not sick, I will do until an invalid comes along.'

And then I start retching again, and in between retches, I mention the dining-car fish, and I tell the stern-looking character that if he will kindly get the dining-car steward to step into my compartment for just one minute I will die happy.

'You speak great nonsense,' the stern-looking character says. 'You are not going to die, although,' he says, 'who knows but what you may be better off if you do? Not enough people know when to die. What ails you is ptomaine poisoning, and I will take charge of this situation myself because I will be unable to sleep in this car with you scrooning and mooning all night.

'I once get the same thing myself in Gloucester, Mass.' he says. 'You will expect fish to be all right in Gloucester, Mass. If I remember,' he says, 'it is mackerel in my case.'

Then he rings for the porter, and pretty soon he has the train secretary, and the Pullman conductor, and even a couple of other passengers running in and out of my compartment getting him this, and that, and one thing and another, and dosing me with I do not know what, and sick as I am, I can see that this stern-looking character is accustomed to having people step around when he speaks.

Well, for a while I am thinking that the best break I can get is to pass away without any further lingering; then, by and by, I commence feeling better, and finally I doze off to sleep. But I seem to remember the stern-looking character mentioning that he is going to the same place that I am, and that he is just returning from a hunting-trip in Canada, and I also seem to recall him telling me what a wonderful shot he is with any kind of fire-arms.

Afterward, however, I figure I must dream all this because the next morning the stern-looking character just glances in on me once and asks how I feel in a tone of voice that indicates he does not care much one way or the other, and after this I do not see hide or hair of him, and I can see that he does not mean to make a friendship of the matter.

In fact, when I am getting off the train at my destination, I suddenly remember that I do not even know the stern-looking character's name, and I am sorry about this, as so few people in the world are ever good to me that I wish to cherish the names of those who are. But, of course, I now have no time for sentiment, as duty calls me, and I do not bother to inquire around and about with reference to the stern-looking character.

I telephone Tommy Entrata, and make a meet with him for dinner in a night-club that is called by the name of the Bath and Sail Club, although there is no bathing connected with it whatever, and no sailing either, for that matter, and while I am waiting there for Tommy, I observe at another table the most beautiful Judy I see in many a day, and you know very well that few better judges of beauty ever live than yours sincerely, G. George.

She is young, and has hair the colour of straw, and she is dressed in a gorgeous white evening gown, and she has plenty of junk on her in the way of diamonds, and she seems to be waiting for someone and I find myself regretting that it is not me. I am so impressed by her that I call Emil, the head-waiter, and question him, because Emil is an old friend of mine, and I know he always has a fund of information on matters such as this.

'Emil,' I say, 'who is the lovely pancake over there by the window?'

'Cemetery bait,' Emil says, so I know he means she is married, and has a husband who is selfish about her, and naturally I cast no sheep's eyes in her direction, especially as Tommy Entrata comes in about now and takes me to a private room where we have a nice dinner, and discuss my business in this city.

It is in pursuit of this business, at the hour of 1 a.m. on a warm Sunday morning, that I am making a call at the residence of a character by the name of Colonel Samuel B. Venus, and am in the boudoir of his ever-loving wife, and a beautiful room it is, at that, with the windows on one side looking out over the sea waves, and the windows on the other side overlooking a patio of whispering palm-trees.

The moon is shining down on this scene, and it is so lovely that I stand at the front windows a few moments looking out over the water before I start seeking the small can, or safe, that I know is concealed in a clothes closet in the room unless the butler in the Venus house is telling a terrible falsehood and accepting money from us under false pretences for this information and for admitting me to the premises.

Of course, Colonel Samuel B. Venus's ever-loving wife is not present in her boudoir at this hour, and neither is Colonel Samuel B. Venus, and in fact I afterward learn that the only way Colonel Samuel B. Venus can get in there is on a writ of habeas corpus, but this has nothing to do with my story.

My information is that Colonel Samuel B. Venus is a very wealthy character of maybe sixty years of age, come next grass, and that his ever-loving wife is less than half of that, and has some of the finest jewellery in this country, including pearls, diamonds, star rubies, emeralds, and I do not know what all else, and I am given to understand that Colonel Samuel B. Venus leaves the night before on a fishing-trip, and that Mrs. Colonel Samuel B. Venus is out somewhere wearing only a couple of pounds of her jewels, so the rest of her stuff is bound to be in the little can in her boudoir.

Well, the little can is in the closet just where the butler reports, and I observe that it is such a can as I will be able to open with a toothpick if necessary, although, of course, I bring along my regular can-opener, which is a tool for cutting open safes that I personally invent, as you perhaps remember, although I never think to get a patent on it from the government, and I am

about to start operations when I hear voices, and two characters, male and female, enter the boudoir.

So there I am in the closet among a lot of dresses and coats, and all this and that, and, what is more, I leave the closet door open a little when I go in, as I figure I may require a little air, and I am now afraid to close the door for fear of making a noise, and the best I can make of this situation is that I am a gone gosling. To tell the truth, it is one of the few times in my life that I regret I do not have that thing on me, just for self-defence.

I can see right away from the way she talks that the female character must be Mrs. Colonel Samuel B. Venus, but the character with her is by no means her husband, and naturally I am greatly scandalised to think that a married broad will bring a party not her husband into her boudoir with her at such an hour, and I am wondering what on earth the world is coming to.

But although I listen keenly, there seems to be no goings-on, and in fact all they are doing is talking, so I figure the character with Mrs. Colonel Samuel B. Venus must be a character without any imagination whatever.

Finally, when I judge from their conversation that they are looking at the view of the sad sea waves, I cop a quick peek, and I see that Mrs. Colonel Samuel B. Venus is nobody but the blonde I admire at the Bath and Sail Club, and while this surprises me no little, it does not surprise me half as much as the fact that the character with her is a party by the name of Count Tomaso, who is known far and wide as a most unworthy character. In fact, Count Tomaso is regarded in some circles as a 22-carat fink, a fink being a character who is lower than a mudcat's vest pocket.

He is a small, slim-built character, with dark hair greased down on his head, and he wears a monocle, and seems very foreign in every respect. In fact, Count Tomaso claims to belong to the Italian nobility, but he is no more a count than I am, and to tell the truth, he is nothing but a ginzo out of Sacramento, and his right name is Carfarelli.

For a matter of twenty years or more, this Count Tomaso is on the socket, which is a way of saying his dodge is blackmail, and of course there is little or no class to such a dodge as this. He generally pitches to foolish old married Judys, and gets them wedged in with letters, and one thing and another, and then puts the shake on them.

Personally, I rarely criticise anybody else's methods of earning a livelihood, but I can never approve of the shake, although I must admit that from what I hear of Count Tomaso, he really is an artist in his line, and can nine those old phlugs in first-class style when he is knuckling.

I only hope and trust that his presence in Mrs. Colonel Samuel B. Venus's boudoir does not mean that Count Tomaso is trespassing in any way upon my affairs, as I can see where this will produce complications, and it is always my

policy to avoid complications, so I remain very quiet, with a firm grip on my can-opener in case Mrs. Colonel Samuel B. Venus or Count Tomaso happens to come to the closet.

But it seems to be nothing but a social visit, as I can hear her getting out some liquor, and after a couple of drinks they begin speaking of nothing much in particular, including the weather. Presently the conversation becomes quite dull, for it is all about love and conversation about love always bores me no little unless I am making the conversation myself, although I can see that Mrs. Colonel Samuel B. Venus is better than a rare hand in conversation of this nature.

I am so bored that I put down my can-opener and am about to doze off among the dresses, when all of a sudden the conversation takes a very unusual turn, to be sure, for Mrs. Colonel Samuel B. Venus says to Count Tomaso like this:

'I know you love me,' she says, 'and I love you madly in return, but what good will it do us? I am married to a character old enough to be my father and, although he does not know it, I hate and despise him. But even if I tell him this, I know he will never give me a divorce, and, besides, if I do get a divorce, he is sure to put me off with a mere pittance. I am bound to him as long as he lives,' she says. 'As long as he lives, Tomaso.'

Well, Count Tomaso says this is certainly a sad state of affairs, and seems to be taking another drink, and she goes on as follows:

'Of course,' she says, 'if he passes away, Tomaso, I will marry you the next day, or anyway' she says, 'as soon as my mourning goes out of style. Then we can go all over the world and enjoy our love, because I know his will leaves me all his vast fortune. I am afraid it is wicked,' she says, 'but sometimes I wish an accident will befall him.'

Now I can see that what is coming off here is that Mrs. Colonel Samuel B. Venus is giving Count Tomaso a hint in a roundabout way to cause an accident to befall Colonel Samuel B. Venus, and thinks I to myself there in the closet, it is a pretty how-do-you-do if such goings-on are tolerated in society circles, and I am glad I am not in society. To tell the truth, I consider Mrs. Colonel Samuel B. Venus's attitude most unbecoming.

Well, they converse at some length about various forms of accidents that they hear of, but they seem unable to arrive at any definite conclusion, and I am almost sorry I am unable to join in the discussion and offer a few original ideas of my own, when Mrs. Colonel Samuel B. Venus says:

'Well,' she says, 'we are sailing next week on the Castilla for New York, and you can come on the same ship. New York is a better place for accidents than down here, because they are not apt to attract so much attention there. But, Tomaso,' she says, 'be very careful the Colonel does not see you on the trip, as

he has been hearing things here, and he is terribly jealous, and has a violent temper, and, furthermore, he always has deadly weapons around, and he claims he is a wonderful marksman.

'Oh, Tomaso,' she says, 'is it not awful to be yoked to an old character who thinks of nothing but hunting, and fishing, and business, when I love you so much?'

Well, Tomaso says it is, indeed, and does she have a few dibs on her to tide him over the week-end, and it seems she has, and then there is a little offhand billing and cooing that I consider very bad taste in her under her own roof, and finally they go out of the boudoir.

As soon as they depart, I turn to my own business of opening the little can and removing the jewellery, which I deliver to Tommy Entrata, who gives it to Lou Adolia, and this is the time that Lou Adolia gets eighty thousand dollars from the insurance companies for the return of the goods, and then disappears with all the sugar, and without as much as saying, aye, yes or no to anybody.

But I am getting ahead of my story.

A couple of days later, I am reclining on the beach with Tommy Entrata, taking a little sun for my complexion, when who comes along in a bathing-suit which displays a really remarkable shape but Mrs. Colonel Samuel B. Venus, and who is with her but the stern-looking character who doctors me up on the train, and at first I have half a notion to jump up and say hello to him and thank him for his kindness to me about the fish, but he looks right through me as if he never sees me before in his life, and I can see that he does not remember me, or if he does, he does not care to make anything of it.

So I do not give him a blow, because the way I look at it, the fewer people you know in this world, the better you are off. But I ask Tommy Entrata who the stern-looking character is, and I am somewhat surprised when Tommy says:

'Why,' he says, 'he is Colonel Samuel B. Venus, the party you knock off the other night, but,' Tommy says, 'let us not speak of that now. Colonel Samuel B. Venus is a most irascible character, and he is making quite a chirp about matters, and it is very fortunate for us that he and his wife are sailing for New York, because the stout fellow is getting nervous about the outcry.

'By the way,' Tommy says, 'I do not wish to seem inhospitable in suggesting your departure from these pleasant scenes, but it may be a good idea for you to take it on the Jesse Owens until the beef is chilled. There are many nightingales in these pans,' he says, 'and they will sing to the law on very slight provocation, for instance such a character as Count Tomaso. I notice him around here nuzzling up to Mrs. Colonel Samuel B. Venus, and while the chances are he is on a business mission of his own, Count Tomaso knows you, and it is always my opinion that he is a singer, at heart.'

Well, I do not mention the incident in Mrs. Colonel Samuel B. Venus's boudoir to Tommy Entrata, because in the first place I do not consider it any of his business, and in the second place I know Tommy is not apt to be interested in such a matter, but I get to thinking about the conversation between Mrs. Colonel Samuel B. Venus and Count Tomaso, and I also get to thinking about Colonel Samuel B. Venus being so nice to me in connection with the bad fish.

And thinks I, as long as I must take my departure, anyway, a little sea voyage may be beneficial to my health, and I will go on the Castilla myself, and will look up Count Tomaso and admonish him that I will hold him personally responsible if any accident happens to Colonel Samuel B. Venus, as I feel that it is only fair to do what I can to discharge my debt of gratitude to Colonel Samuel B. Venus concerning the fish.

So when the Castilla sails a few days later, I am a passenger, and, furthermore, I have a nice cabin on the same deck as Colonel Samuel B. Venus and his ever-loving wife, because I always believe in travelling with the best people, no matter what.

I see Colonel Samuel B. Venus, and I also see Mrs. Colonel Samuel B. Venus on the first day out, and I observe that Colonel Samuel B. Venus is looking sterner than ever, and also that Mrs. Colonel Samuel B. Venus is growing lovelier by the hour, but never do I see Count Tomaso, although I am pretty sure he does not miss the boat.

I figure that he is taking Mrs. Colonel Samuel B. Venus's advice about keeping out of sight of Colonel Samuel B. Venus.

I do not bother to go looking for Count Tomaso on the Castilla to admonish him about Colonel Samuel B. Venus, because I figure I am bound to catch up with him getting off the boat in New York, and that in the meantime Colonel Samuel B. Venus is safe from accident, especially as it comes up stormy at sea after we are a few hours out, and Colonel Samuel B. Venus and his ever-loving wife seem to be keeping close to their cabin, and in fact so is everybody else.

Well, the storm keeps getting worse, and it is sleety and cold all around and about, and the sea is running higher than somewhat, and now one night off the Jersey coast when I am sleeping as peacefully as anything, I am awakened by a great to-do and it seems that the Castilla is on fire.

Naturally, I do not care to be toasted in my cabin, so I don my clothes, and pop out into the passageway and start for the nearest exit, when I remember that in moments of confusion many characters, male and female, are apt to forget articles of one kind and another that may come in handy to some body such as me later on, for instance bits of jewellery, and other portable merchandise.

So I try various doors as I go along the passageway, and all of them are open and unoccupied, as the Castilla is an old-time vessel with cabin doors that lock

with keys, and not with snap locks, and, just as I suspect, I find numerous odds and ends in the way of finger-rings, and bracelets and clips and pins and necklaces, and watches, and gold cigarette-cases, and even a few loose bundles of ready scratch, so I am very glad, indeed, that I am gifted with foresight.

Finally I come to one door that seems to be locked, and I remember that this is the cabin occupied by Colonel Samuel B. Venus and his ever-loving wife, and after first knocking at the door and receiving no reply, I figure they hastily depart and carelessly lock the door after them, and I also figure that I am bound to garner something of more than ordinary value there.

So I kick the door in, and who is in the cabin on a bed, all trussed up like a goose, with a towel tied across his mouth to keep him from hollering out loud, but Colonel Samuel B. Venus, in person.

Naturally, I am somewhat surprised at this spectacle, and also somewhat embarrassed to have Colonel Samuel B. Venus find me kicking in his door, but of course this is no time for apologies, so I take a quick swivel about the cabin to see if there are any articles lying around that I may be able to use. I am slightly disappointed to note that there appears to be nothing, and I am about to take my departure, when all of a sudden I remember my debt of gratitude to Colonel Samuel B. Venus, and I realize that it will be most unkind to leave him in this predicament to be barbecued like a steer without being able to move hand or foot.

So lout with my pocket chiv, and cut him loose, and I also remove the towel, and as soon as he can talk, Colonel Samuel B. Venus issues a statement to me, in a most severe tone of voice, as follows:

'They try to murder me,' he says. 'My own wife, Cora, and a character in a white polo coat with a little cap to match. When the alarm of fire is sounded,' Colonel Samuel B. Venus says, 'she starts screaming, and he comes banging up against our door, and she unlocks it and lets him in before I have time to think, and then he knocks me down with something, I do not know what.'

'The chances are,' I say, 'it is a blunt instrument.'

'You may be right,' Colonel Samuel B. Venus says. 'Anyway, after he knocks me down, my own wife, Cora, picks up one of my shoes and starts belting me over the head with the heel, and then she helps the character in the polo coat and the little cap to match tie me up as you find me.'

'It is a scurvy trick,' I say.

'I am half unconscious,' Colonel Samuel B. Venus says, 'but I remember hearing my own wife, Cora, remark that the fire is a wonderful break for them, and will save them a lot of bother in New York. And then before they leave, she hits me another belt on the head with the shoe. I fear,' Colonel Samuel B. Venus says, 'that my own wife, Cora, is by no means the ever-loving helpmeet I think. In fact,' he says, 'I am now wondering about the overdose of sleeping powders

she gives me in London, England, in 1931, and about the bomb in my automobile in Los Angeles, Cal., in 1933.'

'Well, well, well,' I say, 'let us let bygones be bygones, and get off this tub, as it seems to be getting hotter than a ninth-inning finish around here.'

But Colonel Samuel B. Venus remains very testy about the incident he just describes, and he fumbles around under a pillow on the bed on which I find him, and outs with that thing, and opens the cylinder as if to make sure it is loaded, and says to me like this:

'I will shoot him down like a dog,' he says. 'I mean the character in the white polo coat and the little cap to match. He undoubtedly leads my poor little wife, Cora, astray in this, although,' he says, 'I do not seem to recall him anywhere in the background of the overdose and the bomb matters. But she is scarcely more than a child and does not know right from wrong. He is the one who must die,' Colonel Samuel B. Venus says. 'I wonder who he is?' he says.

Well, of course I know Colonel Samuel B. Venus must be talking about Count Tomaso, but I can see that Count Tomaso is a total stranger to him, and while I am by no means opposed to Colonel Samuel B. Venus's sentiments with reference to Count Tomaso, I do not approve of his spirit of forgiveness towards Mrs. Colonel Samuel B. Venus, because I figure that as long as she is around and about, Colonel Samuel B. Venus will always be in danger of accidents.

But I do not feet that this is a time for argument, so I finally get him to go up on the deck with me, and as soon as we are on deck, Colonel Samuel B. Venus leaves me and starts running every which way as if he is looking for somebody.

There seems to be some little agitation on deck, what with smoke and flame coming out of the Castilla amidships, and many characters, male and female, running up and down, and around and about, and small children crying.

Some of the crew are launching lifeboats, and then getting into these boats themselves, and pulling away from the burning ship without waiting for any passengers, which strikes me as most discourteous on the part of. the sailors and which alarms many passengers so they start chucking themselves over the rail into the sea trying to catch up with the boats.

Well, this scene is most distasteful to me, so I retire from the general melee, and go looking elsewhere about the ship, figuring I may find an opportunity to ease myself quietly into a boat before all the seats are taken by sailors, and finally I come upon a group trying to launch a big life raft over the rail, and about this time I observe Colonel Samuel B. Venus standing against the rail with that thing in his hand, and peering this way and that.

And then I notice a boat pulling away from the ship, and in the stern of the boat I see a character in a white polo coat, and a little cap to match, and I call the attention of Colonel Samuel B. Venus to same.

The boat is so overcrowded that it is far down in the water, but the waves, which are running very high, are carrying it away in long lunges, and it is fully one hundred yards off, and is really visible to the naked eye by the light of the flames from the Castilla only when it rises a moment to the top of a wave, and Colonel Samuel B. Venus looks for some time before he sees what I wish him to see.

'I spot him now,' he says. 'I recognize the white polo coat and the little cap to match.'

And with this, he ups with that thing and goes tooty-toot-toot out across the water three times, and the last I see of the white polo coat and the little cap to match they are folding up together very gently just as a big wave washes the boat off into the darkness beyond the light of the burning ship.

By this time the raft is in the water, and I take Colonel Samuel B. Venus and chuck him down on to the raft, and then I jump after him, and as the raft is soon overcrowded, I give the foot to a female character who is on the raft before anybody else and ease her off into the water.

As this female character disappears in the raging sea, I am not surprised to observe that she is really nobody but Count Tomaso, as I seem to remember seeing Count Tomaso making Mrs. Colonel Samuel B. Venus change clothes with him at the point of a knife.

Well, some of the boats get ashore, and some do not, and in one that does arrive, they find the late Mrs. Colonel Samuel B. Venus, and everybody is somewhat surprised to note that she is in male garments with a white polo coat and a little cap to match.

I wish to call attention to the public service I render in easing Count Tomaso off the raft, because here is a character who is undoubtedly a menace to the sanctity of the American home. And I take pride in the fact that I discharge my debt of gratitude to Colonel Samuel B. Venus, and it is not my fault that he permits himself to be so overcome by his experience on the ship and on the raft that he turns out to be a raving nut, and never has the pleasure of learning that his aim is still so good that he can put three slugs in a moving target within the span of a baby's hand.

'Why, George,' I say to Gentleman George, 'then you are the victim of a great wrong, and I will see the governor, or somebody, in your behalf at once. They cannot do this to you, when according to your own story, you are not directly connected with the matter of Mrs. Colonel Samuel B. Venus, and it is only a case of mistaken identity, at best.'

'Oh, pshaw!' Gentleman George says. 'They are not taking the severe measures they contemplate with me because of anything that happens to Mrs. Colonel Samuel B. Venus.

'They are vexed with me,' George says, 'because one night I take Lou Adolia's automobile out on the salt meadows near Secaucus, N.J., and burn it to a crisp, and it seems that I forget to remove Lou Adolia first from same.'

'Well, George,' I say, 'bon voyage.'

'The same to you,' George says, 'and many of them.'

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14: An Exploration Enterprise

Barry Pain

1864-1928

The Windsor Magazine, July 1901

MR. JULIUS PEMBRIDGE was practically the Exploration and Enterprise Finance Association. If you could not get money from Pembridge for your little scheme, it was not worth while to try elsewhere; you might give it up and go home. He was the friend and comforter of wild cats, but he was not a fool. If most of these ungrateful beasts bit and scratched him, now and again one turned out very good. It was said that he lost more money in a year than any man in his street, but that did not disturb him. At the end of the year he had generally made a living, and a little over. Wherever he saw the faintest glimmer of light— the least possibility— in went Julius Pembridge. If he was right once, that more than made up for ten times when he was wrong.

Pembridge was a dominant male man. He was powerfully built, and rather a handsome man, with keen eyes and a strong chin. He had two distinct manners in general use. One was slangy and good-humoured; the other was different. He was content to let the best possible tailor dress him in the best possible way. His office was well lighted and well and solidly furnished; it was an eccentricity of his to have his office as cleanly and properly kept as his private house, which, by the way, was not a house, but a flat in Jermyn Street. He possessed the smartest and most silent office boy within the cab radius.

One fine morning in May, when Pembridge had gone through his correspondence, he was sitting back in his chair and wondering whether it would be worth while to back anything for the Derby, when the office boy brought in a card. It was not an immaculately clean card, and on it was written— not engraved— "Mr. Percy Mardner." Pembridge held the card by the extreme corner, looking at it through half closed eyes. Then he turned to the boy. "All right," he said.

The boy placed a chair, put the whisky and soda handy, and went out noiselessly. In a moment he returned and announced Mr. Percy Mardner. Mardner's appearance was against him. He looked furtive and shabby and shaky. His appearance was that of a man whose nerves have suffered, one who has been a good deal broken up. His eyes blinked as they met the light.

"It's very good of you to see me, Mr. Pembridge," said Mardner.

"Not at all," said Pembridge. "Always glad to see anyone on business." He spoke genially, but there was a slight emphasis on the word "business," enough to indicate that a charitable appeal would not be considered in the light of business.

"Well, it's on business that I wished to speak to you. It's very queer business and a very queer story that I have to tell. But there's upwards of a hundred thousand pounds at the end of it."

"And what made you come to me?"

"I went first to a man whose name I had seen in an advertisement— a money-lender. He wouldn't let me finish my story. He said it was a fairy tale, and he did not deal in fairy tales. I asked him if he knew of anybody who might help me, and he mentioned your Association, without holding out any great hopes."

"Go on."

"I must begin by telling you that I have been in trouble. I yielded to a temptation, and— well, they gave me three years' penal servitude. I have not been out long. My people gave me a hundred pounds, and told me that was all they would have to do with me."

"And you blued your hundred on booze."

"Yes, I have been drinking hard, and gambling a little. But I still have a few pounds left. I was at it last night; that's why I'm all to pieces this morning." He looked significantly towards the whisky.

"All right. Help yourself. And get to the business as soon as you can; in fact, tell me what it is before you go on with your yarn."

Percy Mardner poured out a great deal of whisky and a very little soda-water. The glass clattered against his teeth as he drank. Then he wiped his ragged moustache with his hand and resumed with more confidence of manner.

"Thank you, Mr. Pembridge; that's done me good. Ill tell you the business at once; only don't send me away until I've told you the story as well. The business is buried treasure— money buried in a little piece of land that is for sale at this moment."

"Ah!" said Pembridge reflectively. "You seem a particularly candid person. One might have said shameless. You speak of the fact that you are an ex-convict who has taken to drink, very much as another man might describe himself as a stockbroker. Perhaps you wouldn't mind telling me, to save time and trouble, whether this is a variation on the Spanish prisoner swindle, or something on the gold brick lines— or, in short, what is it you have been getting up for me?"

"I knew you would say something of that kind. When you hear the story you will see that I do not stand to make a single penny unless my story is absolutely true. You give me nothing in advance."

"Well, well," said Pembridge impatiently, "get on."

"While I was in prison I rendered a service to a fellow-convict; in fact, I helped him to escape. He got clear away to America, and a few weeks ago I got a letter from him. He said that he was dying, and that he would tell me something which might be useful to me, for there was no longer any chance that he would be able to go in for it himself, and I had once done him a good turn. This man

had been a poacher and had pretty nearly killed two keepers. It was while he was living in a Sussex village that he learned what he afterwards told me. In that village there lived two brothers. They were supposed to be wealthy, but they lived in an ordinary labourer's cottage with a bit of garden at the back, and in the most miserly possible manner. They did everything for themselves, and no one but themselves ever entered the cottage. They were quarrelsome and eccentric; for instance, they divided the night into watches, and one slept while the other watched. Though they grudged every farthing that they spent, and practically half-starved themselves, they kept a light burning all night in the kitchen always. They lived in the village for twenty years, and died within a week of one another; one of them was carried off by pneumonia one hard winter, and the other hanged himself when he got home from the funeral. It was found out that all those twenty years they had been in receipt of an income of two thousand eight hundred pounds each under their father's will. In each case the money producing this income was left in trust to the son for life, and afterwards, if he bad no children, to different hospitals and charitable institutions. It was shown that these two men drew the whole, or nearly the whole, of their income from the bank every year, and always drew it in gold. They had not spent it, for it was doubtful if they spent fifty pounds a year between them; and no trace of any investment could be found. Both men died intestate, and the cottage and garden, with about a hundred pounds that was in the bank, went to a relative, a man called Jordan. Of course he tried to find out where the savings of twenty years had gone to. He had the whole cottage pulled down, under his own inspection, and the whole of the garden dug up, and found nothing. Then he decided that the savings had been invested, and spent a lot of money in trying to trace them. That was no good, either. Jordan rebuilt the cottage, and left the place on his death, which happened about a year later, to an old woman who had acted as his housekeeper. She is willing to sell— I have just been down there— and I want you to buy, and then share and share alike with me in what we find there."

"At present," said Pembridge, "there doesn't seem to be the slightest earthly prospect that we should find anything."

"That," said Mardner, "is where my friend the poacher comes in. It was always his conviction, in spite of the search that failed, that the money was hidden in the garden. The cottage stands on the road, and the garden slopes rather sharply downwards behind it until it joins a plantation. There may, perhaps, be a third of an acre of this garden altogether, and, of course, when the two old men were working in it they were out of sight of anybody who might happen to be passing in the road. A few months before they died my friend happened to be coming home very early one summer morning about half an hour before dawn. He came through the plantation, and as he got to the edge of

it he looked up the garden and saw that the back door of the cottage was open and a light showing in it. At that moment out came the two brothers; the first was carrying on his back a small sack— the kind of thing that would take half a hundredweight of coals— and was bent nearly double under it; the other carried a coil of rope and a lantern. They came right down to the bottom of the garden, where a high yew hedge hid them. Not a word was said, but my friend the poacher heard a spade being used. He had half a mind to call out to them, and ask them what they were up to, but there was a special reason why he did not want anybody to know that he was not in bed and asleep that night, and so he passed on. He never thought much about the incident until after the death of the old men, when the talk about the buried treasure began, and then he kept his own counsel. He got himself taken on at the job of pulling down the cottage, and there he found in the roof a number of bags that had been used for Portland cement. Then he tumbled to it."

"Well, I don't," said Pembridge.

"At some time or other the two brothers must have wanted a lot of concrete; that's what they had the cement for; the gravel they could get anywhere in the garden simply for the trouble of digging for it. Now, there was no concrete at all used anywhere about the cottage. But concrete's fine stuff to make an underground cellar with— say at the bottom of a garden by a high yew hedge. It keeps out the damp, and you can store your sacks of anything in it— sacks of gold, for instance. But it is not all guesswork. When Jordan had pulled down the cottage and found nothing, he was discouraged. He began to dig up the garden, but the further he went the more discouraged he got. By the time that they had got to the lower end of the garden the thing was being done very slackly. They dug very shallow, and often, to save a fruit tree, they would leave a bit untouched. By this time Jordan had the idea that the money was not buried at all, but was invested; and this digging was costing money. My friend was digging by the yew hedge, and there was nobody to look after him much; he felt his spade come down on concrete— there wasn't a doubt about it. He said nothing. A week later he was fool enough to have that row with the keepers, and that finished him. He got seven years, and when he escaped, this country wasn't healthy for him. But he meant to come back one of these days and to have the money."

Mardner paused and finished his drink at a draught. "Well," he resumed, "there's the story, and it's the truth, every word of it. What are you going to do, Mr. Pembridge?"

"I'll do it," said Pembridge— "on terms."

"What terms?"

"To start with, I must have all the names given me now, and I must have a week to investigate your story."

"I'm not afraid of that."

"Secondly, if I go in for it, all that we find will be declared."

"But then we lose it all. Don't you know what the law is?"

"I do, and also what the custom is. If the sum is anything like what you suppose, there will be enough for you in any case."

"I don't know what you mean by enough," said Mardner querulously.

"We share alike. What's enough for me has got to be enough for you. If you don't like that, clear out and take your yarn somewhere else."

"All right. Of course, I can't help myself."

"The third condition is also important. I don't much care to go into any partnership with a man of your stamp. I don't trust you, and I don't like you. You will have to leave the direction of the matter entirely to me. I shall treat you as a servant, and you will have servant's work to do; you will address me as a servant would. If we are fortunate, and there is anything to divide, you can take your share and go to the devil your own way. Until then you have got to do what you are told, or I don't help you."

"As I said before, Mr. Pembridge, I've no choice."

"Then address me properly. Now, then, give me all the names, and I'll go into this. And, by the way, whatever your poaching friend saw the old man carrying in that sack, it was not sovereigns. You can make up your mind to that."

A WEEK LATER the abnormally intelligent office boy once more ushered Mardner into Mr. Pembridge's room. Mardner had changed a little. He was less shabby, and in dress and manner was a good enough imitation of a servant to suggest to Pembridge that this had once been his walk in life. He was also noticeably less shaky.

"Well, I've been into this," said Pembridge, "and I find that your story is substantially correct. I have also been down to Shadenham, and have been able to pick up one or two pieces of additional information. So far, so good."

"Then, sir, if I might suggest," said Mardner, "I think the next step to take is to buy the property in our joint names."

"You needn't trouble about that," said Pembridge. "The property is already bought in my name."

"You're trying to do me," said Mardner truculently.

"Not in the least. If there is anything to divide we shall share equally, so long as you keep to the conditions that I have laid down. I have not the least intention of doing you, as you so prettily put it, but neither do I intend to let you do me. The land's my property— not yours. Behave yourself, and that will make no difference to you. Give me any trouble, and I will have you thrown out. I've got the whip-hand. See?"

Mardner looked sulky, but became civil. He whined a little. It was quite natural that he should be suspected, but he hoped to be able to show that the suspicions were quite needless. If he didn't act on the square, he wished his hands might drop off at the roots.

"Don't talk that kind of rubbish. You'll act on the square, because you will get no chance to do anything else. Now, then, we start for Shadenham tomorrow, and there's not much time to lose. Hold your tongue and listen to the instructions I am going to give you."

PEMBRIDGE AND MARDNER, who travelled as his servant, put up at the only inn in Shadenham. It was conveniently near to the plot of ground where it was supposed that the misers had buried their money; it was not comfortable, though, and expensive discomfort annoyed Pembridge.

"Look here," he said on the morning after their arrival, "how long is this going to take, Mardner?"

"Not more than three or four hours. I've taken the tools over and I'm quite ready to start. I know where to dig, and my friend in his letter said it was not more than three feet down. Of course, if we were both going to dig—"

"We're not. My work will come in afterwards. For the present I will confine myself to keeping an eye on you. Well, if we get through in that time, it will be all right. I don't want another night here. Come along, then."

The cottage stared at them with blindless windows. The old housekeeper had removed her belongings two days before, and straw and other litter lay about on the cinder paths. They passed down the garden to the yew hedge at the bottom. Mardner looked around him. "This is it, I think."

"Go ahead, then," said Pembridge. A rustic seat had been fixed under an old apple tree close by, and there he established himself, with the morning papers and his cigarettes. Mardner took off his coat and waistcoat and laid into the work with a will. He was obviously excited. It was a quiet morning; the blows of the pick and the scrape of the spade came with monotonous regularity, and the only other sound to be heard was the song of the birds or the rustle of Pembridge's paper. Pembridge had finished his second newspaper before a word was spoken. Then Mardner threw down his spade and said, "I'm fully four feet down here, and there isn't a sign. I think I should try nearer the hedge, sir."

"Then, so far, you've done nothing but waste time. Try again, of course. And for goodness' sake get it right this time. We haven't all the day to spare for your blunders, you know."

Mardner made no answer. In another minute he was working as hard as ever. The perspiration streamed from him and his breathing was loud and laboured. But he never stopped for one moment; the fever of the chase was on him. He worked as if he were working for his life.

And once more he worked to no purpose; the second attempt at location was a failure also. Pembridge, gloomy and sarcastic, left his place and came over to Mardner. He was studiously unpleasant and insulting, and Mardner remained as studiously respectful; but Mardner's face when he was turned away from Pembridge was not pretty— it was the face of a dangerous man.

Mardner resumed his digging, and Pembridge went back to his seat. For a while he dozed, and then the midges worried and woke him. He had finished his newspapers and he was inexpressibly bored. For the sake of something to do he walked up to the cottage and went over it. It was a fairly new and quite commonplace building. But the country around was pretty, and the quiet was rather pleasant as a change from the City. As he had bought the place, it might be worth while to spend a little money on it, and use it for Saturdays to Mondays in the summer. There would probably be some fishing procurable. It was a pity the golf links were not nearer. Yes, it was worth thinking about. He glanced at his watch and saw that it was half-past two. He had had no idea that it was so late; it was time to go and eat an abominable luncheon at that incompetent inn. And then, as he glanced out of window, he saw Mardner running up the path towards the cottage.

Pembridge met him in the doorway. "Well?" he said brusquely, as Mardner came up.

"I've got it," said Mardner, panting.

"Then why the deuce couldn't you have got it before?" He showed no sign of satisfaction. "Well, come and show me it." Mardner led the way to a hole big enough for a man to work in, and about three feet deep. At the bottom of the hole was a bed of concrete, that might have been the roof of an underground cellar.

"Yes," said Pembridge, "that looks like it. Now, then, put on your coat and waistcoat, and come back to the inn for lunch."

"Excuse me, sir," said Mardner. "If you don't mind, I would sooner go straight on. I've got the spike and hammer here for the concrete. I don't want anything to eat myself. I'd a good breakfast. I should have the thing opened by the time you came back."

"I don't doubt," said Pembridge, "that you are well trained for working hard on very little food. But considering the circumstances under which you got that training, I won't have that concrete opened except when I am here."

"Very well, sir," said Mardner. And he turned to put on his coat. Once more he looked dangerous.

IT WAS PAST THREE when the work was resumed, and the job proved longer than they had expected. The earth was loose and gravelly, and the sides of the hole had to be roughly shored up; the concrete was hard and thick, and

Mardner was not used to this kind of work. It was already dark before enough of the concrete had been broken away for a man's body to pass through.

"Now, then," said Pembridge, "fasten your lantern to a string and give it to me. I'm going to see what there is down there."

He remained for some minutes on his knees peering down the hole, and taking no notice of the excited questioning of Mardner. Then he stood up and drew the lantern up again.

"Yes," he said. "I see what it is. It's a well which had run dry and been disused. The old men found it, and thought it a safer place to hide their treasure in than the cottage. The well must have been partly filled up with rubbish, and they put concrete over it; the walls are concrete, too. With the concrete roof over it, and three feet of earth on the top of that, it doesn't make a bad sort of cash-box. I can make out two sacks and some smaller bags lying on the floor, and that's about twelve feet down. We've got rope enough?"

"Plenty, sir."

"Very well, the place looks perfectly dry, and I suppose the air's all right, as the lamp did not go out. You can fasten one end of the rope round that tree and, let yourself down as soon as you like."

Mardner had a little accident while he was fixing the rope; in moving his tools out of the way he dropped his pick down the shaft.

"What a clumsy fool you are!" said Pembridge. Mardner mumbled something and prepared for the descent. His hands were blistered and bleeding with the work that he had been doing, and the rough rope cut into them; but he was hardly conscious of the pain. The moment was coming.

"All right," he called from the bottom of the shaft.

Pembridge came rapidly down the rope after him. He looked quickly at the sacks; Mardner had not touched them.

"Now, then," said Pembridge, "I'm going to make an inventory of what we find here before we hand it all over to the police."

He opened the first sack. It contained some exquisite pieces of old silver, wrapped in washleather and packed in sawdust.

"Ah," he said, as he unpacked them and noted them down, "those old men did not make a bad investment. This kind of thing is worth far more now than when it was bought. And they seem to have only bought really fine pieces. When I've finished with this sack, you will pack it up again while I am going through the next. The gold will be in the small bags."

"Very well, sir," said Mardner. His face and hands were twitching nervously; the moment had come. As Pembridge bent over the sack to take out the last piece, Mardner, without a sound, lifted the pick from the floor.

He got a good grip and raised the pick high above his head and brought it down straight— there was no room to swing it. There was a crash among the

silver, and a curious gulping sound. And Pembridge was dead. Mardner stooped down and began to move the silver out of the mess. As he did this he knocked over the lamp and was left in darkness.

Then quite suddenly his nerves went. He had no matches, and his one idea was to get out and get a light as soon as possible. Pembridge had matches, but Mardner did not dare to look for them on the dead man's body. He caught hold of the rope and began to climb. The rope fell coiling over his head; the rough edges of the concrete on which it played had frayed it. Mardner was trapped.

There was nothing else to be done; he had to feel for the matches that Pembridge carried. He bent down and stretched out a hand. It went on the dead man's face, and after that Mardner did not dare to move at all. He remained huddled against the wall until, next morning, the search-party from the inn found him.

15: The Time Lock

George Kibbe Turner

1869-1952

Australian Women's Weekly 18 Jan 1936

American journalist, short story writer and novelist. Several of his works were adapted for the movies.

ON THAT RAINY NIGHT, some years ago, young Mr. Pettibone, as he was then, stood in the window of the second story law offices of Punderford and Maddox, staring out. It is quite a time to recall so keenly, as he still does, the tune he hummed, the suit he wore, and the coolness of the rain-streaked window glass upon his finger-tips. And yet not unnatural, either. For this was to be the night of his first law case. The matter of the dark young lady and the time lock.

It was nine o'clock, or thereabouts. Outside the recent rain was shining on the jet black pavement of Malcolm's Main Street. The fixed stare of vacant-eyed street lights fell upon the still more vacant-eyed windows of the damp, yellow brick blocks across the deserted street. He stared out as absently as they; a fair-haired, still-faced young man, slowly etching the figure of a duck with his forefinger on the cool, damp window-pane.

Dull deathly dull. Nothing doing in the deadly place. For him. Or ever would be.

"Hello. What's this?" he said, turning.

It was the telephone; an evident mistake. He let it ring.

"Punderford and Maddox," he said, deciding finally to stop it. The voice of a woman answered; a young woman's, it seemed. High, excited, and, he thought, frightened.

"Thank God!"

"At your service," said young Mr. Pettibone. Suddenly alert, brightening, listening closely.

"Is this a member of the firm speaking?— May I come down to see you? Now? On something of great importance. That must be taken care of now— to-night— at once," the clear, eager voice upon the telephone asked, with stammering haste.

"With pleasure, Madame."

"Wait, please. I shall be there at once."

He sat, with still face, and studious care, marking upon the pad before him at the desk the effigy of a primitive duck, which so often had accompanied his more serious thinking since a child in primary school. And so he waited for the approaching client. Above him, as serious as himself, rose the steel engraving of Lin-coln's Cabinet in session. Around him the worn and shiny dark furniture; the

general respectability of the oldfashioned waiting-room of the most prosperous of New York suburbs' most prosperous and established law firms. That so much needed new blood— like his own. A fact as yet unseen by anyone but himself. Canvassing carefully, once more, whether opportunity might not this very night be knocking finally for the young law clerk with the arrival of this untimely and excited seeker for advice. He rose with keen ex-pectance at the sound of light feet upon the worn stairs of the old hall-way beyond the ground-glass door, suddenly and at once quite decided, as to taking the case.

The client was a dark young woman, black-haired, black-eyed, intense. A type which he feels sometimes, has now practically become extinct— with the change in the current styles of dress and manners and women. In a time when it is far worse form to own a genuine positive emotion than a sin. Her cheeks were red; her voice high and clear; her bright eyes fixed and worried. She was something vivid and alive in the world yet; frightened, but resisting still with every fibre that she had.

"Won't you sit down?"

"Thank you. You are the firm, are you not, who represent so many of the stockholders of the First National Bank?"

He watched her; the neat gloves and shoes she wore; the small dark hat, carefully and gallantly put on at just the angle that was right for his taste; romantic, but not sentimental.

"We are, oh yes," said Pettibone, still studying her with his customary aplomb.

"Yes. So father said, and so I came direct to you. To-night. In hopes ... in hopes our interests might be the same. In hopes that when the stockholders understood— that they might want— might help me save my father, and their bank, too."

"Yes?" he encouraged her.

"For I'm terribly afraid."

"Afraid?"

"Won't you go on, please?"

The Cabinet of Lincoln and himself stared straight ahead, giving the client time to collect herself.

"It is a little hard," she said, "to tell a stranger."

Leaning forward, he laid his hand upon hers at the other side of the flat desk, pressing it confidentially.

"My dear young person," he told her, "I am not a stranger. I am an attorney— your attorney, if you wish to have me."

"I know— of course."

He still held her hand with his; her eyes with his eyes.

"And the first advice I must give you in our new relation is: Trust your attorney. Tell him everything... Quite frankly... Or what's the use?"

"I know. Of course."

RELEASING her hand, he sat back to hear her story; drawing more and more thoughtfully on his pad, as it developed; yet showing neither in his face nor voice the genuine surprise which struck him at hearing it. Nor afterward when he recapitulated it himself:

"You claim, I understand, that the First National Bank is to be robbed some time to-night by its president, Mr. Wilberforce Jones."

"I do."

"To cover up irregularities of his own in its operation."

"Yes."

"And you further claim that after doing this— as part of his scheme— he plans to charge to the bank examiner to-morrow morning that your father, the bank's cashier, robbed the bank instead of him."

"I'm terribly afraid that if you don't my father may do something rash; even may be killing himself to-night."

"You can't mean that."

"To-night. When I get home. If you don't help me. Soon. Right away. For he's desperate. It was all I could do to get him to let me come here to see you."

His client answered with her decisive nod; her eyes not once leaving his. Looking back as steadily, as he pro-ceeded with his summary and her cross-examination.

"Now then, you know all this, you claim, positively, from the president's use of the time lock in the bank's vault. Interrupt me, if you will, please, if I do not get this right."

"I will."

"Your father, Mr. Newell, as I understand you, just before the closing of business this afternoon, hearing that the bank examiner was expected to be there the next morning, went into the office of Mr. Jones, the presi-dent of the bank, to expostulate with him for having replaced genuine bonds with forged ones of identical numbers, in the vaults of the bank, and warn-ing him that at any time this might be discovered. Is that right?"

"Yes."

"They two were alone in the bank. No one but themselves heard the quarrel that developed, when Jones learned for the first time that his cashier, your father, the only other person but himself who had access to the vault, knew what Jones had done. Then suddenly, and unexpectedly, Jones charged that for some time he had been suspecting your father of having robbed the bank. And now the time had come to prove it with a showdown. Then telling your father to

remain where he was, he went into the vault room, saying he was putting the time lock on the safe setting it for nine o'clock to-morrow. At which time they two would open the safe to make good their conflicting statements in the presence of the bank examiner."

"That is right."

"But— instead of this— you claim that Jones, the president, did not actually put on the time lock at all. A fact which your father saw by means of a mirror in the president's office and Jones did this, you claim, with the idea of going to the safe to-night. And not only taking the forged bonds out to prove your father's charges wrong, but robbing the bank; and fixing the securities, so as to fit a theory of your father's having robbed the bank, which he will give the bank examiner in event of the three opening the safe together."

"After Jones— Mr. Jones has fixed the safe and put the time lock on afterward," said the client.

"Yes— and your father has no idea of what the charges, what this frame-up, are going to be."

"That's the worst of it, the most terrible part."

"I know— I understand," said the young attorney, taking the next step tactfully. "But is there anything, any hook, any weakness of your father's record in the bank, which Jones can use in confirming or establishing charges? You will excuse me. But I must know this. You must tell me freely as your attorney."

The client gazed back at him with her usual steadiness. "He can say plenty. That's the trouble. He can say my father drinks at times. That he has speculated, and lost money. His personal money; not the bank's. And once in 1929 he overdrew his personal account a thousand dollars or so— for about a day— covering a call for more margin from his broker."

"But that is all; the worst that can be said about your father?"

"Absolutely yes. Except that since that time he has personally been desperately poor and extended to keep going at all. And frightfully worried all the time for fear of what Jones may do to him."

"Framing him, with all the cards stacked exactly right."

"Yes. Exactly. Yes."

"And knowing that Jones' personal affairs will force him to do what he's going to do."

"Yes. Exactly. Now what should I do?"

SILENCE fell upon the dark furniture of the waitingroom; the still-faced likenesses of Lin-coln and Seward gazed far away, while young Mr. Pettibone worked carefully at the pad upon his desk; looked up at last, starting to give his first per-sonal client his first advice.

"You are aware, of course, that your statement of facts is a very unusual one?"

"You do not doubt it then?" she came back quickly.

"I do not. No," said young Mr. Pettibone, looking up more slowly, but with a glance not less direct than hers. "But it is only fair, on the other hand, that I should ask you and your father to show us, and after us the world, his good faith and honesty in this matter. Are you willing to do this?"

"I am."

"Then there is simply one thing to do."

"What is that?"

"Your father— and yourself— must rob the bank of every security there. Before Jones does."

She was on her feet now, tense.

"If he does not do this— to prove his case, to have an actual showdown with Jones, before the stockholders or our-selves, if he does not show his good faith, by robbing and demonstrating what is in the bank, we shall not feel that we can take the case."

"But he will do it. He will rob the bank," she cried impulsively.

"I am glad of that," he said, rising.

"But what shall we do," she asked, puzzled, "after that; after we have robbed the bank?"

He gazed at her with his usual calm. He placed his hand upon her shoulder. "My dear Miss Newell," he said. "Frankly, it is your next move. We should not fancy— as counsel for the stockholders— to be your counsel also— if you are guilty. But the moment your father shows his honesty by robbing the safe and demonstrating the actual condition of its contents; why, then, we can undertake his case gladly."

"But what— after we have done this?"— she began, stammering.

"Yes?"

"What shall we do then?"

He pressed his hand upon her shoulder in a calm, professional manner.

"Simply trust your attorney to protect all interests— in a rather complicated case. Simply rob the bank, taking your first step. Trusting your attorney to notify you of the second in due time. Is that clear?"

"But I do not see yet."

"You will."

"Very well. I will."

"Good. Then hurry. Lose no time. Get there first."

He pressed his hand upon her shoul-der once again. Saw her to the door. "Don't worry. It's going to be all right. Simply trust your attorney."

Going back, he gave more attention to his artistic pencil work. He had taken a chance, yes— upon an utter stranger's looks. And yet he was not sorry or alarmed. The prize was great: perhaps a double prize— well worth gambling for. Of all women that he had known to date, in none had he felt more confidence, more charm, more certainty in his personal judgment than in this first client. Looking down, he saw the new motif appear from his subconscious in his pencil work. Side by side with the primitive unconscious duck of childhood appeared the Spencerian freehand dove. Far back in childhood his father had taught it to him, having learned it himself in a single term in business college. It had been a prized accomplishment of childhood writing notes; in his correspondence with the gentler sex in grammar school. Surviving still, as early habits will, in the subconscious.

He roused himself, having finished the outline of his first case, stretched out his hand, making his first move, the arrangement for the proper supervision of his bank robbery. If Punderford and Maddox had handled the case themselves, their course of action would, without doubt, have been different. He saw that clearly. But then they would not have approached it from so many angles.

So many hopes.

"Give me Malcolm 701." After a time he got his man.

"Listen, boy. Stop arguing. And get on your clothes. And come running. Each minute over ten you take getting here may cost you $5000 per."

Once more alone on the deserted main street, Miss Anne Newell turned on the switch, pushed down the grinding starter, startled the echoes from the brick-wallad silence with the explosion of the noisy motor of the old-style family car. Herself more or less uneasy.

Robbing the largest bank in town of everything it contained, for the benefit of its stockholders, had seemed unusual even when advised by the lawyer for the stockholders in the dark, serious office with its old, conservative, steel engravings. Now out here in the dark alone it seemed really radical. Did this young attorney, this young-appearing partner in Punderford and Maddox know exactly the law in the case? He was very young. Yet he seemed smart, well-dressed, positive. Everything you would expect a lawyer to be. And he had nice eyes. She adjusted her hat and drove on.

The weather, bad enough before her trip to his office, had changed ; and not at all for the better. It had rained again quite heavily. Low, darkish clouds like tangled, matted hair passed threateningly across lighter openings in the higher clouds. The patent-leather pavements looked shinier and more sinister. She caught, with a sudden, unaccustomed jumping at the throat, the added gleam of the rubber-coated policeman: the one guardian of the law upon his lonely beat.

"But we'll do it. We'll do just what he said,"' she told the darkness, turn- ing now from Main into Prince Street from damp, glistening blocks, to dark, shiny, maple trees.

"It will be all right. All right, Father will understand," she told herself again—turning the corner into Elm Street— and went into a skid on her smooth, old tyres which landed her practically at her front walk.

The house was still dark; she stole into it.

"Father!"

"Yes."

So far, so good; he was there, waiting in the dark.

"What did he say about it, Anne?" His voice was just a little thick.

She told him, in the dark, a grey figure still and slouched in his chair.

"That's what he said, eh?"

"Yes. Is it all right?"

"Sure. I've been waiting for twenty-five years for a show-down with that old devil, Jones."

THAT was all she could get out of him. Whether it was judgment or hate behind the decision to go, she did not know. He had been drinking, too, since she left, but how much she could not tell.

"Come on. Let's go."

They started back, she driving, he sitting behind, silent, with his two suit-cases for the papers. It was already ten o'clock. Now that they were going through with it the one thing was to get there to the bank before Jones.

She drove down the slippery streets as fast as possible on her slippery tyres; slowed down carefully opposite the alley behind the bank.

"Everything all clear?"

She looked around. "Yes."

Her father moved quickly with his two suitcases back into the darkness of the alley and back door of the bank. She closed the car door softly and sat there watching, waiting.

THE section of Main Street ahead of the car was empty, soundless, as the bottom of the sea. Beside her, slightly back, the black-ness of the alley showed blacker behind the dim whiteness of the bank. Sinister as all alleys are at night, even in the calmest, most respectable of New York suburbs. She turned sharply away at a sound in the soundlessness of the empty street—of slow, heavy, measured feet on the Main Street pavement. The single Main Street cop appeared through the windshield in his dark and shiny coat, like a seal in a glass aquarium. She sat motionless. Saw him go. That he was not coming on to see her. Then suddenly she turned about, towards the alley.

It seemed to her now, back in the darkness, she had a sense of something there, moving. A clot of slightly thicker darkness. In the black hole of the alley; beyond the sharp-cut line where the light ended.

She moved at last from her listening. It was her father, coming out. She heard the turning of the knob and lock. The wait as he set down the bags. The closing of the door again.

"Just a minute,'' said the clot of shadow.

"What is this?" her father stammered. "Who are you?"

"Don't worry. Come along. I'll take the bags."

"You!" her father said. And came on in silence.

"Get in."

He put the suit cases in after her father. Got in himself.

"Drive over to the offices of Punderford and Maddox," said the shadow.

Mr. Wilberforce Jones, withdrawing his cold hand from his front door knob, stole back again through the dark hall and the unlighted library to answer the startlingly unexpected tele-phone call that had caught him, as he was .leaving.

"Hello," he said, softly, "yes." And received the unexpected message from the still more unexpected source.

"This is Punderford and Maddox speaking."

"Yes," said Mr. Jones, deeply suspicious.

"Pettibone at the phone."

"Oh, yes, yes," said Mr. Jones, getting the voice now; that light-haired boy in Punderford and Maddox's. He had no use for him. "What can I do for you?"

"Would you care to step down to our office?"

"At this time of night?" exclaimed Mr. Jones.

"Or shall I give you the bad news over the wire?"

"The news! What news?" said Mr. Jones, his teeth clacked slightly, as they did when he got excited. They had never fitted him well.

"Your bank, sir, has just been robbed. If you will come here at once, we can put you on the trail of the robbers. Before notifying the police."

"But how— why?" said Mr. Jones.

"Hurry, please, Mr. Jones. There is no time to lose. Come to our office, unless you would rather meet us at police headquarters."

MR. JONES' teeth clacked again; the goose flesh rose upon his body. It was not alone the words, but the tone, that seemed some way suggestive.

"I'll be there. I'll come right over." It was impossible; a shame, the whole thing. For a man of his age and standing in the community, to be first forced to rob his bank, in self defence, at this time of night. And suddenly without warning to be called up in the dark and told it was already robbed. Yet there it was. And perhaps all for the best. If it were really robbed. He would see.

He put his long, damp fingers on his hip to the old revolver he had put there earlier. In case of accident or interruption. Went softly out.

The bank was just as usual, he saw going by. The windows in Punderford and Maddox's were lighted. After a minute or so he went up.

"Glad you came so soon, Mr. Jones. Won't you sit down?" It was that Pettibone, the young lawyer. "Just a minute while I get the others."

Others! Mr. Jones sat down, somewhat slowly, feeling the unaccustomed hardness of the revolver in his rear pocket as he did so.

By and by this Pettibone reap-peared from the office of Mr. Punder-ford, the senior partner, where he had gone. Another figure followed him; but not Mr. Punderford, as he had hoped.

"You know Mr. Sturgess?"

"Oh, yes, certainly," said Mr. Jones, smiling his set, false-toothed, elderly smile. It was young Sturgess, the representative of the Great Republic Guardian and Fidelity Company which wrote the bank's indemnity insurance for losses through theft.

"It was Mr. Sturgess who captured the robber red-handed." said the lawyer.

"Then you have him, the robber?" said Mr. Jones quickly.

"Just in there," he answered, nodding at the ground glass door into the second private office. "He has confessed," he said in a lower voice.

"Who— who is he?" asked Mr. Jones jerkily.

But he did not answer that at once. "He then confessed the taking of the securities, of every security in the bank."

"Every security?"

"And now he demands that we take them and him at once to the police department."

THE whole thing was unreasonable and unfair. He sat there, Wilberforce J. Jones, the president of the First National Bank, beneath the steel engraving of Lincoln's Cabinet in Punderford and Maddox's office— here at ten p.m. To hear stuff like this from this young law clerk; and feel the hardness of his pistol, that he himself had put there, growing more and more noticeable in his hip pocket.

"Or the bank examiner, if you prefer," said the young whippersnapper, more and more politely. "Claiming that he has robbed the bank in good faith and merely wishes the chance now to demonstrate this to the stockholders and the bank examiner. Whatever that may mean to you!"

Mr. Jones did not respond, his faculties not coming back at once. The one sensation, that hard revolver in his hip pocket, dominating everything else more and more.

"Something about the time lock of the bank being left off by you to-night— which gave him his opportunity, whatever that means. So we sent for you to

find out." He looked up with no visible expression, while Mr. Jones stood listening to a new voice strangely high and shrill; yet one he had often heard before.

"Bring him in. Let's see them both. Both the robber and the bonds."

"With pleasure."

It was a moment before Newell was in the glass doorway; he and the lawyer each bringing in a bag of bonds. And the idea came over Mr. Jones as to what he should do.

"What do you say? Shall I call him? The bank examiner at the hotel. To have the showdown?" the lawyer's voice was going on.

The pistol on Mr. Jones' hip grew suddenly light and disappeared. He found himself suddenly waving it. "No you don't. No you don't. Stand over there. Keep off from that telephone"; that strange voice that he knew so well was going on until he stopped it suddenly, and went on talking in his natural voice.

"Now, then, let's get this thing straightened out if we can."

"Why not?" This lawyer, this still-faced boy was answering and then turning toward the third glass door.

"Miss Newell."

"Yes."

"Is your door locked?"

"Yes."

"Get ready to call the police, when I say three."

Mr. Jones watched him steadily; down the level pistol barrel across his long white hand; a strange sight that he never thought that he would live to see.

"One . . . Are you ready, Mr. Jones, to stop your jesting? . . . For you know, Mr. Jones, this is foolishness."

"You'll see," said Mr. Jones, still stiffly holding out the gun before him.

"Two. Miss Newell, will you take hold of the receiver without removing it?"

"I have."

"What do you say, Mr. Jones? Must we do this thing, Mr. Jones? Must we really?"

"No." Mr. Jones still heard his voice responding. "No. You can't do this thing to me. Hand over those two suit cases to me. That is the property of the bank."

He could see him looking back up the revolver barrel, still arguing. "Why be foolish, Mr. Jones, why not make arrangements— inside the family here without calling in the police— the authorities. Why not simply sit back with Mr. Sturgess here to represent the indemnity company, and the firm of Punderford and Maddox the interests of the stockholders. Why go to gaol, unnecessarily, Mr. Jones? When a compromise can so easily be arranged."

The pistol wavered slightly at this point. Mr. Jones saw it do so.

"Punderford and Maddox, Punderford and Maddox! Since when were you Punderford and Maddox?" he said and laughed loudly.

His harsh amusement woke a slow smile from the young attorney at the desk. "You are quite right, Mr. Jones. Thanks for the suggestion."

"WHAT are you doing now?" exclaimed Mr. Jones, his ancient pistol rising once more, as the lawyer, watching him, reached for the desk phone.

He waved his free hand reassuringly. "Calling up Mr. Maddox at his house, that's all. To fix that up for you: that little matter of the partnership."

As he said this he continued marking very carefully on the pad before him— turning his head critically from side to side, as if still uncertain of the effect. Watching carefully, over his shoulder Mr. Jones saw dimly what he thought it was: A broadly smiling duck, wearing a pronounced bang.

Joe Maddox, the slightly junior partner of Punderford and Maddox, came growling finally to the phone. Standing in his pyjamas in the dark, with his bare feet on the bare floor, he shook his grizzled forelock at the transmitter.

"Well, what is it?"

He was a man of violence; had made his living by violence for twenty-five years. He was the jury lawyer of the firm, the toughest jury lawyer in the county.

The bland young voice came back to him. "This is Punderford, Maddox and Pettibone," he thought he heard it say.

"This is what?" roared Joe Maddox, recognising it at once. He was a very profane man, when started. It was that kid; that crazy, lightheaded Pettibone, get-ting gay on the partnership idea once more.

"Pardon me. My mistake. This is Punderford and Maddox. Pettibone speaking."

"Well, what is it? Is the county courthouse on fire?"

"No. But I've got the First National Bank here."

"Oh yeah?"

"You've often said you'd like to see what was going on inside there— as a stockholder yourself."

"Well, what of it?"

"Service," the young maniac was saying back. "Our motto. One word and it is done— we are holding the bank here for you. The president, and the cashier and all the assets; some 450,000 dollars in securities in two black bags. And Mr. Jones himself here now guarding it and me with a big pistol, all waiting for you. And if you don't believe it, wait!"

Standing in the chilly dark, Mr. Maddox heard another voice; the voice of Jim Sturgess of the Great Republic Guardian and Fidelity Company. "You'll have to come down, Joe. The sooner the better."

He clapped back the telephone, dressed, started. What was going on? What would Jim Punderford, the senior partner, say to this new stunt. The old firm of Punderford and Maddox, the standard law firm of the county, wrecked for the whim, the sudden fancy of a mad boy. A conscious eccentric, an original who drew ducks upon a pad before making his eccentric answers; and the greatest kidder of all time. Yet doing nothing without a definite objective.

THEY were all waiting silently when he reached the office; the four men, and this good-looking, black-eyed girl. He knew her at the second look; it was Jim Newell's little girl with the black pigtails, grown up. Young Pettibone introduced her. "Kindly meet my first client. The first business I brought into the firm."

Joe Maddox looked at him making his marks on the pad as he talked. Getting around to his purpose; to that partnership thought again no doubt.

"I took the liberty, in your absence, and Mr. Punderford's, to give her the advice which has brought us here to-night," he said, waving around easily with his pencil at the two black bags, which he claimed held 450,000 dollars at least; all the bank's securities.

"He told them— he advised these people here, to rob my bank," said old Jones, getting excited; trying to hurry the youngster.

He just sat there, drawing his ducks. "Telling them Punderford and Mad-dox advised it, too."

He looked up at last. "Pleasing you, Joe," he said. (Everybody called Mad-dox, Joe. He was the best and easiest-known court lawyer in the county.) "Giving you a look in at that old First National Bank Mystery. Showing devotion to God, country, and Punderford and Maddox."

They were in for it; there was nothing to do but go ahead after old man Jones; and slam the heart out of the old devil. Between Maddox and himself, and Sturgess and the others, they had him on the run; and a compromise started. Well on the way to an arrangement— to let the old man out, and take over what assets he had; and keep the bank going.

IT was after that that young Pettibone started out for what he was after personally, lifting his head from his drawing.

"There is just one more small matter; another angle of the case, that I would like to secure your advice upon as an older attorney," he said, looking over to Joe Maddox very calmly.

"Ah-ha," said Maddox, looking back, watching it coming.

"About the professional ethics of this case and myself personally."

"I see."

"For I find myself on the horns of a dilemma."

"Oh you do, eh?" said old Joe Mad-dox, scowling at him under his long untidy forelock. "Well, let's get you off it. Which is it?"

"You see, as I viewed the case," said the young madman, looking up again. "As I viewed the case as brought here by our client. (He waved his arm politely.) There were different possibilities as to action. I could, of course, have advised my client to take the matter to the authorities at once. Perhaps locking up the safe with his own combination first, you see, which would very probably have entailed the closing of the bank."

"Ug," said Joe Maddox.

"What I did, of course, was to advise the robbing of the bank... In good faith. Under proper supervision," he said, waving now at Sturgess, the Indemnity man. "An advice, that very possibly the firm— either Mr Punderford or yourself, would not have given, if here. Correct me if I am wrong."

Mr. Maddox not answering, he went on with his plea.

"Which leaves us, as I see it, in this situation: If I, on the one hand, only advised my client to rob the bank for the good of the State— of the people at large— once having done this, my duty is to call in the authorities now, to prove the robbery to be in good faith, for the benefit of all, and indi-cating, of course, the whereabouts and the receivers of the stolen goods, which, of course, might be liable to cause comment; not only for me personally, but even for Punderford and Maddox— in whose offices the stuff would be found. You see my point?"

"Hum," said Mr. Maddox, still watch-ng him, as he went back to his draw-ing, looked up again.

"Now! And here we come to the crux of the case," he said. They all watched him, especially the bright-eyed girl. "On the other hand, if I were a member of this firm, representing not only the interests of these clients here but also for the stock-holders, my duty— the whole ethics of the thing change— from that moment on. I could scarcely go to the authorities; and wreck the interests of my clients by the closing of the bank. I could scarcely reveal the present situation of the securities of the bank here. To the authorities."

THEY still looked at him in silence as he raised his artistic pencil from his drawing.

"You get my meaning perhaps; a partnership, a partnership. What else would make such an excellent, a fool-proof solution of the dilemma in which we both find ourselves?"

"Oh yeah," said Joe Maddox, his eye still on him.

"Correct me, if I am wrong."

"Starting when?"

"At eight to-morrow morning. Before banking hours."

"And subject to Old Man Punderford's O.K. in the morning." After all, he had done the job, the crazy nut had turned the trick.

"O.K. with me," he said, making more careful marks upon his pad, and then all at once raising it. "Listen, Joe, cast your eye on this. How's that for a masterpiece?"

"What is it? If you know."

"A duck."

"A duck," said Joe Maddox. "It looks to me more like a pigeon."

"You're right. It is!" said the young loon, as if surprised. "Now you speak of it. That's exactly what it is. A Spencerian dove. I used to make them for my girl, 'way back—" he started, and stopped, staring. They all did.

That girl; the black-eyed Newell child, that he had told to rob the bank was having hysterics all at once. Young Pettibone was by her side, holding her; talking to her as if there was nobody else there; kidding her back to normal.

"Relax," he said, "that's all. Put yourself in the hands of your attorney. Ease up."

After a while she raised her head up from his shoulder, laughing more naturally.

He put it back again— with a gentle pressure, but she refused to leave it.

"We'll have to go home now. My father and I."

"Taking your attorney— with you. In case of any interference. And you can stay here, to watch over the 450,000 till I come back, pardner." He continued, gazing at Maddox very calmly.

Joe Maddox stood there with the rest, watching him pass out with his clients; holding the arm of the Newell girl; the one he afterwards married.

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16: The *Life* Polar Expedition

Robert Benchley

1889-1945

In: *The Early Worm*, 1927

A humorous riposte to Admiral Byrd's flight to the North Pole in 1926 in a Fokker Trimotor. It first appeared as a series in The New Yorker*. .*

IN SPITE OF THE FACT that already three polar expeditions are well under way in the air, *Life* has decided that the interests of science demand, or at any rate, ask nicely for, an expedition to be conducted through some other medium. We have therefore decided on the bicycle.

We realize that our expedition will have to hurry like everything on bicycles to catch up with the Amundsen and Byrd groups, but we are willing to make the try, and all our men are imbued with an enthusiasm and zeal to carry the banner of *Life* to the Pole which cannot but result in *something*.

Feverish preparations are now under way for the belated start of the *Life* bicycle expedition to the North Pole. The tardy departure has been due to the failure of the contractors to finish the trousers-clips in time, but everything is now in readiness and it looks as if we might start at any minute now. The men are all eager to catch up with Amundsen and Byrd and we all feel that, by very fast pedaling and no fooling along the way, we can do it.

"We *will* do it," Lieutenant Commander Marc Connelly said to me last night, and that just about expresses the spirit behind the whole trip.

"Why did you choose the bicycle?" a lot of people have asked us. "Why *court* danger?"

We realize the risk that we are taking but feel that the bicycle is the logical means for a party of our description to reach the Pole. Three years ago it would have been impossible. But since then we have learned so much more about the earth's magnetism and bicycle navigation that, with the improved technique in balancing which we have developed, we feel that the danger is merely nominal. The farthest that we can possibly fall, in case of an upset, is in an arc with a radius of six feet. Now in this latitude (or in any latitude in which we are likely to be for some time) the rate of acceleration of a falling body is thirty-two feet per second; so you will see that it can't hurt much.

Furthermore, we are using the new Radley model bicycle, which combines all the best features of the old Columbia bicycle with several modern inventions, such as the gyro-balancer and the flash tail-light. The gyro-balancer is a contraption attached to the saddle, by means of which the rider is enabled to doze or shell nuts as he rides and be assured that, unless he leans beyond an angle of forty-five degrees, his machine will right itself automatically. If dozing,

however, he must not forget to pedal, as the gyro-balancer does not function unless the wheel is in motion. The flash tail-light is more for looks than anything else. It flashes red, green and vanilla.

As at present planned, our course to the Pole will be as follows:

Leave the Life office at 598 Madison Ave., New York. Over to Fifth Ave. and up Fifth Ave. to 120th St., skirting Mount Morris Park, past 138th St. (Mott Haven), striking onto the Bronx River Parkway.

Up through Morrisania, Woodlawn, Mount Vernon, Bronxville, Tuckahoe, Crestwood, Scarsdale, and Hartsdale to White Plains.

From White Plains we continue north direct into Canada and through Canada to Victoria Island.

A short carry across Melville Sound to Melville Island. Another carry to Borden Island, followed by a short carry to Axel Heiberg Land and a final carry to Grant Land on Ellesmere Island.

Thence direct to the Pole.

EN ROUTE with LIFE'S *Polar Expedition, passing through 125th St., Manhattan, May 12.—*

After a successful hop-off from the curbing in front of the office of *Life* at 598 Madison Ave., New York City, we pedalled our bicycles slowly up Madison Ave. to 59th St., where it was discovered that Lieut.-Commander Connelly's rear wheel was still locked, a precaution which had been taken while the machines were standing in the rack outside the office. This had made speed out of the question for Lieut.-Commander Connelly, and had resulted in an odd, dragging sensation which he was at a loss to account for until a passerby called his attention to the locked wheel. The trouble was immediately remedied, and the expedition proceeded at a much smarter pace up Madison Ave.

This little incident, at the very outset of our trip, while unimportant in itself, just goes to show the spirit which is animating our men and the determination in their hearts to see this thing through at any cost. Lieut.-Commander Connelly might very well have become discouraged when he found that his rear wheel was not revolving at all and abandoned the thing entirely, but with characteristic bulldog grit he kept pedalling right ahead with only one wheel and would probably have stuck at it until the Pole was reached, do or die. It is such courage that makes us all optimistic.

Proceeding up Madison Ave. to 60th St., we turned the wheels at a sharp right angle and cut across into Fifth Ave. This, while perhaps foolhardy on the face of it, was not the madcap move that it may seem to you sitting safely at home reading of our progress. For we had received wireless messages from the station at 72nd St. and Madison Ave. that at that corner there was a nasty

excavation, into which we might very well have hurtled with disastrous results had we kept on our way up Madison. "I never before realized what a valuable service the wireless telegraph can accomplish," said Ensign Thermaline to me. Ensign Thermaline was on the bicycle just ahead of me, and as he turned to make this remark, his front wheel struck the curbing a glancing blow, which threatened for a moment to result in a spill, but with rare presence of mind Ensign Thermaline turned his head front again without waiting for my corroboration of his remark (which I would have given willingly had there been time or had the occasion been more propitious) and, utilizing the gyro-balancer with which each of our Radley machines is equipped, righted himself and his wheel in no time at all. It was an exciting moment, however, and we all felt better when Ensign Thermaline was once again headed straight north up Fifth Ave.

All of our instruments are in excellent working order except the flash tail-light on Lieut.-Commander Connelly's wheel, which persists in flashing red, a signal that he is going the other way. It should be flashing green. This has caused a little confusion among vehicles following in our wake, for the printed directions in the daily papers stated that those vehicles encountering our expedition en route could tell the direction in which we were moving by watching our flash tail-lights, red if we were going south and green if we were going north. Something akin to a panic was caused among the passengers on a Fifth Ave. bus which was following close on behind Lieut.-Commander Connelly's wheel when he suddenly flashed red, indicating that he was pedalling head-on for the bus. It was only when Lieut.-Commander Connelly yelled a cheery "Mistake, mistake!" that the bus-driver could be convinced that he ought not to turn aside and let the Connelly wheel pass.

We are now approaching 125th St. and the difference in the atmospheric conditions between lower and upper Fifth Ave. is distinctly noticeable. The traffic, while just as heavy, is a little easier to steer through. Ensign Thermaline seems, at the moment, to be lost, but I have no doubt that he will turn up again as soon as that big van gets out of the way just beyond Capt. Nordney. Capt. Nordney joined the expedition at the Heckscher Foundation at 104th St. and Fifth Ave.

It now looks as if we might be able to make 138th St. (Mott Haven) by night-fall, but I rather hope that we don't as there probably wouldn't be any place to spend the night. I certainly have never seen, or heard of, any hotels in that neighborhood.

135th St., New York City, May 12.—At 5:58 p. m. today the *Life* Polar Expedition passed through this street, bearing N.E. by N. The members seemed a little tired and Lieut.-Commander Connelly's wheel was dragging badly.

Commander Benchley was sending out messages in all directions, asking if anyone knew where they could put up for the night.

Railroad Y. M. C. A., 140th St., New York City, May 12.—

Preparations are being made here to take care of the *Life* Polar Expedition, which is due to make a landing at 6:20 p. m. Searchlights are in readiness and hot baths are being run to accommodate at least two of the party.

EN ROUTE with "Life's" Bicycle Expedition to the North Pole. May 17—

We are now just between Woodlawn and Mt. Vernon, at a point where there seems to be some sort of road-digging going on. This means that we shall have to sit down and wait for them to finish, or else go back and take a roundabout route. We are just a little discouraged.

"Chief," Lieut.-Commander Connelly said to me as we were pedalling through Morrisania (168th Street), "do you ever have any doubts about our catching up with the others—Amundsen and Byrd, I mean?"

I felt a strange little chill creep around my heart. Was this mutiny?

"Have you heard any of the men talking?" I asked, without looking at him.

"Well, no, not exactly," he replied, "but Ensign Thermaline asked me yesterday how long I figured out that it would be before we sighted one of the other expeditions."

"You can tell Ensign Thermaline," I said, "that if he will keep his feet pedalling 'round and 'round just as fast as he can and maintain his balance, the rest of us will do the same."

Lieut.-Commander Connelly looked at me with tears in his eyes. "Aye, aye, sir," was all that he said, but it spoke volumes.

From Mott Haven, where we spent the night, we have pedalled due north over the Grand Concourse, stopping only once at a repair shop to get a new thumb-piece for Ensign Thermaline's bell. Ensign Thermaline had been using the bell almost constantly since leaving 57th Street, being one of the most cautious pilots in the expedition.

A peculiarity of the country which we all have noticed since crossing over the Harlem River is the rows upon rows of large apartment houses which have sprung up along the route. At first none of us spoke of it, but finally Lieut.-Commander Connelly could keep his thoughts to himself no longer. "Have you noticed the large number of apartment houses along the way?" he asked. We all admitted that we had.

In front of one of these apartment houses an interesting sight met our eyes. A little boy was seen riding along in what looked like a very small automobile and it was in effect really an automobile except that it was propelled by the little boy's feet, which were in direct contact with the sidewalk. Some members of

the expedition were in favor of stopping and getting the little boy to join, but wiser counsel prevailed and we decided that it would take him too long to get his winter things packed and that we ought not to incur any more delays than we should run into in the natural course of events. "He would have been cute, though," said Lieut-Commander Connelly wistfully.

Just the other side of Williamsbridge we ran into an obstacle which for a while threatened to hold us up indefinitely. Right in our path we came to a high wall surrounding a reservoir. We sent Ensign Thermaline up to take soundings and he returned, making a long face, and reporting that the reservoir was practically ten feet deep.

"What a place to build a reservoir anyway!" I said, and the other joined me in my disgust.

Fording the darned thing being out of the question, we decided that it would be better to take one of the roads which seemed to lead around it. We chose the one to the left because left is Lieut.-Commander Connelly's favorite direction. And Dame Fortune was with us in our choice, for it led, after a while, right into the Bronx River Parkway, which was *just* where we wanted to be. Had we taken the road to the right, there is no telling where we should have ended up.*

**The right road also leads to the Bronx River Parkway.—Editor.*

It was in passing Woodlawn Cemetery that we got into the discussion which is still raging as we sit by the roadside before Mt. Vernon. The sight of the miles and miles of monuments in Woodlawn depressed Lieut.-Commander Connelly and set him thinking.

"Man's span is *so* short," he said, drawing up alongside my "bike" (as we call our wheels). "Man's span is so short that it seems hardly worth all the fuss and pother of trying, doesn't it?" he whispered.

"I think that word is 'bother,'" I said.

"Which word?" he asked.

"The word you called 'pother,'" I replied, a little cruelly, I am afraid.

"Are you *sure*?" he asked.

"As sure as one can be of anything in this old world," I said.

"That's just it," the lieutenant-commander returned, "what *can* one be sure of? We are born, grow up, make our little plans—and what sad, brave little plans they are, too—and then just as we think we are succeeding"—the young explorer stopped and looked at the rows of tombstones on our left.

"I know, Lieutenant-Commander," I said, sympathetically. "You don't have to say it."

And so we rode on in silence, until we reached this sort of digging-up they are doing in the road. Then I said: "Oh, the devil!" And at this rather pat climax to a discussion on philosophy, we both laughed.

But if we are held up very long here it will be no laughing matter, for in the papers we read that Amundsen is already on his way to the Pole from Spitsbergen.

EN ROUTE with "Life's" Bicycle Polar Expedition. May 24—

We chose this route northward, through Mt. Vernon, Tuckahoe and Scarsdale, because we figured out that it might be pleasant to stop off at my house in Scarsdale for maybe a bite to eat, or, in case there was not time for that, at any rate to let the boys see our bicycles. But I guess now that we would have done better to take the Hudson River road.

We reached Scarsdale late yesterday afternoon, intending to put in at my side-yard, get a drink of cool water and perhaps a pocketful of Rosa's cookies, show my two boys how the gyro-balancer works, and then push on to White Plains for the night. The cool-water-and-cookies part of the plan worked out to the dot, but in demonstrating the gyro-balancer to the boys we ran into a snag which has held us up for an entire day.

It was really due to the kind-heartedness of Lieut.-Commander Connelly that the whole thing happened. He insisted on removing his gyro-balancer from the frame of his "bike" in order to show Nathaniel, my older boy, just how it worked, and, as he did so, he laid the loose nuts on a piece of paper on the ground. Robert, my younger boy (who is only six and so mustn't be blamed too much), claims that he didn't go near the paper or the nuts. And he probably doesn't realize that he did. But one of the nuts was found over a nail on a boat that he was working on a few feet away, and the other had disappeared completely.

A search was immediately instituted which covered every square inch of the lawn and extended into the street— those things roll so. But when darkness came we were no nearer to finding it than we had been at the beginning, and it was necessary to telephone back into New York for an extra nut, which they said they would send out the first thing in the morning. It is now 4:17 in the afternoon and the man hasn't come yet. We are very discouraged.

It was while we were searching for the nut that a neighbor came up and asked us if we had heard anything about the Byrd expedition's having flown over the Pole. I got him aside out of earshot of the other men and asked him if he was sure. He said no, but that he had seen a cartoon in some paper which seemed to have reference to a successful flight by Byrd. I, however, laughed his fears away and went back to the search. Even if Byrd *does* beat us to it, his victory will have been by flying-machine, while ours will be by bicycle—two entirely different things.

The trip from Mt. Vernon to Scarsdale was one of great beauty and was accomplished without a mishap. The route led along the Bronx River Parkway, through woods and across streams, which made up in a way for the rough time we had in the traffic in New York City.

While passing through Tuckahoe, Lieut.-Commander Connelly saw a scarlet tanager perched on a bush overhanging the stream. Thinking that it might be interesting to have it for our collection of flora and fauna which we are making for the Museum, we dismounted and crept up very quietly beside it, thinking to bag it before it could collect its wits. But it heard us coming and flew away.

There is a particularly odd family of ferns which grows along the bank of the Bronx River, and, ferns not being as agile as birds, we were able to pick great quantities of it. I wish that some of my readers could tell me what the name of it is. It is green, like other ferns, but it seems to have a sort of flower which looks like a carnation. The blossom was still in bud and so we were unable to tell exactly what it does look like, but I should say that a carnation would just about fit it. Any naturalist who happens to have run across this fern, and who knows what it is, would relieve our minds considerably if he, or she, would write to the *Life* Polar Expedition, General Delivery, White Plains, N. Y., and tell us. Just a regular fern, with a carnation blossom.

We are now going out into the side-yard again with a flashlight to take another look for the missing nut, as evidently the man from town isn't going to bring out that extra one today, and we *must* get started early tomorrow morning.

Every cloud, they say, has a silver lining, and, as a result of our being held up here in Scarsdale like this, we have been able to have some of Rosa's excellent baked-beans. I find it almost impossible to get *real* New England baked-beans in this region, unless you tell someone just how they should be done. In the first place, it must be a California pea-bean that is used, and these should be put to soak the night before and then baked in a slow fire all the next day. If we had got away when we expected, the beans would not have been ready. So perhaps we were a little harsh with Bobbie.

AT THE HOP-OFF of LIFE'S *Polar Expedition, Scarsdale, N. Y. (Second Lap)—*

Here we are, much to our surprise, all set for the second big lap on our expedition to the North Pole by bicycle, begun last spring. Those of you with a scientific turn of mind who have followed us thus far will remember that we were held up in my home in Scarsdale by a lost nut and that, by the time we were ready to start on again, news had come of the so-called successful completion of the Byrd and Amundsen expeditions.

The positive assurance that we had been beaten in the race to the Pole, with our goal practically within pedaling distance, as you might say, was naturally very depressing. Lieutenant-Commander Connelly took the thing particularly to heart, as he had *so* wanted us to be first. We found him that afternoon in the Bronx River Parkway, kicking a tree much bigger than himself and half-sobbing, half-laughing: "Darn-darn-double-darn!" and "You old *tree*, you!"

I myself was quite disheartened but tried not to show it to the brave boys who had come so far and had shown such splendid spirit. So I proposed that we go back to the house and sing some songs. I wish that you might have seen the will with which the rest of the crew took up my suggestion, and have heard the room ring with the sounds of "Upidee" and "Solomon Levi" when we finally got down to it. Both Lieutenant-Commander Connelly and Ensign Thermaline sang tenor.

It was Ensign Thermaline who finally spoke the words which gave us new courage to continue on our expedition in spite of the self-styled winners, Byrd and Amundsen.

"Why should we stop," he asked, toppling off the piano bench, "just because some wise-cracking aviators have flown over the Pole? Our aim was not to *fly*. It was to bicycle. That popular interest in polar expeditions has died down should mean nothing to us. That the New York *Times* will not take any more expedition articles until it uses up those it has on hand means nothing to us. We can get to the Pole and back before the George Palmer Putnam series has even been got together in book form. We can still be the first to bicycle across the Pole— and, by the Eternal, we will!"

At this we were on our feet and cheering. Rosa brought in a plate of hermits and we sat over these until far into the night making plans for our second dash to the Pole.

It was decided that, since the Putnam expedition on the *Morrissey* was being written up by Mr. Putnam's little boy David, we should take my little boy Bobby along as official yeoman and that all reports should be written by him. He is seven, and no one, not even his teacher, can read his writing; so he seemed practically ideal.

We also decided that we ought to have names for our bicycles (like the Putnam's *Morrissey*), and Lieutenant-Commander Connelly immediately chose "The O'Toole" for his, and Ensign Thermaline "Mavourneen" for his. Mine was to be "The Banshee."

The next thing to do was to buy a small bicycle for Bobby, and, believe it or not, it took until just this week to find one small enough. However, Scarsdale was very pleasant during the summer and we all were very happy and brave, and here we are ready to start tomorrow, "rain or shine," as Lieutenant-Commander Connelly expressed it, laughing to hide his tears.

SPECIAL North Pole Correspondence from Bobby Benchley, Juvenile Member of LIFE'S *Bicycle Expedition. En route to Pole. North White Plains, N. Y.—*

When we left Scarsdale on the second dash to the Pole my father told me that he would write the account of our trip and that I should sign my name to it, as every expedition has to have a little boy along who writes a book about it later.

"You write it and I sign it?" I asked him.

"That's right, Bobby," he said. "Daddy writes it and Bobby signs it and Bobby gets all the publicity."

"Publicity me eye," was my answer. "If I sign it, I write it. I'll take no responsibility for your drivel. I know your stuff and I prefer to write my own, *if* you don't mind. The rest of the school would kid the pants off me if one of your books came out with my name signed to it."

This angered my father and he made as if to hit me, but I ducked and ran into the house.

"All right for you, you big bully!" I yelled out at him. "Just for that I won't *go* on your old expedition."

This sobered him up and he agreed to let me write my own stuff and sign it and take ten per cent. of the royalties. If the book sells as it ought to, with any kind of pushing at all from the publishers, I ought to clean up enough to marry Ruthie Henshel in the spring.

So here we are, as far as North White Plains, and very dull it has been up till now, too. We left Scarsdale at ten o'clock Wednesday morning, I on my new Demon with special coaster-brake attachment and a swell cap with a big visor on it to keep the Artic sun out of my eyes. It is my private opinion that all the Artic sun we see on this trip you could *put* in my right eye and I'd never notice it.

(*Proofreading note by Benchley, Sr.*—I *told* Bobby he ought to let me write out a rough draft for him first. You see what he has done with "Arctic." However, if he is going to be just stubborn about the thing—)

The trouble with the expedition so far is that my father and Lieut.-Commander Connelly get winded so soon. They can't pump up even a little hill without having to get off at the top and rest. We're lucky to be at North White Plains, let alone the North Pole. I began by going on ahead as fast as I could, but this just made them sore and I lost them going through Hartsdale and had to sit down by the roadside and wait for them to come up. They both got pretty fat during the summer hanging around at the base in Scarsdale, and my father especially has got to look out or he'll look something awful in another year. I

told him so, too, and he told me to shut up or he'd send me away to military school.

Well, anyway, what with the old folks puffing along behind and Ensign Thermaline having to stop off in White Plains to see an old girl of his, it has taken us just four days to get this far.

Coming through White Plains, my father tried to tell me about the battle that was fought there during the Revolutionary War.

"What battle was that?" I asked.

"The Battle of White Plains, of course," he said. "What did you think it was, the Battle of Princeton, N. J.?"

"Princeton beat Harvard, didn't they?" I came back at him.

At this he made a lunge for me, and fell off his bicycle, which got me to laughing so hard I had to stop, too.

"And who won the Battle of White Plains, Father dear?" I asked him, trying to change the subject.

"The Americans did, of course," he said, brushing himself off.

"Yeah?" I said. "So the Americans won, did they? Well, that shows what *you* know about it. The British won. We had it in school only last week."

"What school?" asked my father, very sore now.

"Not Harvard, anyway," I said. "Yale beat Harvard, too."

"Yeah?" he said, getting redder and redder. "Yale beat Harvard by playing twelve men against Harvard's eleven.... And if you aren't a better boy, Daddy's going to send you right back to Scarsdale on the 4:10 from White Plains."

"The 4:10 doesn't stop at Scarsdale," I said. "It's an express to 125th St."

"Let's be getting on," interrupted Lieut.-Commander Connelly. "This is no way to get to the North Pole— arguing about Harvard and Yale."

So we all got on our wheels again and pushed ahead, but I think I'll drop off at Mt. Kisco and see the Barry kids. My time is worth *something*.

CONTINUATION of the log of Bobby Benchley, Juvenile Yoeman on LIFE'S *North Pole Expedition. Mt. Kisco, N. Y.—*

Things have been going from bad to worse in this expedition and I doubt very much if I can stick it out any longer. My father has been unbearable ever since we left North White Plains, harping continually on the fact that I am only seven years old and small for my age at that. If parents only knew it, it is that sort of talk which makes for radicalism and debauchery in the younger generation.

Then he began insisting that I mention the names of firms which have contributed stuff for our expedition. When I say that we stopped at the roadside for lunch I must add "which was so kindly contributed by the Alexander Hamilton Peanut Butter Sandwich Co., of 1145 North Rumsey Street, Chicago."

Or if I mention tipping our hats to a lady, acknowledgment must be given to the "Bon Ton Arctic Hat Co., who were generous enough to supply the expedition with hats."

Now this is a lot of hooey and I told my father so and refused point-blank to lend myself to any such cheap advertising gag as that. It was then that he brought up the point that I was only seven and that I should busy myself with only those thoughts which a seven-year-old boy should have. And he added, furthermore, that I could keep a civil tongue in my head. So I have determined to stop off here at Mt. Kisco and spend a week or so with the Barry kids and then go on back home to Scarsdale. That expedition is never going to get to the North Pole anyway. My father and Lieut.-Commander Connelly are too fat—especially my father. You ought to see him.

Insert in log made by Benchley, Sr.

Bobby has proved quite a disappointment to us so far, and I am not sure that I would be sorry to see him leave the expedition here. Our idea in having him along was to give the boy a little publicity and to have him write a book which could be sold to the juvenile trade around Christmas time, but a little boy who behaves as badly as he does doesn't deserve any publicity and he can't write for a darn anyway.

Furthermore, I am *not* getting fat. I always put on a little weight in the winter, because I can't play tennis, but every one says that it is becoming to me. I weigh only 160 when I am ready for my cold-bath (which I very seldom am, *these* mornings) and for a man of my height, that is not a pound too much. As a matter of fact, Bobby is probably a little sore because he is so small for his age. You'd never think he was seven. He looks more like a child of three. He must get that from his mother's side of the family, because all the Benchleys have shot right up to a good height before they were seven. His older brother Nat is a fine tall boy. And a great deal smarter in school than Bobby.

Then, too, another sign that I am not too fat is that people who haven't seen me for several years all remark "How well you look!" You don't say that to a man who is *too* fat, do you?

But there is no reason for having our expedition torn with dissension just because a little boy has no respect for his father. I suggested sending him back to Scarsdale, but Lieut.-Commander Connelly said why not give him another chance, he is so cute. It is all very well for an outsider to call a child cute, but when a man has reached my age he is entitled to a little respect from his own children—it seems to me.

(*Resumption of the log by Bobby.*)

It is very nice here in Mt. Kisco at the Barrys' and I wouldn't be surprised if the whole expedition stayed here until the snow gets out of the roads. Mr. Barry has some very good stuff that he brought from France last year and I heard my father say last night that he wouldn't care if he *never* saw the North Pole or anything else for that matter. He and Lieut.-Commander Connelly think they are pretty good at two-part singing and as Lieut.-Commander Connelly said, "It looks as if it were going to be a fine winter for two-part singing, especially 'Sleep,

Kentucky Babe.'" Mr. Barry hasn't said anything yet except that he has to take his family to Cannes early in March. All he expected us to do was stop here overnight, and while he is very nice about it, I guess he knows what he is in for, all right, all right.

On the way up from North White Plains I saw a snow-bird, but didn't say anything about it as I knew it would mean taking out pencils and making notes for the Museum. A hot lot of good the Museum is going to get out of *this* expedition.

Mt. Kisco, New York, January 21st.—

At a meeting of the older members of the expedition last night it was voted to ask Bobby for his resignation, not in any spirit of anger but simply because it was felt that he wasn't in sympathy with the aims and policies of those in command. Lieut.-Commander Connelly was elected to inform Bobby and to see that he got his carfare back to Scarsdale.

Bobby had anticipated our action, however, by resigning on his own hook and was already on his way home with one of the Barry children in the Barrys' car, leaving a note to the effect that he was pretty tired of the whole thing and doubted whether the expedition would reach the Pole at all because of having so many fat men on it.

And so ends the first really unfortunate episode of our trip. As Bobby grows older he probably will acquire more repression and will learn that individual whims must sometimes give way to the common good. I also hope that he starts growing tall pretty soon.

With the discordant element out of the way, the next thing to do was to plan for our hop-off. We still have quite a distance to go before we even get in sight of the Pole and we must be moving. So a meeting was called in the Barrys' study, to which Mr. Barry was, *ex-officio*, invited, as it was thought that he might have some suggestions. His very first suggestion was excellent; it was, in part, to concoct an eggnog, a hot eggnog. He had some very good eggs, he said, and added that that was one of the advantages of living in the country—you get good eggs. This was voted on, and it was decided that Mr. Barry was right. So the eggnog was made hot and the meeting called to order.

Lieut.-Commander Connelly said that we ought to decide how we were to overcome the retarding action of deep snow on our wheels. We have made several trial spins around the house here, just to see that our cycles were in good order, and found (*a*) that they were not, and (*b*) that even if they had been, the snow would have made any kind of progress at all very difficult. As Lieut.-Commander Connelly said, "It is almost as if someone were actually holding the wheels back!"

From there the discussion got around to cases in which wheels actually *had* been held back by some unseen force, but nobody had ever heard of such cases. Ensign Thermaline said that he knew of a case once where a man with hypnotic power had put a friend under a spell and made it impossible for him to move his hand away from his face. Mr. Barry asked whose face it was the man's hand was on, his own or the hypnotizer's, and Ensign Thermaline said that he had never thought to inquire, but that he could get the man on the telephone in a jiffy and find out. We all said that it would be interesting to know. So a telephone book was sent for and Ensign Thermaline set about looking up his friend's number.

While this was going on, we got back to the business of the expedition and the question of when we should start on. Our route lies pretty fairly straight ahead of us, on up through Westchester County to Massachusetts, then on up through New Hampshire to Canada, and from there to the Pole. "It ought to be very pretty up around Williamstown at this time of year," said Lieut.-Commander Connelly. "That's where Williams College is." Everyone agreed to this and it was remembered that the Williams song, "The Royal Purple," has some very neat harmony to it. Furthermore, it was discovered that Mr. Barry sings a very passable baritone, and a baritone is the one thing that our expedition has lacked, for Lieut.-Commander Connelly twists out a very tricky tenor, and with me leading and Ensign Thermaline on a low but fairly accurate bass it began to look as if we might do something worth while after all.

"Here's a funny thing," spoke up Ensign Thermaline, still buried in the telephone book. "There are two people by the name of 'Gepp,' both living in Jersey City. A 'Ben F. Gepp' at 218 Belvidere Ave., and a 'William A. Gepp' at 82 Jewett Ave."

"Probably brothers," suggested Mr. Barry.

"Not necessarily," retorted Lieut.-Commander Connelly, a little testily.

"All right; cousins then," said Mr. Barry, and the threatened hard-feeling was avoided. Mr. Barry would be a very good man to have come along with us to the Pole as he is very conciliatory and diplomatic, and after Bobby we need somebody like that.

As a matter of fact, I suggested to him that he come with us and he said that he really ought to take his family to Cannes in March as he had promised them. But he added that he was almost persuaded to give that plan up and come along with us. I suggested that we go right then and sound out Mrs. Barry on the subject because I was sure that we could make her see the thing in the right light. So we all went upstairs to look for Mrs. Barry, but she was asleep. Lieut.-Commander Connelly suggested a little serenade, on the ground that married women get little or no romance in their lives, and said that if he knew married women at all Mrs. Barry would be very glad to have a serenade sung outside her

door, asleep or not. So we did "The Royal Purple" for her, very soft the first time through and then crescendo on the repeat.

Then, at Mrs. Barry's suggestion, we went to bed.

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17: A Bottomless Grave

Ambrose Bierce

1842-c.1914

San Francisco Examiner, 26 Feb 1888

MY NAME is John Brenwalter. My father, a drunkard, had a patent for an invention, for making coffee-berries out of clay; but he was an honest man and would not himself engage in the manufacture. He was, therefore, only moderately wealthy, his royalties from his really valuable invention bringing him hardly enough to pay his expenses of litigation with rogues guilty of infringement. So I lacked many advantages enjoyed by the children of unscrupulous and dishonorable parents, and had it not been for a noble and devoted mother, who neglected all my brothers and sisters and personally supervised my education, should have grown up in ignorance and been compelled to teach school. To be the favorite child of a good woman is better than gold.

When I was nineteen years of age my father had the misfortune to die. He had always had perfect health, and his death, which occurred at the dinner table without a moment's warning, surprised no one more than himself. He had that very morning been notified that a patent had been granted him for a device to burst open safes by hydraulic pressure, without noise. The Commissioner of Patents had pronounced it the most ingenious, effective and generally meritorious invention that had ever been submitted to him, and my father had naturally looked forward to an old age of prosperity and honor. His sudden death was, therefore, a deep disappointment to him; but my mother, whose piety and resignation to the will of Heaven were conspicuous virtues of her character, was apparently less affected. At the close of the meal, when my poor father's body had been removed from the floor, she called us all into an adjoining room and addressed us as follows:

"My children, the uncommon occurrence that you have just witnessed is one of the most disagreeable incidents in a good man's life, and one in which I take little pleasure, I assure you. I beg you to believe that I had no hand in bringing it about. Of course," she added, after a pause, during which her eyes were cast down in deep thought, "of course it is better that he is dead."

She uttered this with so evident a sense of its obviousness as a self-evident truth that none of us had the courage to brave her surprise by asking an explanation. My mother's air of surprise when any of us went wrong in any way was very terrible to us. One day, when in a fit of peevish temper, I had taken the liberty to cut off the baby's ear, her simple words, "John, you surprise me!" appeared to me so sharp a reproof that after a sleepless night I went to her in tears, and throwing myself at her feet, exclaimed: "Mother, forgive me for

surprising you." So now we all—including the one-eared baby—felt that it would keep matters smoother to accept without question the statement that it was better, somehow, for our dear father to be dead. My mother continued:

"I must tell you, my children, that in a case of sudden and mysterious death the law requires the Coroner to come and cut the body into pieces and submit them to a number of men who, having inspected them, pronounce the person dead. For this the Coroner gets a large sum of money. I wish to avoid that painful formality in this instance; it is one which never had the approval of— of the remains. John"— here my mother turned her angel face to me-"you are an educated lad, and very discreet. You have now an opportunity to show your gratitude for all the sacrifices that your education has entailed upon the rest of us. John, go and remove the Coroner."

Inexpressibly delighted by this proof of my mother's confidence, and by the chance to distinguish myself by an act that squared with my natural disposition, I knelt before her, carried her hand to my lips and bathed it with tears of sensibility. Before five o'clock that afternoon I had removed the Coroner.

I was immediately arrested and thrown into jail, where I passed a most uncomfortable night, being unable to sleep because of the profanity of my fellow-prisoners, two clergymen, whose theological training had given them a fertility of impious ideas and a command of blasphemous language altogether unparalleled. But along toward morning the jailer, who, sleeping in an adjoining room, had been equally disturbed, entered the cell and with a fearful oath warned the reverend gentlemen that if he heard any more swearing their sacred calling would not prevent him from turning them into the street. After that they moderated their objectionable conversation, substituting an accordion, and I slept the peaceful and refreshing sleep of youth and innocence.

The next morning I was taken before the Superior Judge, sitting as a committing magistrate, and put upon my preliminary examination. I pleaded not guilty, adding that the man whom I had murdered was a notorious Democrat. (My good mother was a Republican, and from early childhood I had been carefully instructed by her in the principles of honest government and the necessity of suppressing factional opposition.) The Judge, elected by a Republican ballot-box with a sliding bottom, was visibly impressed by the cogency of my plea and offered me a cigarette.

"May it please your Honor," began the District Attorney, "I do not deem it necessary to submit any evidence in this case. Under the law of the land you sit here as a committing magistrate. It is therefore your duty to commit. Testimony and argument alike would imply a doubt that your Honor means to perform your sworn duty. That is my case."

My counsel, a brother of the deceased Coroner, rose and said: "May it please the Court, my learned friend on the other side has so well and eloquently

stated the law governing in this case that it only remains for me to inquire to what extent it has been already complied with. It is true, your Honor is a committing magistrate, and as such it is your duty to commit— what? That is a matter which the law has wisely and justly left to your own discretion, and wisely you have discharged already every obligation that the law imposes. Since I have known your Honor you have done nothing but commit. You have committed embracery, theft, arson, perjury, adultery, murder— every crime in the calendar and every excess known to the sensual and depraved, including my learned friend, the District Attorney. You have done your whole duty as a committing magistrate, and as there is no evidence against this worthy young man, my client, I move that he be discharged."

An impressive silence ensued. The Judge arose, put on the black cap and in a voice trembling with emotion sentenced me to life and liberty. Then turning to my counsel he said, coldly but significantly:

"I will see you later."

The next morning the lawyer who had so conscientiously defended me against a charge of murdering his own brother— with whom he had a quarrel about some land— had disappeared and his fate is to this day unknown.

In the meantime my poor father's body had been secretly buried at midnight in the back yard of his late residence, with his late boots on and the contents of his late stomach unanalyzed. "He was opposed to display," said my dear mother, as she finished tamping down the earth above him and assisted the children to litter the place with straw; "his instincts were all domestic and he loved a quiet life."

My mother's application for letters of administration stated that she had good reason to believe that the deceased was dead, for he had not come home to his meals for several days; but the Judge of the Crowbait Court— as she ever afterward contemptuously called it— decided that the proof of death was insufficient, and put the estate into the hands of the Public Administrator, who was his son-in-law. It was found that the liabilities were exactly balanced by the assets; there was left only the patent for the device for bursting open safes without noise, by hydraulic pressure and this had passed into the ownership of the Probate Judge and the Public Administrator— as my dear mother preferred to spell it. Thus, within a few brief months a worthy and respectable family was reduced from prosperity to crime; necessity compelled us to go to work.

In the selection of occupations we were governed by a variety of considerations, such as personal fitness, inclination, and so forth. My mother opened a select private school for instruction in the art of changing the spots upon leopard-skin rugs; my eldest brother, George Henry, who had a turn for music, became a bugler in a neighboring asylum for deaf mutes; my sister, Mary Maria, took orders for Professor Pumpernickel's Essence of Latchkeys for

flavoring mineral springs, and I set up as an adjuster and gilder of crossbeams for gibbets. The other children, too young for labor, continued to steal small articles exposed in front of shops, as they had been taught.

In our intervals of leisure we decoyed travelers into our house and buried the bodies in a cellar.

In one part of this cellar we kept wines, liquors and provisions. From the rapidity of their disappearance we acquired the superstitious belief that the spirits of the persons buried there came at dead of night and held a festival. It was at least certain that frequently of a morning we would discover fragments of pickled meats, canned goods and such débris, littering the place, although it had been securely locked and barred against human intrusion. It was proposed to remove the provisions and store them elsewhere, but our dear mother, always generous and hospitable, said it was better to endure the loss than risk exposure: if the ghosts were denied this trifling gratification they might set on foot an investigation, which would overthrow our scheme of the division of labor, by diverting the energies of the whole family into the single industry pursued by me— we might all decorate the cross-beams of gibbets. We accepted her decision with filial submission, due to our reverence for her wordly wisdom and the purity of her character.

One night while we were all in the cellar— none dared to enter it alone— engaged in bestowing upon the Mayor of an adjoining town the solemn offices of Christian burial, my mother and the younger children, holding a candle each, while George Henry and I labored with a spade and pick, my sister Mary Maria uttered a shriek and covered her eyes with her hands. We were all dreadfully startled and the Mayor's obsequies were instantly suspended, while with pale faces and in trembling tones we begged her to say what had alarmed her. The younger children were so agitated that they held their candles unsteadily, and the waving shadows of our figures danced with uncouth and grotesque movements on the walls and flung themselves into the most uncanny attitudes. The face of the dead man, now gleaming ghastly in the light, and now extinguished by some floating shadow, appeared at each emergence to have taken on a new and more forbidding expression, a maligner menace. Frightened even more than ourselves by the girl's scream, rats raced in multitudes about the place, squeaking shrilly, or starred the black opacity of some distant corner with steadfast eyes, mere points of green light, matching the faint phosphorescence of decay that filled the half-dug grave and seemed the visible manifestation of that faint odor of mortality which tainted the unwholesome air. The children now sobbed and clung about the limbs of their elders, dropping their candles, and we were near being left in total darkness, except for that sinister light, which slowly welled upward from the disturbed earth and overflowed the edges of the grave like a fountain.

Meanwhile my sister, crouching in the earth that had been thrown out of the excavation, had removed her hands from her face and was staring with expanded eyes into an obscure space between two wine casks.

"There it is!— there it is!" she shrieked, pointing; "God in heaven! can't you see it?"

And there indeed it was!— a human figure, dimly discernible in the gloom— a figure that wavered from side to side as if about to fall, clutching at the wine-casks for support, had stepped unsteadily forward and for one moment stood revealed in the light of our remaining candles; then it surged heavily and fell prone upon the earth. In that moment we had all recognized the figure, the face and bearing of our father— dead these ten months and buried by our own hands!— our father indubitably risen and ghastly drunk!

On the incidents of our precipitate flight from that horrible place— on the extinction of all human sentiment in that tumultuous, mad scramble up the damp and mouldy stairs— slipping, falling, pulling one another down and clambering over one another's back— the lights extinguished, babes trampled beneath the feet of their strong brothers and hurled backward to death by a mother's arm!— on all this I do not dare to dwell. My mother, my eldest brother and sister and I escaped; the others remained below, to perish of their wounds, or of their terror— some, perhaps, by flame. For within an hour we four, hastily gathering together what money and jewels we had and what clothing we could carry, fired the dwelling and fled by its light into the hills. We did not even pause to collect the insurance, and my dear mother said on her death-bed, years afterward in a distant land, that this was the only sin of omission that lay upon her conscience. Her confessor, a holy man, assured her that under the circumstances Heaven would pardon the neglect.

About ten years after our removal from the scenes of my childhood I, then a prosperous forger, returned in disguise to the spot with a view to obtaining, if possible, some treasure belonging to us, which had been buried in the cellar. I may say that I was unsuccessful: the discovery of many human bones in the ruins had set the authorities digging for more. They had found the treasure and had kept it for their honesty. The house had not been rebuilt; the whole suburb was, in fact, a desolation. So many unearthly sights and sounds had been reported thereabout that nobody would live there. As there was none to question nor molest, I resolved to gratify my filial piety by gazing once more upon the face of my beloved father, if indeed our eyes had deceived us and he was still in his grave. I remembered, too, that he had always worn an enormous diamond ring, and never having seen it nor heard of it since his death, I had reason to think he might have been buried in it. Procuring a spade, I soon located the grave in what had been the backyard and began digging. When I had got down about four feet the whole bottom fell out of the grave and I was

precipitated into a large drain, falling through a long hole in its crumbling arch. There was no body, nor any vestige of one.

Unable to get out of the excavation, I crept through the drain, and having with some difficulty removed a mass of charred rubbish and blackened masonry that choked it, emerged into what had been that fateful cellar.

All was clear. My father, whatever had caused him to be "taken bad" at his meal (and I think my sainted mother could have thrown some light upon that matter) had indubitably been buried alive. The grave having been accidentally dug above the forgotten drain, and down almost to the crown of its arch, and no coffin having been used, his struggles on reviving had broken the rotten masonry and he had fallen through, escaping finally into the cellar. Feeling that he was not welcome in his own house, yet having no other, he had lived in subterranean seclusion, a witness to our thrift and a pensioner on our providence. It was he who had eaten our food; it was he who had drunk our wine— he was no better than a thief! In a moment of intoxication, and feeling, no doubt, that need of companionship which is the one sympathetic link between a drunken man and his race, he had left his place of concealment at a strangely inopportune time, entailing the most deplorable consequences upon those nearest and dearest to him— a blunder that had almost the dignity of crime.

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18: Hard-Boiled

Mark Hellinger

1903-1947

In: *Moon Over Broadway*, 1931

YOU would call her, I suppose, hard-boiled. In her game, she has to be. Night after night, she stands near the door of the club in which she works and checks the hats and coats of men who come in stag and fall out stagger. Her's is a mighty tough racket and she's a pretty tough baby.

She works in one of those speakeasies in the forties. One of those places, you know, that only pop into the papers when they are raided. There is a long bar, a couple of singing waiters, a room with some badly battered tables and chairs and a cash register. Over the register hangs a framed motto. It reads: "Be it ever so humble, there's no place like home."

It was early in the evening and the room was just commencing to fill. As she helped me off with my coat, a button fell to the floor.

"Damn it," I muttered crossly. "There goes another button. One more and I won't be able to close this fool coat. And it's raining out, too."

She hung the coat on a hook and handed me a check.

"Stop squawking" she cried, "I get enough of that stuff from the other dopes around here all night long. I'm gettin' sick and tired of it all, I can tell you."

I grinned at her.

"What's the matter, Mildred? Tired of life, and all that?"

"You said a coupla mouthfuls," she returned. "What can a dame like me get outa life hanging around a dump like this night after night ? All I connect with is lousy people and lousier tips. You know that. You've written about it often enough."

I nodded.

"Sure," I agreed. "But what's the use of crying about it? If you don't like it, why don't you get out and do something else?"

"Can't," she responded shortly. "A girl like me can't make enough dough at any other racket. And I gotta take care of the kid."

"Kid? I didn't know you had a baby."

"Sure, He's three years old now. Here's a picture of him. Ain't he the cute one?"

She handed me a photograph of a terrible looking brat.

"Beautiful child," I said, handing the picture back to her. "But how about your husband? Doesn't he help you out every now and then?"

She laughed mirthlessly.

"Don't make me snicker that way. You'll loosen my teeth. Gawd knows where he is now. Last I heard of him was two years ago in Denver. And then he was havin' a little contest with the bootleggers. He was try in' to see if he couldn't drink the stuff just a little faster than they could make it. At last reports, he was a little in the lead."

"Tough," was the only thing I could think of to say.

She nodded.

"You said it," she continued. "An' that's why I'm kickin' about my life. I don't get no romance. As a matter of fact, there ain't no such thing as romance, if you get to thinkin' about it. It's all a lotta applesauce.

"What happens night after night? A lotta guys get stewed and then come pa win' around me. Is that romance? So's your Aunt Tilly.

"Look at that guy in the corner with his arms around that broad. He's married and got two kids. The gal with him used to be a dance hall instructress but she developed corns, or somethin'. Look at them sittin' there and cryin' into their beers together. He's got a hold on her like Phil Scott had on Sharkey and she's doin' her share too.

"But is that love? Is that romance? It's a lotta baloney, that's what it is."

She paused for breath. And I slipped a word in.

"But, Mildred, you can't judge the whole world by the types you see in this cheap saloon."

"That's where you're all wet," she flashed. "The guys I see in here are the same guys the world over. Ain't one alive that's decent, deep down. The whole crew of 'em are a bunch of fakin', cheatin' four-flushers. Bad as most dames is, there ain't one that ain't better than the guys that make 'em bad.

"When I read some o' them mush stories o' yours about love and romance, I gotta laugh out loud. Jeez, how stupid some o' you writin' guys can be! Why don't you tell the public the truth some day? Let 'em in on the secret that we're livin' in a bum world and that this love stuff is just so much bunk."

I laughed.

"You're a hard-boiled baby, Mildred."

"Yeah?" she said.

"Yeah," I said

I LEFT her and walked through the room to the bar. After speaking to the proprietor for some twenty minutes and learning nothing about anything, I decided to leave. Handing

Mildred a quarter, I bought my coat back.

"So long, wise guy," she murmured.

I nodded and walked from the place. When I hit the rain, I discovered how the hard-boiled girl had spent some of the twenty minutes that I was away from her.

She had sewed the button on my overcoat.

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19: Hands of Death

Algernon Blackwood

1869–1951

Bolton Evening News, 5 Dec 1925

Collected in*: Shocks*, 1935

THE ASSISTANT FOREMAN of the bridge-gang rode his mules slowly up the trail from the river valley to the plateau. His broad-brimmed hat, his fierce moustache, a reckless fling of his great shoulders too, gave him the air of a desperado. As a matter of fact, no warmer-hearted Irishman than simple Mike Kelly ever spared his animal over this arid Bolivian plain. He combined the appearance of a desperado with the emotions of a child, an incurable sentimentalist to boot.

He was on his way to report to Hadow, the foreman, whose hut lay at the far end of the Indian village across the blazing sunshine. The heated air hung motionless. From far below rose the faint tinkling of the workmen's tools, as they chipped stones for the great railway bridge. Occasionally, drowning all other sounds, came the snorting of the construction train, laden with materials. The torrent at the bottom of the deep gorge was also audible. The barren plateau, baked and split by the sun, lay all about him, but far away rose mountains crowned with dazzling snow. On their green foothills, in this crystal air, he easily picked out the herds of llamas and donkeys feeding.

Mike paused at the top of the trail to give his animal a rest. He looked about him.

"A man's country!" he said to himself, as he puffed his cigarette. "A man's way of living too, begad!"

He beamed his deep satisfaction. The next moment, unaccountably, he sighed. In this life of careless liberty something after all seemed lacking. For it was spring. He longed for a companion. Only a mate was needed to make it perfect.

Schooling Mike had never known. A construction camp had always been his home, and the nomad life suited his few elemental needs. He was ever on the move, helping to drive an iron road farther and farther into some grim wilderness. Now, suddenly, in the sunshine of this brilliant Bolivian spring, he knew himself intolerably alone. He sighed again. "Days of grief!" he exclaimed aloud with a melancholy smile. "And not a female anywheres to take me by the hand!"

Unaware that Fate was listening, he rode slowly along the sun-grilled trail. It was deserted, the Indians slept in their huts, no white man was about. Then, as he approached some trees at the entrance of the scattered village, a native girl emerged suddenly from their shade and stepped leisurely along in front of him, stepping at the same time straight into his empty mood of longing. She moved, it seemed, straight into his heart. His pulse stood still, then quickened violently, for the stroke was unexpected, falling like a flash of fire out of the clear sky. Something in him trembled. He urged his mule. "It's me happy day," he exclaimed to himself, "sure as God made little apples!"

The abruptness of it took his breath away, yet did not affect his powers of observation. Rather, it increased them. He saw at a glance, from the subdued colour of her dress, that she was a pure-bred Aymara, and very different from the half-breed Chellas who affected gaudy brilliance in their clothes. Taller than her kind, she moved with an easy grace that delighted his eye, instead of with the shuffling gait the Indians used. Her attitude, moreover, suggested a dignity and self-assurance he had never seen before in any native woman. This air of confidence he noticed instantly, while there was, too, another quality about her that gave him a vague sense of trouble, a disturbing touch that was too slight, too elusive, to leave more than the faintest trail upon his mind. He was aware of it, no more than that, for his positive emotions of another kind at once obliterated it. His Celtic fancy idealised immediately. "Divine and wonderful!" he told himself with bright admiration. "And I'd be after sayin' it to her this minute if I knew her lingo better. Begad, and I will now before she disappears out of me life forever!" And he was in the act of overtaking her when, to his disgust, a man came suddenly out of another hut and stepped into the path as though to speak with her.

Mike cursed beneath his breath. There was always another man, he reflected bitterly. Great was his surprise, therefore, when the fellow abruptly altered his course, rather as though he had just seen her for the first time, hesitated, then drew back in a curious attitude of half respectful, half uneasy waiting, finally allowing her to continue her way without a sign of greeting or recognition. And this, to Mike, was unusual— an act of politeness he had never before seen an Indian show to his own women. He was puzzled a little, while for a passing instant he was again aware of the elusive touch of uneasiness he had known before, though it vanished as soon as it was born. "The daughter of a big Chief!" he decided, as he drew nearer again. "It's still me happy day then after all!" His heart, indeed, was hammering against his ribs, as the girl, standing aside to allow room to pass, looked up at him.

Mike stopped, turned in his saddle, and the next second lifted his sombrero— to an Indian; but to the most beautiful Indian he had ever seen. Her skin, lighter than ordinary, had a lustre of faint gold about it; the features

showed none of the heaviness of her race; she might, indeed, have passed for an Italian of the better class. But it was the luminous eyes, gazing so fearlessly into his own, that enslaved him finally. Did they set other chords vibrating in him too, deep down and out of sight? The question rose certainly, but merely to flicker out and disappear. Strange fires glowed in them, great resolution, something that both attracted and repelled, although repel was far too strong a term to describe the fugitive doubt that passed so flutteringly across the back of his mind. He knew, at any rate, an instant's uncommon bewilderment. Open to swift intuitions, he was superstitious as well, and an emotion that held both shrinking and enticement swept his primitive soul. Did he imagine some unholy knowledge, some unwelcome secret, lurking behind those veiled fires, something perhaps of Indian Magic, of a forgotten faith the white race never knew? He almost crossed himself. But in that moment the girl smiled— and his fate was sealed. Mike loved at first sight, and his love, evidently, was not unacceptable, for a warm colour flushed the girl's bare neck and golden dusky cheeks, she let his rough hand take her own, her voice was welcoming and pleasant.

She had long ago picked him out, he decided, in his rush of happy feeling, and loved him secretly already; had seen him about, of course, and taken note of him, and marked him down for her own. He forgot, in his delirium, that his hat was still off in the dangerous sun, forgot that he was white and the girl an Indian, forgot that the torrent of passionate words he poured forth was only half intelligible to her. One thing only from the outside world pierced his mind at the time— the fact that the man he had seen before was now standing with a companion in front of a hut not far away, both watching him intently, then instantly disappearing as the girl turned to look at them. Yet disappearing in a manner not quite ordinary, it struck him. They vanished into the hut as though her mere look had flashed a word of command they feared and must obey.

Mike noticed this; and a sense of discomfort, born he knew not whence, passed over him, going again however, as swiftly as it came. With the girl in his arms, her lips upon his own, all lesser emotions were utterly obliterated.

MIKE KELLY MEANT MARRIAGE. The difference in race seemed no objection to him. Few whites in these parts were without some trace of Indian blood. Marie would just suit his roving life. The odd respect shown to her by the two men, while it faintly troubled him, added at the same time to her value. His dream obsessed him. He suddenly wondered how long his mule had been standing in front of the foreman's shanty, when a voice brought him back to earth with a shock.

"Who's cut your tongue out, Mike?"

Hadow, the Englishman, was staring at him fixedly, a lurking smile behind his clear blue eyes. Unknown to the other, he had witnessed the entire scene from the window of his shanty.

"Days of grief, Boss," cried Mike with a grin, "they're over. I've just seen the girl I'm goin' to marry. It's me happy day at last, and that's a fact!"

Hadow looked hard into his face.

"You'd be happiest perhaps with a native, Mike," he said, after a perceptible pause. "She'd understand you better than a cold-blooded white, I guess."

"You've said it," returned Mike. "She would that." He gripped the proffered hand, pleased by the wishes of good luck. Then he began to wonder why Hadow held his hand so long and stared so steadily into his eyes.

Suddenly the Englishman spoke. "Fit, ain't you, Mike?" he asked abruptly. "Sound in wind and limb, I mean?" It was a curious question, puzzling the other considerably. "No disease or weakness anywhere— nothing organic?" Hadow persisted, watching him closely as he asked it. His gravity, his persistence, must have made a man in a less emotional state reflect, for Hadow knew the country, knew the Indians too. Mike was merely puzzled by the long word he did not understand.

"What d'ye mean, Boss?" he asked, grinning broadly. "Why, I'm a two-year-old," he added quickly, "for all me wicked sins." And he laughed like of

Still gripping his hand and looking into his eyes, Hadow said quietly, but as if he meant it, "Then see that you keep a two-year-old, Mike Kelly. Take good care of yourself. And— avoid accidents."

Mike burst into yet louder laughter. Its very loudness, perhaps, betrayed a faint uneasiness, yet if so betrayed it unconsciously. "That's me, Boss," he cried, shaking the other's hand with violence, as though to prove his health and strength. "That's me every time," he repeated, while Hadow winced, withdrawing his hand with difficulty, "and it's a marryin' man I am this day. And don't you forget it!"

"I won't," laughed the Englishman, smoothing his hand out, while a curious expression crossed his sunburnt face. His men's domestic affairs after all, it seemed to say, were no concern of his. He made a gesture, however, as though he had been about to say something else, then changed his mind. "Take good care of yourself, Mike," he mentioned, adding, casually as it were, yet with a hint of significance that escaped the Irishman, "and if you ever need a helping hand, just let me know, remember."

Mike thanked him, and the two men turned to business.

THE BRIEF COURTSHIP ran smoothly; Mike learned a bit more of the language, and the girl picked up some Spanish. The marriage caused no particular excitement, for the white men regarded it as a passing episode

merely. The Indians, however, betrayed an unexpected reaction. The unquestionable respect they felt for Marie and her aged mother they now showed to Mike as well. They built his new hut without payment— a present from the village. If he found himself separated a little from his own kind, he picked no quarrel about it. He was romantically, desperately, in love, and Marie managed her easy-going husband as she pleased. Was he, perhaps, a trifle afraid of her? There were certain things he now began to notice, little things to which he attached significance because he could not quite account for them, and these now and again perturbed him rather. Their combined effect upon him was cumulative.

Her hands, for instance— strong, well-moulded; duplicates, for that matter of her mother's— were unroughened, untouched by any sign of toil. They had never been put to menial usages. The respect, the reverence, indeed, that was paid to them both by the natives, also required explanation, but an explanation he could not find. This reverence, sometimes almost tinged by fear, was paid to the old woman chiefly, but Marie shared it too, and no amount of questioning on his part elicited more than the fact that her mother performed some work of great importance to the community. The reverence, Marie told him with an enigmatic smile, was due to that, but it was a purely native matter that concerned the Indians alone, and he was not to trouble about it. With a kiss, a little shrug of her shapely shoulders, she dissipated his uneasiness, while increasing his curiosity. Her father, now dead, Mike discovered had been a man of no particular importance, certainly not a Chief, yet mother and daughter both exacted this odd respect as though entitled to it, as though it was their rightful due. That they did no work of any kind pertained to some rights they held in the public estimation.

Even before his marriage, Mike had known that the natives brought them food, placing it outside their door, giving a peculiar cry, and then withdrawing before it was taken in. Now the offerings were placed outside the mother's hut alone. There were, of course, dozens of little native customs to which the whites paid no attention, Mike ignoring them with the rest as of no importance, but these particular ones caught his attention as somewhere significant. The Indians, themselves, would tell him nothing; they seemed nervous, almost uneasy, when he pressed enquiry. It was, however, the strong and delicate hands his imagination settled upon chiefly, the hands that were never put to common work, the hands that were always so beautifully kept. He never kissed them without knowing a faint shiver down his back, while utterly unable to account for it. The mystery deepened. His superstitious sense increased. Yet neither of these for long, he noticed. His wife's beauty soon banished such vague fears. Marie dominated him easily. She loved him heart and soul, and in her passionate Indian way. Mike came to realise, perhaps, that the Indians, like

his own race, each fostered and enjoyed their own particular collection of little beliefs and fancies, none of which amounted actually to what he called "a row of beans." He smiled and kissed his way through life, and life was all made up of happy days, his days of grief forgotten entirely.

Then chance brought an incident that pulled him up short with an unpleasant start, revived his lurking superstitious dread, and drove him to more definite questions, since uneasiness prompted him. There were, of course, as mentioned, numerous incidents of curious kind among the Indians, but this one left a deep impression, and he was determined to get to the bottom of it, if he could.

One brilliant moonlight night he came home late, passing the cabin of a native as he knew, was desperately ill. The village, squalid enough in the daytime, was softened into beauty now. It looked unearthly. Silvery haze transmuted its forlorn poverty into loveliness, the glimmering snowfields hung far away in the depths of quiet sky. About the cabin of the dying man Mike saw the group of friends and relatives huddled together, whispering and muttering piss themselves. Then, suddenly, the low door was darkened by a figure, and he saw the old mother emerge, her head bent, her long arms hanging down her sides. He watched her pass through the group, who hushed their voices and moved aside to make room with lowered heads. She paid them no attention. He watched her walk silently away. And almost the same moment he heard the death-wail issue from the hut, announcing that the Indian was dead.

Mike stood still, watching, listening, in the moonlight. The group about the door had resumed their whispering among themselves, but were now, he noticed, directing their attention at himself, looking intently, even pointing, at him. They were discussing him with keen interest. Here, he felt positive, was something that concerned himself. He felt suddenly uneasy. Moving a little closer, he caught a strange word in Spanish— *despeñadora*, *la despeñadora*— a hush in the voice that muttered it. The word seemed vaguely familiar, as though he had heard it somewhere long ago. He turned away, 4 superstitious dread clutching at his heart. Where had he heard that word? What did it mean? Why was there something sinister about it?

His questions this time were more insistent. The present of the hut, the food, the respect, the mysterious attitude— what did they all mean? The Spanish word— he cursed himself for it— had slipped his memory, vanished beyond recall. This time, too, his wife answered him:

"It is because my mother," she told him proudly, "is a doctor, and they fear her."

"For why should they fear her," Mike demanded, "if she is a doctor?" Yet he was not too anxious to hear the answer, he realised. There was a light in Marie's eyes, a troubling smile upon her lips, as she drew herself up, gazing at him.

"Because her medicine," she said in a lowered voice, "Is strong. It always cures." She bent a little towards him, their faces close together, then laying her long-fingered hands on his own, she kissed him suddenly with passion. The kiss he liked, returning it as he drew her down upon his knee; it was the touch of her hands that made him shrink. He asked, at any rate, no further questions.

He was very glad, a few weeks later, when the old woman died. He was not so pleased, however, when the night after the burial the peculiar native cry sounded in the darkness outside his own door, and he found the offerings of food, saw the shadows of the donors retreating hurriedly, then caught the blaze of triumphant pleasure in his wife's eyes as she collected it. A new dignity was in her, a new authority, something proud and sinister that chilled his blood and that even kisses could not dissipate.

"It is the custom of our people," she told him in her native tongue. "My mother is dead. I succeed my mother. That is all."

It was the strange fire in her great eyes that scared him. He surprised himself thinking of an animal that has tasted blood. Surreptitiously, he crossed himself. And in that same instant the forgotten Spanish word flashed back.

"*Despeñadora…?*" he whispered, and saw her head bow proudly, her wonderful hands spread out before her with their long fingers parted.

What the word meant he had no notion, nor did he ask. It had flashed into memory again and offered itself. That was all he knew. Simultaneously with its return rose also Hadow's curious warning— Hadow, who was now down at La Paz for a month or so, until the river, swollen with the melting snows, subsided enough to make work possible on the bridge foundations….

THE HEAT, the odour, the atrocious atmosphere in the hut were stifling. The stench of iodoform, of native exhalation from the Indians whispering just outside the door, hung so heavy as to seem almost visible. With it, too, came the damp effluvia of rain-soaked clay. Though the sky had cleared at sunset, the late hour of night brought no relief. A flickering oil-lamp added its noisome flavour.

A patch of moonlight, stealing through the low door, was the only clean and pleasant thing Mike Kelly saw, as he lay helpless on his blankets, both arms in rough splints, with internal injuries as well, and gusts of half-delirium raving about his mind. Marie had tended him with infinite love and care, soothing the pain as best she could, her tears often on his blanket; yet each time her hands touched him, a shriek rose to his lips, though never uttered. Some blind instinct, across the pain, warned him to suppress it.

The Bolivian doctor, who had set the crushed bones, had made his fifteen-mile journey now for the last time. Mike realised that. He had caught sight of him a moment outside the hut with Marie, and, uncertain though his vision was,

it had registered that grave shake of the head. The bones were mendable; it was the internal injuries that knew perhaps no cure; that shake of the head was eloquent of what the doctor thought. And Marie, strange figure of wild grief and stately dignity, had knelt in a paroxysm of tears beside the couch. Father Manuel, too, had come and gone, a ten-mile trip from the little Catholic chapel. That seemed several days ago, but the fever had obliterated what *he* said. Mike only remembered, or thought he remembered, that he had begged some favour of the kindly priest, dark fear behind his feverish words, and that the Father had seemed to make strange grimaces in reply. Mike had made some desperate request because there was terror in his heart; but now, whether this was real or delirium, he knew not. He groaned in his agony, but he could not move a muscle.

It was his wife's whisper that brought him back to a momentary clearer consciousness, lying motionless as a stone statue, but listening intently. Her face, dusky, beautiful, bent over him; he saw her glowing eyes, her tears; he felt— her hands. Their touch, across his pain and fever, summoned a sudden terror, sharp as fire. A change was stealing over her; her attitude, expression, look, were different. What was it? What was she saying, whispering to him now? Then he caught Hadow's name. It puzzled him. Why Hadow? If only he could have got word to Hadow at once. Word about what? The wish, he realised suddenly, had been in him for some time. There was something of dreadful urgency he wanted Hadow for, something he wished Hadow to know without an instant's delay, something he had begged the priest to see to for him… Father Manuel's grimacing face, enormously enlarged, shot before him, ousting all memory of Hadow completely. Then Marie's voice— it was louder, clearer now— was in his ear again. He could not turn his head; it was of stone.

"But if Hadow knew, my people would only kill him. *La Despeñadora* is sacred to them…" and the voice died away into a gulf of blackness.

The shock of violent terror that ran through him brought no relief of action to his body of stone: it could not galvanise muscles that refused to stir. Horror froze his blood. He felt stiff with it. His wife bent lower, kissed his burning lips, then moved away. He watched her tall figure pass across the hut, watched her turn slowly round and look at him steadily, the lamplight on her face. In that instant the truth flashed naked into him, for the long, steady look was an examining look. She was appraising him— professionally.

The next instant she was at his side again, kneeling, her face close against his own. "I cured my mother without pain," she whispered tenderly in broken Spanish. "You shall not suffer, either."

Mike experienced a reaction that searched him like a red-hot knife. His confusion cleared a little, lifted perhaps by the horror that convulsed him. A dim memory revived, rose out of dark mists, stirred into life. Marie's use of Spanish

helped possibly to its recovery. Faint at first, it became gradually sharper, then, as with a leap, grew clear as day. He recalled a scene of years ago — a bearded man, a Spaniard, the worse for drink, talking to him in a bar at La Paz. He had paid little attention at the time, but memory knows no real forgetting. The neglected cells now gave up their dead. *La Despeñadora*, the Aymara death-doctor, the Bringer of Death, was an office, a sacred office, handed down from mother to daughter. Its appalling duty was the finishing off of the aged and infirm, of those who could not live, of incurables especially, by deftly dislocating the vertebra of the neck— an office, the Indians held, of mercy, since it provided escape from useless suffering, one, moreover, the Government had been unable completely to suppress. The Indians were too cunning in their concealment always… *La Despeñadora*, whose "strong medicine always cured." The long-forgotten talk in the bar at La Paz came back, complete in a single second.

The shriek he gave vent to this time was an audible one, and Marie was instantly at his side. The group outside the door pressed in a little. A murmur of excited whispers rose. But it was his wife's low tender voice that he heard above all else, clear and dreadful as a bell of death: "I love you too much to let you suffer more…."

It was in her native tongue. She turned a moment, sending the Indians out, so that through the now unobstructed door the small patch of moonlight lay clean and sweet upon the ground beside the bed. Mike's eyes, the only portion of his body he could move, fell on it. To look into his wife's face, as she prepared to climb upon the couch, upon his helpless prostrate form, was utterly beyond him; but the hands, he noticed, the hands untouched by common toil, had opened, the fingers spread, curving a little as they sank towards his throat. He felt the pressure of her weight on his chest, as she straightened herself for the final office. He closed his eyes…. In that awful moment he saw two things: her amazing dignity, her authority, her confident strength; the second— a bearded man, his face immensely large, telling him drunkenly across a bar-room counter about *la Despeñadora*, only behind the huge face with the beard, mingled with it in some queer fashion, another face that wore Hadow's features. Yes, Hadow; it assuredly *was* Hadow. He choked. The world grew black….

A roaring sound, like a hurricane, burst about his ears, hoofs splashing through wet earth, his own name shouted, bawled, across the darkness. The same instant the roaring sounds subsided, while the voice itself came closer. Inside his own head, it seemed: "Damned liar! Why did you telegraph that the foundations of the bridge were sinking, when they're as solid as your own thick skull?…"

The voice hushed suddenly, died away. Its owner, having scattered the group outside and rushed in, was kneeling beside the couch. There was a sound of a woman sobbing. "A minute more," Hadow was muttering, "and there'd

have been a hanging job for someone." He turned to the figure of another man who stood just behind him. Thanks to something Father Manuel had added to the wire, he had brought a competent doctor with him.

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20: An Old Wastrel

Katharine Tynan

c.1859-1931

Advocate (Melbourne) 5 April 1919

OLD DAN CONNORS was sitting in the workhouse yard. There was a starved thorn-tree over his head, and it had just come out in new leaf. Perhaps that was what made him think of Old Bawn. There wasn't another green thing visible in the great stony yard of the workhouse, except it might be a hardy grass-blade that pushed its head up between the stones, imagin-ing that it was growing into a field, only to be crushed flat by the shuffled feet of the workhouse inmates.

They all shuffled more or less. They were a disgraceful lot, to old Dan's thinking, those able-bodied men and women, who shuffled about on their unwilling employment. They were mostly fat with the fatness of idleness and an ignoble content. As a woman came in his view, her hands resting on her enormous hips, her tow-coloured hair pulled back from her red, flabby face, her whole person hideous in the workhouse garb of coarse blue woollen stuff, old Dan groaned aloud, making the woman pause to ask a ribald question.

It was not such women old Dan was accustomed to; and, in spite of all the ups and downs of his life, he had kept a curiously fastidious and inno-cent mind about women. He had never married, but his experiences had been fortunate ones. He groaned again, this time taking care to look about him first to see that no one was in sight, as he recalled the old days in Ireland, his mother and Kitty and Nora and Brideen and Eily Driscoll, who was dead long ago, who might have been his wife and kept him straight if only she'd stayed in it and not been so quick to get to heaven. He had a wandering drop somewhere in him, and Eily's death had unsettled him, cut him adrift from his moorings. The old place had become dull and strange with Eily's death. The restlessness had come upon him, and he had gone off in the following spring to America, where there was a chance for a man and a crowd to be forgetting in, not the death-in-life of Old Bawn.

So he had said thirty years ago. Now, sitting in the workhouse yard, he recalled, as he had done many a time before, Old Bawn, looking at it through the dim eyes of his spirit as though he looked into Paradise. There was the low white house under its thatch, with its background of orchard— one gable opening on a green old garden, the other on the stack-yard and cattle-sheds, full of golden corn and red and white cattle. He could see as plainly as though he had left it only yesterday the placid, whitewashed kitchen, with its red-ochred tiles, the settle against the wall under the little lattice window that opened into the orchard, the dresser full of crockery, the chairs of twisted straw by the fireside, in which the father and mother had sat, the flitch of bacon and the

drying herbs above the fireplace, the chimney shelf with its row of brass candlesticks all shining bright, the wag-by-the-wall clock.

The kitchen opened on to a green space, bound on one side by the wall of the barns and outbuildings, on the other by the neat privet hedge that outlined the lawn which lay in front of the hall door. A row of sycamores and chestnuts went down by the hedge.

Sitting there in the workhouse yard, his old knotted hands clasped on his stick, he fancied himself sitting on the stone bench outside the kitchen door. He could see the very lights and shadows cast by the trees on the grass. A flock of yellow ducklings came waddling to the kitchen door to be fed. Pincher, the Irish terrier, came out in a leisurely indignation and drove them away. He could hear the swish-swish of the churn handle in the dairy close by.

Something struck him lightly, and he came back to the horrible work-house yard that was like a prison. He had dropped asleep perhaps. One of the able-bodied ones, with humorous intention, had flung a potato at him as he passed, and wakened him out of his happy dream.

It was too bad that he should have gone and left them— he, the eldest one too. It was a bad example for the younger ones. There had been a long line of younger ones when he left— down to a baby in the cradle three months old. Herself had been a fine strong woman, but himself had never been very strong. He sup-posed both of them were gone long ago. Thirty years brought such changes.

Thirty years! Of such a life as his had been! It had been a record of dismal failure. He had gone out with a foolish certainty of success. He had even put his going on a high, unselfish plane. There were too many of them dragging out of himself and Old Bawn. It was right that one of them should go out and seek his fortune, and be able and willing to share it with the others. There were eleven children in the family when he had taken his departure. He wondered what had become of them all. He had a sudden fond memory of Dick, a little lad of four, who had been a special pet of his. Dick would be thirty-four now if he was alive. Why, he wasn't much more than fifty himself, now he came to think of it, only he had had such hardships and seen so much trouble that he was an old man before his time— liker seventy than fifty-four.

He had gone under from the time he had left them at Old Bawn— gone under, not by any choice of his own, but because things were against him. Once or twice he had been on the up-grade. Once a partner had absconded, leaving him only debts and angry creditors. Another time his savings had been stolen— eight hundred pounds, which he had toiled hard to earn. He had worked incredibly hard. The hardship had aged him as much as anything. But he was an innocent prodigal, after all— scarcely a worse sin to his account than a few drinking bouts, in which he had quarrelled and assaulted the police. There were

no shameful memories to come between him and his faith in good women. A poor old wastrel, that was how he thought of himself. But he need not be afraid of his mother's eyes, nor of Eily Driscoll's when they should meet in heaven.

Ah! there were good women in the world, if there were shameful hussies. There was poor Honor Daly, with whom he had lodged these ten years back, whose death had sent him to the workhouse. Honor had been fond of him. When he could work he had brought her his wages. When he was too crippled with the rheumatism to work, she kept him all the same— an heroic soul, with her three children and her helpless lodger to support by standing over the wash-tub all day. She was gone now, and the children were scattered in various institutions. How Dan missed the children, to be sure ! He had been worth his keep for amusing the children, Honor Daly had often declared in the days of his rheumatic attacks, or when the pain in his back was too bad to permit him working as a quay labourer. Some-one passing by with a brisk step, very unlike the able-bodied inmates', pulled up in front of Dan Connors and spoke. It was the workhouse doctor, a man with a ruddy, wholesome, out-of-door face and very blue eyes— a country-man of Dan's, too, and a man with a quick compassion for the flotsam and jetsam of humanity that came his way: "Heartbroke," Dan would have said, "with trying to mend the work-house ways."

"Dreaming, Connors? " he said.

Dan looked up at him with eyes in which the dreams were plainly visible.

"Aye, sir, " he said. "I believe I was back in Ireland. The colour of your moustache, now — I thought for a minute it was old Pincher's coat ; 'twas the little bit of a dog we had at home when I was a boy. "

The doctor smiled.

"I can see you've come of decent stock, Connors, " he said. " Isn't there someone would take you out of this? It isn't a place for the like of you."

Dan looked down at his corduroyed knees.

"I was just wonderin', " he said, "if there was any of them left in Old Bawn at all. There was little Dick. He was no more than four when I went out of it, and a terrible fond child of me. I don't know that I'd like them to know where I was. 'Twould be a terrible disgrace for them. The Connors were always decent people. "

The doctor protruded his lips rapidly and drew them in again in a characteristic gesture which Dan did not see.

"How old are you, Connors?" he asked.

"Fifty-four, come Michelmas, sir."

"You're sure of that?"

The doctor looked startled, as well he might. He looked down at Dan Connors, huddled up on the wooden bench under the hawthorn and be-lieved

him. The age of the man was merely superficial. And there was nothing wrong with him but the over-work and the rheumatism that had resulted from exposure to all kinds of weather.

“I'm surprised, ” he said kindly. “Why, there's only ten years of differ-ence between us. Plenty of men have done a lot of work after fifty-four. You'd be some use yet, Connors, under happier conditions.”

“I might, ” said Dan, humbly, his eyes looking with admiration at the doctor's stalwart, grey-clad figure. “Sure, you look like my grandson,” he added. “ 'Tis the feeding you've had, sir, and the care. Forty's too old for a quay labourer.”

“Let me see — you come from the County Tipperary?”

“Near the foot of the Keeper Moun-tains. 'Twas a lovely little place we had there. Coolmore was the name of the village. You've maybe heard of it. There's great fishing there in the Coolbeg.”

“I was there once. A very different place from this, Connors.”

“You're right, doctor. Well, sure, God help us, 'tis often easy enough to be steppin' out of a place an' not so easy to be steppin' back. What would I be but a disgraceful old ghost goin' back among them ? 'Twas different ideas I had once, when I thought of bringin' them home a bag of gold. Ah, thank you kindly, doctor. 'Tis very good of you.”

The doctor had held an open tobacco pouch under Dan's nose. Dan took a fill with trembling fingers, and looked up at the doctor, sudden tears in his eyes. It wasn't often you met with any humanity in such a desolate old place.

The doctor passed on to bring a breath of the open air and a touch of human kindness to the old people in the bedridden ward, while Dan sat on under the tree, once again lost in his dreams.

The next day the doctor, passing him by, dropped an open paper across his knees. Dan fumbled for his spec-tacles, and, having found them, spread out the sheet and began to read.

It was a little sheet, not very well printed, but it might have fallen straight from heaven so far as Dan was concerned. Why, every bit of it was set, as though with a clear, shining gem, with a well-beloved name. Coolmore, Coolbeg, Drumeriskey, Emly, Shanagolden, Derrybawn. They leaped out of that wonderful lost past as though they had been so many shining flowers. It was kind of the doctor, so it was— God bless him! The time wouldn't pass slowly for Dan, having the *Tipperary People* to read. Why, it was like as though somebody had opened a door into a wonderful lost Paradise and bidden Dan walk in.

For a time he hovered uncertainly over the paper, sipping at the sweets, so to speak. At length he settled himself down for a steady read through it. He wasn't going to get tired of it easily. When he had gone straight through it he could begin it all over again. Perhaps the ward-master would let him keep it by

his bed. It would be great company in the lonesome night, with the old people sighing and groaning wearily all about him, to have the *Tipperary People* tucked away under his mattress. And— who knew?— God was good— maybe Dr. Devine might bring him another paper some day.

He read on, and names of people long remembered or long forgotten sprang up out of the printed line and confronted him. Dear, dear! To think old John Cunningham was yet alive and doing well, for there was a record of the sheep he had bought at an auction. Elsie Doyle had taken a high place at the Intermediate Exami-nations. He wondered would she be Peter Doyle's daughter at all ? Peter and he had been at school together. The girsha couldn't be Peter's grand-daughter. Surely not! Why, Peter would be a personable man still. He'd be about fifty-three. What was fifty-three to them that had had a chance of minding themselves?

He hovered over the paper like a bee over a flower bed, picking out a name here and there. Suddenly he swooped like the bee and rested. He sat staring at a name:

"Among those present was Mr. Richard Connors, J.P., D.C., P.L.G."

Dick!— could it be Dick ? Was it possible it was little Dick, who had followed his big brother about with a dog-like devotion in those days long gone? A J.P., too! A Justice of the Peace! And a Poor Law Guardian! Dan wasn't sure what D.G. meant. That was a new happening since his days. Little Dick! Ah, well, sure it was a great thing there were some to keep up the old name and make it honoured and respected when there were others that dragged it in the dust.

He was so elated by Dick's success in the world that he sat in the stray gleam of sun that had found its way over the top of the high buildings, transported out of himself for the time being. It kept him happy for all that day. But the inevitable re-action followed. A chill sense came to him that Dick's advancement had closed in his face the door which had let through the faintest chink of light. He imagined Dick's glories. In his day to be a Justice of the Peace was to be a person of social importance, to keep a carriage, to follow the hounds— to be a gentleman, in short. Great man, Dick! Dan remembered what a cute little codger Dick had been, even at four years old. What would he be doing, a poor old shabby workhouse ghost, if he could return into the midst of such splendours, but frightening the life out of them all by his return?

He supposed it would be the work-house to the end— the workhouse and the association with people whose ways and whose words repelled his curious natural innocence. He was more aloof from them than ever after his wonderful discovery about Dick, and they hustled and trod on him worse than need be as they went into meals and on the way up to bed. One of the pauper nurses reported him to an official for insubordination— there never was a more

groundless charge— and he was threatened with punishment unless he mended his manners.

His manners!— in that mannerless, moralless abode! Dan had never lost his excellent, old-fashioned manners. They made him a softy to the rough lot about him, and furnished a reason for his toes being trodden on and his ribs punched, till he began to see red, and came near earning the threatened punishment.

The pauper attendant, coming into the ward where the old men were beginning to brandish their sticks, cooled the hot blood by throwing cold water over some of them. Whether by accident or design, Dan got more than his share of the water. His anger died down as though it had been actual fire. Sure, what right had he to be angry, God help him? Hadn't he deserved any ill-treatment he got, he who had flung himself like a fool away out of Old Bawn into a world which had no place for him?

A dreary sense of the futility and hopelessness of it all descended upon Dan. Sure, what were they fighting about?— a lot of poor old wastrels that the grave might swallow to-morrow and welcome! Weren't they all only cumbering the earth? What was the use of their vexing and annoying each other when they were only a vexation and annoyance to them that were doing the world's work and living decently in honour and esteem?

The next day he was wracked with the rheumatism, and could hardly crawl out of bed. But he was better out of bed than in bed, for the day was the day for washing out the ward, which was done with a great swishing of water, to the grievous discomfort of the rheumatic patients who must stay in bed. He crept out through the ophthalmic ward, where the patients were groaning in misery because the walls had been newly white-washed, and into the yard, where he crawled like a sick old fly in the sun.

He was let alone, being plainly too twisted and crippled with the rheumatism to do anything. He sat for hours under the thorn-tree, where the master's dog, who happened to be an Irish terrier, came and rubbed himself by Dan's knees, giving him a sense of companionship. After a time he noticed, and was moved to a simple wonderment at the knowledgeableness of the dog, who was reputed proud in his ways, and well able to distinguish between an official and an inmate. He must have known that Dan was a countryman of his own, and made an exception in his favour. Dan, with his hand on the dog's little hard head, got some comfort from the companionship. It made him think of Pincher long ago at Old Bawn. Pincher would be dead this many a year. Dan began to wonder if any of Pincher's blood were left in it. They had been a notable breed of Irish terriers, and a cause of great pride to the Connorses of Old Bawn.

The days slid over Dan's head in a waking dream. Sometimes he was very ill at ease with rheumatism. He had bad nights. It had been nobody's business to dry his bed where the water had been flung on it. The bad nights made him

sleepy in the day. He dozed away a great part of the sunny days, sitting on the seat under the thorn-tree, which was now becom-ing quite green, his old knotted hands clasped over the stick and his chin leaning on them.

Once or twice Dr. Devine caught sight of him as he passed briskly to and fro, and spared to wake him. It was unusually warm weather for May, and the warm sun on Dan's rheumatic old bones was the best possible treat-ment for him. The doctor understood why it was that Dan wasn't to be found with the other old men where they shuffled about in their recreation yard. He said to himself that he must remember to ask the master, who was a good fellow, to let old Dan have the run of his garden, and after a time, when the rheumatism troubled him less, to let him do odd jobs about the garden.

"If I had my will," said Dr. Devine to himself, energetically, " the like of him would never be in the workhouse, any more than the children. It's no place for the decent old and the children. "

That was after he had become aware that someone had burnt Dan's lips with a match as he slept— a brutal jest, which might have had serious consequences in a man of Dan's age. The perpetrator remained undiscovered. If Dan knew he would not speak. Dr. Devine rather suspected that he did know.

"It keeps me from feeling the rheumatics so bad, " was Dan's remark to Dr. Devine, who was too well used to the ways of his countrymen to wonder at this good wrung out of evil.

But, awake or asleep, Dan's soul was in Old Bawn. The *Tipperary People* had made it all real and living, as of old. He seemed to have forgotten the great stretch of failure and hardship that lay between him and Old Bawn. The sunshine that dazzled his eyes through the closed lids resolved itself into the garden of Old Bawn, with the summerhouse in the middle of it, overhung by a tree which bore the most luscious yellow apples known this side of Paradise. There was the tree-peony and the box borders and the gravel path, and the stone seat in the privet hedge, and the white walls of the garden. Or he was in the fields, and the mountains were over him, and the little streams singing. Or he was coming home at even-ing, healthily tired with the work he had despised, to supper in the parlour and a delicious sleep in his room under the thatch. What a fool he had been ever to leave it! What a fool! A fool! And his mother so fair and comfortable and kind! She had always been there to stand between him and his father's severity. Well, he had repaid her ill. He had been her favourite. He wondered how she had taken his disappearance— how long she had waited and hoped for a letter from him or for his return. In the last letter he had ever had from her she had bid him remember that his place waited for him still.

Footsteps on the gravel-path disturbed the quiet of the noonday heat. He opened tired old eyes. There was the doctor standing looking at him with a peculiar kindness. There was someone else besides the doctor, some-one young

and strong enough to have been Dan's son. Some fragrance from the far-off fields seemed to have come with this new arrival. He was a big, burly, broad-shouldered young man in a suit of grey, with a simple, kindly, capable face. His eyes were very blue. Dan's own had once been as blue before they had failed and grown blurred with fatigue and regrets. Dan's mother had just such eyes.

“A friend to see you, Mr. Connors,” said the doctor, with a new respectfulness of address.

Dan blinked and stared at the handsome young man. There was some memory of the past troubling his tired old heart. Was it?— no, it couldn't be!

“You're kindly welcome, sir,” said Dan, with old-fashioned politeness. “Who might it be? I disremember somehow. I'm not as young as I was.”

“ Why, Dan, don't you guess who I am? Little Dick.” The speaker's voice shook. “Of course, I couldn't remember you. I was only four when you went away. Nor you me. But the mother has talked to me of you so often. ‘Keep a place for Dan,’ she said, ‘whenever he comes home.’ Glory be to God, she's with us still. She wanted to come, but I thought it better not. I've come to take you home, Dan.”

AFTER ALL, the Dan who arrived at Old Bawn a week or two later, although he was glad of his younger brother's strong arm to lean upon, was a very different person from the broken old pauper who had sat nodding on the seat under the thorn-tree, quite unaware of the wonderful good fortune that was on its way to him. Dan, in a well-made new suit of clothes, furbished up, well cared for, even to the flower in his coat, to say nothing of the effect of hope and happiness, had gone back almost to the proper looks for a man of his age. After all, one on the threshold of heaven, new 'scaped from the bitter slough of the world— why, to be sure he is new-made. The workhouse was a page closed for ever in Dan's life. No one except Dick and the mother knew where Dan had been delivered from. That shadow was never likely to fall on Old Bawn and the honour-able position Dan had won for him-self, to say nothing of the comely wife and children, and Dan's brothers and sisters who were married and settled all about the country and were coming for a family reunion as soon as Dan's meeting with the mother was got over.

Why, if he had made his fortune, as he had meant to do, they couldn't have given him a greater welcome. Was that Pincher, or was it Pincher's great-grandson, whose eyes met Dan's with a grave friendliness as he emerged from the little pink-cheeked mother's embrace? It might have been old Pincher and Dan young and hopeful again.

For the matter of that, Dan felt fresh energy stirring in his veins. He was not going to be the old man in the chimney-corner— not just yet. He'd throw off the rheumatism, please God, with the great comfort and the great happiness. He'd

be some use to them yet. They were not ashamed of him. There was only love in their eyes for him.

“ 'Tis a great day, ” said the mother, “ when I've my Dan come home to me. I knew in the heart of me he wasn't dead. ”

“Wasn't it by great good luck entirely we found him?” said Dick, smiling happily, as though the discovery of an old wastrel were a matter for the greatest congratulation.

“ 'Tis dreamin' I am that I'm in heaven,” said Dan to himself. “Maybe I'd be wakin' up and findin' I was back there. ”

But the sights and scents and sweet sounds of Old Bawn were about him. There was the white house and the mountains, and the cattle grazing peacefully in the May pastures. Never had a prodigal such a happy home-coming.

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21: A Gentle Ghost

Mary Eleanor Wilkins Freeman

1852-1930

Harper's New Monthly Magazine Aug 1889

Mary Eleanor Wilkins Freeman was an American author. She is best known for her novel Pembroke*, and also wrote a number of well-regarded ghost stories, which are still frequently anthologized.—Wikipedia*

OUT IN FRONT of the cemetery stood a white horse and a covered wagon. The horse was not tied, but she stood quite still, her four feet widely and ponderously planted, her meek white head hanging. Shadows of leaves danced on her back. There were many trees about the cemetery, and the foliage was unusually luxuriant for May. The four women who had come in the covered wagon remarked it. "I never saw the trees so forward as they are this year, seems to me," said one, gazing up at some magnificent gold-green branches over her head.

"I was sayin' so to Mary this mornin'," rejoined another. "They're uncommon forward, I think."

They loitered along the narrow lanes between the lots: four homely, middle-aged women, with decorous and subdued enjoyment in their worn faces. They read with peaceful curiosity and interest the inscriptions on the stones; they turned aside to look at the tender, newly blossomed spring bushes— the flowering almonds and the bridal wreaths. Once in a while they came to a new stone, which they immediately surrounded with eager criticism. There was a solemn hush when they reached a lot where some relatives of one of the party were buried. She put a bunch of flowers on a grave, then she stood looking at it with red eyes. The others grouped themselves deferentially aloof.

They did not meet any one in the cemetery until just before they left. When they had reached the rear and oldest portion of the yard, and were thinking of retracing their steps, they became suddenly aware of a child sitting in a lot at their right. The lot held seven old, leaning stones, dark and mossy, their inscriptions dimly traceable. The child sat close to one, and she looked up at the staring knot of women with a kind of innocent keenness, like a baby. Her face was small and fair and pinched. The women stood eying her.

"What's your name, little girl?" asked one. She had a bright flower in her bonnet and a smart lift to her chin, and seemed the natural spokeswoman of the party. Her name was Holmes. The child turned her head sideways and murmured something.

"What? We can't hear. Speak up; don't be afraid! What's your name?" The woman nodded the bright flower over her, and spoke with sharp pleasantness.

"Nancy Wren," said the child, with a timid catch of her breath.

"Wren?"

The child nodded. She kept her little pink, curving mouth parted.

"It's nobody I know," remarked the questioner, reflectively. "I guess she comes from— over there." She made a significant motion of her head towards the right. "Where do you live, Nancy?" she asked.

The child also motioned towards the right.

"I thought so," said the woman. "How old are you?"

"Ten."

The women exchanged glances. "Are you sure you're tellin' the truth?"

The child nodded.

"I never saw a girl so small for her age if she is," said one woman to another.

"Yes," said Mrs. Holmes, looking at her critically; "she is dreadful small. She's considerable smaller than my Mary was. Is there any of your folks buried in this lot?" said she, fairly hovering with affability and determined graciousness.

The child's upturned face suddenly kindled. She began speaking with a soft volubility that was an odd contrast to her previous hesitation.

"That's mother," said she, pointing to one of the stones, "an' that's father, an' there's John, an' Marg'ret, an' Mary, an' Susan, an' the baby, and here's— Jane."

The women stared at her in amazement. "Was it your— " began Mrs. Holmes; but another woman stepped forward, stoutly impetuous.

"Land! it's the Blake lot!" said she. "This child can't be any relation to 'em. You hadn't ought to talk so, Nancy."

"It's so," said the child, shyly persistent. She evidently hardly grasped the force of the woman's remark.

They eyed her with increased bewilderment. "It can't be," said the woman to the others. "Every one of them Blakes died years ago."

"I've seen Jane," volunteered the child, with a candid smile in their faces.

Then the stout woman sank down on her knees beside Jane's stone, and peered hard at it.

"She died forty year ago this May," said she, with a gasp. "I used to know her when I was a child. She was ten years old when she died. You ain't ever seen her. You hadn't ought to tell such stories."

"I ain't seen her for a long time," said the little girl.

"What made you say you'd seen her at all?" said Mrs. Holmes, sharply, thinking this was capitulation.

"I did use to see her a long time ago, an' she used to wear a white dress, an' a wreath on her head. She used to come here an' play with me."

The women looked at each other with pale, shocked faces; one nervous; one shivered. "She ain't quite right," she whispered. "Let's go." The women began

filing away. Mrs. Holmes, who came last, stood about for a parting word to the child.

"You can't have seen her," said she, severely, "an' you are a wicked girl to tell such stories. You mustn't do it again, remember."

Nancy stood with her hand on Jane's stone, looking at her. "She did," she repeated, with mild obstinacy.

"There's somethin' wrong about her, I guess," whispered Mrs. Holmes, rustling on after the others.

"I see she looked kind of queer the minute I set eyes on her," said the nervous woman.

When the four reached the front of the cemetery they sat down to rest for a few minutes. It was warm, and they had still quite a walk, nearly the whole width of the yard, to the other front corner where the horse and wagon were.

They sat down in a row on a bank; the stout woman wiped her face; Mrs. Holmes straightened her bonnet.

Directly opposite across the street stood two houses, so close to each other that their walls almost touched. One was a large square building, glossily white, with green blinds; the other was low, with a facing of whitewashed stone-work reaching to its lower windows, which somehow gave it a disgraced and menial air; there were, moreover, no blinds.

At the side of the low building stretched a wide ploughed field, where several halting old figures were moving about planting. There was none of the brave hope of the sower about them. Even across the road one could see the feeble stiffness of their attitudes, the half— palsied fling of their arms.

"I declare I shouldn't think them old men over there would ever get that field planted," said Mrs. Holmes, energetically watchful. In the front door of the square white house sat a girl with bright hair. The yard was full of green light from two tall maple-trees, and the girl's hair made a brilliant spot of color in the midst of it.

"That's Flora Dunn over there on the door-step, ain't it?" said the stout woman.

"Yes. I should think you could tell her by her red hair."

"I knew it. I should have thought Mr. Dunn would have hated to have had their house so near the poor-house. I declare I should!"

"Oh, he wouldn't mind," said Mrs. Holmes; "he's as easy as old Tilly. It wouldn't have troubled him any if they'd set it right in his front yard. But I guess she minded some. I heard she did. John said there wa'n't any need of it. The town wouldn't have set it so near, if Mr. Dunn had set his foot down he wouldn't have it there. I s'pose they wanted to keep that big field on the side clear; but they would have moved it along a little if he'd made a fuss. I tell you what 'tis, I've 'bout made up my mind— I dun know as it's Scripture, but I can't help it— if

folks don't make a fuss they won't get their rights in this world. If you jest lay still an' don't rise up, you're goin' to get stepped on. If people like to be, they can; I don't."

"I should have thought he'd have hated to have the poor-house quite so close," murmured the stout woman.

Suddenly Mrs. Holmes leaned forward and poked her head among the other three. She sat on the end of the row. "Say," said she, in a mysterious whisper, "I want to know if you've heard the stories 'bout the Dunn house?"

"No; what?" chorussed the other women, eagerly. They bent over towards her till the four faces were in a knot.

"Well," said Mrs. Holmes, cautiously, with a glance at the bright-headed girl across the way— "I heard it pretty straight— -they say the house is haunted."

The stout woman sniffed and straightened herself. "Haunted!" repeated she.

"They say that ever since Jenny died there's been queer noises 'round the house that they can't account for. You see that front chamber over there, the one next to the poorhouse; well, that's the room, they say."

The women all turned and looked at the chamber windows, where some ruffled white curtains were fluttering.

"That's the chamber where Jenny used to sleep, you know," Mrs. Holmes went on; "an' she died there. Well, they said that before Jenny died, Flora had always slept there with her, but she felt kind of bad about goin' back there, so she thought she'd take another room. Well, there was the awfulest moanin' an' takin' on up in Jenny's room, when she did, that Flora went back there to sleep."

"I shouldn't thought she could," whispered the nervous woman, who was quite pale.

"The moanin' stopped jest as soon as she got in there with a light. You see Jenny was always terrible timid an' afraid to sleep alone, an' had a lamp burnin' all night, an' it seemed to them jest as if it really was her, I s'pose."

"I don't believe one word of it," said the stout woman, getting up. "It makes me all out of patience to hear people talk such stuff, jest because the Dunns happen to live opposite a graveyard."

"I told it jest as I heard it," said Mrs. Holmes, stiffly.

"Oh, I ain't blamin' you; it's the folks that start such stories that I ain't got any patience with. Think of that dear, pretty little sixteen-year-old girl hauntin' a house!"

"Well, I've told it jest as I heard it," repeated Mrs. Holmes, still in a tone of slight umbrage. "I don't ever take much stock in such things myself."

The four women strolled along to the covered wagon and climbed in. "I declare," said the stout woman, conciliatingly, "I dun know when I've bad such an outin'. I feel as if it had done me good. I've been wantin' to come down to the

cemetery for a long time, but it's most more'n I want to walk. I feel real obliged to you, Mis' Holmes."

The others climbed in. Mrs. Holmes disclaimed all obligations gracefully, established herself on the front seat, and shook the reins over the white horse. Then the party jogged along the road to the village, past outlying farmhouses and rich green meadows, all freckled gold with dandelions. Dandelions were in their height; the buttercups had not yet come.

Flora Dunn, the girl on the door-step, glanced up when they started down the street; then she turned her eyes on her work; she was sewing with nervous haste.

"Who were those folks, did you see, Flora?" called her mother, out of the sitting-room.

"I didn't notice," replied Flora, absently.

Just then the girl whom the women had met came lingeringly out of the cemetery and crossed the street.

"There's that poor little Wren girl," remarked the voice in the sitting-room.

"Yes," assented Flora. After a while she got up and entered the house. Her mother looked anxiously at her when she came into the room.

"I'm all out of patience with you, Flora," said she. "You're jest as white as a sheet. You'll make yourself sick. You're actin' dreadful foolish."

Flora sank into a chair and sat staring straight ahead with a strained, pitiful gaze. "I can't help it; I can't do any different," said she. "I shouldn't think you'd scold me, mother."

"Scold you; I ain't scoldin' you, child; but there ain't any sense in your doin' so. You'll make yourself sick, an' you're all I've got left. I can't have anything happen to you, Flora." Suddenly Mrs. Dunn burst out in a low wail, hiding her face in her hands.

"I don't see as you're much better yourself, mother," said Flora, heavily.

"I don't know as I am," sobbed her mother; "but I've got you to worry about besides— everything else. Oh, dear! oh, dear, dear!"

"I don't see any need of your worrying about me." Flora did not cry, but her face seemed to darken visibly with a gathering melancholy like a cloud. Her hair was beautiful, and she had a charming delicacy of complexion; but she was not handsome, her features were too sharp, her expression too intense and nervous. Her mother looked like her as to the expression; the features were widely different. It was as if both had passed through one corroding element which had given them the similarity of scars. Certainly a stranger would at once have noticed the strong resemblance between Mrs. Dunn's large, heavy-featured face and her daughter's thin, delicately outlined one— a resemblance which three months ago had not been perceptible.

"I see, if you don't," returned the mother. "I ain't blind."

"I don't see what you are blaming me for."

"I ain't blamin' you, but it seems to me that you might jest as well let me go up there an' sleep as you."

Suddenly the girl also broke out into a wild cry. "I ain't going to leave her. Poor little Jenny! poor little Jenny! You needn't try to make me, mother; I won't!"

"Flora, don't!"

"I won't! I won't! I won't! Poor little Jenny! Oh, dear! oh, dear!"

"What if it is so? What if it is— her? Ain't she got me as well as you? Can't her mother go to her?"

"I won't leave her. I won't! I won't!"

Suddenly Mrs. Dunn's calmness seemed to come uppermost, raised in the scale by the weighty impetus of the other's distress. "Flora," said she, with mournful solemnity, "you mustn't do so; it's wrong. You mustn't wear yourself all out over something that maybe you'll find out wasn't so some time or other."

"Mother, don't you think it is— don't you?"

"I don't know what to think, Flora." Just then a door shut somewhere in the back part of the house. "There's father," said Mrs. Dunn, getting up; "an' the fire ain't made."

Flora rose also, and went about helping her mother to get supper. Both suddenly settled into a rigidity of composure; their eyes were red, but their lips were steady. There was a resolute vein in their characters; they managed themselves with wrenches, and could be hard even with their grief. They got tea ready for Mr. Dunn and his two hired men; then cleared it away, and sat down in the front room with their needlework. Mr. Dunn, a kindly, dull old man, was in there too, over his newspaper. Mrs. Dunn and Flora sewed intently, never taking their eyes from their work. Out in the next room stood a tall clock, which ticked loudly; just before it struck the hours it made always a curious grating noise. When it announced in this way the striking of nine, Mrs. Dunn and Flora exchanged glances; the girl was pale, and her eyes looked larger. She began folding up her work. Suddenly a low moaning cry sounded through the house, seemingly from the room overhead. "There it is!" shrieked Flora. She caught up a lamp and ran. Mrs. Dunn was following, when her husband, sitting near the door, caught bold of her dress with a bewildered air; he had been dozing. "What's the matter?" said he, vaguely.

"Don't you hear it? Didn't you hear it, father?"

The old man let go of her dress suddenly. "I didn't hear nothin'," said he.

"Hark!"

But the cry, in fact, had ceased. Flora could be heard moving about in the room overhead, and that was all. In a moment Mrs. Dunn ran up— stairs after her. The old man sat staring. "It's all dum foolishness," he muttered, under his

breath. Presently he fell to dozing again, and his vacantly smiling face lopped forward. Mr. Dunn, slow-rained, patient, and unimaginative, had had his evening naps interrupted after this manner for the last three months, and there was as yet no cessation of his bewilderment. He dealt with the simple, broad lights of life; the shadows were beyond his speculation. For his consciousness his daughter Jenny had died and gone to heaven; he was not capable of listening for her ghostly moans in her little chamber overhead, much less of hearing them with any credulity.

When his wife came down-stairs finally she looked at him, sleeping there, with a bitter feeling. She felt as if set about by an icy wind of loneliness. Her daughter, who was after her own kind, was all the one to whom she could look for sympathy and understanding in this subtle perplexity which had come upon her. And she would rather have dispensed with that sympathy, and heard alone those piteous, uncanny cries, for she was wild with anxiety about Flora. The girl had never been very strong. She looked at her distressfully when she came down the next morning.

"Did you sleep any last night?" said she.

"Some," answered Flora.

Soon after breakfast they noticed the little Wren girl stealing across the road to the cemetery again. "She goes over there all the time," remarked Mrs. Dunn, "I b'lieve she runs away. See her look behind her."

"Yes," said Flora, apathetically.

It was nearly noon when they heard a voice from the next house calling, "Nancy! Nancy! Nancy Wren!" The voice was loud and imperious, but slow and evenly modulated. It indicated well its owner. A woman who could regulate her own angry voice could regulate other people. Mrs. Dunn and Flora heard it understandingly.

"That poor little thing will catch it when she gets home," said Mrs. Dunn.

"Nancy! Nancy! Nancy Wren!" called the voice again.

"I pity the child if Mrs. Gregg has to go after her. Mebbe she's fell asleep over there. Flora, why don't you run over there an' get her?"

The voice rang out again. Flora got her hat and stole across the street a little below the house, so the calling woman should not see her. When she got into the cemetery she called in her turn, letting out her thin sweet voice cautiously. Finally she came directly upon the child. She was in the Blake lot, her little slender body, in its dingy cotton dress, curled up on the ground close to one of the graves. No one but Nature tended those old graves now, and she seemed to be lapsing them gently back to her own lines, at her own will. Of the garden shrubs which had been planted about them not one was left but an old low-spraying white rose-bush, which had just gotten its new leaves. The Blake lot was at the very rear of the yard, where it verged upon a light wood, which was

silently stealing its way over its own proper boundaries. At the back of the lot stood a thicket of little thin trees, with silvery twinkling leaves. The ground was quite blue with houstonias.

The child raised her little fair head and stared at Flora, as if just awakened from sleep. She held her little pink mouth open, her innocent blue eyes had a surprised look, as if she were suddenly gazing upon a new scene.

"Where's she gone?" asked she, in her sweet, feeble pipe.

"Where's who gone?"

"Jane."

"I don't know what you mean. Come, Nancy, you must go home now."

"Didn't you see her?"

"I didn't see anybody," answered Flora, impatiently. "Come!"

"She was right here."

"What do you mean?"

"Jane was standin' right here. An' she had her white dress on, an' her wreath."

Flora shivered, and looked around her fearfully. The fancy of the child was overlapping her own nature. There wasn't a soul here. "You've been dreaming, child. Come!"

"No, I wasn't. I've seen them blue flowers an' the leaves winkin' all the time. Jane stood right there." The child pointed with her tiny finger to a spot at her side. "She hadn't come for a long time before," she added. "She's stayed down there." She pointed at the grave nearest her.

"You mustn't talk so," said Flora, with tremulous severity. "You must get right up and come home. Mrs. Gregg has been calling you and calling you. She won't like it."

Nancy turned quite pale around her little mouth, and sprang to her feet. "Is Mis' Gregg comin'?"

"She will come if you don't hurry."

The child said not another word. She flew along ahead through the narrow paths, and was in the almshouse door before Flora crossed the street.

"She's terrible afraid of Mrs. Gregg," she told her mother when she got home. Nancy had disturbed her own brooding a little, and she spoke more like herself.

"Poor little thing! I pity her," said Mrs. Dunn. Mrs. Dunn did not like Mrs. Gregg.

Flora rarely told a story until she had ruminated awhile over it herself. It was afternoon, and the two were in the front room at their sewing, before she told her mother about "Jane."

"Of course she must have been dreaming," Flora said.

"She must have been," rejoined her mother.

But the two looked at each other, and their eyes said more than their tongues. Here was a new marvel, new evidence of a kind which they had heretofore scented at, these two rigidly walking New England souls; yet walking, after all, upon narrow paths through dark meadows of mysticism. If they never lost their footing, the steaming damp of the meadows might come in their faces.

This fancy, delusion, superstition, whichever one might name it, of theirs had lasted now three months— ever since young Jenny Dunn had died. There was apparently no reason why it should not last much longer, if delusion it were; the temperaments of these two women, naturally nervous and imaginative, overwrought now by long care and sorrow, would perpetuate it.

If it were not delusion, pray what exorcism, what spell of book and bell, could lay the ghost of a little timid child who was afraid alone in the dark?

The days went on, and Flora still hurried up to her chamber at the stroke of nine. If she were a moment late, sometimes if she were not, that pitiful low wail sounded through the house.

The strange story spread gradually through the village. Mrs. Dunn and Flora were silent about it, but Gossip is herself of a ghostly nature, and minds not keys nor bars.

There was quite an excitement over it. People affected with morbid curiosity and sympathy came to the house. One afternoon the minister came and offered a prayer. Mrs. Dunn and Flora received them all with a certain reticence; they did not concur in their wishes to remain and hear the mysterious noises for themselves. People called them "dreadful close." They got more satisfaction out of Mr. Dunn, who was perfectly ready to impart all the information in his power and his own theories in the matter.

"I never heard a thing but once," said he, "an' then it sounded more like a cat to me than anything. I guess mother and Flora air kinder nervous."

The spring was waxing late when Flora went up-stairs one night with the oil low in her lamp. She had neglected filling it that day. She did not notice it until she was undressed; then she thought to herself that she must blow it out. She always kept a lamp burning all night, as she had in timid little Jenny's day. Flora herself was timid now.

So she blew the light out. She had barely laid her head upon the pillow when the low moaning wail sounded through the room. Flora sat up in bed and listened, her hands clinched. The moan gathered strength and volume; little broken words and sentences, the piteous ejaculations of terror and distress, began to shape themselves out of it.

Flora sprang out of bed, and stumbled towards her west window— the one on the almshouse side. She leaned her head out, listening a moment. Then she called her mother with wild vehemence. But her mother was already at the door with a lamp. When she entered, the moans ceased.

"Mother," shrieked Flora, "it ain't Jenny. It's somebody over there— at the poor-house. Put the lamp out in the entry, and come back here and listen."

Mrs. Dunn set out the lamp and came back, closing the door. It was a few minutes first, but presently the cries recommenced.

"I'm goin' right over there," said Mrs. Dunn. "I'm goin' to dress myself an' go over there. I'm goin' to have this affair sifted now."

"I'm going too," said Flora.

It was only half-past nine when the two stole into the almshouse yard. The light was not out in the room on the ground-floor, which the overseer's family used for a sitting-room. When they entered, the overseer was there asleep in his chair, his wife sewing at the table, and an old woman in a pink cotton dress, apparently doing nothing. They all started, and stared at the intruders.

"Good-evenin'," said Mrs. Dunn, trying to speak composedly. "We thought we'd come in; we got kind of started. Oh, there 'tis now! What is it, Mis' Gregg?"

In fact, at that moment, the wail, louder and more distinct, was heard.

"Why, it's Nancy," replied Mrs. Gregg, with dignified surprise. She was a large woman, with a masterly placidity about her. "I heard her a few minutes ago," she went on; "an' I was goin' up there to see to her if she hadn't stopped."

Mr. Gregg, a heavy, saturnine old man, with a broad bristling face, sat staring stupidly. The old woman in pink calico surveyed them all with an impersonal grin.

"Nancy!" repeated Mrs. Dunn, looking at Mrs. Gregg. She had not fancied this woman very much, and the two had not fraternized, although they were such near neighbors. Indeed, Mrs. Gregg was not of a sociable nature, and associated very little with anything but her own duties.

"Yes; Nancy Wren," she said, with gathering amazement. "She cries out this way 'most every night. She's ten years old, but she's as afraid of the dark as a baby. She's a queerchild. I guess mebbe she's nervous. I don't know but she's got notions into her head, stayin' over in the graveyard so much. She runs away over there every chance she can get, an' she goes over a queer rigmarole about playin' with Jane, and her bein' dressed in white an' a wreath. I found out she meant Jane Blake, that's buried in the Blake lot. I knew there wa'n't any children round here, an' I thought I'd look into it. You know it says 'Our Father,' an' 'Our Mother,' on the old folks' stones. An' there she was, callin' them father an' mother. You'd thought they was right there. I've got 'most out o' patience with the child. I don't know nothin' about such kind of folks." The wail continued. "I'll go right up there," said Mrs. Gregg, determinately, taking a lamp.

Mrs. Dunn and Flora followed. When they entered the chamber to which she led them they saw little Nancy sitting up in bed, her face pale and convulsed, her blue eyes streaming with tears, her little pink mouth quivering.

"Nancy— " began Mrs. Gregg, in a weighty tone. But Mrs. Dunn sprang forward and threw her arms around the child.

"You got frightened, didn't you?" whispered she; and Nancy clung to her as if for life.

A great wave of joyful tenderness rolled up in the heart of the bereaved woman. It was not, after all, the lonely and fearfully wandering little spirit of her dear Jenny; she was peaceful and blessed, beyond all her girlish tumults and terrors; but it was this little living girl. She saw it all plainly now. Afterwards it seemed to her that any one but a woman with her nerves strained, and her imagination unhealthily keen through watching and sorrow, would have seen it before.

She held Nancy tight, and soothed her. She felt almost as if she held her own Jenny. "I guess I'll take her home with me, if you don't care," she said to Mrs. Gregg.

"Why, I don't know as I've got any objections, if you want to," answered Mrs. Gregg, with cold stateliness. "Nancy Wren has had everything done for her that I was able to do," she added, when Mrs. Dunn had wrapped up the child, and they were all on the stairs. "I ain't coaxed an' cuddled her, because it ain't my way. I never did with my own children."

"Oh, I know you've done all you could," said Mrs. Dunn, with abstracted apology. "I jest thought I'd like to take her home to-night. Don't you think I'm blamin' you, Mis' Gregg." She bent down and kissed the little tearful face on her shoulder: she was carrying Nancy like a baby. Flora had hold of one of her little dangling hands.

"You shall go right up-stairs an' sleep with Flora," Mrs. Dunn whispered in the child's ear, when they were going across the yard; "an' you shall have the lamp burnin' all night, an' I'll give you a piece of cake before you go."

It was the custom of the Dunns to visit the cemetery and carry flowers to Jenny's grave every Sunday afternoon. Next Sunday little Nancy went with them. She followed happily along, and did not seem to think of the Blake lot. That pitiful fancy, if fancy it were, which had peopled her empty childish world with ghostly kindred, which had led into it an angel playmate in white robe and crown, might lie at rest now. There was no more need for it. She had found her place in a nest of living hearts, and she was getting her natural food of human love.

They had dressed Nancy in one of the little white frocks which Jenny had worn in her childhood, and her hat was trimmed with some ribbon and rose-buds which had adorned one of the dead young girl's years before.

It was a beautiful Sunday. After they left the cemetery they strolled a little way down the road. The road lay between deep green meadows and cottage yards. It was not quite time for the roses, and the lilacs were turning gray. The

buttercups in the meadows had blossomed out, but the dandelions had lost their yellow crowns, and their filmy skulls appeared. They stood like ghosts among crowds of golden buttercups; but none of the family thought of that; their ghosts were laid in peace.

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22: The Valley of Golden Silence

Beatrice Grimshaw

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MARK M'CRACKEN came up the steps of the veranda, with his flying helmet in his hand.

He said: "Persis Cameron's lost!" And the three unemphasized words exploded on the veranda like three Mills bombs.

Most of the men were drunk; it was near Christmas, and almost every miner on the Laurie Field was "in" for the annual spree. Two were boxing in the barroom. Ten or fifteen, seated on benches, were beating on the floor with their heavy boots, while they sang, each independently of the others, "Auld Lang Syne," "Happy Days," the inescapable "Genevieve, my Genevieve," and "Hinky Dinky Parley Voo." One heavyweight, alternately sitting down on and rising up from the keys of the long-suffering piano, seemed to be attempting an accompaniment. Beneath the house, among the piles, several dogs were fighting.

Nevertheless, as if by some miracle, M'Cracken's words were heard. One or two men in his neighborhood caught them, and springing to their feet, began to shake and shout the others into silence. The fighters in the bar, suddenly conscious of the loss of their audience, lurched to the door, and looked with amazement upon the spectacle of thirty or forty half-intoxicated miners milling about Mark M'Cracken, star pilot of New Barbary Airways, the most dangerous flying service in the world; Mark, who never treated, never drank, and seldom came into the hotel, save to bolt a hasty meal and go away.

He stood there at the top of the steps waiting for silence. He had taken off his overalls, and his bare brown knees showed under his shorts, the same color as his darkly coppered hands and face. Six feet was Mark, a fathom of tough young slenderness (they were all young, in that dangerous service), strong-necked, high-nosed and proudly grave, like the bronze statue of an American Indian. Only his eyes showed feeling; they were gray-blue, the most expressive of colors, and they shone in the rays of the electrics, just a little too wide open, a shade too bright.

And now the miners, many of them less drunk than they pretended to be, were almost quiet, realizing the horror of the thing he told.

Persis, the little girl lately from the coast, orphan of a plantation manager, left destitute and obliged to take place as housekeeper's help in the gold-fields hotel; Persis of the silk-black curls, and the long, dark-honey-colored eyes, and

the intriguing poppy-bud of a mouth that (it was said) no man on all the field had yet succeeded in kissing, unless that cool young devil Mark M'Cracken had managed it— Persis Cameron was lost. She had slipped, no one knew how, from the islet of safety that was the settlement of Magadiri, into the sea of unknown ranges and impassable forests surrounding it; into the world of tumbled knife-edge ridges, peaks ten thousand feet tall, and furious rivers, the country of the head-hunters and cannibals, the Stone Age impinging upon the last and most sophisticated of Twentieth Century developments.

A day and a half before she had gone away early, walking briskly in her white shorts and little bare legs, to see the wife of a miner who lived just over the next hill. The neighborhood was supposed to be safe; the miner and his wife were friendly people. No one had troubled much when she did not return that night, save Tim Murphy, the lessee. of the hotel, a pseudo-Irishman from Sydney, who growled at her absence in the Christmas season, as he growled at everything that threatened to deprive him of a penny of profit. Genial Irish, with an accent turned on like the beer taps, was Murphy in the bar; out of it, everyone feared his tongue 'and sometimes his coarse, heavy hand.

The second day passed over, and Murphy began to get indignant— a bit troubled too. What did the Wilsons mean by keeping his star attraction? For that Persis Cameron was, even if she did give herself stuck-uppish airs, and wouldn't drink with the men. Night was coming again; if she didn't turn up tomorrow, he would certainly send for her. He didn't— quite— like the look of things.

Out on the front veranda a sudden silence, with a single voice speaking, caught his attention. Slipping at once into his genial Paddy-from-Cork manner, he stumped on thick short legs from the. back of the house. "Shure now, bhoys— " he was beginning, when the sight of Mark M'Cracken silenced him. Something was up.

Like a figure of Silenus he stood listening, mouth open, huge beard straggling down over pot-round belly. Above him the electrics, the wonderful electrics, shone, on the armchairs, the fancy tables, the looking- glasses, china vases, crystal and silver, that had been carried ' up from the far coast by plane, even as the hotel itself, bit by bit, had been carried ; all of it brought into "being in a night "and a day almost, as if by some enchanter's spell, here in the heart of Stone Age, tameless New Barbary. He did not see, outside, the immense dark shapes of the ranges blacking out the stars, or hear, below the plateau, the Laurie River, mother of death and gold, muttering ill will against the whites who had dared her passes. He was listening, shocked and troubled for once, to the pilot.

BRIEFLY, unemotionally, Mark was telling the men that Wilson had gone out with him that morning to locate a missing plane in the "big bush." Wilson did most of the salvage work for the field; when he and Mark had found the wreck, flying above, Wilson would return, take out his boys, and start to bring in the remains of a costly Junker. There was little hope of saving anything else; pilots seldom escaped from a plane crash in New Barbary.

When they were a few minutes on the way, something Wilson said had made Mark realize that Persis Cameron wasn't at Wilson's camp, had indeed never been there at all. (He did not explain how he knew she was going. Most of the pilots knew most things that went on, about the plateau.)

They had gone on; a pilot on duty stops for nothing. But when the wreck was located, far in the forest, spiked upon a mountain pine, in a place where no landing was possible; when Wilson had been taken back again, to go out with his gang of boys next day, Mark had come up to tell the hotel what he knew.

Persis was missing.

OTHER people had been missing, from time to time. They had been found sometimes; sometimes never. Last week a lone prospector had been discovered split like a kippered herring, and tied to his tent-pole, as a warning to any who might think of following him. Last month the heads of three white men had been rolled down an inaccessible cliff, onto the river claim below. There was a man named Finch who had gone out with his boys months before, and never been heard of, he or the boys, again.

Murphy was troubled, angry. Hell, why couldn't Persis have kept herself safe, mere helpless kid of nineteen that she was, with those little bare legs of hers in blue socks like a baby's? And if she had to get into trouble, why couldn't she have done it without spoiling his Christmas trade? For it was going to' be spoiled; that was clear. The men were putting their heads under taps, calling for coffee. They were going out to the store at the back, and shouting to have it opened. They were buying provisions, looking up carriers, making everything ready for a start at earliest daybreak. The Christmas carouse— to which, in far-off camps, in drowning gorges, in the midst of heavy toil with the company's giant dredges, all these men had been looking forward for months— was being tossed away without a thought.

Persis might be stuck-uppish, might be less generally liked than Ruby, the second help, who would take a weight or two, or an ounce or two, from any man, and not for nothing either; but Persis was respected, admired, by many a man who had a young wife or a daughter far away at home; and not one of the crowd but would gladly have laid down his life to help her.

With dawn coming up over Koroni Mountain, sinister Koroni that had eaten men as a man eats apples, the miners were away. Planes would join in the

search later on, when the mists lifted; but the men knew that planes could do little, above that ocean of unbroken forest, where armies could have hidden, safe from scouting air-men.

They went, and the mists swallowed them. The sun got up, and the planes rose roaring to fly at a hundred and twenty miles an hour over those knitted forests where men crept slowly, five hard miles a day. And in all the range of country that they covered, there. was nothing to be seen, save, far in the forests, the shine of Judd's wrecked Junker, clinging spiked to a tree.

Mark's plane was the first to take off. Roaring over the wreck, he thought of Judd, who was certainly dead. Persis had seemed to like the fellow a little; she would have been sorry to hear of his end. Persis, in off-duty hours, had been rather fond of hanging around the edges of the *drome, out of the way of its fierce winged dragons, but near enough to see and sometimes talk to the pilots as they came off their run; as they stood there, proud, reserved, keeping themselves aloof from the common company of the field. The girls liked the pilots; yes, one had one's privileges.... What was that tale of ancient Mexico he'd read, about. chosen youths who were féted, feasted, crowned with flowers and given their choice of beautiful maidens, all because, in a little time or a little more, they were to be taken up the steps of the sacrificial temple, and there, before all the people, to have their hearts torn out?

WELL, he had seen young Spenser burned alive before the public, on the 'drome, three months ago. That was worse than having your heart cut out, maybe.

It came to this, that he and his kind were privileged, because they might have to die.

How far had Persis given him privilege, in her little innocent heart? He might never know that now. Just as well. Pilots in the New Barbary service had no right to marry.

They'd find her; he was sure of that.

Planes or men would locate the child— she was scarce more— and bring her out in safety. No use saying you couldn't be lost, in New Barbary— but Persis wouldn't be. Mark was a little superstitious, a trifle inclined to believe in "hunches." He had one now. He would not give up hope.

THE girl Ruby came down the veranda of the Magadiri Hotel, where weeks ago Mark McCracken had stood to announce the loss of little Persis Cameron, Persis, of whom, despite patrols, planes, expeditions, capture and questioning of suspected natives, nothing had been heard.

Ruby was pagan; she was gay; she smiled and walked like a Botticelli Flora. Some one had told her as much, but the compliment missed fire, since Ruby

merely supposed that Botticelli was a cheese. .. . She was twenty-five, looked twenty, was as innocent in appearance as an April lamb, was called Miss Ray, and had been twice divorced.

She was the most good-tempered creature in the world, spoke ill of no one, and had cheated and cajoled numerous miners out of dust and nuggets worth many hundred pounds, all of which she hoped eventually to smuggle out of New Barbary, in defiance of law, and at the risk of some confiding pilot's job. No trained pig of the Pyrenees had ever a keener scent for truffles than light-footed, light-hearted Ruby had for gold.

Persis was dead, of course, and Ruby was not sorry. She wouldn't have raised a finger against the kid, but the hotel was a pleasanter place without a little white-ankled pussycat who gave herself airs, and wouldn't drink with the men.

Besides, there was Mark, who never seemed to know that she, Ruby, was alive, as long as he could look out of the corner of his big gray eyes at Persis. Mark had come into the hotel oftener of late, Lord knew what for, since he didn't drink, unless it was to see Ruby herself. But the girl was shrewd, and she was not as sure as she would have liked to be, that Mark was really making love to her, when he sat opposite her at one of the little veranda tables, deliberately flirting with eyes and with clever foot.

"Seems somehow as if he was gettin' at me," she thought. But how?

Today Mark wanted to talk about what really interested her above all else—gold. As soon as he came in and sat down, he began. It wasn't quite like Mark—although on the Laurie everyone talked gold. Much of the ground was owned by companies, but there was still a good deal to be searched for, maybe found, by venturesome spirits, out back in cannibal country, where the stockaded villages were, and the head-houses, and the pools in the rivers where brown women took their human meat to wash for cooking, wiping it clear, sometimes, of drifts of useless yellow spangles that would have spoiled the dish....

Gold, always gold! In the safe of the hotel, in bits of moleskin trousering pulled from men's pockets; in the planes, heavily packed, going down to the coast, thousand and thousands of ounces at a time; in camps, put in old boots and empty tins, for want of better storage; in the idle talk that flowed like water night and day, about the bar and lounges of the hotel.

Mark, removed from it all as the cloudland seraphs in "Faust" stand removed from the turmoil of devils on the stage below, found himself wondering, detachedly, if anything, anything whatever, could happen on or about the Laurie that was unconnected with the great motive-power of the field.

There was his hunch; and it led him, without rhyme or reason, to Ruby.

HE had just brought up from the coast the marble head-stone sent from Australia by Judd's mother; the man was in his mind— and strange to say, Ruby began talking of Judd.

"I saw him carried out when they came back," she was saying. "All done up in canvas, and they said he was smashed something cruel. There's many a one has given their lives for gold."

Mark looked at her. He had treated her to beer, costly on that field as vintage wine; he knew that it was bound to make her talkative, for Ruby liked beer, and could drink any amount of it, without affecting her Botticelli nymph figure. But for the moment, he felt almost as if the beer had been in his own head, instead of hers. Judd— and gold? It didn't fit.

"Judd was trying to locate a new emergency landing-ground," he told her. "We need one or two." That was what Judd had given his life for. Mark could see, as weeks ago he had seen, the wreckage of the plane, great shining wings, and battered engine parts, being carried to the 'drome; and behind it all, a long stiff canvas parcel that was Judd...

Memory played him an odd trick.

Had he, or had he not, seen a fragment of Judd's socks sticking among the plane wreckage? And if he had, did the late pilot habitually wear blue socks— bright blue? He was almost sure that Judd did not, simply because he could not remember ever noticing his socks.

RUBY leaned across the table. She was very pretty, with her laughing lips, and bacchante curls, black-red, that only needed the maenad crown of grape clusters to be complete. "Judd was my friend," she said. "I put him on to it."

"On to what?"

"Aha," she said, and began to whistle. Suddenly she went on. "He wasn't like— some people. He could be generous to a girl. Says he: 'I'll give you half.' Says I: 'Finch would have done that anyway, when he comes back from where he's gone to. Finch and me were cobbers.'"

"Finch," observed Mark, watching her, "won't come back from where he's gone to; he's melted long ago."

At the sneer, she grew red. "Finch," she said, "was worth ten of some people, that kiss you like a cricket-bat slicing a ball— when they do." Mark had dropped a hard peck on her cheek, when he sat down, and Ruby's pride of a pretty woman was up in arms. "Finch," she went on, "isn't lost, if I know him— and I ought to. I bet my life. I bet my five gold bracelets and my three diamond rings, he's on it somewhere, in the Koroni; and that's what I told Judd."

Something was fluttering in Mark M'Cracken's brain, like a. bat in the dark, unable to make its way out. His heart was throbbing as it never throbbed when the plane went into an air-pocket over Koroni Mountain, with visibility bad, and

altitude too low. The bit of blue sock— the bit of blue sock! Judd, who had tried to flirt with little Persis, who had gone out looking for gold. Finch, and gold. What pattern did the bits of the puzzle make? There had been no sign of anyone near the plane, when they found the wreck. But the hour— and the day—

He got to his feet. Sunset was close at hand. You could see, hung out in front of the veranda like tapestry of turquoise and of jade, the range of cruel Koroni; you could hear, far down, the mutter of Koroni's evening thunderstorm, rolling through the gorges of the Laurie. It was as if the mountain, and the river, spoke; as if, together, they were hurling curses at the butterfly splendours of the plateau and its hotel, making little of them, threatening— "By and by!"

"Yes," he thought, " Bey and by they'll get the whole place back again; they're stronger than we are." He thought of Persis, lost among those torrents and those ranges, one, perhaps, of the many sacrifices made to the god of the gold field. "There's been too many," he thought; and a certain resolution took birth and shape in his mind. If she was found—

Something was happening in the hotel. One or two men, who had been listening to Ruby, had slipped away at the back. Others were following. Murphy was hurrying to the bar; he called to Ruby: "Come on, you, and serve!" Murphy was an old hand on the fields; as the barometer feels and marks the coming of rainy weather, so he, before it was fairly started, could feel the onset of a goldfield's rush, There would be drinking and rioting tonight; tomorrow, not a glass, not a bottle, would be sold in the bare.

Mark went out. But before he left, he astonished Ruby by catching her round the waist, and showing her that he' did know how to kiss— and not like a cricket bat slicing a ball.

PERSIS gathered herself together, and knew that she was not dead.

When the plane crashed, falling into a thick sea of mountain mist, she had been sure that she and Judd were going to be killed,

She had tried hastily to pray as they went down, but there wasn't time. She knew she should not have gone with Judd at all, she was breaking the rule of the plane company, running away from her paid work, and telling lies— she who didn't lie— to hide it. He had asked her to come for a joy-ride, and she had thought it might make some one else jealous— some one who was too stiff, too conscientious, ever to smuggle a girl into his plane.

So she had given out that she was going to Wilson's, and instead, had slipped unseen into the Junker, while it was still in the hangars, Judd concealing her.

And here was the fruit of her sneaking and her lying: she was going to die.... And then came the crash... .

She found herself looking up at green, green all round; she was buried in green. At first she thought—

But no; she was not dead and in her grave. She was at the bottom of one of the enormous beds of moss, fathoms deep, that floored the forests at the eight-thousand-foot altitudes. Into this, as into a spring cushion, she had fallen; and as far as she could tell, she was unhurt,

It was horribly still; there was no sign, or sound, of Judd. She could see the plane hanging in a tree a few yards away; the top of the tree had gone right through it, Judd—

SHE saw him, when she had painfully made her way out of the moss-bed, feeling her limbs to make sure she was, miraculously, uninjured, Judd was lying at the far side of the tree, with his head twisted to one side, and his back doubled up like a jack-knife. Dead....

Persis, sobbing, crashed her way through more of the stifling moss, and round the trunks of more of the cruel pointed firs that had spiked the plane—anywhere away from the wreck. She sat down, a long way off, upon a fallen tree. She must not think of Judd. They would come and look for the plane, quite soon, and if she could hold on for a few days— here where perhaps the mountain tribes did not come, where there wasn't a living soul but herself—

Thought broke off— went on again, with a jar. "Not a— living— soul," she repeated, staring at something that stood wedged into the fork of a tree, upon the edge of a giggling stream.

A billycan. A gallon billycan, packed full of gold!

"My Lord," she said, and went toward it with hands outstretched, like one walking in a dream. It was no dream. She couldn't stir the can— it seemed incredibly weighty; but the touch of the gold, fine, squeaking under her finger, the regal color of it, convinced. There was a fortune here, hanging up in the tree. There was enough to a girl— a girl who had been thrown young on the world, and was beginning to feel afraid of it— safe, independent for life. There was enough to let a pilot retire from his work and marry a rich young woman, who would never have to sit sick with terror in her cottage near the 'drome, wondering why his plane hadn't come, or spoken. Who might have a chance to know how her man would kiss her a year after marriage; bear a child to him maybe, in peace and confidence, not agonizing over every storm, each drowning mist, that swept from, or concealed, the peaks of cruel Koroni.

So much was Mark in her mind that when she felt the movement of some one close behind her, she was not frightened ; she swung round, with Mark's name upon her lips.

It was a stranger. A white man, very pale, with queer wild eyes of hazel green, that seemed as if they had taken their color from the forests under which

they had lived and looked so long. The man put out his hand to touch her, and it was fish-white, like his face.

"Real, b'gosh," he said in a dull voice. He pinched her, dispassionately, as one might feel a piece of meat. "So you're not a dream," he said. "What do you want?"

Persis had heard of "hatters," men who had lived in the big bush so long that they had lost touch with their kind, who were queer, inclined to set a hat up on a tree-stump and talk to it, for want of other company. This must be a hatter. She was sorry to have met him, because of this gold that was undoubtedly his gold, not the abandoned treasure of some dead prospector; but she was glad, as well.

"You'll have to get me out of this, come with me to the Laurie," she told him imperiously. Men, on the goldfield, were the slaves of girls; one ruled them with a finger, because they were always wanting, always hoping.... Oh, one had learned about men, since one first came, a little frightened kitten, to the Laurie.

It seemed, however, that one had not learned enough. This man was not to be moved by any woman's finger. Another god than woman had his worship— the god of gold.

"And do you think, you little spit-cat," he said, "that when I'm right on it, I'm going to drop everything and go back with you? Give the whole thing away that I've kept quiet— just to please you? Women," he said, and spat upon the ground, "women are the curse of any field."

"You dare to call me a— a woman!" She would not be classed, even by this hatter, among the henna-haired too-thin ladies with cigarette-dyed hands, who strolled in gorgeous kimonos about the rooms and lounges of Tim Murphy's hotel, coming and going no one knew whence or where.

He said indifferently: "Makes no odds. Here you stay, till I've got what I call a decent shammy to take out with me."

"You can't," she told him triumphantly. "What about stores?"

"Stores are all right. Those cursed carriers of mine, they chucked their loads, just before I came on it. They was ki-ki'd by the wild niggers, I reckon — and serves them right, too!"

EATEN— no doubt! Finch (for it must be Finch) was running serious risks himself; and here was she, obliged against her will to share them.

"There'll be the salvage people, coming after the plane. I could go down with them," she suggested.

Finch's green eyes blazed.

"Oh, no, you don't," he said. "What they don't know won't do them no harm. You're stopping with me. Come now, nobody's going to do you no harm; you aren't that lovely, though you may think you are. Look at my camp." He had

been leading her through the bush as he spoke; they came now upon a native material hut, well hidden among the green. "I'll put up a partition for you, inside, and you'll be as snug as a bug in a rug."

Persis scanned the hut. It was built of plaited bamboo, with grass-thatch roof. The roof caught and held her eye.

"Where did you get that?" she demanded. He wouldn't know why she asked....

But he did. He made no answer, but only grinned at her. "There's the fire," he said. "Charcoal! I made it— I don't want too much smoke. You can get yourself some tea, and then come down to the creek, and I'll show you where you can begin to work tomorrow. The more work you do, the sooner you'll get away." His tone was final, convincing.

DURING the weeks that followed, Persis lost all sense of time. In the dusk-emerald gloom of this huge forest one day was like another: food served grudgingly to her by Finch, who counted every morsel; work in the creek with prospecting-dish, while Finch handled shovel and box; nights beneath the grass roof that represented her only hope, sleeping uneasily, yet never disturbed by word or movement or even a significant forced cough, from the other side of the partition. She knew, now, why the queenship of a girl on the gold-fields had been snatched away from her; why she was, as woman, little or nothing to Finch. The man, brain, body and soul, was eaten up by gold-fever; no other passion could find room.

Every night she gave over to Finch's suspicious eyes and hands the gold she had washed out, by slow primitive methods, during the day— handfuls and handfuls of pure fine stuff. Every day or two Finch cleaned up the box, and took out what seemed to her incredible quantities of gold. The creek was a veritable jeweler's-shop, a rival to that celebrated Croesus Creek that had opened the whole Laurie field,

Gold was tied up in trouser-legs, packed away in handkerchiefs, tobacco pouches, empty meat-tins— anything that could be made to hold it. And still Finch labored madly, and the food grew less, and there was no talk of going back. Persis, not daring to encounter the forests by herself, realizing that Finch was daily growing stranger and stranger in his ways, began to fear that she would never escape from this golden valley alive.

The worst of all was on the day when distant sounds of axes announced the near approach of the plane-salvage party. Finch took her by the arm then, and hurried her away. The wreck of the plane lay far from the camp, but clearly he was taking no chances. For miles he drove her up into the untrodden forests above, where the trees were veiled in weeping mosses, and chilly mists hung low above the path that was no path, led nowhere, and Persis' garments, thin

with work and washing, clung to her like wet seaweed. She could have cried to think of rescue so near at hand, so utterly beyond reach. One consolation only she had, that Mark would not be with the salvaging party; it was not his work.

One? There was another now, a hope so faint that it was no more than a star upon her dark horizon, yet still a hope. Once, when the mists had lifted as they were climbing, she saw, bright emerald, far below, among the tops of the cedars and pines, a patch of shining grass. She had been on the lookout for that, but she did not dare to cast more than a single glance at it; Finch was watching her.

They went back again. The forest was still once more; the salvaging party had taken the remains of the plane, and departed.

FINCH was growing queerer. Now he hardly spoke to her, save sometimes to tell her that she ate too much for a little "scrawfish" like her; to grumble, suspiciously, over the gold when she gave it to him.

"He needn't be afraid," she told herself, for she believed the very thought of gold would sicken her for the rest of her days, if ever she -got away. Even to look at it made her feel, sometimes, as if she had been eating it; as if it lay, a cold heavy mass, in her stomach. And yet— and yet— it fascinated; it held. Gold was so strong. There was not much else in her stomach nowadays, and the light-headedness brought on by hunger and hard work made her sometimes fancy that she saw things in the bush: Skull faces, heads twisted horribly over shoulders, like the head of Judd, after he had fallen. And once—

But that was real. She had not imagined the fierce brown face, painted in black and red, with upright locks above it, supported by a crown of human teeth, that looked at her silently from the encircling green, and swiftly disappeared. She knew it was a native of the Koroni, that the tribe were now beginning to haunt the camp.

When she told Finch, he only said, "The blankety-blanks are after my gold," and went on rapidly spading wash into the box.

Persis knew that the natives didn't understand gold, never troubled themselves about it. Finch must have known that too, before the gold, and the big bush, together, had begun to eat his mind away. There was danger now, grave danger; and he did not even know.

She did not dare to ask him about the grass plot, whence he had obtained material for thatching. But it remained in her mind; the glimpse she had had of it convinced her that here might, be, for a daring, a reckless air-man, a possible landing-ground. Yet— what was likely to bring any of the pilots out so far from recognized routes? She had never known why Judd had ventured the trip; caprice, perhaps, the desire to give her a real thrill.... Well, after what had happened to him, no one was likely to follow in his wake.

IT was a day or two, or more, after this when Persis, working as usual in the creek, was amazed to see Finch suddenly drop his shovel, and catch up his rifle from the rock it leaned against. Crashing through the close-knit jungle, he vanished in the direction of the downward slopes beyond the creek— the place where, Persis thought, that open space of grass must lie. Were the Koroni natives assembling, ready for war, on the flat? What sound, inaudible to her ears, had caught the keen, bush-trained senses of the miner? She listened hard. She could hear nothing— nothing save the ordinary sounds of the forest and the creek ; tattling of water over stones; the slate-pencil squeak of some small parrot ; some way off, a giant green frog bleating, like a lost goat, in the bush.

Underneath these, under the fainter noises of the forest, small chippings and rustlings that one did not notice as a rule, she thought— she dared to wonder if— she heard another sound. An indistinct low hum, that might have been made by a swarm of the huge black hornets of the bush, disturbed in their nest.

Or— might not.

Persis dropped the prospecting-dish; a mass of gravel and gold, half washed, went glittering into the stream. She fell on her knees, and began to pray.

The noise came nearer; it was too loud, now, to be caused by any hornet swarm.

Persis sprang to her feet, eagerly listening.

The sound of a rifle-shot, and a cry, came to her as she stood...

MARK M'CRACKEN had managed to persuade the superintendent into letting him take one of the Fox Moths, in order to look for an emergency landing-ground in the Koroni country. The superintendent was none too anxious to risk another valuable plane, but he understood well enough that a new gold-rush meant trouble, and planes were meant to keep trouble away. Mark had told him that, given a plane, he'd find the makings of a landing-ground, or go to blazes— a figure of speech, in this connection, not entirely figurative.

So, provisioned, and accompanied by a couple of natives with clearing-axes, he got his plane, and roared away.... It would be a mistake to say that a girl's face was in his mind as he cleared the drome, and headed for Koroni heights. Mark was too good a pilot to dream on duty. But he had done his dreaming, a great deal of it, the night before, and he was working hard, now, to make the dream come true.

The rush had started. Sensitive to the smallest hint of gold in the air, as their own scales were sensitive to a grain of the real thing, the miners had put together various apparently unrelated facts, and out of them, made something like a certainty. The continued absence of Finch— Judd's unexplained trip across

the Koroni country— rumors, whispers, that from time to time had drifted down to the field, from wandering natives— these were enough.

THREE of the men, mates in the Australian sense, which means friends for life and death, had kept together, and were well ahead. They were old-timers— all that fever, hunger, ptomaine-poisoning, dysentery, blackwater, and attacks from hostile natives, had left alive out of hundreds who sought gold in the earliest days of New Barbary. Hard, enduring, well-nigh impossible to kill, they meant to be the first in, and they were. The sight of muddied water, in dry weather, in a creek that they were slowly ascending, told them they were nearing the goal. Within an hour they stood by the banks of the tributary on which the missing man had made his camp; they saw his box, his dish, his shovels; they guessed at the richness of the find, and felt themselves repaid for everything. But they did not see Finch. Instead, they came unexpectedly, in a glade not far from the camp, upon a man and a woman who were engaged in putting up a roughly made cross on a new grave.

As one, they burst into astonished cries of profanity. "It's Persis!" "Curse me, it's little Persis from the pub!" "Blimy, the little what-you-may-call-it isn't dead, after all!"

Persis, very far from dead, and glowing like a New Barbary mountain sunrise, flung up her hand in greeting. "How do you do, boys!" she cried. "You've come a bit too late."

The man unbent his back, and looked at the cross. It was well and truly set.

"Hold on, Persis," he remonstrated. "You can't peg out a whole field, We've got two claims and maybe a reward; that's plenty."

Persis, who had found herself, during the last few hours, as hungry for gold as any other victim of gold-fever; who would willingly have taken possession of all the dead man's treasure, if Mark had not, provokingly, packed it away in the plane for the Intestate Estates to deal with— Persis, who was learning that she and Ruby were not in some matters quite as far apart as she had thought— silently, unobservedly, made a face. She could not see why Mark and she might not take up the whole of the creek.

"Where's Finch?" shouted the newcomers.

"There," replied Mark, nodding toward the new-filled grave.

"What happened ?"

"Well, when a man goes batty, and starts shooting at a plane when it's making a landing, and misses, and goes for it with his hands to stop it— "

"That's right. It would. I reckon he had a rat."

"He had several, if you ask me."

"There's more than Finch on the Laurie, that has them little companions," another man cut in. "Maybe we're all a bit batty in the belfry. There's something in the way the stuff gets you— if you know what I mean."

Mark said nothing. He looked at the three men; old, worn and poor— they who had handled many thousands, lost them, lost health and regained it, lost it again; who had no homes, no sons, no women save the Rubys and her kind; who would go on losing, finding, seeking, until the day came when even their iron frames gave out, and they went, to join the mates who had gone before.

He looked at Persis, and saw, in her eyes, something of the light that burned in the eyes of the old men; the same light that he had known in Ruby's.... Ruby, who after all, had been the guide to the New Croesus Creek; who must, of course, be compensated.

Well, that would be easy. But first, there was something that he had to say.

"My claim is pegged. And Miss Cameron's," he said. "And you might as well know that when we get back to the Laurie, there'll be two claims on the New Croesus put up to auction to the highest bidder." He laid one hand on Persis' shoulder, and suddenly the miners raised a cheer. "Good luck!" they said, "Good luck to you both!"

PERSIS threw back her head with a confident gesture. Maybe you could "get over" your husband. Married women said so... . And gold was gold, the biggest thing in the world. Almost she could still feel the weight of the gold she had gathered (surely that at least should have been hers) lying like a weight in her body, like food. Yet she was hungry for more.

Mark said: "The boys will finish clearing, and we'll take off in an hour."

End