

to dread seeking employment elsewhere; but there was little wonder that, playing thus at cross-purposes with himself and his work, his utterances often enough took on a cast of the ineffectual and the insincere.

"He an anarchist," observed Parlow one day to the head-line man. "He's a dub. I'm ten times more of an anarchist myself." Which, from a practical point of view, was pretty close to the truth; for an airy yet determined avoidance of rule and regulation was the very warp and woof of the young fellow's nature.

Another of the Semicolon staff whom Frank Parlow held in but low esteem was Avis Mathilde Grahame, editor of the art department. She was a tall and slender blonde, past her first youth; she wore gold eyeglasses and wrote a lady-like hand. She was Golson's immediate neighbor, and for a year or more they had sat back to back in their respective dens. It was Miss Grahame's cheerless vocation to make a Saturday afternoon half-page out of the limited local doings in the field of painting and sculpture; and she was obliged (in the manufacture of her tale of bricks with so slight a provision of straw) to magnify mezzotints and cry up china decorating, and to turn to the fullest account every peripatetic exhibition that visited the town. She had never held a brush in her hand, and she was the victim of a languishing admiration for Botticelli and Velasquez—an admiration which, from the very nature of things, could not be given an hebdomadal airing in the paper. She was also strong on the pontificate of Julius the Second, and wrote too much—though less than she would have liked—about it. So that, whenever Frank Parlow met her in the corridor or in the elevator, he would say, as likely as not, yet gravely and respectfully:

"Good-day, Miss Grahame. How is the Renaissance?"

The result of all this was that Avis Grahame turned back upon herself—her emotional potentialities struck inward. And she often made herself declare, with feeble pointlessness, that, after all, the great art was life itself.

This sentiment was welcomed pleasantly enough in the genteeler suburbs, but it irritated Frank Parlow. "Oh, fudge!" he would say to the young woman who was obliged to proofread this dolorous matter, "I don't see how you can stand up under it." And on one occasion he added—for their acquaintance was becoming almost an intimacy: "I can get more out of life in one evening than this puling old girl has got out of it in the last thirty-odd years. And so, I expect, can you."

"Well, really, Mr. Parlow," was the young creature's reply, as she rolled back her large yellow wave from her forehead with a fair, ringed hand: "I don't quite know what you mean. If you had only said that I could do ten times as much with a paint brush as she can—a pathetic allusion, this, to the frustration of a higher career—I might grasp you."

"Oh, I guess you 'grasp' all right," returned Frank. "Or, if you don't, you soon will."

Golson was a bachelor. His private life was correct, and as a citizen he was no less exemplary. He hated the law—or so he thought—but he submitted to it. Property was theft, and matrimony was a worn-out form. Yet everybody held him to be honest; and it was assumed that if he even entered the double life it would be on the banal basis of a marriage license. He had never been, however slightly, "in contravention of the law"—as the Latins so grandiloquently express it. If the policeman hectoring too stationary a crowd, it was not Leopold Golson who expostulated or resisted; no, he docilely "moved on." If some officer drew attention, during the illness of the janitor, to the heavy snow-fall on the front sidewalk and called upon Golson's landlady, occupant of the first flat, to remove it, no protest ensued. "I need air and exercise," Golson would declare; "I'll shovel it off"—and more than once he had done so. He felt the weight of autocracy, but—

To Frank Parlow, on the other hand, whatever was was substantially right. He made no great claims to be a thinker;

he had no ambition to reform the world. Nothing mattered much so long as he was free, during his unemployed hours, to let his young blood have such full course as it demanded and required. If the police came into relations with him—this happened now and again—he would cajole, dupe, hoodwink, jolly and generally slip away. If he reached work late some morning, and was perceived to sit pensive at the loom on which he helped weave the ephemeral tissue that was to drape the fleeting form of the Day, none of his mates took notice, but all of them knew why: the reform movement had caught him at some prize fight or in some gambling raid; and nothing, after the failure of his usual wiles, had been able to loosen the hold of justice save the intervention of some high power in his ward. For Parlow was as active politically as every good citizen should be, and had once or twice been more effective in shaping local events than many of Golson's editorials could claim to have been. Again, if Parlow came down with a suppressed swagger in his gait and a scratch on his temple or just a shade of discoloration near his eye, it was tacitly understood that some difficulty had developed at a dance hall—that he had disposed satisfactorily of the other fellow, and still stood high in the opinion of the "lady."

"Ay, he's a tough little nut," the old Scotch foreman would now and then declare.

About Golson's attitude toward the sex little definite was really known. It was understood that there was an intermittent platonic alliance between him and Avis Grahame, and that sometimes, when there were spare tickets for theatres or concerts, or when the regular critic was overtaken by the embarrassment of conflicting dates, he escorted her to an entertainment of sufficient intellectual calibre.

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