

"My child, come home. Come home for Thanksgiving.—Mother."

Briggs slowly raised his eyes from the paper. The office wall became for him the background of a picture in far perspective. How well he knew that white-haired figure seated in that comfortable armchair! And the room, how familiar it was, even to the Rogers group on the mantel!

Distant Illinois; and yet it was here. And he had not been there for ten years—had not seen that kindly, loving face for ten years! He had been too busy! Too busy!

He folded the paper briskly. He got up from his chair, and marched straight to the office of the chief.

"I am going to leave you, Mr. Farley," he said. "I'm going home—for Thanksgiving."

"And where is home?" Privately the chief was a man, after all, though in public he never seemed able to forget that he had once been United States Minister to a foreign country. "And where is home?" he repeated.

"A thousand miles from here," said Briggs. "And I'm going. Clendenning can take my work."

"Don't worry," said the chief. "You're entitled to a rest. Come back in a week or two, if you're ready—but whatever you do, come back!" He studied the younger man's face with smiling comprehension. "I can't spare you long, Briggs. I'm getting old."

"I'm going to-night," said Briggs, hardly taking in what the chief's words implied. "Home, Mr. Farley! Just to think of it!"

The ache was gone from the back of his neck. He was smiling as he set his desk to rights. He slapped Bill Mayo on the back. He gave the city editor a special cigar, and he commiserated the flustered Clendenning. When at last he disappeared, the force was still dazed. The Cub, as an afterthought, wondered why the managing editor carried with him the smudged first copy of the first edition.

Briggs, as it happened, had a sentiment for that smudged paper. He

meant to keep it. Nevertheless, he forgot it, and left it on the Subway train.

III.

When Delaney went aboard the Subway local at Grand Central, his first act was to pick up the paper that was lying on the empty seat.

"Somebody must have rubbed this across the bar," he remarked to himself, noting the smudges on the first page.

He opened to the financial column, and read it with the yawning indifference of one who knows more about Wall Street than do the reporters. At Fiftieth Street he got off, taking the paper with him. He made his way to a non-committal side street in which stood a non-committal apartment-house, built before the days of steel and concrete. He pressed the third button from the end, over the row of inset letter-boxes in the entry, and presently the door clicked open for him. He slowly climbed the creaking stairs, regaled *en route* by the ascending odours of the janitor's dinner.

The door at which he ultimately knocked bore the information that Miss Clare lived within. It was opened an inch, and a high voice said:

"Is that you, Harry?"

"Surest ever," replied Delaney.

"Well, stay there till you hear my door shut," said the voice. "Then come in, and wait for me in the sitting-room. Lucille is doing my hair."

"Any old thing," agreed Delaney.

"Where'll it be this evening?"

"Rector's?"

"Right oh!"

Slippered feet pattered away, and a door was shut. Delaney entered discreetly, went into the sitting-room, and bestowed himself among the bright green plush upholstery. He cast a blasé eye toward the photographs on the wall—photographs of Miss Birdie Clare as *Sylphine* in "The High Rollers," of Miss Birdie Clare as *Cupid* in "The Arrows of Love," of—but why enumerate or describe?