

became more wonderful to me, week by week. Then I lost my head over her. That *apheresis* was so complete that I told Mary what had happened, and asked her to marry me.

Mary was very practical about it all. She said she liked me, liked me a lot. But there were other things to be considered. We would have to wait. I had my work to do—and she wanted it to be *big* work, gloriously big work. She wouldn't even consent to a formal engagement. But we had an "understanding." I was sent back to my work, drunk with the memory of her surrendering lips warm on mine, of her wistfully entreating eyes searching my face for something which she seemed unable to find there.

That work of mine which I went back to, however, seemed something very flat and meager and trivial. And this, I realized, was a condition which would never do. The pot had to be kept boiling, and boiling now more briskly than ever. I had lapsed into more or less luxurious ways of living; I had formed expensive tastes, and had developed a fondness for antiques and Chinese bronzes and those *objets d'art* which are never found on the bargain-counter. I had outgrown the Spartan ways of my youth when I could lunch contentedly at Child's and sleep soundly on a studio-couch in a top-floor room. And more and more that rapacious ogre known as Social Obligation had forged his links and fetters about my movements. More than ever, I saw, I had my end to keep up. What should have been a recreation had become almost a treadmill. I was a pretender, and had my pre-