

careful not to look at him. It seemed to her that she would scream if she had to recognize the good-natured patience which his face was most certainly expressing at the moment. If only she could hold herself together till they got to the Carson-Smiths'!

Meanwhile Edgerton settled down in the seat. He understood well enough that he had blundered; but his mind admitted no defeat. It was merely, he said to himself, that he had brought the question forward at an unfavourable moment. Later there would be a better opportunity.

He picked up the folded newspaper beside him. He did not remember putting it there. Without even troubling to unfold it, he glanced indifferently at the column exposed on the broadest fold, seeking to decipher a few words by the casual light of the passing street lamps.

Suddenly he lowered the hand that held the paper, and stared thoughtfully before him. With heavy deliberation, he took a pencil from his overcoat pocket and laboriously ringed the item he had read. He turned on the wide seat and spoke to his wife. The car had stopped at a Fifth Avenue crossing, blocked by a flow of transverse traffic.

"Phyllis," he said, "read this."

She moved slightly. Then, conscious that he had thrust the paper almost under her nose, she took it and read. As she read, she tried to harden herself against the tenderness that crept into her heart.

"That's universal, Phyllis," said Edgerton in a low voice. "My child, come home—the cry of the mother. Here we are, in this big, homeless city; but, thank God, we've got a place to go to for Thanksgiving! Of course, it will interfere with engagements to spend the rest of the week at Toronto. Of course, it will bore you; my family always bores you. But, Phyllis, it will do you good to be bored a little—to blunt the edge of all this nervous excitement of the great American pleasure-hunt. And my mother wants us, Phyllis. Isn't

that at least worthy of something?"

Mrs. Edgerton unconsciously placed her hand on the edge of the tonneau. The folded paper slipped from her relaxing fingers and fell to the street. She bent her head. "You needn't say more," she whispered. "We will go!"

The car moved forward.

## V.

Missouri Bill picked up the newspaper that was threatened with obliteration by hoofs and wheels. In the Third Avenue hotel to which he was bound—a hostelry in which, for ten cents, he would get as good a bed as he desired—he would be glad of reading-matter. Also, a newspaper, after perusal, might come in handy to eke out the scanty bedding.

Missouri Bill was puffy—and forty. His eyes were watery; red bristles adorned his face. His means of livelihood were so simple as to require no paraphernalia other than a fairly glib tongue and a husky earnestness of voice.

At the Hyperion Hotel, that evening, Bill sat as near as he could to the flaming gas-jet in the "office," and read his paper like a philosopher. He had early observed that a certain item in the personal column was encircled by pencil-marks, but he forbore from comment, because it was not his custom to offer comment unless he had a properly responsive audience. Thus had he learned from experience.

Young Charley drifted into the Hyperion about ten-thirty. Here, to Missouri Bill's eyes, was youth—youth still unhardened, still impressionable. For Young Charley was still in his twenties. What though his face was evil, his eye undependable? Was he not young?

"Come 'ere, Young Charley," said Bill, as soon as the newcomer had successfully proved to the clerk his right to remain.

Young Charley ambled over to the vacant chair beside Missouri Bill.

"Kid, where you goin' for Thanksgiving?" inquired Missouri Bill.