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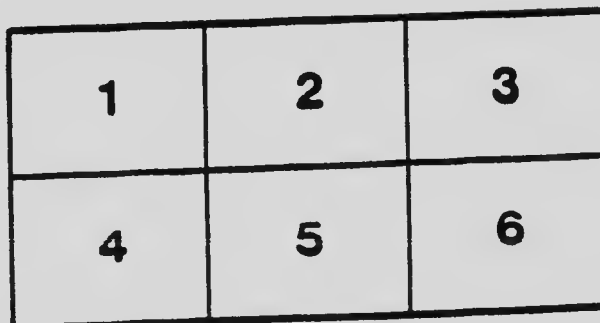
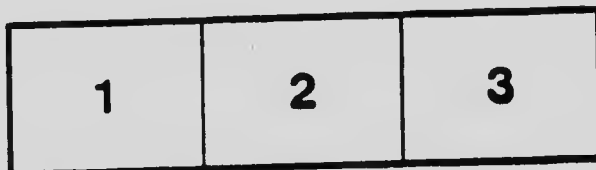
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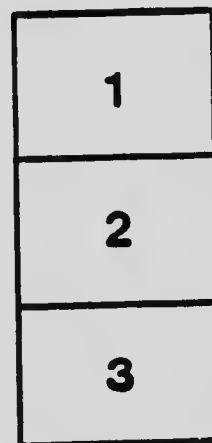
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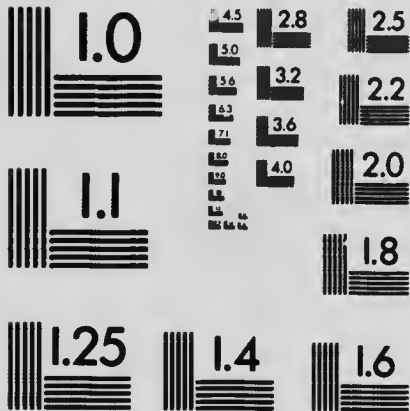
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THE SALAMANDER





É. de la

Doré

THE SALAMANDER

By
OWEN JOHNSON

Author of
THE VARMINT, STOVER AT YALE
THE SIXTY-FIRST SECOND, ETC.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY
EVERETT SHINN

TORONTO
MCLEOD & ALLEN, PUBLISHERS

P53519

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1914

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TO MY WIFE

FOREWORD

Precarious the lot of the author who elects to show his public what it does not know, but doubly exposed he who in the indiscreet exploration of customs and manners publishes what the public knows but is unwilling to confess! In the first place incredulity tempers censure, in the second resentment is fanred by the necessity of self-recognition. For the public is like the defendant in matrimony, amused and tolerant when unconvinced of the justice of a complaint, but fiercely aroused when defending its errors.

In the present novel I am quite aware that where criticism is most risked is at the hands of those entrenched moralists who, while admitting certain truths as fit subjects for conversation, aggressively resent the same when such truths are published. Many such will believe that in the following depiction of a curious and new type of modern young women, product of changing social forces, profoundly significant of present unrest and prophetic of stranger developments to come, the author, in depicting simply what does exist, is holding a brief for what should exist.

If the type of young girls here described were an ephemeral manifestation or even a detached fragment of our society, there might be a theoretical justification for this policy of censure by silence. But the Salamanders are neither irrelevant nor the product of unrelated forces. The rebellious ideas that sway them are the same ideas that are profoundly at work in the new gen-

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eration of women, and while for this present work I have limited my field, be sure that the young girl of to-day, from the age of eighteen to twenty-five, whether facing the world alone or peering out at it from the safety of the family, whether in the palaces of New York, the homesteads of New England, the manors of the South or the throbbing cities and villages of the West, whatever her station or her opportunity, has in her undisciplined and roving imagination a little touch of the Salamander.

That there exists a type of young girl that heedlessly will affront every appearance of evil and can yet remain innocent; that this innocence, never relinquished, can yet be tumultuously curious and determined on the exploration of the hitherto forbidden sides of life, especially when such reconnoitering is rendered enticing by the presence of danger—here are two apparent contradictions difficult of belief. Yet in the case of the Salamander's brother, society finds no such difficulty—it terms that masculine process, "seeing the world," a study rather to be recommended for the sake of satisfied future tranquillity.

That the same can be true of the opposite sex, that a young girl without physical temptation may be urged by a mental curiosity to see life through whatever windows, that she may feel the same impetuous frenzy of youth as her brother, the same impulse to sample each new excitement, and that in this curiosity may be included the safe and the dangerous, the obvious and the complex, the casual and the strange, that she may arrogate to herself the right to examine everything, question everything, peep into everything—tentatively to project herself into every possibility and after a few years of this frenzy of excited curiosity can suddenly be translated into a formal

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and discreet mode of life—here is an exposition which may well appear incredible on the printed page. I say on the printed page because few men are there who will not recognize the justice of the type of Salamander here portrayed. Only as their experience has been necessarily individual they do not proceed to the recognition of a general type. They know them well as accidents in the phantasmagoria of New York but they do not comprehend them in the least.

The Salamander in the last analysis is a little atom possessed of a brain, thrown against the great tragic luxury of New York, which has impelled her to it as the flame the moth.

She comes roving from somewhere out of the immense reaches of the nation, revolting against the commonplace of an inherited narrowness, passionately adventurous, eager and unafraid, neither sure of what she seeks nor conscious of what forces impel or check her. She remains a Salamander only so long as she has not taken a decision to enter life by one of the thousand avenues down which in her running course she has caught an instant vista. Her name disappears under a new self-baptism. She needs but a little money and so occasionally does a little work. She brings no letters of introduction, but she comes resolved to know whom she chooses. She meets them all, the men of New York, the mediocre, the interesting, the powerful, the flesh hunters, the brutes and those who seek only an amused mental relaxation. She attracts them by hook or crook, in defiance of etiquette, compelling their attention in ways that at the start hopelessly mystify them and lead to mistakes. Then she calmly sets them to rights and forgives them. If she runs recklessly in the paths of danger, it is because to

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her obsessed curiosity it is imperative for her to try to comprehend what this danger can mean.

She has no salon to receive her guests—she turns her bedroom at noon into a drawing-room, not inviting every one, but to those to whom she extends the privilege fiercely regulating the proprieties. She may have a regular occupation or an occasional one, neither must interfere with her liberty of pleasure. She needs money—she acquires it indirectly, by ways that bear no offense to her delightfully illogical but keen sensibilities. With one man she will ride in his automobile, far into the night—to another she will hardly accord the tips of her gloves. She makes no mistakes. Her head is never dizzy. Her mind is in control and she knows at every moment what she is doing. She will dare only so far as she knows she is safe.

She runs the gamut of the city, its high lights and its still shadows. She enters by right behind its varied scenes. She breakfasts on one egg and a cup of coffee, takes her luncheon from a high-legged stool in a cellar restaurant, reluctantly counting out the change, and the same night, with supreme indolence, descends from a luxurious automobile, before the flaring portals of the restaurant most in fashion, giving her fingers to those who rank among the masters of the city.

This curiosity that leads her to flit from window to window has in it no vice. It is fed only by the zest of life. Her passion is to know, to leave no cranny unexplored, to see, not to experience, to flit miraculously through the flames—never to be consumed!

That her standard of conduct is marvelous, that her ideas of what is permitted and what is forbidden are mystifying, is true. So too is it difficult to comprehend, in the society of men of the world, what is fair and what

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is unfair, what is "done" and what is not "done." To understand the Salamander, to appreciate her significance as a criticism of our present social forms, one must first halt and consider what changes are operating in our social system.

If one were privileged to have the great metropolis of New York reduced to microcosm at his feet, to be studied as man may study the marvelous organism of the ant-hill or the hive, two curious truths would become evident. First that those whom the metropolis engenders seldom succeed their fathers, that they move in circles as it were, endlessly revolving about a fixed idea, apparently stupefied by the colossal shadows under which they have been born; secondly that daily, hourly even, a stream of energetic young men constantly arrives from the unknown provinces, to reinvigorate the city, rescue it from stagnation, ascending abruptly to its posts of command, assuming direction of its manifold activities—ruling it.

Further, one would perceive that the history of the city is the result of these two constantly opposed forces, one striving to conserve, the other to acquire. The inheritors constantly seek to define the city's forms, encase its society, limit its opportunities, transform its young activities into inheritable institutions; while the young and ardent adventurers who come with no other baggage than their portmanteaux of audacity and sublime disdain, are constantly firing it with their inflaming enthusiasm, purifying it with their new health, forcing the doors of reluctant sets, storming its giant privileges, modernizing its laws, vitalizing its arts, capturing its financial hierarchies, opposing to the solidifying force of attempted systems

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their liberating corrective of opportunity and individualism. Of the two forces, only the conqueror from without is important.

This phenomenon of immigration is neither new nor peculiar to our civilization. It is indeed the living principle of a metropolis which, as it requires food, water, fire for its material existence, must also hourly levy, Minotaur-like, its toll on foreign youth. Woman has had no counterpart to this life-giving fermentation of young men. The toll of the metropolis has been the toll of corruption, spreading corruption, and this continuous flow of the two sexes through the gates of the city has been like the warring passage through the arteries of red life-defending corpuscles and disease-bearing germs.

Now suddenly to one who thus profoundly meditates this giant scheme, a new phenomenon has appeared. All at once amid the long stretching lines of young men that seek the city from the far horizon appear the figures of young women, not by hundreds but by the thousands, following in the steps of their brothers, wage-earners animated by the same desire for independence, eager and determined for a larger view of life, urged outward by the same imperative revolt against stagnation, driven by the same unrest for the larger horizon. This culminative movement, begun in the decline of the nineteenth century, may well be destined to mark the twentieth century as the great era of social readjustment.

In the past the great block to woman's complete and equal communion with man has been her economic dependence on him; while she has not been necessary to man, man has been necessary to her. Hence her forced acceptance of his standard of her position and her duties. In one generation, by this portentous achievement

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of economic independence, woman in a night, like Wolfe on the Plains of Abraham, has suddenly elevated herself to a position of aggressive equality. Those who see in the feminine movement no further than a question of political expediency perceive no more than a relatively unimportant manifestation. What has happened is that the purely masculine conception of society has been suddenly put to the challenge. Man's conception of religion, of marriage and the family, of property rights versus sentimental rights, of standards of conduct and political expediency, imperfect and groping as they have been, will, in the future, progress according to a new alliance between man and woman. And this world revolution has come, day by day, month after month, in the spectacle of young women, bundles in arms, light of purse, rebel in heart, moving in silent thousands toward the great cities. In this new army of women who have now intrenched themselves in the strongholds of economic independence, there are two distinct but related divisions, the great mass who must work and the relatively smaller class, socially more significant, who must live, those, of whom the Salamanders are the impatient outstripping advance, who are determined to liberate their lives and claim the same rights of judgment as their brothers.

What has brought this great emigration to pass? Several causes, some actively impelling, others merely passively liberating—the taking down of weakened bars.

The causes which have actively impelled this liberating emigration are more clearly perceived, the causes which have passively permitted this removal of the bars are less obvious. We are a society of passage—between two ports. Scarcely can we recall the thin shores we have

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departed, nor can any one foretell what outlines, at the end of the voyage, will rise out of the sea of experiment. In every social revolution there are three distinct generations, the first of intrenched traditions, the second of violent reaction and the third of reconstruction. And if it seem a law of nature's tireless action and reaction that fathers and sons should be ever set against one another, ever misunderstanding one another, the true measure of human progress lies in that degree of change which results between the first and the third generations. Between this old generation of authority and this present generation of logic has come a feminine revolution startling in the shock of its abruptness. Yet a social revolution that obliterates in an hour the landmarks of ages, frequently resembles a cataclysm of nature—the gathering torrent only becomes possible with the last six inches of earth. What has broken out in these last half a dozen years has been accumulating without beginning—for ideas can have no beginnings. They have existed in the unconscious human soul as the germ of physical evolution has lain among the glaciers and the wilderness.

What then was the position of women under the old order? That generation of authority was intrenched in the great social domination of the church. What in effect did religion say to women? It said:

“Remember always that this life is of no moment. It is given you that you may inherit eternity. Reckon not the present, aspire to the next. Abnegation is glorious, suffering is to be prized, sacrifices patiently made bring you by so much nearer to Heaven. Subordinate yourself, bear everything, accept all burdens gladly. Live for others; forgive, inspire. If this life seem to you narrow

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and motherhood staggering, bleak, joyless, think not on the fatigue but on the awakening."

With the turning of men's minds to the dormant truths of science came a great agnostic revolt that brought a scientific questioning of all facts and a demand that everything should fall or stand by the test of the reason. In this new enthusiasm for logic, which has overturned so many rooted institutions with its militant individualism, the authority of the home has been shattered, divorce has been multiplied in the protest against the old unreasoning tyranny of marriage, and the Puritan domination of the church has too often become a social institution for the better ordering of the masses and an outward form of polite respectability. In this complete breaking down of authority the voice of the church that spoke to women has been lost.

Another troubling phase began simultaneously, the period of miraculous material opportunity, the fungus growth of fortunes great and little. The suddenly prosperous parents began to plan for their children those opportunities which had been denied them, seeking to educate them beyond what they had known—a process ever linked with tragedy and disillusionment. What now results, with the thousands of young girls who have learned of magazines and novels or who have gone out from the confining narrowness of little homes to a broader education—not simply in books but in the experience of life, of a certain independency, of the opportunities beyond?

At about the age of eighteen the Salamander returns to town or village, to the mediocrity of the home from which she has escaped, and at once the great choice of

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life presents itself to her. What she has learned, what she has absorbed from every newspaper has awakened her curiosity and given her a hunger of the great life which is throbbing somewhere, far away, in great cities, in a thousand fascinating forms.

To remain, to take up a mild drudgery in the home, means closing the door on this curiosity. Marriage to such men as remain means at best the renunciation of that romance which is stirring in her imagination. Why should she have been educated, if but to return to a distasteful existence? The parents by the very education which has thrust their daughter so far above their simple needs have destroyed their old authority. No other voice of authority commands her in credible tones to renounce the follies of this life—to consult only the future.

In fact she is none too certain of what is beyond, but she is certain of what she wants to-day. She spurns the doctrine that it is woman's position to abnegate and to immolate herself. New ideas are stirring within her, logical revolts—equality of burden with men, equality of opportunity and of pleasure. She is sure of one life only and that one she passionately desires. She wants to live that life to its fullest, now, in the glory of her youth. She wants to breathe, not to stifle. She wants adventure. She wants excitement and mystery. She wants to see, to know, to experience. . . .

And one fine day, inevitably, she packs her valise as her brothers may have done before her, and despite commands, entreaties, tears, she stands at last on the platform of a shivering creaking train, waving the inevitable farewell to the old people, who stand bewildered, straining their eyes after the fast-fading handkerchief, feebly fluttered by the daughter whom they have educated for

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this. She will come back soon. She will return in a few months—in a year, surely. She never returns.

Sometimes the home has been disrupted by divorce, by death or by indifference; in which case her departure is the sooner. Sooner or later if she is clever or attractive she reaches New York. New York is the troubling light whose rays penetrate to her wherever she may start. At last, one fine day, she crowds impatiently forward to the front of the choked ferry-boat, beholds the play of a million lights starting against the twilight, vast shapes crowding to the water's edge like mythological monsters, towers flinging up new stars among the constellations—and the battle has begun.

What will she become? In six months she has learned the anatomy of the complex struggling city, flinging herself into a ceaseless whirl of excitement. She usually finds a facile occupation which gives her the defense and the little ready money she needs. She goes into journalism, stenography or the office of a magazine. Sometimes she has already been trained to nursing, which opens many avenues of acquaintance to her deft planning. Sometimes she has a trick with pen or pencil and plays at art. More often she touches the stage in one of a dozen ways. But all this is beside the mark. Her real occupation is exploration—how do they act, these men, clever or stupid, rich, poor, mediocre, dangerous or provokingly easy to manage? What is the extent of the power that she can exert over them?

Her education has been quickly formed. The great fraternity of the Salamanders has taught her of their curious devious understanding. Her acquaintance with women is necessarily limited, but she can meet what men

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she wishes, men of every station, men drawn to her by the lure of her laughter and tantalizing arts, men who simply wish to amuse themselves, or somber hunters who have passed beyond the common stuff of adventuresses and seek with a renewal of excitement this corruption of innocence. She has no fear of these last, matching her wits against their appetites, paying them back cruelly in snare and disillusion. She lives in automobiles and taxicabs, dines in a new restaurant every night—and with difficulty, each week, scrapes up the necessary dollars to pay her board. She knows the insides of pawn-shops, has secret treaties with tradesmen and by a hundred stratagems procures herself presents which may be converted into cash. She is fascinated by "dangerous" men. She adores perilous adventures and somehow or other, miraculously, she never fails in saving her skirts from the contagion of the flames.

The period in which she whirls in this frantic existence—the day of the Salamander—is between eighteen and twenty-five. She does not make the mistake of prolonging, beyond her youth and her charm, this period fascinating though it be. By twenty-five, often sooner, she comes to some decision. Frequently she marries, and marries well, for the opportunities at her disposal are innumerable. Then what she becomes must depend on the invisible hazards that sport with all marriages. Sometimes she selects a career—few women, indeed, are there in the professions who have not known their years among the Salamanders—but as she is always ruled by her brain, she does not often deceive herself; she sees clearly the road ahead and seldom ventures unless she is convinced. Sometimes she prefers her single existence, resigning herself to a steady occupation, slipping back into Sala-

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manderland occasionally. Sometimes—more rarely than it would seem—she takes the open step beyond the social pale, conquered at length by the antagonists she has so long eluded—but then she has betrayed the faith of a Salamander.

To a European, the Salamanders are incomprehensible. He meets them often en voyage, often to the cost of his pride, and for his vanity's sake he denies their innocence. In his civilization they could not exist. Even the New Yorker, who analyzes her surface manners, recounts her tricks and evasions, her deceptive advances, is still ignorant of the great currents beneath, and of how profound is their unrest.

For, capricious, inconsistent, harum-scarum, dabbling with fire—yet is she not the free agent she so ardently believes? Back of all the passionate revolt against the commonplace in life, back of all the defiantly proclaimed scorn of conventions, there are the hushed echoes of the retreating first generation, there are old memories, whispers of childhood faith, hesitations and doubts that return and return, and these quiet suspended sounds constantly turn her aside, make of her a being constantly at war with herself, where will and instinct are ever opposed without she perceives or comprehends the wherefor.

We see clearly two generations, the old order of broken authority passing sadly away, the new which is bravely seeking a logical standard of conduct beyond that of blind obedience—if yet the time be arrived when humanity be ready. The third—that coming generation in which woman will count for so much, where for the first

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time she will construct and order—where will it go? Backward a little or forward? Will those who have been Salamanders to-day, turned mothers to-morrow, still teach what they have proclaimed, that what is wrong for the woman is wrong for the man and that if man may experience woman may explore?

THE SALAMANDER

THE SALAMANDER

CHAPTER I

THE day was Thursday; the month, October, rushing to its close; and the battered alarm-clock on the red mantel stood at precisely one o'clock. The room was enormous, high and generally dim, the third floor front of Miss Pim's boarding-house on lower Madison Avenue. Of its four windows, two, those at the side, had been blinded by the up-rising of an ugly brick wall, which seemed to impend over the room, crowding into it, depriving it of air. The two windows fronting on the avenue let in two shafts of oblique sunlight. The musty violet paper on the walls, blistered in spots, was capped by a frieze of atrocious pink and blue roses. The window-shades, which had been pulled down to shut out the view of the wall, failed to reach the bottom. The curtain-rods were distorted, the globes on the gas fixtures bitten and smoked. At the back, an alcove held a small bed, concealed under a covering of painted eastern material. An elongated gilt mirror, twelve feet in height, leaned against the corner. Trunks were scattered about, two open and newly ransacked. A folding-bed transformed into a couch, heaped with

cushions, was between the blind windows: opposite a ponderous rococo dressing-table, the mirror stuffed with visiting-cards, photographs and mementoes. Half a dozen vases of flowers — brilliant chrysanthemums, heavily scented violets, American Beauty roses, slender and nodding — fought bravely against the pervading dinginess. On the large central table stood a basket of champagne, newly arrived, a case of assorted perfumes, a box of white evening gloves and two five-pound boxes of candy in fancy baskets.

Before the mirrored dressing-table, tiptoe on a trunk, a slender girlish figure was studying solicitously the effect of gold stockings and low russet shoes with buckles of green enamel. She was in a short skirt and Russian blouse, rich and velvety in material, of a creamy rose-gold luster. The sunlight which struck at her ankles seemed to rise about her body, suffusing it with the glow of joy and youth. The neck was bare; the low, broad, rolling silk collar, which followed the graceful lines of the shoulders beneath, was softened by a full trailing bow of black silk at the throat. A mass of tumbling, tomboy, golden hair, breaking in luxuriant tangles over the clear temples, crowned the head with a garland. Just past twenty-two, her figure was the figure of eighteen, by every descending line, even to the little ankles and feet, finely molded.

She had elected to call herself, according to the custom of the Salamanders, Doré Baxter. The two names, incongruously opposed, were like the past and the present of her wandering history: the first, brilliant,

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"What do you really think?"

daring, alive with the imperious zest and surprise of youth; the second baldly realistic, bleak, like a distant threatening uprise of mountains.

On the couch, languidly lost among the cushions, Winona Horning (likewise a nom de guerre) was abandoned in lazy attention. In the embrasure of one window, camped tailor fashion in a large armchair, a woman was studying a rôle, beating time with one finger, mumbling occasionally:

"Tum-tum-ti-tumpety-tum-tum-tum!
I breakfast in diamonds, I bathe in cream.
What's the use? What's the use?"

Snyder — she called herself Miss, but passed for being divorced — was not of the fraternity of the Salamanders. Doré Baxter had found her in ill health, out of a position, discouraged and desperate; and in a characteristic impulse, against all remonstrances, had opened her room to her until better days. The other Salamanders did not notice her presence or admit her equality. She seemed not to perceive their hostility, never joining in their conversation, going and coming silently.

The sharp shaft of the sun, bearing down like a spot-light, brought into half relief the mature lines of the body and the agreeable, if serious, features. The brown head, with a defiance of coquetry, was simply dressed, braided about with stiff rapid coils. The dress was black, the waist unrelieved — the costume of the woman who works. What made the effect seem all the more severe was that there was more than

a trace of beauty in the face and form — a prettiness evidently disdained and repressed. One shoe, projecting into the light, was noticeably worn at the heel.

All at once, without turning, the girl on the trunk, twisting anxiously before the mirror, exclaimed:

"Winona, what do you really think?"

"It doesn't show from here."

"How can you see from there? Come over nearer!"

Winona Horning, taller, more thoughtful in her movements, rose reluctantly, fixing a strand of jet-black hair which had strayed, and seated herself according to the command of a little finger. Her complexion was very pale against the black of her hair, her eyes were very large given to violent and sudden contrasts, more intense and more restless than her companion's.

"And now?" said Doré, lifting the glowing skirt the fraction of an inch.

"Still all right."

"Really?"

"Really!"

"And now?"

"Um-m — yes, now it shows!"

On the golden ankle a mischievous streak of white had appeared — a seam outrageously rent.

"Heavens, what a fix! I've just got to wear them!" said Doré, dropping her skirts with a movement of impatience.

"Estelle has a pair —"

"She needs them at three. We can't connect!"

"Bah! Dazzle with the left leg, then, Dodo," replied Winona, giving her her pet name.

Doré accepted the suggestion with a burst of laughter, and springing lightly down, seated herself on the trunk.

"Yes — yes, it can be done," she said presently, after a moment's practising. "If I don't forget!"

"You won't," said Winona, with a smile.

Snyder rose from her seat, and without paying the slightest attention to this serious comedy, crossed the room and returned to her post, bringing a pencil, with which she began eagerly to jot down a few notes.

"Like the effect?" said Doré, leaving the mirror with a last glance, the tip of her tongue appearing a moment through the sharp white rows of teeth, in the abstraction of her gaze.

She turned, and for the first time her eyes raised themselves expectantly. They were of a deep ultramarine blue, an unusual cloudy shade which gave an unexpected accent of perplexity to the fugitive white and pink of the cheek.

"Perfectly dandy, Dodo; but —"

At this moment from the little antechamber outside the door came the irritable silvery ring of the telephone.

"See who it is," said Doré quickly. "Remember! you don't know if I'm in — find out first."

As Winona crossed toward the back, Doré turned with a mute interrogation toward the figure in the window, and extending her arms, pirouetted slowly twice. Lottie Snyder responded with a sudden smile

that lighted up her features with a flash of beauty. She nodded twice emphatically, continuing to gaze with kindness and affection. Then she took up her rôle brusquely as Winona returned.

"It's a Mr. Chester — Cheshire? What shall I say?"

"Chesterton," said Doré. "I'll go."

She consumed a moment searching among the overflow of gloves on the trunk-tray, and went to the telephone, without closing the door. Winona, not to speak to Snyder, began to manicure her hands. From the hall came the sounds of broken conversation:

"Hello? Who is it? . . . Yes, this is Miss Baxter . . . Who? . . . Huntington? . . . Oh, yes, Chesterton . . . of course I remember . . . How do you do? . . . I'm just up. . . . Yes, splendid dance! . . . What? . . . To-night? . . . No-o. . . . Who else is in the party? . . . Just us two? . . . No, I guess not! . . . Aren't you a little sudden, Mr. Chesterton? . . . Not with you alone. . . . Oh, yes; but I'm very formal! That's where you make your mistake. . . . Certainly, I'd go with a good many men, but not with you. . . . Not till I really know you. . . . Now, I'm going to tell you something, Mr. Chesterton. I'm not like other girls, I play fair. I expect men to make mistakes — one mistake. I always forgive once, and I always give one warning — just one! You understand? All right! I won't say any more! . . . No, I'm not offended. . . . I'm quite used to such mistakes: they sort of follow dances, don't they? . . . Well, that's nice; I'm glad you understand me. . . .

Some men don't, you know! . . . That's very flattering! . . . If what? . . . If it's made a party of four? . . . That would be different, yes. . . . Try — telephone me about six and I'll let you know. . . . No, I couldn't say definitely now; I'll have to try and get out of another party. . . . No, I haven't seen that play yet. . . . Phone at six. . . . Oh, dear me! How easily you repeat that! . . . Why, yes, I liked you; I thought you danced the Hesitation perfectly dandy. . . ." (A laugh.) "Well, that's enough. . . . I can't promise. . . . Phone, anyhow. . . . Good-by. . . . Yes, oh, yes. . . . Good-by. . . . Not offended! Oh, no! . . . Good-by!"

She came back, and extending her fingers above her head, said:

"So high!" She brought her hands close together: "So thin! A monocle — badly tamed — a ladylike mustache — all I remember! Oh, yes, he said he had two automobiles — most important!" She shrugged her shoulders and added maliciously: "We'll put him down, anyhow — last call for dinner! . . . So you don't like my costume?"

"That isn't it!" said Winona. She turned, hesitating: "Only, for an orgy of old Sassoon's."

"Orgy," in the lexicon of the Salamanders, is a banquet in the superlative of lavishness; on the other hand, a dinner or a luncheon that has the slightest taint of economy is derogatorily known as a "tea-party."

"It's my style — it's me!" said Doré, with a confident bob of her head.

"Those girls will come all Gussied up for Sassoon," persisted Winona. "Staggering under the war-paint!"

"Let me alone," said Dodo; "I know what I'm doing!"

She knew she had made no blunder. The costume exhaled a perfume of freshness and artless charm, from the daintiness with which the throat was revealed, from the slight youthful bust delicately defined under the informality of the blouse, to the long descending clinging of the coat, which followed, half-way to the knee, lines of young and slender grace which can not be counterfeited.

"It's individual — it's me," she repeated, running her little hands caressingly down the slim undulation of the waist, caught in by the trim green belt.

The telephone rang a second time.

"Joe Gilday," said Winona presently, covering the mouthpiece with her hand.

"Say I'm in," said Doré hastily, in a half whisper. "Now go back and say I'm out!"

"What's wrong?" said Winona, opening her eyes.

"Needs disciplining."

"He knows you're here — says he must speak to you," said the emissary, reappearing.

"Tell him I am, and won't," said Doré mercilessly.

Snyder, with a sudden recognition of the clock, rose, and going to a trunk, pounced on a sailor hat, slapping it on her head without looking in the mirror. She came and planted herself before Doré, who had watched her, laughing.

"Beating it up to Blainey's," she said. The voice was low, but with a slur that accused ordinary antecedents. "Say, he's dipped on you; got a fat part salted away — if you ever turn up! Why don't you see him?"

"I will — I will."

"Look here. You're not going to let everything slip this season, too, are you?"

"How do I know what I'll do to-morrow?" said Doré, laughing.

"Aren't you ever going to settle down?"

"Yes, indeed; in a year!"

"It's a real fat part; you're crazy to lose the chance!"

"Tell Blainey to be patient; I'm going to be serious — soon!"

"See him!"

"I will — I will!"

"When?"

"To-morrow — perhaps."

She took Snyder by the shoulders, readjusting the hat.

"Aren't you ashamed to treat yourself this way! You can be real pretty, if you want to."

"When I want to, I am," said Snyder, shrugging her shoulders, but opposing no resistance to the rearrangement of her costume.

"Snyder, you *do* it on purpose!" said Doré, vexed at the hang of the skirt, which resisted her efforts.

Winona reentered. She had heard the conversation with one ear, while extending comfort to the

frantic Gilday in disgrace. Snyder, with the entrée to Blainey, manager for the Lipswitch and Berger Circuit, aroused her respect with her envy.

"Snyder, what do you do all the time?" she said in a conciliatory tone.

"Meaning what?"

"You never go out — never amuse yourself!"

"I amuse myself much more than you!"

"What!" exclaimed Winona.

"Much more. I work!"

Saying which, she flung into her jacket like a school-boy, and went out without further adieus.

"Pleasant creature!" said Winona acidly.

"It's you who are wrong," said Doré warmly.

"Why patronize her?"

"There is a difference between us, I think," said Winona coldly. "Really, Dodo, I don't understand how you can —"

"Let Snyder alone," said Doré, with a flash of anger. "No harm comes from being decent to some one who's down. Don't be so hard — you never know what may happen to you!" Seeing the flush on Winona's face, she softened her tone and, her habitual good humor returning, added: "If you knew her struggle — There! Let's drop it!"

Fortunately, the telephone broke in on the tension. Another followed, even before she had left the ante-room. The first was an invitation from Roderigo Sanderson, one of Broadway's favorite leading men, to a dress rehearsal of a new comic opera that promised to be the rage of the season. While secretly delighted

at the prospect, Doré answered, in a tone of subdued suffering, that she was in bed with a frightful headache—that, though it seemed to be improving, she couldn't tell how she would feel later, and adjourned a decision until six, at which hour he was to telephone. She gave the same reply to the second invitation, a proposition from Donald Bacon, a broker, who was organizing a party for a cabaret dance later in the evening.

"Hurray! Now I can have a choice," she said, tripping gaily back and pirouetting twice on her left foot. Suddenly she stopped, folding her arms savagely.

"Winona!"

"What?"

"I'm bored!"

"Since when?"

"Don't laugh! Really, I am unhappy! If something exciting would happen—if I could fall in love!"

"You will be when you come back!"

"Yes—that's the trouble!" said Doré, laughing.

"But it never lasts!"

"And day before yesterday?"

"What about it?"

"That wonderful Italian you came home raving about?"

"Ah, yes! that was a great disappointment!" She repeated, in a tone of discouragement: "A great disappointment! It's the second meeting that's so awful! Men are so stupid, it's no fun any more!" All

at once she noticed her friend's attitude. "What's the matter? You're not angry!"

"No, not that!" Winona rose, flinging down the manicuring sticks, drawing a deep breath. "Only, when I see you throwing over a chance like that from Blainey —"

"What! You want the job?" exclaimed Doré, struck by the thought.

"Want it?" cried the girl bitterly. "I'd go up Broadway on my knees to get it!"

"Why didn't you tell me?"

"Ah! this has got to end sometime," said the girl, locking and unlocking her fingers. "Snyder was right. It's work — work! She's lucky!"

Doré became suddenly thoughtful. Between Salamanders real confidences are rare. She knew nothing of the girl who was separated from her but by a wall, but there was no mistaking the pain in her voice.

"I'm sorry!" she said.

"Yes, I've come to the end of my rope," said Winona. "I'm older than you — I've played too long!"

"You shall have the job!"

"Oh, it's easy to —"

"I'll go to-morrow. I'll make Blainey give it to you."

"He won't!"

"He? Of course he will! That old walrus? He'll do anything I tell him! That's settled! I'll see him to-morrow!"

Winona turned, composing her passion.

"I'm a fool!" she said.

"Hard up?"

"Busted!"

"The deuce! So'm I! Never mind; we'll find some way —"

"Why don't you take the job yourself?"

"I? Never! I couldn't! It's too soon to be serious!" exclaimed Doré, laughing in order to relieve the tension. "When I'm twenty-three — in six months — not before! It's all decided."

"First time you've been to one of Sassoon's parties?" asked Winona abruptly.

"First time! I'm quite excited!"

"You've met him, then?"

"No, not yet! I'm going as a chorus girl."

"What?"

"He's entertaining the sextette of the *Gay Prince* — I'm to replace one. I got the bid through Adèle Vickers — you remember her? She's in the sextette."

"Adèle Vickers," said Winona, with a frown.

"It's on the quiet, naturally," said Doré, not noticing the expression. "I'm to be taken for a chorus girl, by old Sassoon too — complications, heaps of fun!"

"You're crazy! Some one'll recognize you!"

"Bah!"

"Sassoon doesn't play fair!" said Winona abruptly.

"Dangerous?"

"He doesn't play the game fair!" repeated Winona, with more insistence.

"I like precipices!" said Doré, smiling.

"How you express things, Dodo!"

"Why? Don't you like 'em?"

"Yes, naturally. But with Sassoon —"

"It's such fun!" said Doré, shaking her curls.

Her companion crossed her fingers and held them up in warning.

"Dodo, be careful!"

"I'll take care of myself!" said Doré scornfully, and a flash of excitement began to show in the dark blue shadows of her eyes.

"Different! Sassoon is on the black list, Dodo!"

Albert Edward Sassoon, whom two little Salamanders were thus discussing in a great barn of a room, third floor front of Miss Pini's boarding-house, was the head of the great family of Sassoon, which for three generations had stood, socially and financially, among the first powers of the city.

"Thanks for the warning. When you know, you know what to do!" said Doré carelessly. "Just let him try!"

The admonition troubled her not at all. She had met and scored others before who in the secret code of the Salamanders were written down unfair. The prospect of such an antagonist brought to her a little more animation. She bolted into a snug-fitting fur toque, brightened by a flight of feathers at the side, green with a touch of red.

"There!" she exclaimed merrily. "A bit of the throat, a bit of the ankle, and a slash of red — that's Dodo! What's the time?"

"Twenty past. Who's your prop?"

"Stacey."

"Prop," in the lexicon of the Salamanders, is a term obviously converted from the theatrical "property." A "prop," in Salamanderland, is a youth not too long out of the nest to be rebellious, possessed of an automobile — a *sine qua non* — and agitated by a patriotic craving to counteract the evil effects of the hoarding of gold. Each Salamander of good standing counts from three to a dozen props, carefully broken, kept in a state of expectant gratitude, genii of the telephone waiting a summons to fetch and carry, purchase tickets of all descriptions, lead the way to theater or opera, and, above all, to fill in those blank dates, or deferred engagements, which otherwise might become items of personal expense.

At this moment the curly brown head of Ida Summers, of the second floor back, bobbed in and out, saying in a stage whisper:

"Black Friday! Beware! The cat's loose — rampaging!"

It was a warning that Miss Pim, in a periodic spasm of alarm, was spreading dismay through the two houses in her progress in search of long-deferred rents.

"Horrors!" exclaimed Winona Horning. She sprang to the door which gave into her room, ready to use it as an escape from either attack.

"Twice this week. Um-m — means business!" said Doré solemnly. "I'm three weeks behind. How are you?"

"Five!"

"We must get busy," said Doré pensively. "I have just two dollars in sight!"

"Two? You're a millionaire!"

"The champagne will bring something," said Doré, fingering the basket, "but I can't let it go until Mr. Peavey — If he'd only call up for to-night! Zip might take the perfume, but I need it so! Worse luck, the flowers have all come from the wrong places. There's twenty dollars there, if it were only Pouffé. And look at this!"

She went to her bureau, and opening a little drawer, held up a bank-note.

"Fifty dollars!" exclaimed Winona, amazed.

"Ridiculous, isn't it?" said Doré, with a laugh, shutting it up again. "Joe Gilday had the impertinence to slip it in there, after I had refused a loan!"

"What! Angry for that?" said Winona, carried away by the famine the money had awakened in her.

"Certainly I am!" said Doré energetically. "Do you think I'd allow a man to give me money — like that?"

This ethical point might have been discussed, but at the moment a knock broke in upon the conversation. The two girls started, half expecting to behold Miss Pim's military figure advancing into the room.

"Who is it?" said Doré anxiously.

"It's Stacey," said a docile voice.

"Shall I go?" inquired Winona, with a gesture.

"No, no — stay! Always stay!" said Doré, hastily stuffing back the overflowing contents of a

trunk and signaling Winona to close the lid nearest her.

Stacey Van Loan crowded into the room. He was a splendid grenadier type of man, with the smiling vacant face of a boy. He wore shoes for which he paid thirty dollars, a suit that cost a hundred, a great fur coat that cost eight times more, enormous fur gloves, and a large pearl pin in his cravat. On entering, he always blushed twice, the first as an apology and the second for having blushed before. The most captious Salamander would have accepted him at a glance as the beau ideal of a prop — a perfect blend of radiating expensiveness and docile timidity. Van Loan Senior, of the steel nobility of Pennsylvania, had insisted on his acquiring a profession after two unfortunate attempts at collegiate culture, and had exiled him to New York to study law, allotting him twenty thousand dollars a year to defray necessary expenses.

"Bingo! what a knock-out!" said Stacey, gazing open-mouthed, heels together, at the glowing figure that greeted him.

Doré, who had certain expectations as to his arrival, perceiving that he held one hand concealed behind his back, broke into smiles.

"You sly fellow, what are you hiding there?"

"All right?" said Van Loan, with an anxious gulp.

"How about it?"

He thrust out an enormous bouquet of orchids, which, in his fear of appearing parsimonious, he had doubled beyond all reason. The sight of these flowers of luxury, the price of which would have gone a long

way toward placating Miss Pim, brought a quick telegraphic glance of irony between the two girls.

"Isn't he a darling?" said Doré, taking the huge floral display and stealing a glance at the ribbon, which, alas, did not bear the legend Pouffé, who was approachable in time of need. "Stacey is really the most thoughtful boy, and everything he gets is in perfect taste. He never does anything by halves!"

As she said this in a careless manner, which made the young fellow redden to the ears with delight, she was secretly smothering a desire to laugh, and wondering how on earth she was to divide the monstrous display without discouraging future exhibitions of lavishness. She moved presently toward the back of the room, saying carelessly:

"Look at my last photographs, Stacey."

Then she quickly slipped a third of the bouquet behind a trunk, signaling Winona, and turning before the long mirror, affixed the orchids, spreading them loosely to conceal the defection.

"Quarter of. You'll be late!" said Winona, masking the trunk with her skirts.

"I want to be! I'm not going to have a lot of society women find me on the door-step!" said Doré, for the benefit of the prop. "Come on, Stacey; you can look at the photos another day!" She flung about her shoulders a white stole from the floor below, and buried her hands in a muff of the same provenance. "Good-by, dear. Back late. Go ahead, Stacey!"

A moment later she reentered hurriedly.

"Give me the others, quick!" she said, detaching

those at her waist. "These are from Granard's. Take them there — tell them Estelle sent you; she has an arrangement with them. See what you can get. Tell them we'll send 'em custom."

She completed the transfer of the smaller bunch, carefully arranging the wide stole, which she pinned against accidents.

"Listen. If Joe telephones again, make him call me up at six — don't say I said it! It's possible Blainey may get it in his head to call up. I'll go with him, unless — unless Peavey wants me for dinner. I must see him before I dispose of the champagne — understand? You know what to answer the rest." She hesitated, looking at the orchids: "We ought to get fifteen out of them. Remember, promise them our custom; use Pouffé on them. Good-by, dear!"

"Be careful!"

"Yes — yes — yes!"

"Dangerous!"

"Bah! If they only were — but they're not!"

She rejoined Stacey, whose nose was sublimely at the wheel, crying:

"Let her go, Stacey. Up to Tenafl'y's. Break the speed law!"

She ~~started~~ to spring in, but suddenly remembering the ~~offending~~ stocking, stopped and ascended quietly — on the left foot.

CHAPTER II

AT this time, it happened that the highest democratic circles of New York were thrown into a turmoil of intrigue and social carnage by the visit of representatives of one of the royal houses of Europe, traveling under the title of the Comte and Comtesse de Joncy. A banquet had been respectfully tendered these rare manifestations of the principle of divine right. The list of guests, directed by the autocratic hand of Mrs. Albert Edward Sassoon, tore New York society to shreds, and reconstituted that social map which had been so opportunely established by the visit of the lamented Grand Duke and Royal Imperial Highness Alexis. Twenty-five young gentlemen of irreproachable standing had flung themselves enthusiastically at the distinguished honor of offering soup to such exalted personages, and the press of New York scrupulously published the list of honorary waiters high among the important details of the probable cost per plate of this extraordinary banquet.

Now, the Comte de Joncy, being profoundly bored by such amateur exhibitions, had remarked to Sassoon that, in his quality of traveler and student of important social manifestations, what had impressed him most was the superior equipment, physically and mentally, of the American chorus girl.

It was a remark that Sassoon was eminently fitted to comprehend — having, indeed, received the same confidential observation from the Comte de Joncy's last royal predecessor. The present luncheon was the prompt response, and to insure the necessary freedom from publicity, Harrigan Blood, editor of the *New York Free Press*, was invited.

They waited in the brilliant Louis XVI salon of that private suite which Tenaflly reserved for his choicest patrons, patiently prepared for that extra half-hour of delay which the ladies of the chorus would be sure to take in their desire to show themselves ladies of the highest fashion. The curtains were open on the cozy dining-room, on the spectacle of shining linen, the spark of silver and the gay color of fragrant bouquets. Two or three waiters were giving the last touches under the personal supervision of Tenaflly himself, who accorded this mark of respect only to the master who had raised him from head waiter in a popular roadside inn to the management of a restaurant capitalized in millions.

There were six: Sassoon, slight, waxen, bored, with a wandering, fatigued glance, oriental in the length of his head and the deep setting of the eyes; the Comte de Joncy, short, round-bellied, hair transparent and polished, parted from the forehead to the neck, with nothing of dignity except in his gesture and the agreeable modulation of his voice; Judge Massingale of the magistrates court, urbane, slightly stooped in shoulders, high in forehead, set in glance, an onlooker keenly observant, and observing with a relish that

showed in the tolerant humor of the thin ever-smiling lips; Tom Busby, leader of cotillions and social prescriber to a bored and desperate world, active as a young girl, bald at thirty, but with a radiating charm, disliking no one, never failing in zest, animating the surface of gaiety, blind to ugliness below, well born and indispensable; Garret Lindaberry, known better as "Garry" Lindaberry, not yet thirty, framed like a frontiersman, with a head molded for a statesman, endowed with every mental energy except necessity, burning up his superb vitality in insignificant supremacies, a magnificent man-of-war sailing without a rudder, supremely elegant; never, in the wildest orgies, relaxing the control of absolute courtesy; finally, Harrigan Blood, interloper, last to arrive, abrupt and on the rush, in gray cheviot, which he had assumed as a flaunting of his independence before those whose motive for inviting him he perfectly understood. Neck and shoulders massive, head capacious and already beginning to show the stealing in of the gray, jaw strong and undershot like a bulldog's, cropped mustache, forehead seamed with wrinkles, incapable of silence or attention except when in the sudden contemplative pursuit of an idea, disdaining men, and women more than men on account of the distraction they flung him into, passionately devoted to ideas, he bided his time, knowing no morality but achievement.

The group formed an interesting commentary on American society of the day, which parallels that of modern France, with its Bourbon, its Napoleonic and its Orleanist strata of nobility. Sassoon and Mass-

ingale were of the old legitimists, offshoots of families that had never relaxed their supremacy from colonial days; Lindaberry and Busby were inheritors in the third generation of that first period of industrial adventure, the period of the gold-fields of 1845, while Harrigan Blood was of the present era of volcanic opportunity, that creates in a day its marshals of the Grand Army of Industry, ennobles its soldiers of yesterday, and forces the portals of established sets with the golden knocking of new giants, who cast on the steps the soiled garments of the factory, the mining camp and the construction gang.

Past and present have given the American two distinct types. The characteristics of the first are aristocratic, the thinly elongated head, the curved skull balancing on a slender neck, nose and forehead advancing, the jaw less and less accentuated. Of the second, the type of the roughly arriving adventurer, Harrigan Blood was the ideal. His was the solid, crust-breaking, boulder type of head, embedded on shoulders capable of propelling it upward through the multitude, the democrat who places his chair roughly in the overcrowded front rank, whose wife and daughters will crown, by way of Europe, the foundation which he flings down.

"*Mon cher Sassoon,*" said the Comte de Joncy, studying Blood,—who, in another group, was discussing the coming political campaign with Mas-singale,—“I'll give you a bit of advice. The animal is dangerous! I know the kind!”

“Words — words!” said Sassoon, his wandering

eye flitting a moment to the group. "We manage him very well."

"If you could dangle the prospect of a title before his eyes," said the count, with a sardonic smile. "But you — what have you to offer him?"

"Money!" said Sassoon indifferently. "We make him a partner in our operations. He won't attack us!"

"He will use you!" said De Joncy shrewdly. "That type doesn't love money! When he gets as much as he wants, beware! Do you receive him?"

"Oh, we invite him to half a dozen of these affairs," said Sassoon, without looking at his companion and speaking as if his mind were elsewhere. "That keeps him to generalizations!"

This word, which was afterward repeated, and reaching the ears of Harrigan Blood, made of him an overt enemy, made the Comte de Joncy smile.

"I see you, too, have your diplomacy," he said, studying Sassoon with more interest.

"Yes. Generalizations are blank cartridges: they can be aimed at any one," Sassoon said, without animation. He ran a thin forefinger over the scarce mustache that mounted in a W from the full upper lip. Then, raising his voice a little, he called Busby:

"I say, Buzzy, hurry things up a bit!"

Busby, like Ganymede at a frown from Jove, departed lightly in the direction of the ladies' dressing-room.

"It's Buzzy, my darlings," he said, sticking in his

beaky nose and wide grinning mouth. "You've prinked enough; I'm coming in!"

He was immediately surrounded and assailed with exclamations:

"Oh, Buzzy! why didn't you tell us!"

"A Royal Highness!"

"Mean thing! — not to warn us!"

"What d'ye call His Nibs?"

"We're tickled to death!"

"Don't suffocate me, sweethearts," said Busby, defending himself. "I didn't tell you for a damn good reason. No press-agent stunts before or after. Understand? Besides, the papers are bottled up — democratic respect for His Highness."

"I've a mind to have appendicitis," said one in a whisper to a companion. "Gee! What a chance!"

"If you do, Consuelo, dear," said Busby urbanely, "we'll ship you down in a service elevator, and see you get the operation, too. Now, no nonsense, girls. You know what that means."

"What we've got to keep it out of the poipers? What, no publicity? Gee!"

"None, now or after," said Busby firmly.

All at once he looked up, astonished, perceiving Doré, who floated in at this moment like a golden bird.

"Gwendolyn had the sneezes," said Adèle Vickers hastily. "This is her sister."

"What's her name?" said Busby suspiciously, while the chorus girls, with their untainous hats and sweeping feathers, their overloaded bodices and

jeweled necks, studied with some concern the simple daring of this new arrival, uncertain and apprehensive.

"Miss Baxter," said Miss Vickers in a low voice.

"She's not a reporter?" said Busby, hesitating.

"Honest to God, Buzzy," said Adèle Vickers emphatically. "She's on the stage, the legitimate — Doré Baxter, a friend of mine!"

"I know her!" said Busby, suddenly enlightened by the full name, and going to her, he said: "Met you at a party of Bruce Gunther's, I believe, Miss Baxter."

Doré, who thus found herself, to her vexation, sailing under her own colors, said, with a pleading look:

"Don't give me away, will you? It's just a lark, and," she added lower, "don't call me Miss Baxter!"

"A stage name, eh?"

"Splendid one — Trixie Tennyson. Doesn't that sound like a head-liner?" she added confidentially, in the low tone in which the conversation had been conducted.

Busby repeated the name, chuckling to himself, yielding to his sense of humor. "All right! Now, girls, come on!"

"But what shall we call him?"

"Call him anything you like . . . after the soup!" said Busby, laughing. "Remember! he's here to be amused! . . . Have any of you girls changed your names since I saw you last? . . . No? . . . Then I know them! . . ." He told them off, counting with his fingers: Adèle Vickers, Georgie Gwynne — it used to be Bronson last year —"

"It never was!" exclaimed a petite Irish brunette, with a saucy smile and a roguish eye: "Baron —"

"I'll give you a better one: Georgie Washington!" continued Busby. "Why not? Fine! . . . A press-agent would charge for that! . . . I see an inch of nose, a gray eye and a brown cheek under an avalanche of hat — must be Viola Pax!"

"Violetta, please!" said a southern type with soft consonants.

"To be sure! . . . to be sure! . . . Both are up-to-date, though! . . . Trixie Tennyson . . . ah, there's a name! . . . Do you know who Tennyson was, little dears? . . . A great scientist who discovered the reason why brooks go on forever!" Adèle and Doré smiled, but the rest accepted the information. "Paula Stuart and Consuelo . . . dear me! I never did know your last name, Consuelo, darling!"

"Vincent! and cut out the guying!" said a fair buxom type, child of the Rialto. "Let's get a move on!"

"Quite right!" said Busby, offering an arm to Adèle Vickers and Violetta Pax. "Follow me . . . always!"

The dressing-room emptied itself, with a last struggle for the mirror, a few hurried applications of rouge, and a loosening of perfumes, while, above the pleasant rustle of skirts, the voice of Georgie Gwynne was heard in a stage whisper:

"Remember, girls! Act refined!"

Consuelo Vincent, under pretext of a cold, insisted

on keeping a magnificent sable cape, which she shifted constantly the better to display it.

On perceiving Busby arriving with this bouquet of vermillion smiles, polished teeth and flashing eyes, the Comte de Joncy, who had begun to be restless under the strain of serious conversation, brightened visibly, and holding out both hands, exclaimed with the practised familiarity of a patron of all the arts:

"Why you make me wait so long? *Jolis petits amours!* Ah, she is charming, this one. What a naughty little eye! Oho! something Spanish — do you dance the Bolero? Ah, but each is perfect — adorable! I could eat every one of them!"

But to this royal affability the ladies of the chorus, very stiff, very correct, lisping a little, made answer:

"Pleased to meet you, I'm sure!"

"It's quite an unexpected pleasure!"

"Indeed, most glad to meet you!"

The introductions continued, and presently the room resounded with such phrases as these:

"I hope we're not terribly late! . . . New York streets are so crowded!"

"Delightful weather, don't you think?"

"What a charming view! . . . I dote on views, don't you?"

"Have you seen *Péléas and Mélisande*?"

And Georgie Gwynne, picking her words with difficulty, was remarking to Harrigan Blood:

"You're such a celebrity, Mr. Blood! . . . I'm tick . . . I'm delighted to know you!"

The Comte de Joncy, overcome by this flood of manners, said to his host:

"The devil, *mon cher* Sassoon, they overawe me! You are sure it is no mistake? It is not some of your dreadful wives?"

"Wait!" said Sassoon, raising a finger.

Busby, who knew their ways, arrived with a tray of cocktails, scolding them like a stage-manager:

"Now, girls — girls! Unbend! Warm up, or His Highness will catch a cold! Come on, Consuelo, you've aired your furs enough; send them back — you give us a chill! This will never do! Now perk up, girls, do perk up!"

Doré took the cocktail offered, and profiting by the stir, emptied it quickly behind her in the roots of a glowing orange tree. She raised her eyes suddenly to Massingale's. He had detected the movement, and was smiling. She made a quick, half-checked gesture of her arm, imploring his confidence, as, amused, he came to her side.

"What a charming name, Miss Tennyson," he said, without reference to what he had seen. "Are you related?"

She understood that he would not betray her.

"Alfred's a sort of distant cousin," she said with a lisp, affecting a mannerism of the shoulders. "Of course, I haven't kept my full name — my full name is Rowena Robsart Tennyson; but that wouldn't do for the stage, would it? Trixie — Trixie Tennyson is chicker, don't you think?"

"Is what?"

"Chicker — French, you know!"

"Ah, more *chic*," he said, looking at her steadily with a little lurking mockery in the corners of his eyes.

"I'm not fooling him," she said to herself, impressed by the steadiness of his judicial look, half inquisitorial, half amused. Nevertheless, she continued with a mincing imitation of Violetta Pax, who could be heard discoursing on art.

"What charming weather! Do you like our show? Have you seen it?"

"Yes — have you?" he said, with malice in his eyes.

"What do you mean by that? I'm sure I don't know!"

"I understood you came in place of your sister. Did you forget?"

She glanced at him out of the corner of her eye, knowing the comedy useless, but continuing it. She was easily impressed, especially at a first meeting, and she had a feeling that to be a judge one must know all, see through every subterfuge.

"'Course I've only been in the sextette a couple of nights."

"And what is your ambition? Tragedy?"

"Oh, no!" she said, with an important seriousness. "I don't think tragedy's in my complexion, do you? I dote on comedy, though; I'd like to be a Maude Adams s-some day."

"So you are serious?" he said gravely.

"Oh, much so — 'course, I don't know. I haven't

any prejudices against marriage," she continued, allowing her great blue troubling eyes to remain on his. "I sometimes think I'd like to go to London and marry into the English aristocracy."

He bit his lips to keep from laughing.

"Society is so narrow here — there's more opportunity abroad, don't you think?"

He did not answer, considering her fixedly, plainly intrigued.

She moved into the embrasure of a window with a defensive movement.

"The view's quite wonderful, isn't it?"

They were on the fifteenth floor, with a clear sweep of the lower city. He moved to her side, looking out gravely, impressed as one who reads beneath the surface of things. From the window the spectacle of the city below them irrevocably rooted to the soil, caged in the full tide of labor, gave an exquisite sense of luxury to this banquet among the clouds. To the south a light bank of fog, low and spreading, was eating up the horizon of water and distant shore, magnifying the checkered chart of the city as it closed about it. It seemed as if the whole world were there, the world of toil, marching endlessly, regimented into squares, chained to the bitter gods of necessity and the commonplace.

"It gives you the true feeling of splendor," he said. "The world does not change. We might be on the Hanging Gardens of Babylon." He continued, his eyes lit up by a flash of imagination that revealed the youth still in his features: "It is Babylon, As-

syria, Egypt. The Pyramids were raised thus, man in terms of a thousand, harnessed and whipped, while a few looked down and enjoyed."

She forgot the part she had assumed, keenly responsive. Her mind, still neglected, was not without perceptions, ready to be awakened to imagination. She saw as he saw, feeling more deeply.

She extended her hand toward the Egyptian hordes beneath them, looking at him curiously.

"And that interests you?"

"Both interest me. That and this. Everything is interesting," he said, with a smile that comprehended her. "Especially you and your motive."

"You know I'm not one of —" she began abruptly.

He shrugged his shoulders good-humoredly, and in his eyes was the same look of delighted malice that had brought him to her.

"You needn't explain. Your manner was perfect. I quite understand you — much better than you believe."

He moved forward, joining the movement into the dining-room. She followed, watching him covertly, enveloped still by his unusual personality.

As the chorus girls still persisted in their display of mannered stateliness, the men listened to Harrigan Blood, who had begun to coin ideas.

"Count, here you have America in a thimble." He elevated his second cocktail, speaking in the slightly raised tone of one who is accustomed to the attention of all listeners. "Your Frenchman takes an afternoon sipping himself into gaiety; your German be-

gins to sing only when he has drunk up a river of beer; but your American — he's different! What do we do? We've won or we've lost — we've got to rejoice or forget — it's all the same. We bolt to a bar and cry: 'Tom, throw something into me that'll explode!' And he hands us a cocktail! Here's America: a hundred millions in a generation, a century's progress in a decade — the future to-morrow, and a change of mood in a second!"

He ended, swallowing his drink in a gulp. Like most mad geniuses of the press, he drank enormously, feeding thus the brain that he punished without mercy.

Busby, who peddled epigrams, murmured to himself with a view to future authorship, "A cocktail is an explosion of spirits; a cocktail . . ."

The chorus girls, who regarded Harrigan Blood as a sort of demigod who could make a reputation with a stroke of his pen, acclaimed this sally with exaggerated delight. The party crowded into the dining-room, seeking their places.

CHAPTER III

DORÉ found herself between Judge Massingale and Lindaberry, Harrigan Blood opposite between Georgie Gwynne and Violetta Pax. Sassoon was at the farther end, opposite Lindaberry, with Adèle Vickers and Busby to his right, and Paula Stuart and the Comte de Joncy on his left, Consuelo Vincent sharing the noble guest, with Massingale next to her.

Beside each feminine plate a bouquet of orchids and yellow pansies, daintily blended, was waiting, and from the loosely bound stems the edge of a bank-note showed — a slit of indecipherable green.

Immediately there was a murmur of voices, a quick outstretching of hands, and a sudden careful pinning on to waists, while each glance affected unconsciousness of what it had detected. Doré did not imitate the others. Her eye, too, had immediately caught the disclosed corner. She contrived, while folding her gloves, to turn the bouquet slightly, so that no trace of what it contained showed. Then, when the opportunity came, she examined the faces of the men. So quickly had the flowers been transferred to the bodices that the male portion remained in ignorance. Massingale was too close to her to be sure of. Had his quick eye detected what the others had missed?

To refuse the bouquet meant to bring down on her head a torrent of explanations; ignorance were better.

At this moment there was a hollow pause. The caviar had just been served, and the chorus girls, watching for a precedent, were in a quandary between a fork which inclined to a knife, and a fork that was a tortured spoon. But Georgie Gwynne, too long repressed, exclaimed:

"Oh, hell! Buzzy, tell us the club."

This remark, and the roar with which it was greeted, dispelled at once the gloom that had settled about the Royal Observer. The chorus girls, unbending, began to talk American — all at once, chattering, gesturing. Doré profited by the moment to affix the bouquet among the orchids she already wore. The success of Georgie Gwynne's ice-breaking was such that the Comte de Joncy, charmed by such naturalness, wished to invite her to his side; but, amid protests, it was decided, on a happy motion of Busby's, that the guests should rotate after each course.

"Sorry it's so," said Massingale, turning; "I shall lose you!"

"Oh, now you know I'm a counterfeit," Dodo said maliciously, "I shall spoil your fun. Never mind; I promise to go early!"

"Who are you?" he said, by way of answer.

"Trixie Tennyson!"

"I've half a mind to denounce you!"

"Oh, Your Honor, you wouldn't do that!"

"So you won't tell me who you are?"

"It'll be so much more fun for you to find out!"

She listened to him with her head set a little to one side. She rarely gave the full of her face, keeping always about her a subtle touch of evasion.

"I know her kind well," he had said to himself. But he continued to watch her intently, interested in that innate sense of the shades of coquetry she displayed in the lingering slanted glances, and the eerie smile which gathered from the malicious corners of her eyes, slipping down the curved cheek to play a moment about her lips.

"Why did you come?" he said, wishing that she would turn toward him.

"Curiosity!"

"Precipices?"

She turned to him, genuine surprise in the blue clouded eyes, her rosy lips parted in amazement.

"How did you know?"

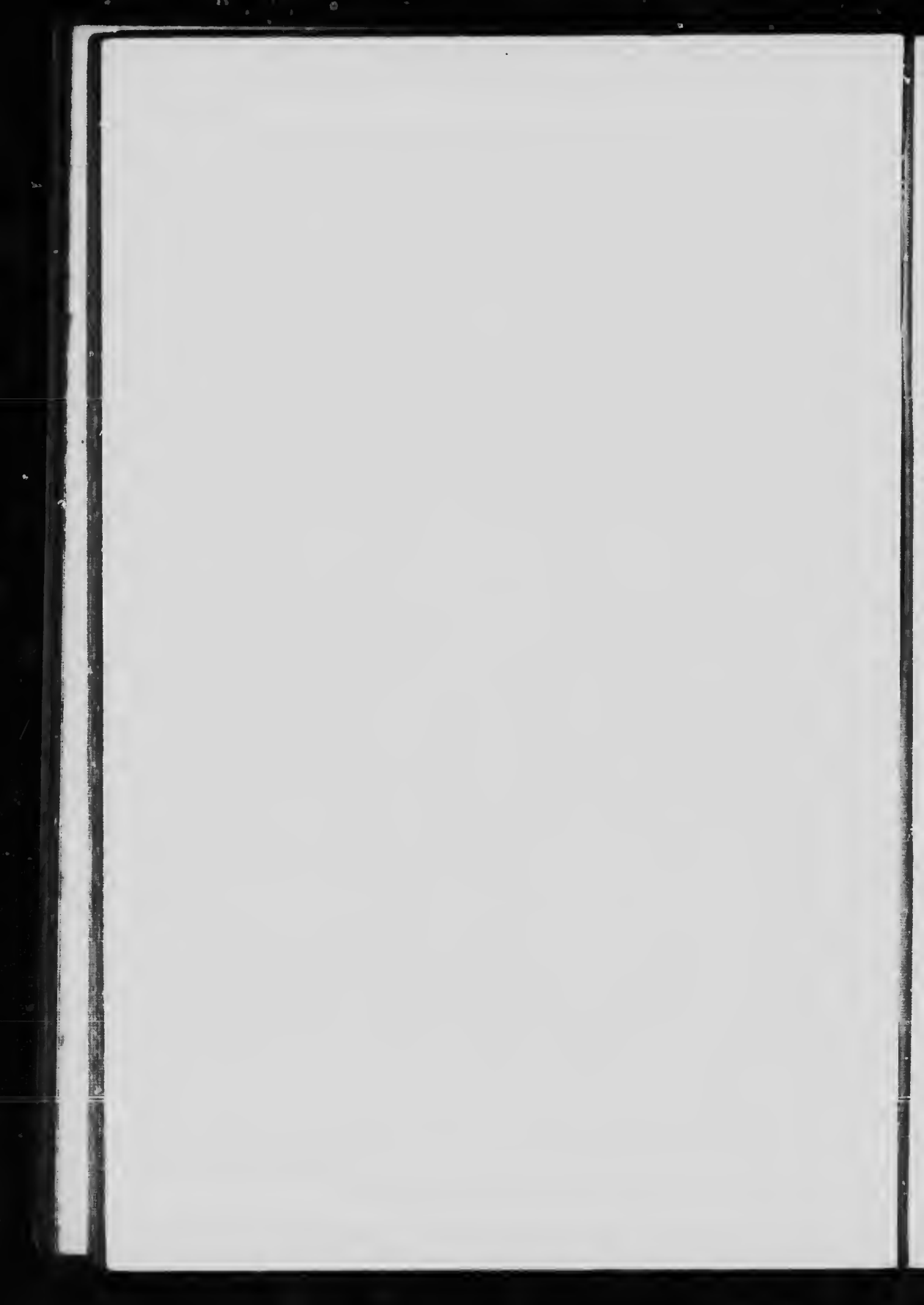
"It wasn't difficult!"

"You're uncanny!"

His sense of divination had so startled her that she turned from him a moment, wondering what attitude to assume. While feigning to listen to the declaiming of Harrigan Blood, she took every opportunity to study him. Massingale, scarcely forty, had an intellectual aristocracy about him that lay in the impersonality of his amused study of others. Yet in this scrutiny there was no accent of criticism. His lips were relaxed in a tolerant humor, and this smile puzzled her. Was he also of this company who sought amusement in a descent to other levels, or was he simply an observer, a man who had ended a phase of



The chorus girls began to talk



life, but who still delighted in the contemplation of the ridiculous, the grotesque and the absurdity of these petty contests of wits? She was aware that he had attacked her imagination in a way no man had tried before, and this presumption awoke an instant spirit of resistance. She stole a glance from time to time in the mirror, but she avoided opportunities for conversation.

From the farther end of the table she beheld the guest of the day radiating happiness under a storm of questions from the chorus girls:

"Perfectly horrid of you to call yourself count!"

"Count, lord, I've got a string of 'em!"

"Barons:"

"Dukes, too. I know Duke of What's-His-Name Biscay. He's a nice boy! Do you know him?"

And Georgie Gwynne, flushed with her first success, said to Harrigan Blood, in a permeating aside:

"When I get to His Nibs, watch what I'll hand him!"

But Harrigan Blood, absorbed in an idea, answered her:

"Be quiet now, Georgie — gorge yourself!"

"Composing an editorial on luxury, Harrigan?" said Lindaberry, speaking for the first time.

Harrigan Blood admitted the patness of the guess with a wave of his hand, leaning heavily on the table with his elbows. He had always an air of being in his shirt-sleeves.

"See the *Free Press* to-morrow," he said, moving his large hand over his face and frowning spasmod-

ically. His eye ran quickly over the menu, calculating the cost per plate, the value of the rare wines, the decorations, the presents and the tips. "Two thousand dollars at the least — four thousand dinners below Fourteenth Street, five years abroad for a genius who is stifling, twenty thousand tired laborers to a moving-picture show. And with what we turn over with our fork and regret, the waste that will be thrown away, a family could live a year! This is civilization and Christianity!"

"Appetite good, Harrigan?" said Lindaberry, with an impertinence that few would have ventured.

"Better than yours," said Blood impatiently. "Ideas and personalities have no connection. Ends are one thing, instruments another. Who was the greatest of the disciples? St. Paul. He had experienced! Shakespeare — Tolstoy. The caviar is delicious!"

In his attitude he felt no hypocrisy. He looked upon himself as a machine, to be fed and to be kept in order by sensations — experiences: a privileged nature dedicated passionately to ideal ends. For the rest, his contempt for mankind in the present was profound. He had conquered success early, but he retained an abiding bitterness against the world which had misunderstood him and forced him a short period to wait.

"And this is Harrigan Blood!" Doré thought, wondering. Another day flashed before her — two years old — when, just arrived, a despairing claimant, she had pleaded in vain for opportunity in the great

soul-crushing offices of the *Free Press*. The sport of fate had flung her a chance, and watching Harrigan Blood from the malicious corners of her busy eyes, she planned her revenge.

Lindaberry had not as yet addressed a single word to her. He had gradually come out of the stolid dull intensity that had lain on him with the weight of last night's dissipation, but one felt in the awakening vivacity of his eye, the impatient opening and shutting of his hand, the quick smile that followed each outburst of laughter, a struggle to reach the extreme of gaiety which such a company brought him to relieve him from that depression which closed over him when condemned to be alone.

For her part, she had scarcely noticed him — having a horror of men who drank. At this moment a butler, under orders from Busby, placed before him a bottle of champagne for his special use. He turned courteously but impersonally, without that masculine impertinence in the eye which is still a compliment.

"May I freshen up your glass?"

"Thank you, no!" she said icily. "I'm afraid I don't appreciate your special brand of conversation!"

He looked at her, startled — her meaning gradually dawning on him. But, before he could reply, Busby had risen, sounding his knife against his plate.

"Next course, ladies will please chassé! Gentlemen, make sure of your jewelry!"

Doré rose, and, as she did so, addressing the butler who drew out her chair, said:

"In order that Mr. Lindaberry may feel quite at

home, do please place a bottle on *each* side of him!"

She made him an abrupt mocking bow, and went to her place past Massingale, next to the Comte de Joncy, while Lindaberry, flushing, was left as best he could to face the laughter and clapping of hands that greeted her sally.

The Comte de Joncy had risen courteously, studying her keenly from his pocketed, watery blue eyes, seating her with marked ceremony, too keen an amateur of the sex not to feel a difference in her.

"Bravo!" he said, laughing, and in a confidential tone: "Madame de Staël could not have answered better!"

The allusion was not in her ken, but she felt the compliment.

"Are you what? Wolf in sheep's clothing, or sheep—"

"Beware!" she said maliciously, converting a fork into a weapon of attack. "I am a desperate adventureress who has taken this way to meet Your Highness!"

"If it were only true!" he said, looking questions.

"Why not?" The game amused her, and besides, something perversely incited her to recklessness. Massingale was on the other side of her—Massingale, who, after the impudence of having comprehended her, treated her with only tepid interest. "Where shall I follow you? Paris or Dresden?"

He stared at her with squinting eyes, not quite deceived, not quite convinced. At the end he laughed.

"Pretty good — almost you fool me!"

"You don't believe me?" she said, raising her eyes a moment to his.

"Mademoiselle, your eyes have a million in each of them!" he said, after a moment, but not quite so calmly. "Will you give me your address?"

"Why not?" she said, opening her hands in a gesture of surprise.

"I will come!" he said, yet not entirely the dupe of her game.

"Poor Count!" she said, with a quick change of manner. "You don't know what a dangerous animal we have here. Beware!"

"What?"

"The great American teaser!" she said, laughing.

"Teaser — teaser! What is that?"

She entered into an elaborate explanation, glancing into the mirror, striving from there to catch Massingale's look.

"I say, angels!" said Buzzy, bubbling over with mischief. "I've got an idea!"

"Buzzy has an idea!"

"Good for Buzzy!"

"We want to amuse the Count, don't we?" said Busby artfully.

"Sure! . . ."

"You bet! . . ."

"Well, then, let's tell our real names!"

Violetta Pax gave a scream of horror and retired blushing under her napkin at the storm of laughter her scream of confession had aroused.

"Real name's Lou Burgstadter!" said Consuelo Vincent in a whisper to De Joncy, who had forgot her.

Violetta Pax was on her feet in an instant.

"Consuelo Vincent, I like your nerve! . . . Consuelo, indeed! Cassie Hagan!" she cried furiously. "Yes, and Carrie Slater, too, needn't put on airs!"

The rest was lost in an uproar; the chorus girls were on their feet, protesting vigorously, all chattering at once, the men applauding and fomenting the tumult, Busby secretly enjoying the mischief he had exploded, running from one to the other, pleading, provoking, adding fuel to the burning.

"Ladies! . . . Ladies! Remember there are gentlemen present! . . . Georgie, Violetta's giving you away! . . . Girls! Girls! Remember His Highness! . . . Paula, dear, you ought to hear what Georgie said of you! Awful . . . awful . . . Now, dearies, behave! . . . remember your manners!"

At the end of a moment, overcome with laughter, he capsized on a sofa in weak hysterics. Blood exclaimed that Busby had a fit, and thus procured a diversion which restored calm. Nevertheless, the storm had been so sudden that the wreckage was strewn about the room; Busby gathered them together again, conciliated every one and brought them back to their seats.

Doré was excited by this outburst. At last the party promised something to her curiosity. She waited eagerly, her eyes dancing, her fingers thrum-

ming on the cloth, curious to see these men, of whom she had heard so much, unmask.

While continuing her banter with De Joncy, she had turned her attention to Sassoon, who, in the midst of the hilarity, preserved the fatigue and listlessness of his first appearance, a smile more contemptuous than amused lurking about the long oriental nose and burnt-out eyes without abiding quite anywhere. He paid no attention to the girls at either side, peering restlessly at those farther away, dissatisfied, unamused.

His reputation was of the worst, his name bandied about in big places and in small; nor, as is usually the case, did gossip bear unmerited reproaches. Neither a fool, as most believed, nor of originating imagination, as a few credited who witnessed from the inside the shrewd and infallible success of his colossal schemes, Sassoon at bottom was a prey to an obsession that stung him like a gadfly to restless seeking, eternally tormented by the fever of the hunter, eternally disillusioned. For thirty years, following the exigencies of a maladive heredity, he had raked the city with his craving eye, always alert, always disappointed, running into dark side streets, ringing obscure bells, pursuing a shadow that had awakened a spark of hope. And at the end it was always the same — emptiness! To-day he sat moodily, fiercely resentful at a fresh deception.

A certain disdainful defiance, a trick of Violetta Pax, fleeing, bacchante-like, in the sextette, had stirred in him a flash of expectancy, a hungering hope, which had died in hollowness now that she was at his side,

unresisting, too ready. So he sat, brooding, heavy-lidded, already turning to other fugitive forms that he might follow in a vague impulse—of all the millions in the city the one most enslaved. When, in her turn, Doré came to take her place beside him, after the first listless acknowledgment he spoke no word to her. She responded by turning her back to him at once, with a complete ignoring. This attitude, so different from the challenging eyes of the others, struck him—he who craved opposition, resistance. All at once, as she was leaving him to take her place between Busby and Harrigan Blood, he said, his soft hand on her arm, in his low, rather melodious feminine voice:

“You haven’t paid much attention to me, pretty thing!”

“Your own fault, Pasha!” she said impertinently. “Men run after me!”

And she was aware that his eye, dead as a cold lantern, followed her now, running over her neck and shoulders, aroused as from its lethargy. Satisfied that her instinct had not failed, she took her seat. Then, all at once, she felt a new annoyance: Massingale, the observer, was smiling to himself.

The hilarity began to freshen. Consuelo Vincent, who had magnificent hair, was heard exclaiming:

“I say, girls! we’re stiff as a bunch of undertakers. Let’s slip our roofs!”

Amid general acclaim, the top-lofty, overburdened hats were consigned to a butler. Every one began to chatter on a higher key, across the constant rise

of laughter. Georgie Gwynne, installed by the Royal Observer, saucy and unabashed, was saying:

"Well, Kink, how do you like us?"

In another moment the Comte de Joncy, sublimely content, was being initiated into the art of eating brandied cherries from the ripe lips of Violetta Pax and Georgie Gwynne.

From the moment Don had taken off her toque, Sassoon and Harrigan Blood had not ceased to stare at her.

"A hat is not becoming to me," she said to Harrigan Blood, and added, "Besides, I have nothing to conceal."

Amid the pyramided and confounded head-dresses, the simplicity of her own, playing about her forehead like a golden cloud, stood out. For the first time, her youth and naturalness appeared, depending on no artifice.

Harrigan Blood did not go to what attracted him by four ways, or around a hill.

"You don't belong to this crowd," he said point-blank. "Don't lie to me! What are you?"

"The story of my life?" she said. "It's getting to the time, isn't it?"

"You know what I mean," he said roughly. "People don't often interest me. You do! I've been watching you. Do you want backing?"

She was surprised—genuinely so. She had felt that Blood was different—too powerful, too merciless, to be caught as other men were caught. She did not look up at him, as others would have, but

remained smiling down at the cloth, running her mischievous fingers through the low dish of yellow pansies before her. And, with the same averted look, which brought her a complete understanding of the impetuosity of his attack, she felt Sassoon's awakened stare and the scrutiny of Judge Massingale, who, while he pretended to talk to Paula Stuart, was listening with a concentrated interest. She was pleased, quite satisfied with herself. Only Lindaberry remained.

"You are very impulsive, aren't you?" she said slowly.

"On the stage? A beginner?"

She nodded.

"Come to me — at my office, any afternoon, after five." And he added, without lowering his voice: "If you're after a career, don't waste your time on this sort. I can put you in a day where you want."

She rose to take her seat on his right, next to Lindaberry.

"Will you come?" he said, detaining her.

"Why not?" she said, lifting her eyes, with a little affectation of surprise at so simple a question.

During her progress about the table she had kept Lindaberry in mind, with a lurking sense of antagonism, a desire to return to the attack, to punish him further. A certain grace that he had, which appealed to her instinct, the quality of instinctive elegance, only increased her resentment. At the bottom, the intensity of this resentment surprised her — without her being able to analyze it.

He had risen with a bow that was neither exaggerated nor curt. There was undeniable power in his face, boyish and weak as it was in its unrestraint, like a flame spurting fiercely on a trembling wick. He brought to men a little sense of fear — never to women. To-day this intensity seemed clouded, not fully awake as if there were still dinning in his ears the echoes of the night before. The dullest observer, looking on his face, would have seen where he was riding. In his own club (where he was adored) bets were up that he would not last the year.

Presently he leaned toward her and said, protected by the shrieks of laughter that surrounded De Joncy:

"Don't you think you were in the wrong? What right had you to come here?"

She understood that Busby had betrayed her to him and to Harrigan Blood.

"Even if I were a —" she gave a glance up the table, "you should make a difference between a woman and a — bottle!"

"You are quite right," he said, after a moment. "Will you accept my apologies? I am seldom discourteous to a woman — never intentionally."

She looked at him, and saw with what an effort he spoke, his brain on fire, yet making no mistake in the precision of his words. She nodded, and turned again to Harrigan Blood, all her nature aroused to opposition at this weakness in such a man. Yet ordinarily her sympathies were quick.

"You are too hard on him," said Harrigan Blood,

who had listened. "It's gone too far; he can't help it. He's got his coffin strapped to his back."

"Why doesn't some one help him?" she said irritably.

Blood shrugged his shoulders, answering with the superiority of the self-made man before the misfortune of the friend who has thrown everything away:

"Help him? There's your feminism again! The world's turned crazy on sentimentalized charity! Charity is nothing but a confession of failure! Build up! Let derelicts go! Save him? For what? In New York? We are too busy. The best that can be said is, he's drinking himself to death like a gentleman — doing it royally! His self-control's a miracle — some day there'll be an explosion! If you knew his history —"

"What is his story?"

As Blood was about to begin it, he was interrupted by a general pushing back of chairs. Busby, at the piano, flung out the chords of the sextette that had made a mediocre opera famous.

Half the party crowded, laughing and bantering, to render the chorus, the Comte de Joncy insisting on being taught the latest curious American dance. Tenaflly entered to see to the clearing of the room.

He was the type of the valet ennobled, a mask of incomparable vacuity, a secret smile that missed nothing, internal rather than outward, yet still chained to the servant's habit of picking up his feet.

Sassoon summoned him with a nod which Tenaflly perceived instantly across the room.

"The little girl in yellow — who is she?"

The eye of the restaurateur passed vaguely over the company, but the instant sufficed to photograph each detail.

"She's new," he said, without moving his lips.

"She's not of the sextette?"

Tenaflly shook his head.

"She's dined here — below — I've seen her!"

"Know her name?"

Tenaflly searched the pigeonholes of his memory.

"I don't know her."

"Find out what you can — soon!"

"I will, sir!"

He spoke a moment in low tones with the master, who had no evasions with him. At the end Sassoon said impatiently:

"Can't be bothered . . . see her for me and get a receipt."

Every one wished to dance, whirling and bumping, none too restrained in their movements, the Royal Observer awkwardly enthusiastic, enjoying himself immoderately. Doré, a little apart, Harrigan Blood at her side, watched with eyes keen with curiosity. Busby, De Joncy, Lindaberry amused themselves hugely, caricaturing the eccentricities of the dance, their arms about their partners, clinging, bacchanalian, in their movements. Doré followed Lindaberry, frowning, feeling a blast of anger that set her sensitive little nostrils to quivering with scorn. The feeling was unreasonable. She did not know why he should disturb her more than another, and yet he did. He seemed

so incongruous there; she could not associate his refinement, his courtesy, with Georgie Gwynne, who held him pressed in her arms, her head thrown back, her throat bared, laughing provokingly. She had come to see behind the scenes, and yet this one roused her fury. Besides, there was in his attitude a scornful note—a contemptuous valuation of the woman, of women in general, she felt, as if he were thus proclaiming: "See, this is all they are worth!"

She began to glance at the door, counting the minutes. Judge Massingale came to her side.

"Dance?"

"I turned my ankle this morning."

"You don't want to!"

"No!"

He began to dance with Adèle Vickers, but not as the others, not with the same immoderate abandon. She noted this swiftly.

At last, in a pause between the dances, to Doré's relief, a footman, entering, announced:

"Miss Baxter's car is waiting."

It was an effect she had carefully planned, taking a full half-hour to lead Stacey Van Loan to an innocent participation. A group came up, protesting, acclaiming the discovery of her name—as she had wished.

"Oho! Miss Baxter, is it?"

"We won't let you go!"

"The fun's just beginning!"

"My chauffeur can wait!" said Doré superbly, perceiving the danger of an open retreat before this

over-excited group. Her curiosity was satisfied. She began to foresee what she did not wish to witness, ugliness appearing from behind the carnival mask of laughter. She began to glance apprehensively at Harrigan Blood, who clung to her side, wondering how she could elude him. Then, as the group of protestants broke up, Sassoon, advancing deliberately, in that silken effeminate voice that expected no refusal, said abruptly: "Miss Baxter, where do you live?"

She was on the point of an indignant answer, but suddenly checked herself. She gave the address, but in a sharp muffled tone, boiling with anger within, with a quick resolve to punish him later.

"When are you in?"

Before she could answer, Harrigan Blood pushed forward, determined and insolent.

"Too late, Sassoon, my boy; nothing here for you!"

"I fail to understand you," said Sassoon.

"Don't you? Well, I'll make it plainer!"

"You'll kindly not interfere."

"And I'll thank you not to trespass!"

"What?"

"Don't trespass!"

Sassoon responded angrily; Harrigan Blood retorted with equal heat. In a moment the room was in an uproar.

Doré seized the confusion of the hubbub to slip from the group which rushed in to separate these two men whom a glance from a little Salamander had turned back into the raw.

She went quickly, frightened by the sounds of anger and the increasing uproar, flung into her furs, and stole toward the door.

All at once it opened before her, and in the hall was Lindaberry, roguishly ambushed.

"No, no — not so fast!" he cried.

He flung out his arm, barring the way. For a moment she was frightened, seeing what was in his eyes, hearing the tumult in the salon behind. Then, without drawing back, she raised her hand gently, and put his arm away.

"Please, Mr. Lindaberry, protect me! I need it! I ought not to be here."

"What?" he said, staring at her.

"I'm a crazy little fool!" she said frantically. Help me to get away!"

"Crazy little child!" he said, after staring a moment as if suddenly recognizing her. "Get away, then — quickly!"

She felt no more resentment, only a great pity, such as one feels before a magnificent ruin. She wished to speak to him — but she was afraid.

"Thank you," she said, with a look that appealed to him not to judge her. "I am crazy — out of my mind! Come and see me — do!"

CHAPTER IV

THE faithful Stacey was below, lounging at the door of the grill-room, as she came tripping down, the sensation of escape sparkling on her delicate features. She was so delighted at the effect he had achieved for her that she gave him an affectionate squeeze of the arm.

"Stacey, you're a darling! When the footman announced 'Miss Baxter's car' you could have heard a pin drop among the squillionairesses!"

Stacey had been told, and dutifully believed, that the luncheon was a heavy affair, very formal, very correct.

"I say, you didn't bore yourself, did you?" he said, noticing the excitement still on her cheeks.

"No, no!"

"Fifth Avenue, or Broadway?"

"Fifth first."

"Bundle up; it's turning cold!"

The next moment the car had found a wedge in the avenue, and Stacey, solicitous, relapsed into gratifying silence.

She was all aquiver with excitement. Her little feet, exhilarated by the memories of music, continued tapping against the floor, and had Stacey turned he would have been surprised at the mischievous, gay

little smile that constantly rippled and broke about her lips. Indeed, she was delighted with her success, with the discord she had flung between Sassoon and Harrigan Blood. She could scarcely believe that it could be true.

"What! I, little Dodo, have done that!" she said, addressing herself caressingly, overjoyed at the idea of two men of such power descending to a quarrel over a little imp like herself.

She had no illusions about these flesh hunters. If she had given Sassoon her address instead of hotly refusing, it was from a swift vindictive resolve to punish him unmercifully, to entice him into fruitless alleys, to entangle and mock him, with an imperative desire to match her wits against his power, and teach him respect through discomfiture and humiliation. Sassoon did not impress her with any sense of danger. She rather scoffed at him, remembering his silken voice, the slight feminine touch of his hand, the haunted dreamy discontent in his heavy eyes.

Harrigan Blood was different. In her profound education of a Salamander, she knew his type, too: the man without preliminaries, who put abrupt questions, brushing aside the artifices and subtleties that arrest others. She would make no mistake with him — knowing just how little to venture. And yet, always prepared, she might try her fingers across such hungry flames. Strangely enough, she did not resent Harrigan Blood as she did Sassoon; for men of force she made many allowances.

She thought of Lindaberry and Judge Massingale:



"No, no, not so fast!"

of Lindaberry rapidly, with a beginning of pity, but still inflamed with an irritation at this magnificent spectacle of a man going to destruction so purposelessly. He, of all, had been the most indifferent, too absorbed to lift his eyes and study what sat by his side. She did not know all the reasons why he so antagonized her, nor whence these reasons came . . . yet the feeling persisted, already mingled with a desire to know what was the history that Harrigan Blood had started to tell. Perhaps, after all, there may have been a tragic love-affair. She reflected on this idea, and it seemed to her that if it were so, then in his present madness there might be something noble . . . magnificent.

"How stupid a man is to drink!" she said angrily.

"Eh? What's that, Dodo?" said Stacey.

She perceived that, in her absorption, she had spoken half aloud.

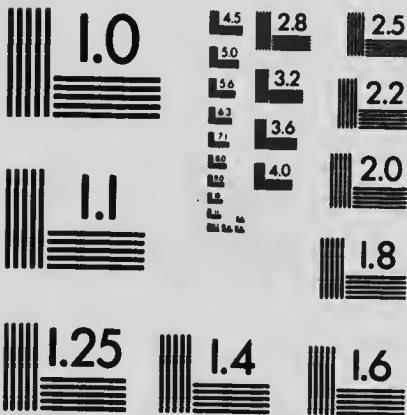
"Go down Forty-second and run up Broadway!" she said hastily.

Massingale she could not place. She comprehended the others, even the Comte de Joncy, whom she had left with a feeling of defrauded expectation. But Massingale she did not comprehend, nor did she see him quite clearly. Why was he there? To observe simply, with that tolerant baffling smile of his? What did he want in life? Of her? He had been interested; he had even tried to arouse her own curiosity. She was certain that the effort had been conscious. Then there had come a change — a quiet defensive turn to impersonality. Tactics, or what?



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What impression had she left? Would he call, or pass on? She did not understand him at all; yet he excited her strangely. She had a feeling that he would be too strong for her. She had felt in him, each time his glance lay in hers, the reading eye that saw through her, knew beforehand what was turning in her runaway imagination, and that before him her tricks would not avail.

Then she ceased to remember individuals, lost in a confused, satisfied feeling of an experience. It seemed to her as if she had taken a great step — that opportunity had strangely served her, that she had at last entered a world which was worthy of her curiosity.

She had met few real men. She had played with idlers, boys of twenty or boys of forty, interested in nothing but an indolent floating voyage through life. For the first time, she had come into contact with a new type, felt the shock of masculine vitality. Whatever their cynical ideas of conduct, she felt a difference here. They were men of power, with an object, who did not fill their days with trifling, but who sought pleasure to fling off for a moment the obsession of ambitions, to relax from the tyranny of effort, or to win back a new strength in a moment of discouragement. Perhaps if she continued her career she might turn them into friends — loyal friends. It would be difficult but very useful. The men she met usually, at first, misunderstood her.

“Perhaps one of them will change my whole life!

Why not? I have a feeling —" she said solemnly to herself, nodding and biting her little under lip.

The truth was, she felt the same after every encounter, dramatizing each man, and flinging herself romantically on a sea of her imagining. But to-day it was a little different. The feeling was more profound, calmer, more penetrating. She felt, indeed, under the influence of a new emotion, a restlessness in the air, an unease in the crowded streets.

Since morning, the glowing warmth of the last summery stillness had slipped away unperceived. The wind in an hour had gone round to the north, and from each whipping banner threaded against the sky one felt the whistling onrush of winter. In the air there was something suspended, a melancholy resounding profoundly, penetrating the soul of the multitude. The gray sluggish currents in the thoroughfare quickened, stirring more restlessly, apprehensive, caught unawares. Little gusts of wind, scouts heralding the chill battalions piling up on the horizon, drove through the city clefts, sporting stray bits of paper to the rooftops, in turbulent dusty, swooping flight, uncovering heads and rolling hats like saucers down the blinded streets. Then suddenly the gusts flattened out. A stillness succeeded, but grim, permeating, monstrous; and above the winter continued to advance.

She felt something in all this — something ominous, prophetic, vaguely troubling, and being troubled, sought to put it from her. She began to dramatize another mood. About her she felt the city she adored:

the restaurants, the theaters, the great hotels, the rocket-rise of the white *Times* building, towering like a pillar of salt in accursed Sodom. But her mind did not penetrate to ugliness. The febrile activity, the glistening surface of pleasure, the sensation of easy luxurious flight awoke in her the intoxication of enjoyment. She adored it, this city whom so many curse, whose luxuries and pleasures opened so facilely to her nod, whose conquest had borne so little difficulty.

She forgot the unease that lay in the air at the sight of the feverish restaurants where so often she had dipped in for adventure of the afternoon. The sight of the theaters, even, with their cold white globes above the outpouring matinée crowds, brought an impatience for the garlanded night, when elegant shadows would come, slipping into flaming portals, amid the flash of ankles, the scent of perfume, glances of women challenging the envy of the crowd.

The multitude churned about her, roaring down into the confusion of many currents: the multitude — the others — whom she felt so distant, so far below her. They were there, white of face, troubled, frowning, harassed, swelling onward to clamoring tasks, spying her with thousand-eyed envy; and everywhere darting in and out, dodging the gray contact of the mass, alert, light, skinning on like sea-gulls trailing their wings across the chafing ocean, the luxurious women of the city sped in rolling careless flight. She felt herself one of them, admiring and admired, glancing eagerly into tonneaus bright with laughter and fashion,

deliciously registering the sudden analytical stare of women, or the disloyal tribute boldly telegraphed of men.

She had lunched with Sassoon, De Joncy, Massingale. She was a part of all this — of the Brahmin caste; and her little body rocking to the swooping turns, deliciously cradled, her eyes half closed, her nostrils drawing in this frantic air as if it were the breath of an enchanting perfume, she let her imagination go: already there by right, married to Massingale or Lindaberry — she saw not which quite clearly. Nor did it matter. Only she herself mattered.

“Riverside or park, Dodo?”

“Through the park,” she said; and roused from her castle-building, she laughed at herself with a tolerant amused confusion.

“Good spirits, eh?”

“So-so!”

In the park there were fewer automobiles. She no longer had the feeling of the crowd pressing about her, claiming her for its own. There were no restaurants or climbing façades. There was the earth, bare, shivering, and the sky filled with the invader.

She had a horror of change, and suffered with a profound and uncomprehended trouble when, each year, she saw summer go into the mystery of winter, and again when came the awakening miracle. Yesterday, when she had passed, the splendor of the trees, it is true, lay shorn upon the ground; but the earth was warm, pleasant, with a fragrant odor, the air soft and the evening descended in a glow. Now

there was a difference. Over all was the dread sense of change. Each tree stood alone, aghast, against the sky, the ground bleak, bare, the leaves wandering with a little moaning, driven restlessness. Even against the gray banks piling up against the north there was something vacant and horribly endless. From tree, sky and empty earth a spirit had suddenly withdrawn, and all this change had come within an hour, in a twinkling — without warning.

Now she could no longer put it from her, this resistless verity that laid its chill fingers across her heart. It was not of the change in nature she thought — no; but of that specter which some day, inexorably, would rise from a distant horizon, even as the wind in an hour goes round to the north and winter rushes in. She was twenty-two and she had a horror of this thief, who came soft-footed and unreal, to steal the meager years.

She stiffened suddenly, clutching her stole to her throat.

“Too cold?”

“Yes!”

“I’ve got a coat for you.”

“No; go back!”

“Already?”

“Yes!”

“Tea?”

“No! Go back!”

She closed her eyes, not to see, but the thing was there, everywhere, in the air that came to her, in the sad tiny sounds that rose about them. Yes, she her-

self would change inexorably, as all things filled their appointed time. What she had was given but for a day — all her fragile armament was but for a day. Not much longer could she go blithely along the summery paths of summer. She thought of Winona Horning, who had played too long. She thought of thirty as a sort of sepulcher, an end of all things! She felt something new impelling her on — a haste and a warning.

"It can't go on always!" she said to herself, in her turn using the very words that Winona had uttered. "Not much longer. A year, only a year, then I must make up my mind!"

"Blue, Dodo?" said Stacey.

"Horribly!"

The word seemed so incongruously ridiculous, after what she had felt, that she burst into exaggerating laughter.

"Going to change your mind?"

"No, no! I'm out of sorts — a cold! Get me back!"

They reentered the city as the first owlsh lights were peeping out, futile, brave little rebels against the spreading night. Below, high in the air, suspended above the ghostly town whose sides had faded, the great illumined eye of the Metropolitan tower shone forth. Then all at once long sentinel files of lights rose on the avenue and down the fleeting side streets, miraculous electric signs burst out against the night, a myriad windows caught fire, and the city, which a moment ago had seemed flat, climbed blazing into the air.

They were again nearing the great artery, which changes its name with the coming of the artificial night, no longer Broadway, but the Rialto, with its mysteries of entangled beams and profound pools of darkness, its laughter free or suspect, its mingled virtue and vice, elbowing and staring at each other, its joy and its despair treading in each other's steps.

But the dread reminder was still above, hurling its black engulfing storm across the bombardment of a million lights, that painted it with a strange red glare, but could not destroy its menace. A few cold drops of rain, wind driven, dashed against their faces, as they went with the crowd, scuttling on. There was something unreal now in all this, something artificial in the glimpse of vacant restaurants setting their candles for the guests who went fleeing home. Of plunging temperament, she had a horror of these rare depressions, striving frantically against the realization of what must be, and striving thus, always suffering the more keenly. In seeing all this fugitive world, flat shadows driven restlessly as the shorn splendor of the streets, she asked herself of what use it was after all, to be young, to be attractive, to go laughing and dancing, to dare, to conquer . . . why, indeed, childhood, maturity and old age should stretch so far, and youth, the exultant brilliant hour she clung to, should be allotted only the few, the fingered years! She felt a sense of loneliness, of terrified isolation, the need of some one to come and talk to her, to interpose himself between her and these unanswerable questions, to close her eyes and stop her ears.

When they reached Miss Pim's the rain was beginning in little flurries. She ran in and up-stairs hurriedly. She had hoped that she would find her room lighted, that Snyder or Winona would be home. No one was there, and when she opened the door she entered a region of obscure shadowy forms, faintly lighted by the reflection of a street lamp below. Across the windows on the avenue was the cyclopean eye of the Metropolitan tower, which she saw always every night with her last peeping glance from her covers — enormous eye, bulging, swollen with curiosity. At the other side was the wall of brick pressing against the window-pane, this wall she hated as she hated the idea of the commonplace in life.

She stood in the luminous pathway, gazing outward.

"What is the matter with me?" she thought. "Am I like Winona? Am I getting tired of it all? Or is it — what?"

The metallic summons of the telephone broke upon her mood. She lighted the gas quickly. The telephone continued to clamor, but she took no step toward it. All that she had planned as a choice for the evening no longer interested her. She was in another mood. She flung down her things rapidly. Then, remembering the bouquet of Sassoon's, she took it off, pricking her fingers. Inclosed was a bank-note for a hundred dollars!

Then she began to laugh — a bitter incongruous note. She understood now why he had gone so abruptly to his questions, confident in the test he had

prepared among the fragile stems of orchids and dainty yellow pansies.

All at once her eye went to her pin-cushion, caught by the white note of visiting-cards left there by Josephus, the colored chore-boy. She crossed quickly, stretching out her finger impatiently. Which of the four had come, as she had determined? The first bore the name of Harrigan Blood, the second Albert Edward Sassoon. She stood staring at the last, the hundred-dollar bill still wrapped in her fingers. . . . Sassoon and Harrigan Blood! She let the cards drop, profoundly disappointed, prey to a sudden heavy return of disillusionment.

The telephone, querulous, impatient, again called her, but she turned her shoulder impatiently. Now the thought of an evening of gaiety revolted her. She changed quickly, wrapped herself up in an ulster, took an umbrella and went out, though by the wide-faced clock in the skies it was scarcely six. Before, she had sought to break away, to escape recklessly from the depression that claimed her: now she sought it out, surrendering to this tristesse that whirled her on with its exquisite benumbing melancholy.

She supped at a lunch-room in Lexington Avenue, paying out a precious thirty cents for a cup of coffee, a bowl of crackers and milk, a baked potato. Not many were there yet. A young fellow without an overcoat, stooping already, pinched by struggle, came and sat at her table, seeking an opportunity to offer her the sugar. But, seeing her so silent and inwardly tortured, he did not persist.



She did not notice him



She did not notice him. She was thinking always of Massingale, and a little of Lindaberry. Why had she succeeded with Sassoon and Blood only to fail where she wanted to win?

"He carries a coffin on his back!" she found herself repeating, in the cynical words of Harrigan Blood. He would not seek her out; nor would Massingale. All her castles in the air had collapsed. It was only to the others, then, that she could appeal — the flesh hunters!

She returned, swaying against the wind, holding her umbrella with difficulty against the spattering rain-drops, that seemed to rise from the glistening sidewalks. The young man, who had no umbrella, remained in the shelter of a doorway, watching her undecidedly.

"Ah, yes! I must be getting tired of it!" she said suddenly, as she reached her steps. A taxicab was turning in the avenue, having just drawn away. As she went slowly up the interminable, impenetrable, dark flights to her room, she said, revolting against an injustice:

"Well, if he doesn't come, I'll go and find him!"

She entered her room, lagging and depressed, knowing not how to spend the hours until sleep arrived. She had no feeling of reticence in seeking out Massingale and Lindaberry, since they appealed to her and would not come, any more than she felt the slightest diminution of her self-respect in situations labeled with the appearance of suspicion. Her ideas of morality and conduct were not even formulated. They

existed as the sense of danger exists to a pretty animal. For, ardently as she desired it, there had not come into her soul the awakening breath of love, which, in despite of old traditions and lost heritages, alone would be to her rebellious little Salamander soul the supreme law of conduct.

Suddenly she saw that on her pin-cushion another card had been placed while she had been absent. She went to it without expectation. It was from Massingale — Massingale, who must have left in the taxicab even as she returned hopelessly.

Then it seemed to her as if a thousand tons had slipped from her. She felt an extraordinary joy and confidence, the alertness of a young animal, a need of light and laughter, a longing to plunge into a rush of excitement.

The telephone rang. Donald Bacon was clamoring to take her to the cabaret party. She disliked him cordially. She accepted with wild delight.

CHAPTER V

THE morning was well spent when Doré awoke, after a gray return from the cabaret party where, in a revulsion of emotions, she had flirted scandalously. But the men with whom she had danced, laughed and fenced, provokingly were lost in a mist. They had only served to eat up the intervening time; she had not even a thought for them.

The busy bubbling whistle of a coffee-pot in fragrant operation sounded from the table. She opened one eye with difficulty, peering out the window at her friend, the clock. It was already thirty-five minutes past ten — what might be called a dawn breakfast in Salamanderland.

Snyder, moving about the table with a watchful eye, came to her immediately.

"Take it easy, Petty! Don't wake up unless you feel like it!"

She stood at the foot of the bed, and the smile of fond solicitude with which she bent over Dodo, lightly touching her hair, seemed like another soul looking through the tired mask of Lottie Snyder.

"You're an angel, Snyder! You spoil me!" said Dodo, rubbing her eyes and twisting her body in lazy feline stretches.

"Me an angel? Huh!" said Snyder, grinding on her heel.

She went to the improvised kitchen with the free gliding grace of the trained dancer, and lifting the top of the coffee-pot, dropped in two eggs.

Breakfast at Miss Pim's was an inviolable institution ending at eight-thirty sharp. Wherefore, as the Salamanders would as soon have thought of getting up to see the sun rise, coffee was always an improvisation and eggs a visitation of Providence. Besides, the Salamanders, for the most part, made their arrangements for lodgings only, trusting in the faithful legion of props, but supplementing that trust by an economical planning of the schedule ahead. In a week, it was rare that a Salamander was forced to a recourse on her purse for more than one luncheon — dinner never.

"Did you hear me come in?" said Doré, raising her gleaming white arms in the air and letting the silken sleeves slip rustling to her shoulders.

"Me? No!" said Snyder, who had not closed her eyes until the return. "Here's the mail."

Doré raised herself eagerly on one elbow.

"How many? What! only four?" she said, taking the letters from Snyder.

She frowned at the instant perception of Miss Pim's familiar straight up and down, sharp and thin writing, concealing the dreaded summons quickly below the others, that Snyder, who paid nothing, might not see.

Two she recognized; the third was unfamiliar.

She turned it over, studying it, characteristically reserving the mystery until the last. But, as she put it down on the white counterpane, she had a feeling of expectant certitude that it was from Massingale.

"Well, let's see what my dear old patriarch says!" she said, settling back in the pillows and taking up a stamped envelope, typewritten, with a business address in the corner.

"Dear Miss Baxter:

"Will be in town to-morrow, Friday, the twenty-second. It would give me great pleasure if you could lunch with me at twelve-thirty. Will send my car for you at twelve-twenty. I trust you are following my advice and giving attention to your health.

"Very sincerely yours,

"ORLANDO B. PEAVEY.

"P. S. Am called to important business appointment at one-thirty sharp, but take this brief opportunity to see you again. Telephone my office only in case you *can not* come.

"O. B. P."

"Sweetest old thing!" she said, smiling at the post-script characteristically initialed. "So thoughtful — kindest person in the world!"

Snyder brought her coffee and an egg broken and seasoned in a tooth-mug. Doré glanced at it suspiciously, seeking to discover if the division had been fair.

"My! Eggs are a luxury," she said, applying the tip of her tongue to the tip of the spoon; and she added meditatively: "I wish Stacey went in for chickens!"

She took up the unknown letter, turned it over

once more, and laid it slowly aside in favor of the second, a fat envelope covered with the boyish scrawl of the prop in disgrace. She spread the letter, frowning determinedly. Joe Gilday was difficult to manage, too alert to be long kept in the prop squad. It began without preliminaries and a fine independence of punctuation:

"Look here, Do — what's the use of rubbing it in on a fellow? You've made me miserable as an Esquimo in Africa, and why? What have I done? Supposing I did slip fifty in your bureau honest to God Do you don't think I'd do anything to jar your feelings do you? Lord, I'll lay down and let you use me for a door mat for a week if it'll help any. Kid you've got me going bad. I'm miserable. I'm all shot to pieces — insult you, why Do, I'd Turkey Trot on my Granny's grave first. Won't you let up — see a fellow won't you? I'll be around at noon if you don't see me I swear I'll warm the doorstep until the neighbors come out and feed me for charity: *that's* straight too! Now be a good sort Do and give me a chance to explain.

"Down in the dumps,
"J. J. (Just Joe.)"

This note, inspired with the slang of Broadway, would have made Doré laugh the day before, but the experiences of the last twenty-four hours had given her a standard of comparison. Between Joseph Gilday, Junior, and the men she had met there was a whole social voyage. Nevertheless, props were necessary, and undecided, she laid the scrawl on Mr. Peavey's neat invitation, postponing decisions. She opened the third, drawing out a neat oblong card, neatly inscribed in a minuscule graceful handwriting, slightly scented:

"My dear Miss Baxter:

"I shall call this afternoon at two o'clock.

"A. E. SASSOON."

She was not surprised at the signature nor the pasha-like brevity.

"Harrigan Blood won't take chances; he'll telephone," she thought. At the bottom she was pleased at this insistence of Sassoon's; it worked well with the plan she had determined on for his disciplining. "You're sure that's all?" she said aloud, wondering what Massingale would do.

"Yes."

"Wonder why he called so soon?" she thought pensively; and then, remembering the warring cards of Blood and Sassoon, added: "To warn me, perhaps?"

She smiled at this possibility, sure of herself, knowing well how weak the strongest man is before the weakest of her sex, when he comes with a certain challenge in his eyes.

"So Sassoon is coming, is he? Good!" she said musingly, a little far-off mockery in her smile; and to herself she rehearsed again the scene she had prepared, coddling her cheek against her bare soft arm, dreamily awake.

She would receive him with carefully simulated cordiality there below in the dusky boarding-house parlor; she could even lead him to believe that he might dare anything; and suddenly, when she had led him to indiscretions, she would say suddenly, as if the thought had just suggested itself:

"What! you have no flowers. You shall wear mine!"

She smiled a little more maliciously at the thought of the look that would come into those heavy foolish eyes at this. Then, taking a few violets from her corsage, she would fix them in his buttonhole, saying:

"No, no; look up at the ceiling while I fix them nicely — so!"

And, when she had coaxed him into a ridiculous craning of his neck, she would deftly pin the hundred-dollar bill on the lapel under the little cluster of purple, and turning him toward the mirror, say, with a mocking farewell courtesy:

"Mr. Albert Edward Sassoon, I have the pleasure of returning your visiting-card!"

She was so content with this bit of romance that she laughed aloud.

"Hello! what's up?" said Snyder, taking away the tooth-mug.

Dodo could not restrain her admiration.

"You know, Snyder," she said seriously, "I am really very clever!"

But she did not particularize. She had a feeling that Snyder, who watched over her in a faithful, adoring, dog-like way, might not quite approve. She did not know quite what made her feel this, for they had not exchanged intimacies; yet she felt occasionally in Snyder's glance, when she met it unawares, a dormant uneasy apprehension.

"Now for it!" she thought, and taking up the last note, unstamped, she tore it open.

"Miss Doré Baxter, Dr.

"To Miss Evangelica Pim

"Four weeks' lodging, third floor double room front at \$10
per week\$40

"Kindly call to see me as to above account."

"Four — impossible!" exclaimed Doré, bolt upright, now thoroughly awake. But instantly she repressed her emotions, lest Snyder might guess the cause. She made a rapid calculation, and discovered that in fact she had to face four deficiencies instead of three. But finances never long dismayed her.

"Anyhow," she thought, "I can turn over the champagne. If only Winona raised something on the orchids! There are a dozen ways, but I must give it some attention!"

Suddenly she remembered Harrigan Blood's estimate of the cost of yesterday's luncheon, and of what she had herself turned over with her fork. She thought of what Sassoon spent so carelessly, and of what he might squander were he once awakened, really interested. . . . Not that there was the slightest temptation,—no — but it did amuse her to consider thus the irony of her present dilemma. Well, there certainly were funny things in life!

Snyder had silently cleared away breakfast, and seated herself with a book by the window. Now, glancing at the clock, she rose.

"Ready for tub, Petty? I'll start it up."

"Snyder, you're too good to me!" said Doré, rousing herself from her reveries.

"Huh! Wish I could! Hot or cold?"

But Doré, catching her wrist, detained her, her curiosity excited.

"You're the queerest thing I ever knew!" she said, looking at her fixedly.

"That's right, too!"

"Why do you insist upon my calling you Snyder?"

"Don't like to get fond of people," said the other shortly.

"Why not?"

"Too long a story."

She sought to detach her wrist, but Doré held it firmly.

"And aren't you fond of me?"

Snyder hesitated, frowning at thus being forced to talk.

"Sure! Couldn't help it, could I?"

Doré smiled, pleased at this admission.

"And yet, you have such a funny way of watching me!"

"Me? How so?"

"Yes, you have! I often wonder what's back of a certain queer look you get —"

"What I'm thinking?"

"Yes!"

"I want to see you married and settled, girlie!"

No more unexpected answer could have been given.

"Heaven forbid!" said Doré, sitting up in astonishment. For this commonplace solution to all the romantic possibilities she imagined always infuriated her. But at this moment Ida Summers came, after a little rippling knock, a grapefruit in hand.

The new arrival was in bedroom slippers and pink peignoir, her disordered hair concealed under a tasseled negligee cap. She was a bit roly-poly, but piquant, merry, still new to Salamanderland, hugely enjoying each little excitement.

"Breakfasted already?" she said in astonishment. "Heavens! Dodo, how *do* you get up in the middle of the night?"

She began to laugh before she finished the sentence, she laughed so hard as she said it that it was almost incomprehensible, and she continued laughing long after Doré had ceased. She could hardly ever relate an incident without being overcome with laughter, but the sound was pleasantly musical, infectious even, and the blue devils went out the window as she came in the door.

"Heavens! . . . thought I had a swap for a cup of coffee," she said, beginning to laugh again at the thought of her exploded stratagem.

"There ought to be some left," said Doré, venturing one rosy foot from under the covers in search of a warm slipper. She was still thinking of Snyder's strange speech.

Having teased from the coffee-pot a bare cup of coffee, Ida camped down on the couch, and while waiting for the coffee to cool, applied the end of her forefinger to the tip of her nose in the way to uplift it contrary to the gift of nature.

"Ida, do leave that nose alone," said Doré.

"I must have a *retroussé* nose," said the girl merrily. "This doesn't go with my style of laughter.

All the artist-men tell me so. Ah, this nose!" And she gave it a vicious jolt, in her indignation. Her coloring was gorgeous, her lines were delicate, her expressions vivacious and quick with natural coquetry. Wherefore she was in great demand among the illustrators, who had reproduced her tomboy smile on the covers of a million magazines. She was in great demand, but she was capricious in her engagements — like all Salamanders, sacrificing everything to pleasure.

Winona Horning, aroused by the sounds of laughter, appeared through the connecting door, in a green and black negligee, rubbing her eyes, quite indignant.

"Heavens, child! No one can sleep when you're round! Hello, Snyder. Morning, Dodo!"

She said the last words in a tone that made Snyder look up at her, surprised. There was a note of reluctance, even of apprehension.

"Ida's drunk up the coffee; make her give you a grapefruit," said Dodo, nodding and departing.

When she darted in twenty minutes later, tingling and alert for the day, Snyder had gone and Ida Summers, curled like an Angora cat on the couch, was chatting to Winona, who stood in the doorway, undecidedly, turning a cigarette in her fingers, watching Dodo from under her long eyelashes.

"You certainly made the big hit last night, Win," said Ida rapidly. "Do, you should have seen her. She gets the men with that quiet waiting manner of hers. I can't do it to save my life. I have to rush in, barking like a white fluffy dog, to get noticed."

"Where were you?" said Doré, opening all the

trunks and ransacking the bureaus. When she dressed, the room had always the look of a sudden descent by the police.

"Up at Vaughan Chandler's studio," said Ida, giving the name of one of the popular illustrators, who catered to the sentimental yearnings of the multitude. "Quite some party, too, celebrities and swells. I say, Do, why don't you go in for head and shoulders? They're perfect gentlemen, you know . . . flirty, of course, . . . but it pays well, and they'd go daffy over you."

"Don't know . . . hadn't thought of it," said Doré, who, having decided to see Gilday and lunch with Peavey, was in a reverie over the subject of the dramatic costume. "By the way, Winona, raise anything on the orchids?"

"Only eight bones — hard enough getting that," said Winona slowly.

"Old brute! Pouffé would have given double," said Doré indignantly. "By the way, Joe's coming at noon. I must dress the stage up for him. What flowers have you girls got?"

"Three vases," said Ida joyfully. "Couple of southern millionaires are getting quite demonstrative over little me. What's up? . . . Going to coax the Kitty?" she added,—meaning in Salamanderish, "Are you going to encourage him to make presents?"

"Must raise something on this confounded rent," said Doré briefly. "Then, there are other reasons."

As Ida went tripping off, her little white ankles

gleaming, Winona entered with two jars of chrysanthemums which she placed, one on the table and one on the mantel, slowly, frowning. Then she turned and said, with a gesture like a blow:

"Do, I took it! I had to!"

"Took what?" said Doré, startled.

"Joe's fifty!"

Doré sprang precipitately to the drawer and opened it.

"Winona, you — you didn't!"

"It was that or get out!" said Winona doggedly, her back against the wall. "The Duchess made a scene. I'll pay it back — sure!"

"But, Winona, what am I to do? Joe's coming. I must — I have to return it to him. What can I say?" said Doré in dismay, staring at the empty drawer. "You had no right! You should have asked me. I can't — oh, you've put me in an awful hole! It wasn't right!"

"Don't! Dodo — don't!"

The girl clasped her hands, extending them in supplication, and burst into tears.

Doré could not resist the spectacle of this misery. She sprang to her side, seizing her in her arms, all her anger gone.

"Never mind! I don't care! You poor child! It isn't the money — it isn't that! I'll find some way." All at once she remembered the hundred dollars of Sassoon's bouquet. "Stupid! Why, of course!" She recounted hastily the incident to Winona, smoothing her hair.

"But, Do, you can't take it. How can you?" said Winona, becoming more calm.

"Why not? It was a present to each."

"But what can you say to Sassoon?"

"Him? Let me alone; I'll invent something — he'll never know! Bah! I shall miss a fine scene, that's all!" she added with a dramatic regret. "Well, that's over! How much did you use?"

"Thirty-five."

"Keep the rest!"

"I'll pay."

"Bur-r — shut up! I'm not lending. Borrowing breaks up friendship. It's yours — it's given!"

She looked at the distressed girl a moment and added apprehensively:

"Winona, you're losing your grip!"

"Losing? It's gone!"

"Decidedly, I must see Blainey this afternoon and get that job for you," said Doré pensively. She disliked these sudden bleak apparitions and hated long to consider them. "You'll see in a few days, all will be changed — all!"

Ida returned with long-stemmed chrysanthemums towering over her brown curls, and made a second trip for some hydrangeas which she had found at Estelle Monks' below. The room had now quite the effect of a conservatory.

"Why don't you work the birthday gag?" said Winona helpfully.

"Can't! November's my month for Joe," said Doré reluctantly.

Birthdays, needless to say, are legitimate perquisites in Salamanderland, and pretty certain to occur in the first or second months of each new acquaintance.

As the three Salamanders were thoughtfully considering this possibility, three knocks like the blow of a hammer sounded on the door, and the next moment the dreaded form of Miss Pim, yclept the Duchess, swept, or rather bounded, in.

"Humph! and what's this folderol mean?" she said, stopping short, sniffing and folding her hands over her stomach. "Very fine! Plenty of money for cabs, perfumes, silks, hats, flowers, luxuries —"

"You certainly don't object to my having plenty of money, do you, Miss Pim?" said Doré in a caressing voice, as she went to her purse before the landlady could make the demand direct. "You seem rather anxious about my little bill, I believe!"

"Little!" exclaimed Miss Pim, sitting down with the motion of a jack-knife shutting up.

Doré's calmness took away her breath, but a certain joy showed itself eagerly over her spectacled nose. She understood that such impudence meant pay. Nevertheless she sat stiffly and suspiciously, ready to pounce upon the slightest evasion.

Miss Pim's face advanced in three divisions — forehead, keen nose and sharpened chin. She wore a high false front, of a warmer brown than the slightly grizzled hair that she piled *en turban* on her head, a majestic note which had earned her the sobriquet of "the Duchess." She adhered to the toilets of the late

seventies — flowing brown shotted silks, heavy medallions, hair bracelets, and on state occasions appeared in baby pinks, as if denying the passage of years. She had had a tragic romance — one only, for her nature was too determined to risk another, and at the age of fifty-four she still showed herself implacable to the male sex, although not unwilling to let it be known that she could choose one of three any day she selected. She carried a hand-bag, which jingled with the warning note of silver dollars. She was horribly avaricious, and the Salamanders who courted her favor paid her, whenever possible, in species. Then she would open her bag, holding it between her knees, and drop into it, one by one, the shining round dollars, listening eagerly to the metallic shock.

“My dear Miss Pim,” said Doré, returning with her pocketbook, in a tone of calm superiority that left the landlady dumfounded, “I’ve told you frequently that I prefer my bill monthly. These weekly rounds are exceedingly annoying. Please don’t bother me again. I have nothing smaller than a hundred; can you change it?”

And flirting the fabulous bill before the eyes of the landlady, she nonchalantly let it flutter from the tips of her disdainful fingers.

Miss Pim, who liked to inspire terror, was so completely nonplused that, though her lips worked spasmodically, she found nothing to say. She took the bill furiously, and went out. A moment later Jo-

sephus appeared with the change in an envelope. The Salamanders were still in gales of laughter over the discomfiture of their common enemy.

Dodo, left alone, dressed in a simple dress of dull black, relieved by a lace edging at the throat and sleeves, and a tailor hat with the invariable splash of a red feather; for she made it a superstition never to be without a little red flutter of audacity and daring. Then she zealously applied the powder, to give a touch of ailing melancholy to her young cheeks — it would never do to appear before Mr. Peavey in too healthy a manifestation. In general, it must be noted that no Salamander is ever in perfect health. There is always lurking in the background a melancholy but most serviceable ailment that not only does for a thousand excuses, but encourages concrete evidences of masculine sympathy.

Her costume finished, she exercised her prevaricatory talents at the telephone, soothing irate admirers, who had clamored ineffectually for her the evening before, with plausible tales which, if they did not entirely believe, they ended by weakly accepting, which amounted to the same thing.

At noon, according to orders, Joseph Gilday, Junior, arrived with a carefully simulated hang-dog look. He was a wiry, sharp-eyed, jingling little fellow, just twenty, already imbued with the lawyer's mocking smile, on the verge of being a man of the world, eager to arrive there, but not quite emancipated. For the last month in this growing phase Doré had found the lines of discipline difficult to maintain. She even



"Please don't bother me again."

foresaw the time when it would be impossible. He had to be handled carefully.

"Hello, Dodo," said Gilday in a hollow tone of misery, dragging his cane into the room and fastening humble eyes on his yellow spats.

"Good morning," said Doré frigidly, for she perceived his maneuver was to force a laugh.

"Thunderation! what is it?" said Gilday, lifting his head and perceiving for the first time the floral display on the trunk tops, the bureaus and the mantelpieces.

"I say, is this your October birthday?"

"What do you mean?" said Doré blankly, shaking the water from the stems of Sassoon's orchids.

"Never saw so many flowers in my born life!"

"Many? . . . do you think so?" said Doré with the air of a marquise.

"Ouch!" said Gilday; "I got it! . . . I got it!"

"I think you came here to . . ."

Gilday flushed; apologies were not easy for him.

"What's the use of kicking up a tempest about a little bill of fifty?" he said sulkily. "You could take it as all the other girls do!"

"My dear Joe," said Doré, seizing her opportunity instantly, "other girls do, yes — the kind that I think you see entirely too much of. The trouble with you is, you are not man of the world enough to distinguish. That's the trouble of letting boys play around with me; they make mistakes —"

"Come, now," he broke in furiously, for she had touched him on the raw of his vanity.

Doré stopped his exclamations with an abrupt ges-

ture, and picking from her purse a fifty-dollar bill, held it to him between two fingers.

"Take it!"

"You don't understand."

"I understand perfectly, and I understand," she added, looking him in the whites of the eyes, "just what thoughts have been in the back of your head for the last two weeks!"

Her plain speaking left him without answer. He reddened to his ears, took the bank-note and thrust it in his pocket.

"Now I am going to say to you what I have to say many times," she said, without softening her accusing glance. "I expect to be misunderstood — often. I live independently, and as men are mostly stupid or brutal, I expect to have to set them right. I forgive always one mistake — one only. If you make a second, I cut your acquaintance! Now we'll consider the matter closed!"

Gilday gulped, suddenly enlightened, overcome with mortification, and in a sudden burst of sentimentality exclaimed:

"Dodo, if you'll take me I'll marry you to-night!"

This unexpected turn, the value of which she did not overestimate, brought her a mad desire to burst out laughing. It was not the first time that she had been surprised by such sudden outbursts, and not being given to the study of psychology, had always been puzzled — with a little disdain for the superior masculine sex.

"Neither now nor ever!" she said, with a shrug of

the shoulders. "Don't be a silly! Hand me my muff — there on the table. It's time to be going!"

She replaced the orchids, deciding it was best to appear alone and unbefriended before Peavey. Joe, going to the table, stole a glance at the cards of Sassoon, Harrigan Blood and Judge Massingale, apparently carelessly thrown there, and returned with enlarged eyes.

"Damn it, Do," he said, with a new respect, "I wish you'd let me buy you a diamond necklace or an automobile. This money burns my pocket!"

"Presents, all you wish. Send me a *little* bouquet of orchids, if it will make you feel better," she said, descending the stairs. "Orchids I never get tired of. If I were rich I'd wear a new bunch every day. Pouffé has such exquisite ones. . . ."

The stairs were so dark that she had to feel her way: she could smile without fear of detection.

"He will leave an order for a bouquet every day," she thought confidently, and she began busily to calculate the advantages of her understanding with that justly fashionable florist.

CHAPTER VI

OF all the men Dodo met, paraded and ticketed to her own satisfaction, Mr. Orlando B. Peavey was perhaps the one she had the most difficulty in keeping in the *status quo*. Not that a wounding thought could ever cross his timid imagination, but that she feared a crisis which by every art she sought to postpone. On the day he found courage to propose, she knew their friendship would end. This exact and vigorous man of business, indefatigable, keen and abrupt in the conduct of affairs, was as shy and disturbed in her presence as a wild fawn. At the age of twelve he had been forced, by the sudden death of his father, to give up an education and fling himself into the breach. For thirty-five years he had worked as only an American can who is resolute, ambitious, passionately enwrapped in work, without the distractions of a youth that had been closed to him, or without other knowledge of women than the solitary devotion he gave to an invalid mother, who querulously and jealously claimed his few spare hours. All the depth of sentiment and affection he lavished in small attentions on this invalid. Yet at her death a great emptiness arrived — life itself seemed suddenly incomprehensible.

For the first time he perceived that he had almost

reached fifty, and had he taken stock of his demands on life he would have found that business had ceased to be a means, but had become the sole end, the day and the night of his existence. Several times he had had a furtive desire to marry, to create a home, to look upon children whom he might shower with the enjoyments of youth, which he might thus in a reflected way experience. But the complaining shadow at his side was a jealous tyrant, always on the watch for such an eventuality, bitterly resisting it with hysterical reproaches and frightened prognostications of abandonment. But when at last, two years ago, he had found his life set in solitary roads, he had at first said to himself that the opportunity had come too late, that he was past the age when marriage would be safe. The word "safe" was characteristic of the man. He had a horror of becoming ridiculous.

Nevertheless, a life which had been conceived in sacrifice could not endure selfishly. There were great depths of compassion, yearnings toward the ideal in this walled-in existence, that had to be fed. He felt imperatively the need of doing good, of generosity toward some other human being. He thought of adopting a child, and as this idea grew he was surprised to find that his thoughts constantly formed themselves not in the image of his own sex, but of a young girl, fragile and unprotected, innocent, with the dawning wonder of the world in her eyes, light of foot, warm of voice, with the feeling of the young season of spring in the rustle of her garments.

Then he had met Doré.

He had met her through the daughter of a western business acquaintance, who had confided her to his care. From the first meeting, he had felt a turbulent awakening in him at the sight of her glowing youth. At the thought of her, so inexperienced and candid, subject to all the hard shocks of metropolitan struggle, standing so fragile and alone amid the perils, the temptations and the hunger of the flaring city, he had felt an instant desire to step between her and this huddled snatching mob, to give her everything, to make all possible to her, to watch her face flush and her eyes sparkle at the possession of each new delight that youth craves. But other thoughts came, and he began to suffer keenly, afraid of fantastic perils that tossed before him in his silent hours. If, after all, she should find him ridiculous — he an old man, and she so fresh, so delicate! Then another horrible fear came. What did he know of her — of any woman? If he were deceived, after all? He became suspicious, watching her with a woman's spying for significant details, alarmed, poised for instant flight.

This was the man who was waiting for her in the long corridor of the Waldorf-Astoria, black coat over his arm, derby in hand, not too portly, not too bald, square-toed, dressed in the first pepper-and-salt business suit, ready-made, which had been presented him, low turn-down collar, and a light purple tie, likewise made up. Small nose and aquiline, eyes gray under bushy eyebrows, lip obscured under heavy drooping fall of the mustache. He steadied himself on his

heels, beating time with his toes, wondering what others would think when they saw he was waiting for a young and pretty girl.

He saw her flitting down the long hall, head shyly down, light, graceful, scattering imaginary flowers on her way; and the sensation of life and terror that she set leaping within him was so acute that he pretended not to perceive her until she was at his elbow.

"It's very good of you to come," he said at last, when they had reached their table in a discreet corner.

"It's very kind of you to think of me," she said instantly, a little touched by the confusion in his manner. She understood the reason, and it saddened her that it should be so—that he could not always be kept just a devoted friend.

"I'm rushing through; wanted to know how you were!"

"Don't you think I look better?" she said, raising her eyes in heavy melancholy. "The champagne has done wonders."

He was not able to do more than glance hastily at her.

"You don't look yet as you ought to," he said, shaking his head. "You need air. I have a plan—I'll tell you later."

"I'm taking fresh eggs, two a day," said Doré, wondering what he had in view. "Only it's so hard to get real fresh ones!"

"My dear girl, I'll send you the finest in the market," he said joyfully, delighted at the opportunity of such a service.

He took out a note-book and wrote in a light curved hand, "Eggs," and replacing it, said:

"If I send you a pint of the finest dairy cream each morning, will you promise faithfully to make an egg-nogg of it? It's splendid — just what you need!"

"I'll do anything you tell me," said Doré, genuinely touched by the pleasure in his face. It was not entirely self-interest that had made her lead up to the subject, for she could have secured a response from a dozen quarters. It was perhaps an instinctive understanding of the man and what it meant to him to find even a small outlet to his need of giving.

Mr. Peavey methodically had taken out his memorandum and by the side of "Eggs" had added "and cream."

She would have preferred that he should need no reminders; but at this moment, on taking up her napkin, she gave a cry of pleasure. Inserted between the folds was a package of tickets. She scanned them hastily — groups of two for each Monday night of the opera.

"Oh, you darling!" she exclaimed, carried away with delight.

He reddened, pleased as a boy. "Want you to hear good music," he said in self-excusation. "Shan't be here always; you'll have to take a friend."

"Oh, but I want to go with you!" said Doré, genuinely moved.

"When I'm here — can't tell," he said, in the seventh heaven of happiness. "But I want you to go regularly; besides, my car is to call for you."

"You are so kind," said Doré, looking at him solemnly, and forgetting for the moment all thought of calculation. "Really, I don't think there is another man in the world so kind!"

"Nonsense! Stuff and nonsense!" he said, resorting hastily to a glass of water. The waiter came up. He took the menu in hand, glad for the diversion.

"How good he is!" she thought, watching the solicitude with which he studied the menu for the dishes she ought to take. "He would do anything I wanted. If he were only a colonel or a judge!"

She was thinking of the ponderous mustache, and wondering in a vague way what it would be like to be Mrs. Orlando B. Peavey. Perhaps, she could get him to cut his mustache like Harrigan Blood. At any rate, he ought to change his tie. Purple — light purple! and made up, too! With any other man she would have attacked the offending tie at once, for she had a passion for regulating the dress of her admirers; but with Mr. Peavey it was different. A single suggestion that he could not wear such a shade, and she fancied she could see him bolting through the shattering window.

"Will you do me a favor — a great favor, Miss Baxter?" he said finally, turning to her in great embarrassment.

"What is it?"

"It would make me happy — very happy," he said, hesitating.

"Of course I will," she said, wondering what it could be.

"It's not much — it really is nothing. I mean, it means nothing to me to do it! It's this: I am away so much; my car is here — nothing to do; you need a ride,— good air every afternoon,—and, besides, I don't like to think of you going around alone in taxicabs or street-cars, unprotected. The car is standing idle; it's bad for the chauffeur. Won't you let me put it at your disposal for the winter — for a month, anyway?"

"Oh, but, Mr. Peavey, I couldn't! How could I?"

"You don't think it would be proper?" he said in alarm.

"No, no, not that!" she said, and a strange thought was at the back of her head. "For the opera, yes! And occasionally in the afternoon. But the rest — it is too much; too much! I couldn't accept it!"

He was immensely relieved that this was the only objection.

"I should feel you were protected," he said earnestly. "That worries me. Such horrible things happen!"

"But I am a professional! I must take care of myself!" said Doré, with a sudden assumption of seriousness.

She began to talk of her career, of her independence, her ambitions — rapidly, feeling that there were sunken perils in the course of his conversation.

"Really, it isn't difficult. American men are chivalrous; they always protect a young girl — really, I've been surprised! And then, I don't think it's quite right that I should have advantages other girls haven't.

If I'm going on the stage, I should take everything as it comes. Besides, it teaches me what life is, doesn't it? Then, it's such fun being independent, and making yourself respected! By the way, I feel so much stronger now, I shouldn't wonder if I could be on the stage again soon. Blamey wants to talk to me — I may see him this afternoon. He's such a good kind fellow, just like you, Mr. Peavey! Really, all men seem to try and protect me!"

But the real reason she did not wholly accept his offer she did not tell him.

"Are you sure you want a career?" he said abruptly.

"Do I? . . . I don't know!" she said, eating hungrily. "But you see the trouble is, I've got to find out! Oh, I don't want anything small! No holding up a horse in the back row of an extravaganza, as Ida says!"

"You won't like the life! . . ."

"Won't I? Perhaps not! . . . I know some women have a bad time! But every one looks after me! . . ."

She shifted the conversation to his interests, and kept it there, with one eye on the clock. It was difficult choosing her questions, for all would not do. For instance, she wished to ask him why he did not stop working and enjoy his money; but that would have opened up a direct and personal reply.

"Why do you work so hard?" she said, instead.

"I've got to do something!" he answered; "and, besides, I'm on the point of something big — if I carry

it through. In another year I'll be a rich man — quite a rich man!"

He looked away as he said it, ashamed, knowing at heart why he had offered it up to her thus against his fifty years! But in a moment, chirping ahead rapidly, she had put him at his ease, and keeping the conversation on light topics, avoided further dangers.

He left her with stiff formal bows, placing her in his automobile and giving the chauffeur directions.

The car went smoothly through the crush. It was a good car,—she was a judge!—in perfect order. Whatever Peavey did was always of the best. The chauffeur had quite an air, too. She disturbed the heavy fur rugs that had been so carefully wrapped about her little feet, sunk her head gratefully against the cushions, and thought, with a long easy breath:

"Well, that's one thing I could do!"

She began to consider it from all points of view:

"I wonder what it'd be like to be Mrs. Orlando B. Peavey?"

An automobile — two or three; seats at the opera — a box in the upper row, perhaps; a big house; big dinners. Or, better still, travel, strange countries, curious places. Then she remembered the mustache. On a colonel or a judge, perhaps. What a pity he wasn't either! To be the young wife of a colonel or a judge was quite distinguished!

He was good, kind, gentle. She might even go in for charity. Perhaps, after ten or fifteen years, she might be left a widow, with lots of money. Fifteen was rather long — ten would be better! There was a

girl she knew who had married an old man worth ten millions, who had died before the year was out. What luck! But then, all husbands are not so obliging!

This reverie did not last long. She tied it up, so to speak, in a neat package and put it in a pigeonhole. It was comforting to think of it as a possibility! Why had he offered her his automobile every day — just for her own? Was it pure generosity, or was there something else? She smiled; such motives she read easily. Wasn't it, in fact, to know what her daily life was! — whom she saw, where she went, to know absolutely, before he took the final plunge? She smiled again. She was sure there was something of all this in the gift, and leaning forward, she sought to study the face of Brennon, the chauffeur, wondering if she could make him an ally, could trust him — if he were human.

She had no time for conversation. Hardly had she arrived before Miss Pim's than she perceived Sassoon's automobile turning the corner. She did not wish to meet him thus, though she was not sorry that he had seen her return. So she ran hastily up-stairs to her room, and was in the midst of a quick change of toilet when Josephus brought the card.

"Tell him to wait!"

She took pains that this waiting should not be too short, maliciously studying the clock for a good twenty minutes before, prepared for the street, she went down.

"Now to be a desperate adventuress," she thought to herself; and assuming a languid indifferent manner, she entered the room.

CHAPTER VII

SASSOON was on his feet, moving restlessly, as she entered. He was not accustomed to be kept waiting, and to wait half an hour after he had seen her enter just ahead of him was interminably vexing. And yet, he was profoundly grateful for this teasing delay. It awakened him; it made him hope. There was a resistance, a defiance, in it that was as precious as it was rare. He had wondered much about her as he moved with slow irritation, stopping occasionally to catch a reflection in the foggy mirror of his long, oriental, slightly hanging head, and the grizzled mustache which, with its mounting W, gave to his dulled eyes a sharp staccato quality of a blinking bird of prey.

The drawing-room, or parlor, was like ten thousand other parlors of boarding-houses — brown, musty, with an odor of upholstery and cooking, immense tableaux sunk into the obscurity of the walls, imitation Dresden shepherdesses on the mantel, an album of Miss Pim's on the table and a vase containing dried flowers, cheap furniture, a crippled sofa placed in a shadow, and weighing down all, the heavy respectability of a Sunday afternoon. Occasionally the front door opened to a latch-key, and a feminine form flitted by the doorway, always pausing curiously to survey the

parlor before sorting the mail that lay displayed on the seat of the hat-rack.

Once a couple with cheery voices came full into the room before perceiving his tenancy. They withdrew abruptly, and he heard the girl saying to her escort:

"Oh, well, come up to the room; there's never a chance at the old parlor!"

This mediocrity, this quiet, these flitting forms of young women, the cub escort who was privileged to enjoy intimacy, strangely excited him. There was something really romantic in following a fancy into such a lair, and the longer the plaguing clock sounded its tinny march, the more vibrantly alert he felt, in the anticipation of her coming.

"I saw you come in!" he said directly. He did not move forward, but stood blinking at her like a night-bird disturbed in the day. "You've kept me waiting quite a while, young lady."

"Really?" she said indifferently. She stopped in the middle of the room. "Well, Pasha, do you expect me to come to you?"

He roused himself, hastily advancing. In truth, waiting for others to throw themselves at him had become such a habit that he had not noticed the omission.

"Pardon me! I was enjoying—you are a delightful picture!" he said in his silky voice.

She accepted the evasion with an unduped smile.

"You are lucky to catch me at all," she said. "I have an engagement up-town at three."

"Do you always wear the national costume?" he said, indicating her Russian blouse.

"Yes, always."

"But my flowers, Miss Baxter?" he said, standing after she had motioned him to a seat; and the glance from under the prominent, hanging upper lids, that half covered the irises, seemed to sift wearily down at her.

"Your flowers? What flowers? Sit down!"

"My orchids — yesterday —"

"Oh! Your orchids." She stopped suddenly, as though confused. "You won't be angry? I know you won't when I tell you about it! I gave them away."

He took his seat, rubbed the back of one hand with long soft fingers, and slowly raised his mocking glance to hers.

"Ah — you gave them away?"

"Yes! and you'll quite approve," she said, meeting his inquisitorial scrutiny without confusion. "I'll tell you just how it was. I have a protégée, an old woman who sells newspapers under the elevated station — such an old woman! If I were rich I'd send her off to a farm and make her happy for the rest of her life! The first day I came to New York I hadn't any money. I didn't know what to do! I sold newspapers!"

"You?"

"Yes! You didn't hear? Oh, it made quite a fuss at the time! The newspapers had it, 'Mysterious Society Woman Sells Papers.' And I made a lot of

money — no change, naturally! Too bad I didn't know you then; you would have paid at least a dollar a paper!"

She laughed gaily, a little excited at the recollection.

"It was quite romantic! Well, my old woman gave me the idea. She's been my mascot ever since. Every day I get my papers from her. Last night, coming back after a spin, I stopped as usual. I had the orchids here at my waist; I noticed her eying them.

"'What are you looking at? These?' I asked.

"She bobbed her head. She has only five teeth — the funniest teeth! You ought to see them; none of them meet.

"'At these flowers?'

"She bobbed again.

"'You like flowers?'

"Then she came up close to me — the way old people do, you know — and said in my ear:

"'When I was your age, my darling, I had flowers, like those, every day!'

"And she drew back, nodding and bobbing, smiling her toothless smile."

Doré stopped, pressed her hand to her throat and said in a muffled voice:

"It just took me. Something came right up in my throat — I could have cried! I tore them off and threw them in her arms. If you could have seen the look she gave me! She kissed them. Ah! it made *me* very happy, I can tell you!"

Did he believe her? He didn't care! Perhaps he preferred that it should have been invented.

"It will mean a *great* deal to her," he said, his eyes on hers — his eyes, that began to light up as lanterns showing through the fall of night.

"It will mean a great deal!" she said, with an expression of such beatitude that his abiding doubt began to waver. "I just couldn't have kept them!"

"I want you to lunch with me — to-morrow," he said slowly.

"Where?"

"In my apartments. They overlook the park. It's quite delightful."

He watched her eagerly, for eagerness could occasionally show on his face, as a sudden joy may recall a past youth to the face of a mature woman. She considered thoughtfully:

"To-morrow? At what time?"

"At one," he said; and she noticed again the curious gesture of his feminine fingers sliding caressingly over the back of his hand.

"One's all right. I'll be delighted to meet Mrs. Sassoon."

He raised his head with an ironical smile; but the smile fled as he noticed that her face was blankly serious.

"I don't like that!" he said abruptly.

"What?"

"You know very well I am not inviting you to meet my wife."

"What *do* you want with me, then, Mr. Sassoon?" she said calmly, looking directly at him with her cloudy blue eyes of a child.

He rose, nonplused, walked to the window and slowly back. What was she — straightforward or deep? Did she wish to come directly to a business understanding, or — or was she truly independent and seeking this method to terminate the acquaintance? An instinct warned him of the danger in an answer. He returned, and said, leaning on the mantelpiece:

"Bring a friend, if you wish. I'll have in the Comte de Joncy. . . . You've aroused his curiosity —"

"At your private apartments?"

"Of course!"

"No!"

"At Tenaflly's, then."

"At Tenaflly's — down-stairs — yes!"

"A party of four?"

"No. Come to think of it, it'll be more interesting just with you."

This unexpected answer, said in the most natural manner imaginable, perplexed him more than ever. She noticed it, quite delighted at the helplessness of the experienced hunter.

"You won't lunch in a party of four at my apartments, but you will lunch with me alone at a public restaurant."

"Quite so!"

"And your reputation?"

"It isn't a question of reputation — my security! I wouldn't trust you — that's all!"

He didn't choose to discuss this, but sought to give the conversation a different turn.

"You are satisfied with this?" he said, with a sudden crook of his arm.

"You are delightfully direct, aren't you?" she said. "You usually don't have so much trouble coming to an understanding with women, do you?"

"No, I don't."

"Well, what do you want to know?"

"I'm curious to see how you live — your room —" She shook her head.

"That you'll never see."

"But —"

"Oh, yes, I make a difference. There are men you receive in your room, and men you receive always in a parlor, and there's no trouble at all in classifying them!" She jumped up, with a laugh. "And you, with all your experience among my sex, can't make up your mind about me."

"You pay what? Eight — ten — fifteen a week. And you have your automobile," he said, pursuing his idea.

"Ah, that's it! Have I an auto or not? But that's not what you want to know! You want to know if some one gives me an automobile, and, if so, why? Well, have I or haven't I? Find out!"

"You know," he said in his deliberate dragging way, "I don't believe that story about the orchids!"

"What do you mean?" she said, with such a swift turn from provoking malice to erect gravity that he hesitated.

"There was a hundred-dollar bill in that bouquet, Miss Baxter!" he said, changing the attack slightly.

"A hundred!" she said, drawing herself up in surprise and scorn. "Ah! now I understand — everything. So that's why you are here! To get your value!"

"No — no," he protested, confused.

"No, I see it all!" she continued, as if suddenly enlightened. "Of course, such presents are quite in order as mementoes when young ladies of the chorus are entertained by you. But you weren't sure of me? You wanted to know if I would take it! For, of course, that would simplify things, wouldn't it?"

"Do you regret giving it away?" he said, convinced, watching her with his connoisseur gaze.

She stopped.

"That is insulting!" she said, so simply that he never again recurred to the subject. "Now, Mr. Sassoon, I am going to play fair with you. I always do — at first. I am not like other girls. I do play fair. I give one warning — one only — and then, take the consequences!"

"And what is your warning, pretty child?" he said, with a faint echo of excitement in his voice.

"You will lose your time!" she said, dropping him a curtsy. "You wish to know what I am? I won't give you the slightest hint! I may be a desperate adventuress, or I may be a pretty child; but I tell you frankly, now — once only — you had better take your hat and go! You won't?"

He shook his head stubbornly.

"Very well! You will regret it! Only, be *very* careful what you say to me, and how you say it. Do you understand?"

"And you will lunch with me to-morrow?"

"Yes!"

"Why?"

"Two reasons — to tantalize you, and because I am the most curious little body in the world! There! That's quite frank!" She glanced at the clock, which had gone well past the hour. "Now I must be off — I shall be late, as it is!"

He glanced, in turn, at his watch.

"And I've been keeping a board of directors cursing me for half an hour — very important board," he said, grinning at the thought of their exasperation if they should be privileged to see the cause of his delay.

"Really?" she exclaimed, delightfully flattered. "Then you can keep them waiting some more! Your car's here? Very well; take me up to the Temple Theater, stage entrance."

It was not in his plan thus publicly to accompany her. Not that he cared about his ghost of a reputation! But to arrive thus at a stage entrance, dancing attendance on a little Salamander, savored too much of the *débutant*, the impressionable and gilded cub. To another woman he would have refused peremptorily, with short excuse, packing her off in the automobile, and going on foot to his destination. But with Miss Baxter he had a feeling that she would exact it, and a fear that somehow she was waiting an excuse to slip from him, a fear of losing her.

"I am waiting!" she said impatiently.

"What for?" he asked, coming abruptly out of his abstraction.

"For you to hand me in, Pasha!"

He gave her his hand hurriedly, capitulated and took his seat in turn. She guessed his reasons, and watched him mockingly, sunk in her corner. The melancholy and the weakness of yesterday were gone; she was again the gay little Salamander, audacious and reckless, sublimely confident in the reserves of her imagination to extricate her from any peril.

"The warning holds until to-morrow morning," she said, her eyes sparkling, the mood dramatized in every eager and malicious expression.

He did not answer, aroused and retreating by turns, uncomfortable, irritated and yet resolved. Had Doré known the fires she had kindled and the ends to which he was capable of going, perhaps she would not have felt so audaciously triumphant.

As they swung from Broadway into the crowded, narrow side street, quite a group was before the entrance—a knot of stage-hands loafing outside for a smoke, Blainey himself in conversation with an actress who was speaking to him from another automobile, and three or four of the personnel of the theater awaiting the arrival of the manager.

She forced Sassoon to descend and hand her down—Sassoon rebelling at being thus paraded and recognized. Then, with a fractional nod, she went through the group. All at once some one, making way for her, lifted his hat. She looked up and recognized the one man she did not wish to see her thus in Sassoon's company: Judge Massingale, smiling his impersonal, tolerantly amused smile.

CHAPTER VIII

WHEN she had passed the familiar limping figure of the guardian of the stage door, and had caught the sound of the helter-skelter preparations behind the curtains — the ring of hammers, the hoarse shouts into the rafters, the green-and-gold filmy sheen of the scenery, the groups in costume, chattering in the wings, the busy black-hatted, coatless stage-hands tearing about — Doré felt that tingling of the nerves that comes to the crutched veteran when the regiment passes. She adored this life with a keen excited zest. Its unrealities were vitally real, its Lilliputian sultans and pashas great potentates. She adored it — but she was not yet decided. To have been certain of succeeding would have seemed to her the fullest of life; but she was not so blinded by the dazzling light of success as not to perceive clearly the barrenness of its mediocrity and the horror of its failure.

She passed into the theater, which seemed to swallow her up in its impenetrable embrace. She stood a moment, peering into the darkness, seeing only a great red eye above, ghostly draperies in the galleries, and in the mysterious catacombs below a vague flitting figure stumbling to a seat. Then, her eyes growing accustomed to the obscurity, she put

out her hand and felt her way along the empty seats, with their damp musty shrouds.

The curtain was up on the set for the first act, which had been ended ten minutes before. They had been rehearsing since noon; the probabilities were they would continue long past midnight. On the stage, O'Reilly of the "props" was swearing hoarsely at the calcium light in the ceilings, throwing on reds and blues with a rapid succession that blinded the eyes. Baum was cursing the scene-shifters, clamoring for more verdure. Trimble, the stage-manager, was in the center of the stage, rearranging a scene with the soubrette and the heavy comic. In the house itself, back of the orchestra, in the dim lobby with its dungeon reflections from the street, the chorus girls and men were busily rehearsing a new step that had just been given them, humming as they balanced on their toes, took hands and twined about their partners, who, with a final twirl, sank on their knees to receive them. As the step was complicated, everywhere murmurs of expostulation and protest were heard:

"Stupid! Not that way!"

"One, two — one, two — one, two, three!"

"Catch me."

"No! I go first."

"Gee! what an ice-wagon!"

"To the left, I told ye!"

Dodo, dodging swaying bodies and arms extended in swimming gestures, found the center aisle, and her eyes acquiring more vision, began to explore the ob-

scurities. Above the orchestra, Felix Brangstar, his head crowned with a slouch hat, stripped to shirt and crossed pink suspenders, angry, hot and on edge, was screaming to the flutes orders to transpose certain measures. O'Reilly continued to shout:

"Blind that! Throw on the whites. Damn you, *will* you throw on your whites? Hold that!"

Trimble, on the stage, was taking the part of the soubrette, skipping about the heavy comic, coquetting and dodging under his arm, while the air was charged with electric comments:

"Lower away! More — more!"

"Is Blainey here yet?"

"Where's Benton?"

"Switch that table over!"

"Throw on your borders!"

"*B* flat, then the chord of *A*."

"That's cut out. Yes — *yes!*"

"Try that curtain again."

"Bring it down slow. No! God! Carey, do you call that slow? Again!"

The piece was a truly fairy-like creation of a modern Offenbach, romantic in libretto, distinguished and delicate in music, a true operetta of the sort that ten years from now will take its just place as a work of art, no longer subject to the mutilations and humiliations that now attend such Americanizations into the loosely tied vaudeville numbers justly termed *comic opera*.

At this moment some one touched Doré on the arm, and looking up, she beheld Roderigo Sanderson. In

the shadow she perceived nothing but the flash of a diamond stick-pin and the white sheen of his collar, while an odor of perfume distilled itself from the handkerchief he wore in his sleeve and the heavy curls on his forehead.

"You here?"

"T. B. wants to see me," he answered, giving Blainey, with the American passion for intimacy, the initials under which he was known from one end of the Rialto to the other. He took a seat back of her, leaning over her shoulder, speaking in a guarded tone in the mezzo-Anglican accent which he had almost acquired.

"It's uncommon good, you know. Saw it in Vienna. A gem! Trimble has really staged it jolly well. Sada Quichy—they've imported her, you know—really knows a bit about singing as well as dancing. If they'd put it on as it is now, it would go big—by jove, it would be a revolution! But they won't. The slaughter-house gets a chance at it to-day. You'll see what's left after T. B. gets his meat-ax into it!"

"Who's in the stage-box?" said Doré curiously.

"The silent partners," said Sanderson, with a laugh. "Look at the brutes! They're in a fog—in a panic! They already see their money flowing in a gutter. Never mind! they'll get a bit more cheery when T. B. begins his popularizing. It'll be quite amusing. I always get to these executions. It's a brutal appetite, but it sort of consoles one, you know!"

In the box, the silent partners, Guntz, Borgfeldt

and Keppelman, suddenly enriched commission agents from the Central West, new to the dishabille of the theater, sat motionless, three black, ill-smelling cigars on parade, three enormous bodies, tortured by tight collars, tight vests, tight chairs, each derby set over one ear to shade the fat folds of the jowled head. Sanderson had made no mistake: the exquisite and melodious first act had left them absolutely petrified with horror.

Sanderson, *au courant*, continued his exposition after a preparatory glance around the stalls.

"They say they've made millions. How the deuce did L. and B." (the theatrical firm of Lipswitch and Berger) "ever entice them into it? They say they're back of the firm for a third in everything! I'd give a good deal, now, to see the contract those bandits drew up for mutual protection! Jove! that would be a curiosity!"

At that moment, when the stage was in a bedlam, with the cross-fire of the stage-manager coaxing on the soubrette, Brangstar furiously reprimanding the little polyglot tenor, who sang of "lof," and was insufferably pleased with his slender legs, Baum moving indifferently in the confusion, giving ideas for the readjustment of the ravine and the bridge, O'Reilly darkening the blue lights to try the effect of dawn, despite the complaints of the dressmaker, who was defending her costumes and endeavoring to save the hussar boots of the chorus girls by a bolder rearrangement of the draperies — in the midst of this inferno,

Blainey came shouldering in, the reverberations of his deep bass stilling the uproar.

"First act, now. Get at it! Don't bring me in here, O'Reilly, for a rehearsal on lights. Ring down your curtain. Gus, want to hear that overture! Let's get at it, boys!"

"All on stage for first curtain!"

Instantly there was a scurrying of the chorus from the lobby down the stage aisle; the dressmaker went hurriedly over the footlights, via a box; the curtain slowly settled; Brangstar climbed to his chair; and the voice of O'Reilly floated out in a final curse at the calcium lights.

"Blind your blues and clear slow. Pete, bring it on slow this time! Do you get me? *Do you get me?*"

And from above, the voice of the labor union, unruffled, neither to be coaxed nor driven, came impudently down:

"Sure I get you!"

"Overture, now. Then go through the first act. No stops!" said Blainey, lumbering up the aisle.

Against the firefly lights of the orchestra his figure showed like a great barrel, short legs and short arms, with the sense of brute power in the blocked head sunk in the shoulders. He came to where they sat, shading his eyes. Sanderson stood up abruptly, at attention.

"Hello, kid!" he said, perceiving De

"Hello, Blainey!"

"See you after first act," he said, leaning over the chairs until they groaned, to take her hand in his enveloping grasp. "Who's that with you—the judge? Oh, Sanderson! What are you—oh, yes, I remember. Judge, glad you came; I want your . . . ion!"

At this moment Massingale came down from the lobby and took a seat beside Doré, while Blainey, readjusting his soft black, broad-brimmed hat with a nervous revolving motion, sauntered on, impatient at the scraping of the violins and the preparatory pumping of the horns. Sanderson, at a nod from Blainey, had followed him into the lobby.

"Surprised to see me here?" said Massingale, taking his seat. "You know, I turn up everywhere. I'm one of those who circulate. I came with Sada Quichy—she's great fun!"

In fact, in New York three classes are privileged at every door—privileged because they have the power to make themselves feared: the politician in office; the representative of the press; and the judge who, at a word, can unloose the terrors of both the others.

"Don't forget what you told me yesterday," she said, turning to him directly, haunted by the malice in his eyes when he had seen her handed down from Sassoon's automobile.

"What did I tell you?"

"That you would not misunderstand me!"

"I don't!" he said, after an ineffectual attempt to

see her face. "But — are you strong enough to play the game you are playing?"

"Sassoon?"

"Yes, Sassoon!"

She thought of him, ruffled and rebellious, forced to accompany her to the stage entrance. She held him in slight respect.

"Pooh! Sassoon!" She had a feeling that this man already had her confidence, that she could talk freely with him. "Harrigan Blood, yes; but not Sassoon!"

"You are wrong about Sassoon," he said quietly. "It is not the clever man that is difficult to manage; it is the relentless one! That's Sassoon!"

"Did you call yesterday — to warn me?" she said, turning to him.

"No; moralizing is not my forte," he said, shaking his head. "You are unusual. I should like to watch — your progress!"

"You like to be behind the scenes?"

"Adore it!"

"I wonder just what you think of me," she said pensively. "Have you decided what I am to become?"

"Yes."

She looked up, startled.

"What?"

"Oh, not now — later; some time when we can really talk."

She wished him to invite her, but he was one of

those who had the rare instinct of making women believe they were pursuing him. She was silent, thinking, too, of Sada Quichy, doubly resolved to steal him from her.

"Very well," she said suddenly; "we'll dine together. They'll go on here till midnight. We can bring back some sandwiches and cold chicken for the prima donna. But, in her mind, she was resolved that, once they were at dinner, she would carry him off boldly, Sada Quichy or not.

"Splendid!" he said laconically, and prepared himself for the overture, that was being announced by a vigorous lashing of the conductor's stand.

Blainey had settled his body a short way in front of them, ears pricked for the commercially vital waltz motif.

But in the present overture this essential did not at once appear. The operetta, which had been given the name of *The Red Prince*, was a fantastic romance of Hungary, strangely endowed with an intelligible plot, and this fresh presentation of wild dancing melodies, passionate strains of melancholy and yearning, abandoned delight and fierce exultation, was summarized in the overture.

Massingale, who was an amateur of music, bent forward, breathing full, murmuring his approbation. Doré too felt strangely lifted from herself, leaping along perilous heights, striving with invisible windy shapes, that caught her and whirled her, with closed eyes and bated lips, in giddy whirlpools or sudden languorous calms. All the instincts that yesterday, in

the change of the year, had vibrated to melancholy, now suddenly seemed to awake with the sufficiency of the instant. A fig for the future! She had a need of the present, of the day, of the hour, gloriously, deliciously stirred from blank realities. Her breath came quick, the little nostrils quivered, and glancing at Massingale's aristocratic forehead and jaw, she found him more than interesting — strong, virile, fascinating in the chained-up impulses which a sudden wild burst of the czardas brought glowing to his eyes.

The overture ceased amid a murmur of approbation; she moved a little way from the shoulder she had instinctively approached.

"Take up that waltz again," said Blainey instantly.

Brangstar, as if warned of what was coming, rebelliously gave the signal. The motif occurred in the middle of the overture, directly after the czardas. It was a tum-ti-tum but undeniably catchy affair.

"Stop there!" Blainey rose and moved into the aisle. "Cut out all that follows. No grand opera stuff — we don't want it! End with that waltz. Fake it. Play it once pianissimo, fiddles; second time louder — bring in your horns. Then let go with your brass. Cut loose. Soak it to 'em! Start it up, Gus!"

Brangstar, who had given three fretful weeks to this beloved production, musician at heart, loathing his servitude to Mammon, seeing in the present work of art his opportunity to emerge, to do the true, the big thing, raised his fists in horror. He had either to burst into tears or swear. Swear he did, damning

Blainey, Lipswitch, the whole gang of Pharisees and infidels he served, calling them every name his rage flung to his lips, vowing he never would be a party to such an atrocity.

Blainey, composed, allowed him to vent his fury, rather admiring his manner. Brangstar was a valuable man, a blooded race-horse harnessed to a delivery-wagon.

"You know your music, Gus; I know my public!" he said finally. "What's going to make this opera is just one thing — what you can get under the skin of your audience! We'll soak that waltz at 'em until every mother's son of them goes out whistling it — till the whole town whistles it! That's success, and I know it, and you know it! Now, get at it!"

When the overture had been repeated as he had ordered, Guntz, Borgfeldt and Keppelman began to warm up and to slap one another with delight, while from the recesses of the theater the shrill whistle of the ushers was heard continuing the catchy:

"Tum-ti-tum-ti,
Tum-ti-tum-ti,
Tum-tum-tum!"

Blainey, not insensible to dramatic effects, indicated the box, where joy now reigned, pursed his lips and nodded knowingly to Massingale.

The execution continued in the first act. The waltz appeared only in the third. Blainey put it forward into the first, arranged for the comics to give a light twist to it in the second, and built it up again in the

third, with all the resources of the chorus and repeated encores.

At each moment he stopped the progress of the act:

"Too pretty, pretty! Never go! Cut it!"

"Throw in some gags, there."

"Rush it — rush it!"

"Explode something, there."

"Trimble, got to get your chorus in here. Rush 'em in!"

"Oh, that's enough atmosphere!"

"The public wants dancing!"

"All right! Strike for the second act!"

The curtain rolled down and up, and the scene-shifters flung themselves on the ravine. Brangstar went out to a saloon, strewing curses; Guntz, Borgfeldt and Keppelman followed to celebrate; and Blainey, moving up to Massingale, said, with a shrewd twinkle:

"Well, Judge, how do you like the first act?"

"Tim, if I had you before me I'd send you up for ten years!"

"Not if you had your money behind it, you wouldn't," said Blainey good-humoredly. "Art be damned. I'm here to make money — yes, as every one else is, in this town! I know what the public wants, and I soak it to 'em. Why, this show wouldn't run six nights on a South Troy circuit!"

At this moment some one whispered to him that Sada Quichy was in hysterics.

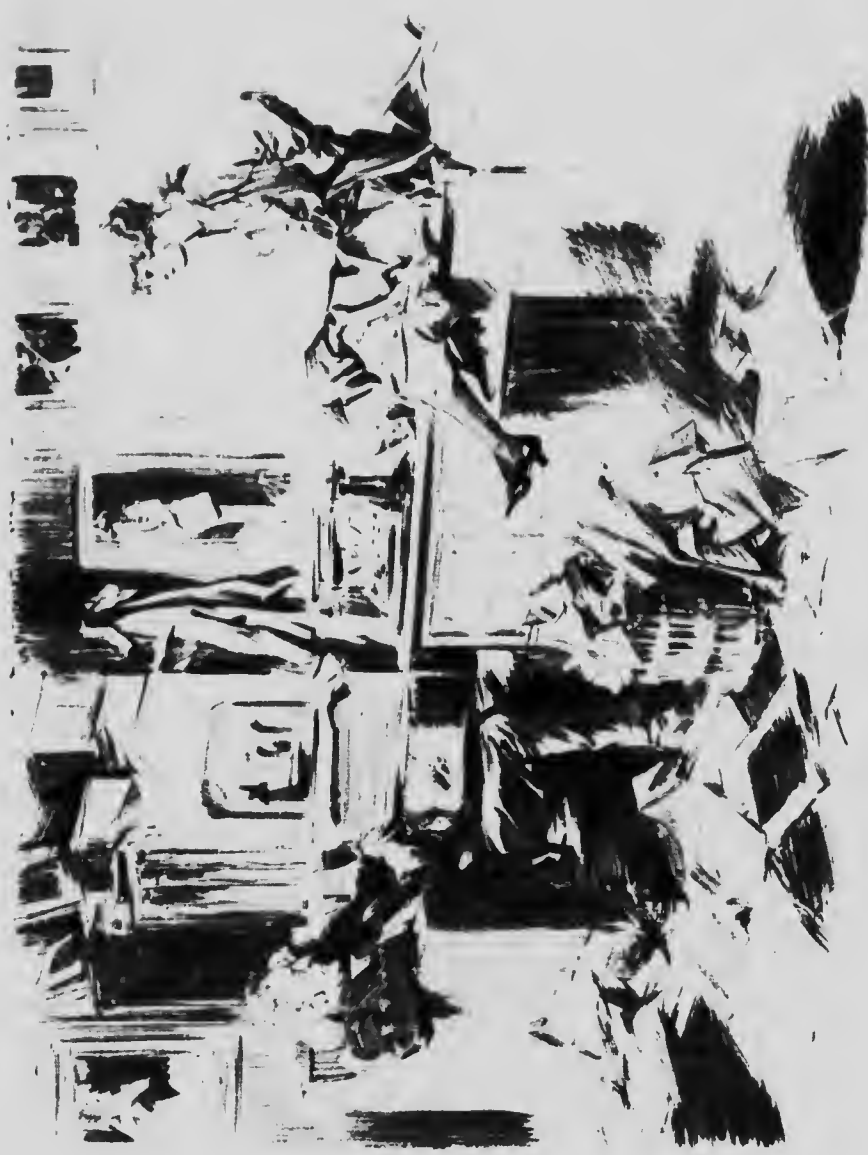
"What's the matter with Sadie, anyhow?" said

Blainey, shrugging his shoulders. "What's she kicking about? She gets twenty weeks, whether we smash or not. I say, Judge, go and jolly her up a bit. Tell her she's got a grand part! I want to talk business with this little girl."

And without concerning himself further, he led the way to his private office.

Doré followed quietly. During the last two hours she had been balancing on various emotions. The first glamour of the intoxicating overture had been shattered. She looked on with sober eyes at this spectacle of the theater reduced to its materialistic verities. She was too imaginative not to perceive the outrages committed in the name of the box-office, and too keen not to credit Blainey's logic. The fat idol-like figures of Guntz, Borgfeldt and Keppelman were realities, too; she would have to deal with that type, too — many of that type — if she chose to continue. And she had remained in long periods of absorption, scarcely hearing the remarks Massingale whispered to her, wondering, trying to see into the future, asking herself if this were to be the solution, and, if it were, how to play it. Musing thus, she continued to watch Blainey closely, wondering. Blainey and Harrigan Blood were of the same tribe; they could not be fed on sugar-plums!

The office was a comfortable, pleasantly lighted room, in the greatest disorder possible. Blainey swept aside a litter of papers, and sank into a huge upholstered chair, studying Doré, who vaulted to a seat on the desk.



Doré vaulted to a seat on the desk

Seen in the daylight, his head seemed to have been scraped and roughened by the long buffeting of adversity and the rough passage upward. The ears that leaped from the solid head, the sharp pointed nose with large nostrils, the wide mouth of a great fish, the shaggy brows and eyes of the fighter, the thin gray cockatoo rise of hair on the forehead as if grasped by an invisible hand—all had about them the signs of the battler, whose defiant motto might appropriately have been: "Don't bump me!"

Blainey glanced at half a dozen telegrams, news from productions scattered over the country, and raised his glance again.

"You're not mixed up with Roderigo Sanderson, are you?"

"Who?"

She had taken off her fur toque with a charming gesture of intimacy, and was arranging her hair in the opposite mirror, her feet swinging merrily.

"Sanderson."

"Did you see who brought me here?" she said impertinently. The answer saved the actor an engagement. With Blainey she assumed always the disdain of a woman of the world.

"Don't get mixed up with actors," he persisted, a note of jealousy in his voice. "Steer clear!"

"Managers are safer, you mean!" she said, laughing at him.

That was not his meaning, but he continued:

"I don't have to tell you much, do I, kid?"

"Not much, Blainey."

"That was Sassoon with you, eh?"

"Albert Edward himself, Blainey," she answered, with an accented note of pride. She knew the man she was dealing with. Brutal and contemptuous to innocence, but bowing down with a sneaking admiration to the woman who played the game and won out, not for a moment did he doubt that she was of the shrewdest and the most unprincipled. And this conviction stood like a shield before her in this room where other women had gone in with a shrug.

"Sassoon, eh?" he said admiringly, and he gave vent to a long whistle. "Well, trim 'em, kid, trim 'em!"

"That's what I'm doing, Blainey, and the finest!"

She took his accents, almost the contemptuous abruptness of his gestures, transforming herself into his world.

"When are you going to get tired of all that?" he said, his eyes narrowing covetously. "It's a short game. This is longer, safer."

"When? Pretty soon, Blainey."

"Why not now?"

She shook her head, laughing.

"Too soon — too soon!"

He reached over into a drawer and drew out a play.

"Do you see this? I'm keeping this for you!"

She opened her eyes.

"For me?"

"There's a fortune in it. There's a scene there" — he swore appreciatively — "it's all in a scene, a trick;

but it's a winner. And I'm holding that for you, kid."

"Star me?" she said, laughing incredulously.

"In the third year — yes!"

"Come, now, Blainey, I'm no fool. I'm not that strong on acting!"

"Acting be damned. Personality!" he said, slapping the table. "You've got me — you can get them!"

"Have I got you, Blainey?" she said, looking at him boldly.

"You got me from the first with your impudent way," he said abruptly. "I'm interested in you, kid — particularly interested! You understand what I mean?"

"It's not hard to understand you, T. B."

"I'll put you on Broadway in two years," he said. Then, bubbling over with enthusiasm, he took up the rôle again. "God! there's a scene here that'll get 'em — won't be a dry handkerchief in the house!" He continued, his face lighting up with sentiment, for scenes of virtue triumphant, virtue resisting, virtue rewarded, genuinely moved him — on the stage: "End of second act, the girl learns she's an intruder — not Lady Marjorie, heiress to millions, but a waif, substituted, see? It's a lie, of course; all works out well in the last act; but you don't know that. She's got an exit there beats anything in *Camill*! Runs away, see? Leaves everything — jewels, clothes, money, nothing belongs to her.

"Proud — that's the idea; won't take a thing — nothing! Just as she's rushing out, sees a cat, a damned, bobtailed, battered old kitten she's picked off the streets, saved from a gang of ruffians in first act. That's hers; in that great gorgeous palace — think of it — all that is hers — all she's a right to. Runs back, grabs it, hugs it to her breast, and goes out! What a chance! There's millions in that cat! I saw it. The play was rotten, but the cat was there! That's the kind of stuff that gets over, chokes you up, blinds you! I know it — I'd risk a fortune on it!"

"Sounds good!" she said, nodding, amazed at this other side in him, not yet comprehending inconsistencies in human nature.

He was off in raptures again, insisting on reading the final pages. She listened without hearing, attracted and repulsed, turn about, by the man. When he had come to earth again, she said:

"Blainey, I'm going to send a girl around to you for that part you offered me."

"No, you're not! Work others," he said, with a snap. "Trim 'em, but don't work me! I don't go in for charity!"

"Who said anything about charity?" she answered, knowing the impracticability of such an appeal. "I'm sending you some one who can act — Winona Horning, and a beauty! She was going to take a part in one of Zeller's productions, and I told her to hold off until you saw her. She's a friend, and I don't want her to lose time with Zeller!"

"You won't take it yourself?"

"Not now! Besides, when I get ready, you're going to place me in a good stock company first. Look out, Blainey," she added, laughing; "if I turn serious, it'll be frightful!"

He began, delighted, to sketch for her the course she should take, seeking to convince her of her talents, unfolding to her the methods he would employ. She kept her eyes on his, but she did not hear a word. The feeling of the place possessed her; she could not shake it off. She felt already caught.

In reality, her reckless assumption of this part was simply a trying out of herself, an attempt to project herself into the future, to explore with the eye where the feet must tread. Not that a career was within her serious intentions. She retreated from coarseness, drawing her delicate skirts about her; yet it amused her thus to dramatize herself! So, while one Dodo was audaciously playing at acting, another Dodo was coldly placing questions before herself.

"Would it be possible? Could I ever? Would it be worth while? And Blainey—what would that mean?"

Then, as he turned in the glare from the window, she noticed his vest. It was a brown upholstered vest with purple sofa buttons. Her reverie centered on those buttons, counting them, running them up and down; and a curious idea came to her. If by any chance she should go on with a career, she certainly would have to make him change that vest!

The idea of a manager, a manager devoted to her, wearing a brown upholstered vest with purple sofa

buttons, offended her horribly — more than other possibilities which did not stare her in the face. When she went off with Massingale, after the second act, for a hasty bite, he said to her:

“Why so solemn?”

She was still counting over that double line of purple sofa buttons.

CHAPTER IX

THEY took their supper in a near-by oyster house, invaded by a chattering throng, drummed over by an indefatigable orchestra. She had looked forward keenly to the tête-à-tête. She was terribly disillusioned. It was not at all exciting. Conversation was impossible, and what they said was meaningless. She became irritable and restless, for she had a feeling that she was being defrauded—that this man was not like the rest, that he was one worth knowing, drawing out, an adversary who would compel her to utilize all the light volatile artillery of her audacious imagination.

"Listen," she broke out suddenly, "this is a horrible failure. I really want to talk to you! Have you seen enough of the rehearsal?"

"Plenty!"

"Let's cut it, then!"

"Madame Quichy would never forgive me!"

She was silent a moment, rebuffed.

"I'm out of sorts. You can at least take me home!"

"Certainly!"

Arrived at the house, she said reluctantly:

"Well, come in for just a moment!"

And the parlor being occupied, they went to her room.

"Is Your Honor really going to spare me ten minutes from the fascinating Sada Quichy?" she said, pouting, once arrived.

"Ten hours, if you like!" he said, taking off his coat with a gesture of finality.

She was so delighted at this unhopd-for treason that she clapped her hands like a child, not perceiving how he had made her ask each time for what he really wanted.

"You're really going to stay?"

"Yes, indeed!"

"How exciting!"

She let her coat slip into his hands, and going to the mirror, raised her hat slowly from her rebellious golden curls with one of those indescribable, intimate, feminine gestures that have such allurements to the gaze of men. If, with Blainey, she had resorted to abrupt and dashing ways, with Massingale she felt herself wholly feminine, sure that each turn of her head, line of her body, or caressing movement of her arms would find appreciation.

She looked at him a moment over her shoulder, arching her eyebrows with eyes that seemed brimming with caprice.

"You know, I was quite determined you should come!" she said, laughing, and with a sudden swift passage of the room, she darted on the sofa, curling her legs under her, hugging her knees, and resting her little chin on them in elfish amusement. "Honor bright! Made up my mind there in the theater!"

"So did I!" he said frankly.

"Really? And Sada Quichy?"

"She is a known quantity! It's much more amusing gambling with possibilities!"

Since taking her coat he had remained standing, examining the room with a keen instinct for significant details.

"Two beds?"

"This is Snyder's," she said, patting it. "She's rehearsing. Won't be home till late."

Without asking her permission, he moved about curiously, smiling at the trunks which stood open, and the bureaus with their gaping drawers.

"Heavens! everything is in an awful mess!" she said, with a little ejaculation.

"Don't change it. I like it! It looks real!" he said, continuing.

She allowed him to pry into corners, watching him from the soft depths of the couch, a little languid from the varied emotions of the day, longing to be rid of the stiff pumps and the fatigue of her day dress. The different dramatizations she had indulged in with Peavey, Sassoon and Blainey had aroused her craving for sudden transpositions. If only this should not prove disappointing! She felt an exhilarated curiosity, more stirred than ever before. Did he really know her, divine her, as she believed? How would he act? Was he only mentally curious, or was that a clever mask for a more personal interest? She had a feeling that she had known him for years, that all they could say had been said again and again.

He was young at forty-five, and yet already gray.

She liked that. Youth and gray hair, she thought, were distinguished in a judge. There was an air of authority about him that imposed on her. He did not ask permission for what he did, and yet it carried no offense. He was dressed perfectly, and that counted for much with her—so perfectly that she did not even notice what he wore, except that the tones were soft and gave her a sensation of pleasure, and that the cut was irreproachable.

All the accent lay about the eyes and the fine moldings of the forehead. The eyes were deep, hidden under the brows, Bismarckian in their set, and not so calm, after all, she thought. She found herself studying the lines of his mouth, strong and yet susceptible. And as she studied the characteristic mockery of his smile, that smile which gave him the appearance of one who projects above the crowd and sees beyond the serried heads, it did not seem so much the man himself as an attitude carefully assumed against the world. Was there a drama back of it all? At any rate, her curiosity awaking her zest, she began to wonder what he would be like in anger—that is, if anything could move him to anger, or to anything else! This last provocative thought aroused the danger-defying little devil within her. The languor vanished; she felt swiftly, aggressively alert.

"And this is where we say our prayers," he said, pointing to the white bed.

"Every night!" she answered promptly.

"Really?" he said, raising his eyebrows.

"Every night," she repeated, "I throw myself on my knees and cry, all in a breath:

"'O Lord! give me everything I want!' Then I dive into bed, and pull the covers over my head!"

"H'm!" he said, his chin in his hand, looking down at her as she rocked in laughter on the couch. "After all, that's what a prayer is, isn't it?"

"I think so. Oh!"

Suddenly on the floor, tipping from the edge of the couch, her pumps fell with a crash. She had slipped them off surreptitiously, concealing the operation with her skirts. She sprang on the rug in her green stocking feet, snatching up the indiscreet pumps, and retreating to the closet, but without confusion.

"What are you doing now?" she said, bobbing out suddenly.

He was standing by the chrysanthemums, reaching up.

"I was wondering if they were real."

"Imitation?"

"You don't know that trick," he said maliciously. "A great invention of one girl I knew. You ought to know it! She had three vases, chrysanthemums, roses, violets, all imitation. She said they were the only flowers she cared for; so, when orders came in, all the florist did was to telephone the amount he would credit to her account!"

"Was the florist Pouffé?" asked Doré, stopping short and laughing.

"One of them. But the real touch was when the

admirer called. She would place the vase of roses, say, on the mantel,—out of reach, naturally,—blow a special perfume in the room, and say:

“‘My! how wonderfully fragrant those roses are!’”

Doré felt divined; she laughed, conscious of a tell-tale color.

“Really, Your Honor, you know entirely too much!”

“I adore the little wretches — and their games!” he said frankly. “I’m always on their side!”

“You don’t adore anything! You couldn’t!”

She had stopped before him, looking up at him with her blue eyes, which were no longer cloudy but sparkling with provocation.

“You read character, too,” he answered, smiling impersonally. “It’s true — it’s safer and more amusing! Let me behind the scenes. I like it — that’s all I ask!”

“All?”

“Quite all!” he said dryly. Then: “What are you going to do with Sassoon and Harrigan Blood?”

He asked the question without preparation, to throw her off her guard, but she avoided it by asking another.

“Are you really just looking on?” she said, drawing her eyebrows together. “Only curious?”

“It’s as I told you,” he said. “You see how I am here. Can’t you tell?”

She shook her head.

“I can’t tell; I can’t tell anything about you!”

"You were not very nice to me at the luncheon!" he said irrelevantly.

"I know it!"

"You would hardly speak to me!"

"No."

"Why?"

"Shall I tell you? Because — because you are too strong for me!" she said, her eyes widening curiously round and large.

He laughed.

"Now, Miss Mischief, that's too silent!"

"It's true! I felt it from the start," she said simply. "Sit down."

He credited her with being deeper than he had believed, whereas she had only obeyed an impulse.

"Is Blainey a possibility too?" he asked suddenly.

"What! he has guessed even Blainey?" she thought, startled; but, as she began an evasive answer, satisfied, he turned to a trunk, closed it and installed himself, folding his arms.

"I'll tell you what I am going to do with Sassoon and Blood," she said suddenly. She had camped on another trunk, swinging one little foot incased within a red slipper, ten feet of the faded rug between them.

"I am going to make — oh, a lot of trouble!"

"You've started it already!"

"Tell me — was there really a terrible row?" she asked, clapping her hands eagerly. "All over little me?"

"H'm, yes — rather! We had some difficulty in stopping it!" He looked at her, amused, with the

gaze of one who appreciates the irony of values. "Do you know, you pretty little atom, that you are setting in motion forces that may shake millions?"

"Oh, how lovely! Tell me!"

"Perhaps I'd better not!" he said grimly. "And suppose I told you that if you made Sassoon and Blood enemies over your charming little person, that Blood is capable of turning all the force of his newspapers against the Sassoon interests, making ugly revelations and bringing on a mild panic, would you persist?"

"Certainly I should!" she exclaimed enthusiastically.

"So is history made!" he thought to himself.

"Now, answer me honestly."

"Well?"

"Don't you ever feel any temptation —"

"With Sassoon — money?"

He put out his arm in a gesture that swept the room.

"You are satisfied with this?"

"Do you know, that's just what he asked — the very words!"

"Yes; Sassoon would be pretty sure to ask that. And you are never tempted?"

"I thought you knew us!" she said proudly. "You don't — no, you don't understand at all! — or you wouldn't have asked that question!" But, not yet ready to talk, wishing to put a score of questions to him, she changed abruptly: "So, Your Honor, you are just curious about me?"

"I am — very curious!" he said, looking at her with a touch of his magisterial manner. "It's a queer game you are playing!"

"It's such fun!"

"Yes," he said, unbending; "it is fun; but what's going to come of it?"

She flung out her arms.

"*Quien sabe!*"

"I wonder what is the answer," he said, with a touch of solemnity. "There are so many possible answers!"

"Oh, now, Your Honor," she said, with a pouting look, a little restless, too, under his fixed gaze, "are we to be as serious as all that?"

"You girls are marvelous," he said in a lighter tone, "and you don't even appreciate the wonders you accomplish!"

"Go on! Cross-examine me! It's a new experience!" she said, dropping her hands into her lap resignedly, with mock submission. She felt as though she were playing a great rôle, and that before an audience which would not respond — which she was determined should respond; and yet, much as she wished to try his composure, she was still groping for the proper tactics.

"Some day will you tell me something?"

"I'm afraid, Your Honor, I'd tell you almost anything! What is it?"

"Where you come from — your home — why you left —"

"The story of my life — right away!"

"I should be interested!"

"My father was shot the week before I was born," she began, composing her features. "Mother was arrested on suspicion; I was born in jail. . . ."

"Wait," he said, with an appreciative nod. "I don't want a romance!"

She laughed with some confusion.

"What a pity! It was such a good start."

"I want the truth—not one of a dozen stories you've made up!"

She eyed the tip of her red slipper, raising it slightly.

"Some day I'll tell you," she said finally. "Next question!"

"Where in the world did you pick up the name?"

"Pick up? What do you mean?"

"The 'Doré.' It wasn't your own!"

"Oh, I found it," she said, turning away hastily, as if afraid he might have guessed.

That was one thing she could never tell him, no matter where future confidences might lead her. It had, in truth, been the suggestion of a certain Josh Nebbins, press-agent for a local theater, who had once adored her fatuously—one of those forgotten minor incidents, lost in the impenetrable mists of an outlived beginning, an indiscretion that she wished to forget, an impossible admirer of the days when her taste had not been cultivated.

Luckily, in this moment of her confusion the telephone saved her.

"Shall I close my ears?" he said instantly.

"The idea! Do you think I haven't learned how to telephone?" she said indignantly. "See how much you can gather from it!"

He waited, availing himself of her permission to listen, seeking in vain to patch sense in the guarded replies that came to him:

"I know who it is. Go ahead. . . . No, not alone — but that makes no difference. . . . Well, I thought it was time! Engaged to-night! . . . You saw me? . . . To-day — this afternoon. . . . 'Deed I am! . . . Why not? Lovely! . . . I'm sorry! . . . When? . . . Yes! . . . Oh, terribly exciting! . . ."

He smiled, and admitting defeat, continued his examination of the room. Keen amateur of the thousandfold subterranean currents of the city, none interested him more than the adventurous life of the Salamanders, with their extraordinary contrasts of wealth and poverty. He had known them by the dozens, and yet each was a new problem. Was it possible that she could experience no temptation, before the opportunities of sudden wealth, so boldly enticing, or did she not realize what such opportunities could mean? The interview interested him hugely. He felt himself master of the situation, enjoying the sudden turns of his intimate knowledge that kept her on the defensive — keen enough to know the advantage, with a woman, of establishing an instant superiority.

"Well?" she said, returning and looking at him with a teasing glance.

"I'll admit that you've learned to telephone," he said appreciatively. "What were your planning — how best to elope?"

"You didn't guess who it was?"

"Sassoon?"

"No; Mr. Harrigan Blood."

"H'm! I should like to have heard —"

The telephone interrupted again, but this time, responding in an assumed voice, she cut it off abruptly, swinging back to her perch on the trunk.

"Ready! Go on with the examination. Well! what are you thinking?"

"I am trying to see the whole scheme," he said, looking at her seriously. "Sassoon, Blood,— twenty others, I understand,— excitement and all that. How long have you been in it?"

"In what?"

"In this maelstrom of New York?"

"Two years, almost!"

"Ah, then there must be a man or two behind the rocks!"

"How funnily you express things," she said, half guessing his meaning. "Just what do you mean?"

He took out his cigarette-case, asked permission with a nod, and lighting a match, said:

"The man behind the rock? Oh, that's obvious! The man you have only to whistle for, the passably acceptable man, safe, eligible, marriageable. The man who will come forward at any time! Every woman understands that. Perhaps there are several rocks, way back in the background? No fibbing, now!"

She laughed, and thinking of Peavey, blushed under his quick gaze.

"Yes, of course."

"More than one?"

"Three or four; but I shall never whistle!"

"That's what makes the game so exhilarating, isn't it?"

"Naturally! There's always a retreat," she said, nodding.

His way of taking her, unexpected and positive, made her forget, at times, the combat intended, in the delight of self-analyzation.

"Your eyes are extraordinary," he said, meeting her glance critically. "They're not eyes; they're blue clouds entangled in your eyelashes."

But even in this there was no personal enthusiasm. He spoke enthusiastically, but as an observer, calculating and foreseeing developments. This compliment infuriated Doré. She was not accustomed to having men meet her full glance with nothing but criticism.

"Thank you!" she said icily. "You compliment like an oculist."

"No oculist would understand the value of such eyes," he answered calmly; "De Joney was right when he said there was a million in each."

"So you overheard?"

"And you — did you understand?"

"Of course!"

She sprang to the floor, and went to the dressing-table on the pretext of seeking a comb.

"I don't like the way you talk to me," she said, with her back to him.

"Why?"

The real reason she could not avow — that she resented this immovable impersonality of his attitude. This man, who saw into her, who divined so much that she believed securely masked, and yet showed no trace of emotion even in his flattery, began to irritate her, as well as to arouse all the dangerous vanities. But, as she could not tell him this, she assumed an indignant manner and said:

"I believe you really think I shall turn into an adventuress!"

"No-o," he said slowly, as if reflecting. "You may come near it — very near it; but it will be a hazard of the imagination. You will end very differently!"

"Ah, yes," she said, suddenly remembering, her irritation yielding to her curiosity, "you were going to prophesy. Well, what's going to happen to me?"

"You will be angry if I tell you," he said, with a whimsical pursing of his lips.

"No! What?"

"You will burn up another year or so; you will come very, very near a good many things; and then you will marry, and turn into a devoted, loyal little *Hausfrau* — like a million other little *Hausfraus* who have thought they were in this world to do anything else but marry!"

"No, no! Don't you dare say that!" she said,

covering her ears and stamping her foot. "That never!"

"Mark my prophecy," he said, with mock solemnity, delighted at the fury he had aroused.

"No, no! I won't be commonplace!" she cried. "I am in this world to do something unusual, extraordinary. I'm not like every other little woman. Marriage? Never! Three meals a day at the same hours — the same man — domesticity! Horrors!"

"Of course, of course," he said, with his provoking analytic exactness of phrase. "My dear girl, this is not a real life you are indulging in! Some day, perhaps, I'll discuss it more frankly with you. All this is a phase of mild hysteria. Do you know what you are doing? You're not living; you're rejecting life — yes, just that! — with every man you meet. The time comes when you will have to select. The forces of nature you are playing with are bigger than you; they'll conquer you in the end — decide for you! Now you play at fooling men so much that you fool yourself. When you marry, you will surprise yourself!"

"Stop!" she cried furiously. "Marriage! Yes, that's all you men believe we are capable of! But we are different now. We can be free --- we can live our own lives! And I will *not* be commonplace. Nothing can make me that. I'd rather have a tragic love-affair than that! Oh, what's the use of living, if you have to do as every one else does!"

She went to the window at the side, covering the

ground with the leap of a panther, working herself to a fury.

"Do you know what this wall is?" she cried, striking the curtain, which rolled up with the report of a pistol—"this ugly, hateful, brutal wall that I hate, loathe, despise? That's matrimony!—ugly, cold, horrid wall!"

She groped with her hand, caught the tassel, and pulled the shade without turning around.

"But, you see, you can't shut it out!" he said maliciously, pointing to the space that showed under the deficient shade.

"There'll be no wall in my life," she said, with a toss of her head. She felt herself in her most effective theatrical mood, and she flung the reins to it, caring nothing where it led her. Now, at all costs, she was resolved to thaw out this glacial reserve of his, rouse him, teach him that she could not be held so cheap. "No wall in my life! No man to tell me: Do this—do that—come here—go there! Sacrifices? I shall never make them! I tell you, all I want is to live—to really live! A short life, but a free one! You think Sassoon tempts me; you think I'd change this room for a palace or a home! You don't understand me! No; not with all you think you understand!"

"Tell me!" he said, transforming himself into an audience.

She changed suddenly from the passion of protest to almost a caressing delight, ready to turn into a hundred shapes to overwhelm him. For this perfect

discipline of his rushed her on. She would find under the observer the spark of the savage! Perhaps it was because she had no fear that she played so boldly, recognizing in him the true gentleman, and woman-like, presuming on this knowledge. He continued like a statue. She was not quiet a moment, flitting to and fro near him, dangerously near him, with a hundred coquetties of movement, half-revealing poses, sudden flashes of the eyes, confiding smiles, all tantalizing, insinuating, caressing, tender, provoking, filled with the zest of a naughty child.

"Oh, Your Honor! you're a very, very wise man," she said, shaking her finger at him, "but you have not seized the real point. We want to be free! Yes, we could live where we wanted,—in the finest apartments,—but it is such fun to be in an old boarding-house at ten dollars a week, when you never know how you're going to raise the rent! Ah, the rent! that's a terrible bugbear, I can tell you! You know one trick for doing it. There are a hundred, things you would never guess; for, with all your prying eyes, you are just like the rest—less stupid, not more clever!"

"Tell me some," he said, his eyes half closed as if dazzled by this sudden outpouring of youth and excitement.

"No—no," she said, shaking her hair so merrily that a loosened curl came tumbling over her ear. She changed the mood, coming near to him, laying her hand appealingly on his sleeve. "Ah, don't get wrong ideas. Don't judge us too harshly! We're not mer-

cenary at the bottom; it isn't the money we want — that's very little! It's the fun of playing the game!"

"Precipices?" he suggested, nodding.

"Ah, yes, precipices!" she said, in a sudden ecstasy; and as she said it her eyes drooped, her lips seemed to tremble apart as if giving up her body to a sigh half ecstasy, half languor.

"I can remember when I adored precipices, too," he said, drawing his arm away from her touch and folding it over the other, tightly across his chest.

"Remember!" she said mockingly, snapping her fingers under his nose. "You do now. Who doesn't?" She put a space between them with a sudden bound, as though he had made a move to retain her. Then, with a whirl, she poised herself gleefully on the arm of a chair. "I adore precipices! It's such fun to go dashing along their edges, leaning up against the wind that tries to throw you over, looking way, way down, thousands of miles, and hear the little stones go tumbling down, down — and then to crouch suddenly, spring aside and see a great, stupid, puffy man snatch at the air and go head over heels, ker-plunk! You don't understand that feeling?" she said, stopping short.

"I understand that!" he said curtly.

She whirled suddenly on her feet, extending her arms against an imaginary gale, and bending over, her finger on her lips, pretended to gaze into unfathomable depths.

"But you never fall in," he said wisely.

Instantly she straightened up.

"Oh, dear, no! for then, you see, there would be only *one* precipice, endlessly, forever and ever! No more precipices, no more fun, no more Dodo — and that would be unbearable!"

"And are there many precipices, Dodo?" he said, assuming the privilege.

"Oh, dear, yes — many precipices," she said, watching him maliciously. "There are old precipices, but those aren't interesting! Then, there are new ones, too; oh, yes, several very interesting new ones!"

"Blainey," he said; but she shook her head.

"I'm afraid that's not a precipice," she said seriously. But at once, back in her roguish mood, she continued: "Sassoon's a moderately exciting precipice, only he will look so ridiculous as he goes spinning down, all arms and legs!"

She took a few steps toward the door, and put her hand to her ear.

"And I think there was the beginning of another precipice there to-night; only — oh!" She exaggerated the exclamation with a confidential nod to him. "That is a very risky one. I shall have to be very careful, and always have a long start!"

"Others?"

"Others? Of course there are others!" she said indignantly. "Everywhere — naturally — but I'm not going to tell you. You know entirely too much already. Only of one!"

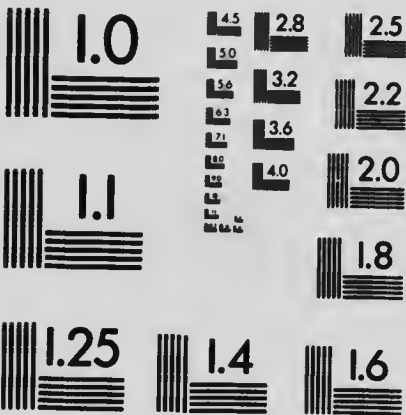
"Aha!"

"A very curious one, but very exciting! A precipice that I can see right here in this room!"



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"An old one?"

"Not at all! Quite new!" She made a pretense of simulating it on the rug, to pass mockingly under his eyes, daintily, with steps that trod on air. "Do you want to know where it is?"

"Where?"

"It runs from the tip of this mischievous, naughty red slipper, right straight across the carpet, to — let me see! where does it go? Over — over — over here!"

She came with her head down, peeping up from under her eyelashes, balancing with her hands on an imaginary line, straight by him, laughing to herself, and passed so close that he felt the flutter of her dress and the warm perfume from her hair.

"Little devil!" he said between his teeth, and flinging out his hand, caught her retreating shoulder.

She wrenched herself free, sprang away and turned, blazing with anger, forgetting all that she had done wilfully, maliciously, to tantalize him — illogical, unreasoning, wildly revolting at the acquiring touch of this male hand on her free body.

"How dare you!" she cried, advancing on him, gloriously enraged, fists clenched. "How dare you! You — you contemptible — you — oh, you brute, brute! You dare to touch me again — you dare!" She turned suddenly, striking him on the chest with her little fists, crude, futile, repeated blows, choking with shame, still in the dramatized mood. "You dared — you dared! And I trusted — oh!"

He did not retreat, opposing no resistance to the

frantic drumming of her blows, watching her coldly, with something besides ice in the intensity of his mocking glance. Then, when from lack of breath her rage spent itself a moment, he said calmly, his glance in her glance, as a trainer's subduing a revolted animal, deliberate, slow, imperative:

"Now, stop acting!"

She caught herself up, tried to answer and found only another furious gesture.

"I said, stop acting!" he repeated brusquely, and stepping to her, caught her in his arms. She cried out in a muffled strangled voice, turning, twisting, flinging herself about fruitlessly in the iron of his embrace. He held her silently until she ceased to struggle; and then his eyes continued to hold her eyes, fixed, imperious, compelling her gaze. She remained quiet — very quiet, looking at him startled, in doubt, seeing in him something new, masterful. And as he continued steadily looking into her eyes, penetrating beyond, overcoming all resistance, a smile came to her, a smile of confession, gathering from the cloudy blue of her eyes, running down the curve of her cheek, playing about the thin upturned lips. He bent his head deliberately. She did not turn aside her lips. . . . Then on this embrace came another, a convulsive frantic clinging of the lips, a kiss which conquered them both, flinging a mist across their eyes, stopping their ears, stilling their reason. This kiss, which went through her like a flame, blinding out the world, hurling into her brain a new life and a new knowledge, caught him, too, in the moment when he felt the

strongest, the most able to dare. Neither his eyes nor his brain had foreseen this — nor the touch of her arms twining about his neck. He had a moment of vertigo in which he suddenly ceased to think. He kissed her again, and she answered hungrily, whispering:

“I didn’t know! Ah, you’ve come —”

All at once his mind cleared as if a hand of ice had touched his forehead. He tried to put her arms from him, aroused, suddenly frightened at where he had been whirled by the immense combustibility of nature. But still she clung to him, her eyes closed, her lips raised, repeating:

“At last — oh, at last!”

“What have I done?” he said to himself, conscious-stricken at her glorified face. He stiffened against the soft arms, that sought to draw him back, saying hoarsely:

“Dodo — listen, Dodo!”

But she shook her head, pervaded suddenly by an incomprehensible ecstasy of weakness, the oblivion of absolute surrender. She opened her eyes once, and let them close again heavily.

“Please,” she said in a whisper, “don’t — don’t say anything. Don’t talk. . . . It’s all too wonderful!”

Then, abruptly, he tore her away from him, grasping his coat, placing a table between them.

“To-morrow!” he said, in a voice he did not recognize, knowing not what to believe, afraid of what he might say, amazed that all his will had gone.

She gave a cry, extending her hands to him.

"No! Oh, don't go!"

"I must, Dodo! I must!"

"How can you?" she cried. "How cruel!"

She covered her face suddenly, and her whole body began to tremble.

"Good night!" he said hurriedly, a prey to a wild tugging that bade him leap to her.

She did not answer, swaying in the center of her room, shaken from head to foot.

"Good night!" He took a long breath and repeated: "Good night, Dodo!"

Still she did not answer.

"To-morrow!"

No longer trusting himself, he flung through the door, out and down the stairs.

She went herself across the room, her knees sinking under her, groped for the door, weakly closed it and turned the key. And for the first time she was afraid!

How was it possible that she, who had known so much, who had feared so little, should suddenly, in the twinkling of an eye, have been overwhelmed, caught and mastered? What did it mean? And this question brought with it a fierce delirious joy in her moment of panic. For she was in fear—of many things known, and things uncomprehended: fear of where she had passed; fear of where she was going; of him!

Had it been only a game, or had he, too, been caught as she had been caught? Fear there was of the flames

that lay in his touch, fear of that blank moment when she had known nothing, cared nothing, with the sudden starting horror with which once she had come out of a swoon. But most of all she had a fear of the fire that had broken out within her, in that first awful, lawless moment, in which the knowledge of life had come to her in blinding realization.

"Do I — is it love? If not, what is it? Why am I so?"

But this time she did not dramatize her mood. She found no answer, slowly recovering mastery of herself. She remained with her back against the door, her arms extended, barring the return, bewildered, weak, revolted, happy, fearing, listening.

Suddenly the sound of a returning step — a tapping on the door, irresolute, and a voice calling to her.

It was Massingale.

So! He had not been able to go! In a flash she was again the free Salamander, emerging out of the fire of conflict, triumphant by the last dramatic hazard. And being her own mistress again, she made no mistake.

She drew herself up, arms barring the door in the sign of a cross.

"Not now!" she said breathlessly.

He did not answer. She heard his step on the stairs, descending. When, at last, her arms fell, there was a gleam of exultation in her eyes. Whatever this might mean, wherever it might lead, she knew now, by that momentary yielding weakness of his return, that she would be — in the last crisis — the stronger!

CHAPTER X

DORE went to bed at once — not to sleep, for she felt in her mind a cold clarity that seemed impervious to fatigue, but in order to avoid conversation with Snyder. She did not at once return over the surprising moments of the night. From her pillow the flushed clock-face of the Metropolitan Tower came bulging into the room. She watched it with a contented numbness of the senses, striving to follow the jerky advance of the minute-hand, conscious only of the fragrance and pleasure of the cool bed-linen, dreamily awake, prey to a delicious mental languor. She asked herself no questions . . . she wished no answers. The emotional self which had so violently awakened within her, overturning all her mental *qui vive*, returned, but in a gentle warm dominion. She drew her arm under the pillow . . . and her embrace was tightening about his neck again. She felt herself caught, rudely imprisoned, struggling — dominated, convulsively yielding. She moved restlessly, rearranging the pillows — returning impatiently into the illusion, feeling herself always in his arms.

“The great elemental forces of nature will decide for you,” he had said. . . .

She remembered the words confusedly. She had never quite believed in these forces . . . though often

in her lawless imagination she had sought to comprehend them, never convinced, always puzzled. She had permitted half stolen embraces, furtive clasps of the hand, wondering, always disillusioned. She had perceived, it is true, some inexplicable emotional madness in the men who sought her . . . and sometimes roughly it had repelled her to great distances. This abrupt disorder which she could call forth with a tone of her voice, a quick lingering glance or a certain reclining languor, had excited her curiosity. There was a certain mental exhilaration in it, the cruel teasing of the feline, playing with its prey. It gave her an excited sense of power . . . that was all. The slightest acquiring advance had roused in her a fury of resistance. . . . And now, at last, she knew! This was the force that had made playthings of men and women, that sent them where they did not wish to go, that could upset all coldly logical calculations, that gave the frailest little women irresistible weapons against the strongest men . . . or made them throw all opportunities to the wind and follow incomprehensible husbands.

She heard the cautious entering of Snyder, and instantly closed her eyes, breathing deep — a light word would have seemed a sacrilege. She waited, irritated and nervous, until her room-mate, undressing in the pale reflections, had noiselessly curled herself on the couch.

What would she have done if he had remained? Now the languor that had stolen treacherously over her senses was gone, dissipated by the presence of another

human being. Her mind threw itself feverishly on the problem, encircling it, trying it from a hundred points of view. What did it mean? Was her liberty, her freedom of action suddenly jeopardized? And the thought of this overpowering new force made her violently react . . . striving to escape its verity . . . just as her body had whipped around in his arms when they had suddenly closed about her. What was it frightened her? . . . the man, or something awakened within her?

She sat up in bed, her head in her palms, throbbingly awake. What would have happened if he had stayed? . . . But he had not stayed — and she had not allowed him to return. She said it to herself victoriously . . . illogically evading an answer . . . momentarily satisfied. And if he came again? Would there be a new danger?

She sank wearily on her pillow. No . . . of that she was sure . . . never again would she be so vulnerable. . . . It had been the unknown — the thing she had not believed in — which had taken her by surprise . . . unprepared.

Then he had made the mistake of returning. Massingale, strong and unyielding, had had a fearfully attractive force over her will and her vanity, but the other . . . the Massingale who had returned, was human, and therefore could be subjected. No! . . . she would never fear him again!

Did she love him? . . . She did not know . . . at least she insisted that it could not be so — not all at once — perhaps, later. But she knew this — that she

longed to see him again, to have the dragging night end, to awaken to the morning and to hear his coming, . . . to go hurriedly with him out of the discordant city, somewhere, where it was peaceful and solitary, . . . somewhere where they could turn and look in each other's eyes and know what had happened.

At other moments she said to herself with profound conviction that it must be love, that that was the way, the only way, that love could come, overpowering the reason, despite the reason, beating down all reason. Then if it were love? Would she submit, renounce all her defiantly proclaimed liberty? Characteristically, she did not answer. Instead, she projected herself into this submission, and her imagination, volatile as a dream, whisked her from one fancy to another. She imagined what it would be like to fill a feverish letter, each night after he had gone, with all the tender, passionate, jealous, or yearning fancies that he had left tumultuously stirring in her breast — a letter which she herself would carry hastily out into the night, running to the letter-box at the corner, that he might wake to a surprise. And each morning she, too, would awake to his call, his voice over the telephone. At other times, sentimentally urged, she visualized him as ill, sadly stricken, herself at his bedside.

"So, after all, I am going to marry — like all the rest!" she said, suddenly roused. This one word — "marriage" — pierced through all the fancied illusions. Marriage — one man; nothing but one man every day, year in and year out — was it possible? Could she resign herself? No more excitement, no

more gambling with opportunity, no more dramatizing herself to each new situation, no more luring and evasion, no more sporting with dull brute strength or matching of wits — nothing but the expected, the routine — yes, the inevitable commonplace? Could she give this up — so soon? She rose fiercely against the sacrifice. Never! She preferred her youth.

All at once a sound broke across the hot flights of her conflicting fancies. She sat up instantly, bending forward, listening. She had heard a sob, muffled but unmistakable, from the adjoining room — then another. She slipped quickly to the floor. Snyder too had risen.

"Be quiet, Snyder. Let me go," she said to her in a whisper, forcing her back.

She felt her way to the door, and opening it quietly, passed into Winona's room.

"Who's that?" asked a frightened voice.

"Hush! It's I — Dodo. I heard you," she said, groping. "What's wrong, Winona?"

But the figure in the bed, without answer, buried itself face down in the covers, striving to choke back the sobs.

Doré put her arm about her, endeavoring to calm her, wondering and a little apprehensive.

"But this is frightful! Winona, you mustn't!" she said helplessly. "Winona, can't you tell me? Can't you speak?"

The girl grasped her hand, pressing it convulsively. Doré waited, seized by the mystery of the heavy night, the stillness and the little animal sound of sorrow.

Between Salamanders real confidences are rare. What did she know of this life which only a wall divided from her? A suspicion flashed into her mind, knowing the perilous ways that sometimes had to be run. All at once she remembered.

"Winona!" she cried joyfully. "What a fool I am! I've good news! It's all settled — Blainey tomorrow!" And as the girl, buried in her pillow, continued to struggle against the sobs, she shook her by the shoulder, repeating: "Blainey wants to see you; he's giving you a chance. Do you hear?"

"Chance! Ah, I've had a thousand chances! What's the use!" exclaimed the girl, twisting in the bed. "It's always the same! Don't I know it — know it!"

"But you won't throw away this one?"

"Chance! Yes, that's all it is — chance!" she cried uncontrollably. "If I wasn't such a fool! What's the use of trying, anyhow? It don't make any difference. Nothing ever does! Ah, I'll give up. I'll go back!" She continued, repeating herself endlessly, beating the pillow with her fist; and as she abandoned herself to despair, old errors of speech, forgotten accents, mingled in her cries. "It ain't right! No, it ain't right — nothing ever comes of nothing! Nothing works out — nothing! Ah, no! I'll go back — I'll go back — I'll go back to it!"

"What do you mean? Back to what?"

Winona caught her throat, silenced suddenly.

"Can't you tell me?"

"I'm all right now," said Winona, shaking her head.

She disengaged herself brusquely, sitting up, twisting her fingers in the physical effort at control. She turned, clutching Doré.

"Did Blainey — he — what did he say?"

Doré, inventing details, building up a favorable incident, exaggerated the importance, recounted the interview.

"I told him Zeller was after you. You know how he hates Zeller! He's crazy to steal you! You'll see! Everything will work like a charm — and the part just for you!"

She continued optimistically pouring out encouragement. Winona allowed herself to be convinced, grasping at straws. They remained talking deeply of difficulties and discouragements, always avoiding the questions that lay below. Once Doré had said tentatively:

"Winona, wouldn't it help you just to talk out everything — tell me everything? I'd understand. Do trust me!"

But the girl, resisting, answered hastily:

"No! no! Not now! Some day, perhaps."

Doré made no further effort. She drew her arm about her.

"Then let me quiet you," she said softly.

Winona, without resistance, allowed herself to go into her arms. They ceased speaking, clinging to each other there in the dark, and a strange sensation came to Doré at the touch of the body clinging to her, these unseen arms so tenaciously taut: it seemed to her almost that she heard another voice, mastering her

physically and morally, making her suddenly flexible and without defense, a voice saying:

"Now, stop acting!"

"All right. Better now. I can sleep," said the girl in her arms. "Thanks."

Dodo rose and went gliding back. Snyder, open-eyed, made no sound. She was grateful to her for this, divining the reason. Back in her bed, huddling under the covers, she recalled Winona with a feeling of horror. To lose one's courage like that — how terrible! And if she herself were thus to be transformed, if all her indomitable audacity should suddenly go —

"There's some man back of it all," she said, thinking of Winona. "There always is a man."

Yet she had been on the point of rapturously hugging the first dream that had come to her in an uncomprehended moment, of submitting to a man — the very thought flung her back into intuitive revolt.

"But, if it isn't love, how could he have such power over me? Could there be such a vertigo without true love? Could such a thing be possible?" Time and time again she put these questions, finding different answers. At times she let herself go deliciously, stretching out her arms, conjuring up that first penetrating embrace. At others, fiercely aroused, she resisted him with every fiber of her body, rejecting submission, resolved to combat him, to subordinate him, to retain always her defiant supremacy, to revenge her momentary defeat by some future victory.

Neither in the yielding nor in the revolt was there

any conviction — no peace and no calm. What there was, was all disorder, and the insistent drumming note of his voice, which drew her to him, had in it the confusion of a fever.

Though she had fallen asleep late, she awoke early, with a start. It was half past eight by the clock. She rose abruptly on her elbow at a sound that had startled her from her slumber — the slippery rustle of letters gliding under the crack of the door. There were two, white and mysterious against the faded blue of the carpet. She was about to spring to them when she perceived Snyder watching her. She contained herself with a violent effort, waiting, with eyes that were averted not to betray their eagerness, until they were brought to her. She was certain that he had written, and something within her began to tremble and grow cold with the suspense of awaiting his first letter. At her first glance she fell from the clouds. One was in Mr. Peavey's disciplined hand, the other in Joe Gilday's boyish scrawl, each announcing expected gifts. She had a sudden weak desire for tears.

"Gee! eggs and cream! Who is the fairy god-mother?" said Snyder. "Say, you must have a wishing-cap!"

"It's Mr. Peavey, bless his heart!" said Doré. At that moment, in her first exaggerated pang of disappointment, she had an affectionate inclination to the elderly bachelor. He would not have treated her so, had the rôles been shifted.

"Going to be a habit?"

"Hope so."

"I'm strong for that boy; I like his style!"

Doré smiled; she comprehended the thought. She cast a hasty glance at Gilday's disordered pages. It was, as she had surmised, the humble tender of bouquets to come. She dissembled her disappointment as best she could, seeking excuses. He might have posted his letter after midnight, from his club. It would come in the late morning mail. Or perhaps he had preferred to telephone. It must be that! Of course, that was the explanation. He wished to hear her voice, as she longed for his, and then they would take rendezvous at once. Yes, he would telephone — now — at any moment. She glanced again at the clock. Ten long minutes had elapsed. The excuse so convinced her that she felt a sudden access of unreasoning happiness, as if already, by some sense, she had divined his coming.

She had promised over the telephone the night before to pay a morning visit to Harrigan Blood in the editorial rooms of the *Free Press*, and then there was the appointment for luncheon with Sassoon. These acceptances did not disturb her in the least. When anything was offered, her invariable tactics were to accept — provisionally. For her tactics were simple, but formed on the basic strategy of the Salamanders: acceptance that raises hopes, then an excuse that brings tantalizing disorder, but whets the appetite. To-day she had not the slightest intention of keeping either appointment. She was only glad that she had contracted them. It was a little bit of treachery which she would offer up to Massingale.

She chose her simplest costume — blue, the invariable Russian blouse, white collar open at the neck, and a bit of red in the slim belt. She wished to come to him girlish, without artifice. She felt so gaily elated that she turned tenderly toward the happiness of others. Winona would sleep until ten at least. She wheeled suddenly, and putting her arm around Snyder, embraced her. In the confusion, a locket became entangled in her lace.

"What's that? You've never shown me," she said, catching the chain.

Snyder silently touched the spring. Inside was the face of a child of four or five.

"Yours?"

"Yes."

"How pretty! What's her name?"

"Betty."

They stood close together, looking at the uncomprehending childish gaze.

"Where is she?"

"With my mother."

"Aren't you going to take her — ever?"

"Never!"

"Why not?" She dropped the locket, glancing at this half woman, half girl, who continually perplexed her. "She is so sweet — how can you do without her?"

"Want her to have a home," said Snyder abruptly. She turned, as if the conversation were distasteful. "Can't be dragging her all over the continent, can I?"

A great pity came to Doré, that any one should be unhappy in such a bright world. A fantastic thought followed. She knew only that Snyder was divorced — a child, a broken home. Yet persons often divorced for the absurdest reasons; perhaps it had only been a misunderstanding. If she could reconcile them, bring them together again! She approached the subject timidly.

"Do me a favor?"

"What?"

"Let me see Betty; bring her here!"

Snyder's agitation was such that she came near pushing over the coffee-pot.

"You really — you want me to —"

"Yes. Why not? I adore children!"

She continued to watch her, surprised at the emotion she had aroused.

"Yes, she is unhappy — frightfully unhappy!" she thought, and taking courage, she added: "Snyder, tell me something?"

Snyder shook her head, but, despite the objection, Doré continued:

"You have never told me of him — your husband. Are you sure it can't be patched up? Are you sure you don't care?"

"I don't want to talk about it — it's ended!" said Snyder, so abruptly that Doré drew back.

"I only asked —"

"Don't want help — don't want to talk!" Snyder broke in, in the same embittered tone.

"Not to me?" said Doré gently.

Snyder drew a long breath, and turned to her swiftly, with an appealing look, in which, however, there was no weakness.

Then she laid her finger across her lips.

"Here — breakfast is ready; sit down!"

"Snyder, I don't understand you; you hurt me!" said Doré, opening her eyes.

The woman stood a moment, locking and unlocking her hands, swinging from foot to foot.

"Can't help it. You can't make me over. I've got my rut!" She shrugged her shoulders. "I'm damned unsociable — perhaps I'd better dig out."

"Snyder!" exclaimed Doré, bounding to her side. She took her in her arms, crying: "Why, it was only to help you!"

"Well, you can't!" said the other, with a forcible shake of her head, her body stiff against the embrace. And there the conversation ended.

It was after nine, and still no sound at the telephone. Doré began to feel an uneasy impatience. At any minute, now, certainly he must summon her. Snyder made an excuse and went out. But she ceased to think of her. Her thoughts were no longer keen to another's suffering, but sensitive to her own.

She grew tired of pacing restlessly, and flung herself down on the couch, her head turned toward the clock, watching it wearily. Why didn't he telephone — or, at least, come? This sensation of suspense and waiting, which she had so often dealt out to others, was new to her. It disarranged her whole self, aroused fierce resentful thoughts in her. He wished

to tantalize her, to draw her on, as he had the night before — to be cruel, to make her suffer! Well, she too could be cruel. She would do something to hurt him, too.

"Very well! Now I *will* go to see Harrigan Blood," she said all at once, choking with something that was not entirely anger.

And hastily slipping into her coat, she went hurriedly to Ida Summers' room, awoke her and took her with her.

CHAPTER XI

MR. PEAVEY'S automobile was waiting. Doré had telephoned for it while Ida Summers, protesting, had made a quick toilet. She had at first thought of availing herself for the day of the car so insistently pressed upon her; but she was not yet quite sure of Brennon, the chauffeur. If by any chance she should decide to keep her appointment with Sassoon, it would not be wise to accept such escort. So she supplemented the day's preparations by a message to Stacey, who was given a later rendezvous.

"Down-town! The *Free Press* building. Hope I didn't get you up too early, Brennon?"

He grinned at her ideas of morning values.

"He looks as if he were a good sort," Doré thought, meditating on the possibilities long after she and Ida had tucked themselves in.

"I say, Do, what's the game? Give us the cue!" said Ida Summers, making heroic efforts to get her eyes open.

"Your cue is to be real sisterly," said Doré. "Stick close, unless I give you the wink."

"Oh, I'll cling! Arm in arm, eh?" said Ida, beginning to laugh. "Conversation high-toned. I say, Do, I'm quite excited. Harrigan Blood! You do move in the swellest circles!"

Doré allowed her to chat away without paying attention, a fact that did not disturb her companion in the least.

"Well, he'll be furious!" she was thinking, delighted at paying Massingale back in coin. Nevertheless, she had mitigated the retaliation by taking a companion. Then, too, the effect on Harrigan Blood would not be at all bad — Blood, who expected a tête-à-tête, and who could thus be taught the value of such favors.

But now that she was finally embarked on her impulse, she began to consider more calmly, even with a willingness to see Massingale's side. All at once the perfectly obvious explanation occurred to her. How could he be expected to telephone, when she had not given him the number? Why had she never thought of this before? Probably he had been frantically seeking it! Of course he could not telephone — and of course he could not come personally; he would have to be in court all the morning. Perhaps at this very moment a letter was waiting for her, by the post, or by a messenger! She must indeed be in love, to be such a fool!

"Thank heaven," she thought, "I had the sense to bring Ida! I'll confess to him — or, no! He mustn't know what it has meant!"

The sudden joyful release the calm of content that came to her from this explanation, surprised her. For a moment she felt like renouncing the visit; but a new turn strengthened her resolve. She could hardly believe in what had happened. Perhaps it was only

another case of self-deception. She would try to revolt, to be interested in another man, to see if the old game could still attract.

"Lordy! I'd forgotten there was so much New York!" said Ida Summers, who lived, like her thousand sisters, between the Flatiron and the park.

They entered lower Broadway, random flowers on the foul truck-strewn flood, advancing by inches, surrounded by polyglot sounds, traversing revolted Europe in a block, closing their ears against the shrieking cries of imprisoned industries, the sordid struggle in the streets, the conflict in the air, where stone flights strove for supremacy.

All at once she remembered — this roaring entrance. She remembered the evening, not two years before, when she herded from the ferry, satchel in hand, oppressed by the jargon of a thousand tongues, she had arrived, hustled and jostled, barely making head against the outflowing tide of humanity which flushed the street in its roaring homeward scramble.

That first breathless impression of New York! How she had feared it, that first dusky evening, when, shrinking in a doorway before the onrush of driven multitudes, she had felt the very air dragged from her nostrils, obliterating her individuality, routing her courage, stunning her senses. She had stood a long time, clinging to her meager sheltering, disheartened at the fury at her feet, awed by the flaming ladders to the impending stars — no inanimate stones, but living rocks, endlessly climbing, which must end by toppling over on her in an obliterating crash. New

York! How different from what she had imagined in the tugging, liberty-seeking aspirations of her soul!

She had never lacked courage before, in all her adventurous progress toward the Mecca of her dreams; but that night she had been defeated, overwhelmed before the issue, even. She had come, sublimely confident in a fanciful project she had conceived, a series of impressions — *A Western Girl in New York* — a western girl arriving undaunted, satchel in hand, ten dollars in her purse, to seek fortune in the great city of Mammon — surely a daring story to fill a woman's column. And she had gone to the same *Free Press*, standing in the outer office, talking to a tired sub-editor, vainly striving to interest him, to revive in herself a necessary spark of enthusiasm and audacity which had expired in that first brutal confrontation of the world in terms of thousands. Yes, she had lost even before she had opened her plea, convinced of the futility of making an impression on those frantic halls, where her voice was pitched not alone against the tired indifference of a routine mind, but against the invading storm of outer sounds, the clang of brazen bells, the honk of automobiles, the shaking rush of invisible iron forces tearing through the air, the grinding roll of traffic over the complaining cobblestones, the mammoth roar of the populace endlessly washing reverberating shores.

She had talked and talked, without interruption, clenching her fist, growing weaker and weaker, stum-

bling in her phrases, until at last, convinced, without waiting for an objection, she had stopped short, saying: "It's no use, is it?"

Then he had gone to a file of papers, and returning, spread before her a gaily colored page, placing his finger on another face in silhouette, gay, jaunty. Another had had the same idea! How many others? She was no longer an individual — only one of a thousand who came, with the same ideas, to face the same struggle.

That first leaden closing of the doors of hope, as if no other doors remained! And now she was to enter that same *Free Press*, no longer daunted, clinging to a satchel, but rolling luxuriously, triumphant: no longer a suppliant, but amused, at the insistent invitation of the chief, the genius of the machine, whom once she had clamored so fruitlessly to see. Then and now. . . . Harrigan Blood — society itself, on which she was to take a delicious revenge. She forgot Massingale, remembering only a hopeless little figure, ready for tears, standing, a tiny black dot against the electric windows of the press, gazing into the wilderness of the strident crowded unknown.

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A quick descent, a sudden volcanic propulsion upward, and they were transferred a hundred feet above strife, into a noisy anteroom, gazing down at the gray-and-white tapestry of the spread city.

"Hello! What are you doing here?"

They turned. Estelle Monks, of the second floor

front at Miss Pim's, owner of the white fox stole and the circulating garments, was standing beside them, jauntily alert.

"Goodness' sakes, it's Estelle!" exclaimed Ida. "Well, what are *you* doing —?"

"Oh, I contribute," said Estelle evasively.

She was in a short tailored suit, Eton collar, Alpine hat and feather. With her hands in her side pockets, she was very direct, at ease, mannish, but not disagreeably so — rather attractive with her dark eyes, which, as Ida expressed it, had the "real come-hither" in their mocking depths.

A boy came shuffling out, saying nasally:

"Mr. Blood will see you naow."

They left Estelle Monks indulging in a long whistle of surprise, traversed a long chorus of clicking machines, and discovered a room of comparative quiet, spacious, with embattled desks. Harrigan Blood was waiting, a smile on his face as he fingered the *two* cards.

"Very nice of you to bring Miss Summers," he said jerkily, making his own introduction. "Added pleasure, I'm sure!"

Doré, who had expected some show of irritation, wondered in an amused way how he would manage to procure the tête-à-tête which she had just rendered impossible. In ten minutes Blood, without seeming to have considered the question, had resolved the knot by calling in Tony Rex, one of the younger cartoonists, a boyish person who eyed them with malicious curiosity, and having consigned Ida to him for a tour

of inspection, had availed himself of the first interval to say:

"Come, you can see all this any time. You are not going to get out of a talk with me by any such tricks."

She consented, laughing, to be led back.

"Why did you do this?" he said, irritated.

"Do what?"

"Bring a governess?"

"Because I'm a very proper person."

"It annoys me. I hate women who annoy me!" he said abruptly.

She smiled in a provoking silence, while, with a quick excusing gesture, he lighted a cigar.

"You seem more natural here," she said, glancing at his ruffled hair and careless tie. "I'd like to see you at work."

He rose to get a copy of the editorial sheet for the day, and handed it to her.

"You inspired that."

She took the editorial, which was entitled "Waste," and ran down its heavily leaded phrases, smiling to herself at these moralizations of the devil turned friar. He saw her amusement, and took the editorial abruptly.

"You won't understand — that's what I *believe!*"

He drew a chair opposite and flung into it; then, with an erect stiffening of his body, clasped his hands eagerly between his knees, releasing them in sudden flights, returning them always to their tenacious grip. There was something in the combustibility of the gesture that was significant of the whole man.

"By George!" he said suddenly, without relevancy, "why haven't I the right to stretch out my hand and take you?"

Doré burst out laughing, immensely flattered.

"What a nuisance you are!" he continued savagely. "What good do you do in the world? All you women do is to interfere! And to think that this sentimental civilization — idiotic civilization — is going to experiment for a few hundred years with pretending that women are made to share the progress of the world with men!"

"So you're not a woman's —"

"I'm absolutely against the whole feminine twaddle!" he broke in. "Man's the only thing that counts! We're suffocated with feminism already — over-sentimentalized; can't think but in the terms of an individual." He stopped, and glaring at her, said, with a furious gesture: "And now, here you are, an impudent little girl who doesn't do the world a bit of good, sitting back there and laughing contentedly because you've suddenly popped up to raise Cain with me!"

The originality of his attack delighted her. It pleased her immensely to feel her attraction for such a man, for it seemed to her a promise that with another she would not lack charm and fascination.

"What a strange method of courting," she said demurely. "If that's the way you're going on, I think I prefer to be shown the —"

"The machines, of course," he cut in. "That's the trouble with you. That's all they ever understand —"



"Why did you do this?"

the things they see. But, my dear girl, *I am the paper*; all the rest is only wheels, chains, links; every man here is only part of the machine. I only am the indispensable force."

He had found an idea, and was off on its exposition, starting up, pacing and gesturing.

"Yes, all the rest is only a machine. I can change every bolt in twenty-four hours and it will go on just the same. I pay a cartoonist twenty thousand dollars a year, and he thinks he's indispensable; but I can take another and make him famous in a month. I give him the ideas! Yes, they are lieutenants here — editors of Sunday supplements, specialist writers, women's columns, sporting experts. I can change 'em all, take a handful of boys, and whip them into shape in six weeks! That's not journalism. What is? I'll tell you. Others have copied me; I found it out — *emotions* and *ideas*! You don't get it? Listen! They're two heads: the news column and the editorial page."

He paused at the table, and taking up a paper, struck it disdainfully.

"Trash! I know it! News? No! That's not what the public wants — not my public! It wants fiction, it wants emotions! You don't know what the multitude is; I do! A great sunken city, a million stifling, starved existences, hurried through, railroaded through life. News? Bah! They want a taste of dreams! I make their dreams live in my paper. It's everything to them, melodrama, society, romance; it's a peep-hole into the worlds they can't touch. I show 'em millionaires moving behind their

house-walls, rolling in wealth, fighting one another, battling for one another's wives, flinging a billion against a billion, ruining thousands for a whim. 'Monte Cristo'? It's tame to what I serve 'em. 'Mr. X Gives a Hundred Thousand Dollar Lunch'—'Secret Drains of Oil Trust's Home'—'Deserts Millionaire Husband for Chauffeur'—'Ten Millions in Five Years'! That's life—that's emotion! That's what makes 'em go on! Look here, did you ever stop to think what does make the five million slaves go on, day in and day out, driven, groaning? Hope! the belief that in some miraculous way life is going to change."

He stopped, and with a drop to cold analysis, laying his hand on the editorial sheet, said:

"This is what does count. This is real—ideas! The other is just tom-tom-beating to get the crowd around—yes, just that: the band outside the circus. But this is different; this is true. America, the future—the glorious future when I've stirred up their imagination and taught them to think! There! Now do you understand what kind of man I am?"

She had understood one thing clearly, in this stupendous flurry of egotism—that, as Sassoon had sought to tempt her with the lure of his wealth, Harrigan Blood was seeking to overwhelm her with the brilliancy of his mind. She did not oppose him, seeking flattery, needing fresh proofs of her power thinking: "If he wants me, Massingale—Massingale, who is so clever and strong—will want me too."

"You lunch with me," he said confidently.

She shook her head. "Previous engagement."

"Where?"

"Tenaflly's at one."

"Sassoon?" he said, sitting up with a jerk.

"Yes," she answered, with malice aforethought.

"What — you're going to be caught by that whited sepulcher?"

"And you, Mr. Blood?" she said softly.

"I? I'm loyal!"

"But not monogamous."

"Sassoon only wants to be stung out of a lethargy. Women — I need them to help me. I have the right! That's why I want you!"

"I'm not the kind you want," she said, drawing back, for his precipitation gave her the feeling of being crowded into a corner.

"You would if I could make you love me!"

"Indeed! Are you considering — matrimony?"

"Never!" he said angrily. "Marriage is a reciprocal tyranny. I don't want to own a woman, or have her own me! What, you can have a career, and you want to marry?"

She defended herself, laughing, assuring him that was not the case.

"You have your career; I have mine. I'll educate you! Ten thousand men will give you money — I'll give you brains! My little girl, I wonder if you know what opportunity is dangling on your little finger-tips. Break your engagement!"

"I can't!"

"Interested?"

"Um! Very curious. Certain sides are amus-

ing!" Then she turned, assuming an air of dignity, repeating her defensive formula: "Mr. Blood, I am not like other girls. I play fair. I give one warning — and one only. Then take the consequences."

"What's your warning?" he said abruptly, with a bullish stare.

"You will lose your time," she said calmly. "You think you know me. You may, and you may not. I won't give you the slightest hint, but I tell you frankly now, and only once, you will lose your time!"

"But," he said contemptuously, "you don't know what a real man is! There's nothing real in your life. I'm going to give you realities!"

"How charming!" she said, shrugging her shoulders. "And in the same breath you let me know it won't last. Thanks; I don't enjoy being an episode!"

"That depends on you."

"Frank!"

"Don't you know," he said suddenly, coming toward her, "what is true about a man like myself? — yes, about all men? They say we're naturally polygamous. Rats! nothing of the sort! We want to be true to one woman only. Look here. The real tragedy in life is that a man can't find in one woman all he wants,— all the time!"

At this moment, much to Doré's relief, Ida Summers and her companion returned. As they went out to the elevator, Blood made another opportunity for a final word:

"I haven't said half that I wanted to. When can I get a chance really to talk with you?"

A malicious suggestion, prompted by some devil of intrigue within her, suddenly rose in her imagination.

"Come and get me after luncheon."

"I thought you said you were lunching with Sassoon," he said suspiciously.

"I am. What of it? — or don't you dare?"

He looked at her fixedly, divining her reason.

"I warned you to beware of me," she said demurely. "I love scenes — dramatic temperament, you know. Think how furious Sassoon will be! Well?"

"What time?" he said, with a snap of his jaws.

"Oh, half past two."

"I'll come!"

CHAPTER XII

TONY REX descended to place them in their automobile. He was a short youth in loose pepper-and-salt clothes, with a pointed nose and a quantity of tow hair tumbling over a freckled forehead. Doré hardly noticed him. Not so Ida, who, in true Salamander fashion, had already established a permanent intimacy.

"Why did you desert me?" said Doré, with hypocritical severity, when they had left their escort, hat in hand, on the curb.

"My dear, I couldn't help it!" said Ida volubly. "I was having such a wonderful party with Mr. Rex. My dear, I'm crazy about him! Did you ever see those funny little cartoons of his? Screams! Just think of it, he comes from almost the same place I do! We've made a date for to-morrow. Lord! I do like some one who talks English you can understand!"

Doré, impatient to be home, fed her with rapture-inciting questions and retired into her own speculations. Chance had played her a trick. She had had no intention of keeping her appointment with Sassoon; but now the dramatic possibilities of a clash between her host and Harrigan Blood, which had risen out of a light answer, had so whetted her curiosity that she found herself in sudden perplexity. Her encounter

with Blood had awakened in her all the mischievous, danger-seeking enthusiasms. They had scarcely passed half an hour, and yet he had left her breathless at his breakneck pace, the abrupt charge of his attack, his unconventionality, his stripping away of artifices. He had interested her more than she had foreseen.

Yesterday how her eyes would have sparkled with delight at having inveigled such a thrashing fish into her cunning nets! And even now it was hard to forego the excitement of such a game. Her dramatic self, once aroused by the tête-à-tête, was not easily subdued. After all, too easy a compliance with Massingale's ideas, too patient a waiting for his summons, was dangerous. Better to teach him how sought after was the prize. Besides, if she kept him waiting until the evening, she could tell by the first glance of his eyes how much he had suffered, how much he cared. She did not doubt in the least that, when she reached Miss Pim's, there on the mahogany hall table she would find his note; and blowing hot and cold, she ended up by saying to herself that if in that letter were things that could make her close her eyes with delight, she might possibly, on a mad impulse, go flying off to him. Only, it would depend; there would have to be things in that letter —

When, at last, she went tumultuously into the boarding-house, she ran through the heap of letters twice fruitlessly.

"It came by messenger; Josephus must have taken it up-stairs," she thought.

She ran up breathlessly, anxious and yet afraid,

flinging open the door, gazing blankly at the floor, then ransacking rapidly the table, the bureau-tops, the mantelpiece. Nothing had come — he had not written! She sat down furiously. She could not comprehend! On the table a great bouquet of orchids, with "Pouffé" in golden letters on the purple ribbon, was waiting. She saw it heedlessly.

He had not written! Why? She could not understand — could find no explanation. How could any one be so thoughtless, so cruel?

"I will telephone him myself!" she thought angrily, springing up.

She went to the door precipitately, before she could control herself. Then she stopped, wringing her hands, shaking her head. Perhaps he had come in person. She rang for Josephus. Had any one called? Had there been a message? None. Perhaps he had telephoned, and Winona had made a note of it. She went hastily to the pad where such notes were jotted down. But the page, to her dismay, was blank. She sat down quietly, folding her arms across her breast, gazing out of the window. All at once she bounded up, went rapidly down the hall, and entered Ida Summers' room.

"Come on. You're lunching with me. No excuses!"

"Where? With whom?"

"Doesn't matter — come! I'll tell you later!"

"Good heavens! what's the matter, Do?"

"Nothing! I'm a fool — I don't know. Only let's get out!"

Yes, she was a fool! The explanation was obvious! While she had been soaring with her dreams, he had gone quietly about his day. What had set her in a whirl had meant nothing to him—nothing at all! And for the moment, forgetting what had happened, forgetting how he had at the last returned, seeking admittance, she said to herself bitterly that she must have gone mad to imagine for an instant that there had been anything more than a moment's amusement between Judge Massingale and a crazy little fool living in the third floor front of a cheap boarding-house.

"Now to do as I please," she said recklessly. "We'll see if I'm of so little consequence. Sassoon and Blood shall pay for this!"

Ida Summers, overwhelmed at the prospect of meeting Alfred Edward Sassoon, was excitedly clamoring:

"But, Do, heavens! Give me a pointer; I'll never be able to say a word to a swell like that! What do you talk about?"

"Anything!" said Doré savagely. "What does he care what you talk about! Or any of them! Look him in the eyes, smile, flirt! Did you ever flirt with a butcher's boy?"

"Heavens! Dodo!"

"Well, I did! They're all the same!"

"What's happened?"

Doré shrugged her shoulders. But by the time they had drawn up in front of Tenafl's she had regained her calm in a dangerous coldness bent on mischief.

Sassoon came up softly, looking questions at this unexpected presentation of a third.

"I thought you would be more comfortable in public this way, instead of tête-à-tête," said Doré briefly, making the introduction. "You see how considerate I am!"

"Delighted, of course," said Sassoon, in his low unvarying tones. "Don't you think I'd be better up-stairs?"

"I said in the restaurant," answered Doré peremptorily.

Sassoon bowed, signaled a waiter, and led the way. She had gone hardly twenty steps into the chattering curious room, which stared at this public spectacle of Sassoon, when her eye fell on the figure of Judge Massingale. Their eyes met. She felt a sudden burning shame there before every one, wavered, and went hurriedly to her seat.

He had seen her! What would he think? Would he misunderstand her at seeing her thus publicly flaunted by Sassoon? What awful conclusions might not come into his mind at this persistent dogging of her steps? And after what had happened last night, with the memory of her blind clinging to him, the soft confession of her voice, what would he think now? Let him think what he wished, so long as he should suffer a little! If he were here, he could have come to her! If he were so mechanical, she would teach him jealousy.

But these thoughts, timorous, elated, determined, expectant, were not clearly defined to her. She had a sensation of fleeting emotions, utterly uncontrolled. She began to chat rapidly without saying anything at



What would he think?

all, seeking in the arrangement of the mirrors a favorable angle. At last she saw his table, and the direct confrontation of his stare. He was with a large party, mixed, a dozen at the least, and he was still looking in her direction.

"I don't care if he is furious," she thought defiantly. "If he is furious, he cares! I shall see him — talk to him. He'll make an excuse!"

She did not cease talking, but she did not hear a word she said or notice what Sassoon replied. She thought Ida was making grammatical errors in her excessive efforts to give the conversation dignity, and from the bored nervous way in which Sassoon was listening, she divined his fury at being thus circumvented. This pleased her. She wanted to be sure that Massingale could be jealous, but, in some confused way, she wanted Sassoon to be punished.

All at once in the mirror she saw Massingale rise to take his leave. In another moment, surely, he would turn as he came toward them. She would see him, talk to him, look into his eyes. She began hurriedly, frantically, laughing at nothing, to run from topic to topic, gesturing to attract her own eyes to the table, so that he might not perceive her agitation or know the sinking of her heart as she felt him nearer and nearer.

He was there, almost at her back, coming to her. In a moment she would hear his voice, that deep controlled tone, speaking her name. She was sure now that she was blushing, that her sparkling eyes betrayed her, that Sassoon, Ida surely, had guessed her agita-

tion. But she did not care! She felt only an exquisite happiness, a bodily glow. And all at once she saw that he had passed without even an attempt to catch her eye. He was in the doorway, and he was gone!

Why? Was it anger that she should be there with Sassoon? If it were only true! She tried to seize upon this idea, but all her courage had evaporated. She felt all at once without enthusiasm. If that were so, then she was wrong; perhaps he would never believe her.

"That was Judge Massingale, wasn't it?" she said aimlessly.

Sassoon jerked his head in assent, adding viciously:

"Family affair. Gets out as soon as he can. Mrs. Massingale entertaining some imported geniuses, probably."

"Whó?"

"Mrs. Massingale."

CHAPTER XIII

MRS. MASSINGALE! Doré heard the name a second time without quite realizing what it meant, as if the sound were suspended in the air before her, waiting for recognition before taking flight. She did not comprehend — she could not comprehend! The thing was too incredible!

“Ah, Mrs. Massingale,” she repeated mechanically.

All at once a sharp pain penetrated to her heart. The riot of fork and knife, the busy live sounds of conversation, were lost in a confused humming in her ears. Everything became blurred to her eyes, except the mounting W of Sassoon's mustache and the round eyes of Ida, which seemed to grow rounder and bigger before her. She felt suddenly stricken, and yet unable to cry out — suffocated. She let her head fall slowly, staring at the plate before her, a yellow and red plate with a curious scroll design in the center. No! She could not understand. It was not possible that such a thing could befall her. Married! Massingale married! Blackness — a wall — a wall that had no opening, that could not be scaled or turned.

A waiter was offering something at her side. She nodded, taking up a fork, all quite mechanically.

Inside she felt a hand closing over her heart, contracting it painfully. Then all at once she experi-

enced a burning feeling of shame and anger across her shoulders, on her cheeks, and on her lips where his kisses had touched her. How she had been entrapped, blindly, foolishly entrapped, caught and humiliated at the last, despite all her cleverness! Now she understood, in a flash of understanding, why he had not come, why he had not written, why he had not telephoned! He had gone further than he had meant. It was his conscience he was fleeing from — that conscience he had forgot when he had returned to her door!

“I understand! I shall see him no more!” a voice said within her. “It’s all over. It never was anything!”

She felt within her the beginnings of many fierce emotions — despair, blinding anger, a fierce unreasoning desire for revenge, a revolt against the forces that had tricked her. But these slumbering points of fire did not leap up instantly. The shock that suddenly had arrested her very being, seemed to have arrested the operation of her sensibilities: they did not respond — they were numbed. The realization was staggering. She could not meet it; she rejected it, striving to send it from her. She felt hurt, horribly, weakly hurt; but she did not wish to acknowledge what had happened. She only knew, in a groping way, that something horrible had suddenly fallen on her out of a clear sky — something that meant the end of all things, the lurking tragedy in her life: something that she would, perhaps, never, never live down!

All at once she began to talk, looking at Sassoon with a dangerous provoking light in her eyes, her cheeks unnaturally flushed, reckless and defiant.

"Poor Mr. Sassoon! Ida, look at him. Did you ever see a man so miserable? He's furious at me. He was counting on such a confidential, intimate little luncheon! It really is a shame to play him such a trick! But I warned him—I always play fair. I told him he was no match for us!" She laughed at his puzzled expression, rushing on: "Really, though, you should conceal your feelings better. You should learn from women. We never show what we feel!"

Did she show what was tearing at her heart? She wondered. She did not care! There was nothing but injustice in the world. What had she done to deserve such a blow? If she had to suffer, others should suffer too! Sassoon's eyes were lighting up, tantalized by this frantic savagery in the woman. She saw the look, and laughed at it, knowing the bitterness she had reserved for him. Now she was scarcely polite to him, mocking him to his face, eagerly awaking within him the demons of covetousness and revenge.

"What has happened to her?" thought Ida, watching her anxiously.

"Pretty little devil, she'll pay for this!" thought Sassoon, blinking at her, his arms before him, rubbing the back of his soft hands with his quiet, combustibly patient gesture.

"Ah, there's Mr. Blood at last!" Dodo cried, all at once. "Now it will be more amusing!"

She waited tremulously the meeting of the two men — these two who should pay so dear to her what she had received in injustice.

Sassoon did not rise. He shot a searching angry glance at Doré, closed one hand tightly over the other and raised his eyebrows in interrogation at the new-comer.

"Quarter of three," said Blood, standing, and barely nodding to Sassoon. "I've been waiting fifteen minutes — that's quite enough. Miss Baxter, you belong to me now!"

"Oh, is it as late as that?"

"Is Mr. Blood here on your invitation, Miss Baxter?" said Sassoon deliberately.

"Yes. We had an engagement for a ride up the river. I'm afraid I've kept him waiting."

"Turn about is fair play," said Harrigan Blood aggressively.

The looks the two men exchanged said what their meaningless phrases concealed.

Ida Summers, not in the secret, yet scenting complications, remained watching, puzzled and a little apprehensive.

"My turn later then," said Sassoon, with perfect politeness. He smiled a little, but it was a malicious smile.

"He detests me now," thought Doré, with a first curious unease at this controlled oriental passion, stubborn, willing to wait endlessly.

She was right. The humiliation which he accepted calmly, with an inward raging, had roused the brute

within him, but not the brute that gives up the hunt. To run her down at the last, to have the woman whom he curiously hated and desired, who hated and resisted him, but could not resist beyond the temptations he would spread—that was a passion worth any amount of money; that alone could make money precious to him.

“I may at least be permitted to accompany you to the door,” he said, showing his white, sharp little teeth in a well-constructed smile, surprising them by his self-possession. “I am glad to know Mr. Harrigan Blood is a rival; it simplifies matters, doesn’t it?”

“Yes, bandit,” said Blood, making the sign of drawing a knife.

Sassoon having helped Doré into her coat, stood holding her hand.

“What consoles me is that I am sure Mr. Harrigan Blood is no more a match for you than I am!” Then he added imperturbably, looking her boldly in the eyes: “You are very beautiful. You have a right to be as tantalizing as you like! I shan’t object in the least! Give me credit, pretty little tigress, for being quite submissive!”

“Lordy, I think you’re an angel, Mr. Sassoon,” said Ida Summers, who was sentimental, and who had the advantage of completely missing the situation.

“Your sympathy is very consoling, Miss Summers,” said Sassoon curtly, turning on his heel.

He went evenly to the telephone booth and called up his confidential broker:

"Humphreys, I want you to get me a little information very quietly."

"Yes, Mr. Sassoon?"

"Find out what is the extent of Mr. Harrigan Blood's holdings in the stock market. I want complete information, especially as to what he is holding on margins. Treat the matter as absolutely confidential!"

CHAPTER XIV

IDA SUMMERS insisted on departing on her own ways, laughingly proclaiming that if she couldn't be provided with an adorer she wasn't going to sit by for a second time and spoil the fun. Doré let her go without protest. She did not care now. Her head ached. She could not collect her thoughts — could not place before her what had happened. That everything had suddenly ceased, that in the cataclysm her youth, her dreams, her joy in being, were swallowed up, she knew. Something had happened, and yet she could not distinctly perceive it.

They went rushing up the crowded driveway, and on along the open Hudson, hour after hour. The man at her side, leaning forward eagerly, facing her, talked incessantly — talked to her as a man does only when he seeks to unfold all that he has to impress a woman. She answered correctly; she even heard phrases and repeated them mechanically, seeking to comprehend them.

"You are more than life — you are youth itself. I don't know why — every reason — you attract me, but I know I'm groping for you!

"Yes, it's youth, youth, a man like myself needs — the feeling of youth again, the daring of youth, impetuous, magnificent. That's what you can give me!

"I'll give everything — not by half measures; I want you to know all I'm holding back. You'll know the greatest joy in the world, of sharing everything!"

Once he took her hand. Then she turned, and without withdrawing the fingers, which felt no sensation, said:

"Don't do that!"

And he obeyed.

She listened, seeking only the sadness in the sky, the melancholy of isolated and distant things. She knew her heart was broken, that nothing could ever exist for her again. No, never could she feel a palpitating joy; it would all be gray and brown — brown and gray as the worn hills about her, nature, which had forgot its May! And at the same time she listened, smiling and provocative, to this other man who passionately courted her, laying open his innermost soul for her inspection — a man who proclaimed again and again that she drew him to her by the glow of her youth and the joy of life.

That afternoon was like a phantasmagoria. Even he, at the end, noticed her mental numbness.

"What's the matter with you?" he asked.

She looked at him, smiling negation.

"You seem crushed, as if I could stick a pin in you! What's wrong? Has that beast Sassoon insulted —?"

She shook her head. Even this incongruity did not penetrate.

"Listen!" he went on, retaining her hand as she

started to descend. "I'm not a fool! I won't throw myself away on any woman! I'll play fair, too, and open. I don't want backing and pulling—I want things to be big, direct, honest! You know what I feel; you know what I'm capable of feeling! Don't you?"

She smiled and nodded, without comprehending in the least. She was thinking, with a desperate longing, of the shelter of her room, still so far away.

"Very well. I'm going to see you once more," he said abruptly. "Then it's for you to decide. If you want me to come,"—he hesitated to give full emphasis,— "it's for you to send for me!"

She remembered the ultimatum afterward. Now she murmured something commonplace.

He caught her hand.

"Can't you tell me now?"

"What?" she said, striving to recall his meaning.

"Do you want me to come? Is it your wish?"

"Why—yes, why not?" she answered mechanically—nor did she see what leaped into his eyes.

She went hurriedly up the stoop and in. Suddenly she had the feeling that she used to have when she had left the tense concentrated glare of the footlights and passed into the relief of the shadowy wings. The smiles fled from her lips, the nervous provocative mask dropped away. She felt a mortal heaviness of accomplishment. She had lasted through the afternoon; she had not betrayed herself. Half-way up the second flight, she sat down abruptly, exhausted; then,

straining every nerve in her body, she reached the haven of her room, as a spent swimmer battling for the shore.

Then a new trial. From behind her door came the sound of voices. Again she took up her mask. The next moment Winona had sprung to her, embracing her feverishly, crying:

"I've got it! I've got it, you darling!"

"Ah — Blainey," she said, suffering her embrace.

But Winona, not to be prevented, continued hugging her frantically, babbling everything, all in a breath, frantic with joy and relief — Winona, whom the night before she had held sobbing in her arms, who to-day was the deliriously happy one!

Then she saw Snyder standing apart, and at her skirts a little girl, half child, half baby, clinging, shyly revolted. As soon as Doré saw her, she went forward impulsively, kneeling and holding out her arms. The child, with the divining instinct of childhood toward suffering, to the amazement of the others, ran swiftly into her embrace. Doré carried her to a chair, holding her head from her, looking into the starry eyes.

"What's your name?"

"Betty."

From that moment she forgot the others. The room seemed narrowed to their embrace, each clinging to the other. These arms, so warm against her neck, this soft weight against her breast, filled her with immeasurable awakening sadness, but a sadness that deadened the consciousness of self, as if this in-

nocence were the only affection that could understand, the only one that could minister to her pain! This helplessness pressing against her breast recalled her poignant childhood, unmothered yet often in passionate grief groping for maternal arms. If only now she could go in weakness, somewhere to confide her crushed body weakly as a wounded child! If only the others would go and leave her thus —

How long she remained thus she did not know. Winona went, returned and departed. All at once Snyder was standing above them, saying:

"Sorry — time's up! Young one must be getting home to roost!"

She took her convulsively to her breast. She did not know whether it soothed or hurt her more; only that it started within her a passionate hunger for this innocence that responded, this incomprehension that understood! She rose abruptly.

"Bring her often — often!" she said, turning away her face.

A knock at the door, and the black hand of Josephus extending a letter.

She knew at once whose letter it was; no need to look! She clutched it, hiding it against her dress. Betty, clinging to her skirts, indignant at her change of mood, clamored for recognition. She bent over, kissed her swiftly, laughed. Then she was alone.

She looked at the letter, but she did not open it. Instead, she placed it on a table, locked the doors, and clutching her hands until the nails cut in, began to pace the floor.

If he had dared — to seek another meeting!

She felt a hot indignant anger wrapping her whole body. She would show him her scorn! At one moment she was on the point of tearing up the letter unread, at the next of sending it back contemptuously. At the end she opened it and read:

"Dear Miss Baxter:

"I was out of my head. . . . I should have known my limitations. . . . I didn't. I am very sorry, and I only am to blame. Some later day I want to be your good friend. . . . Do you understand?"

"With great respect,

"L. M."

When she had read this unexpected renunciation, she forgot all her anger, all her resistance.

"He will never see me again!" she said, with a sob, pressing the letter convulsively against her tears.

She needed no second reading to understand that. She put the crumpled sheet into her waist, striking her temples with her little fists as she had once struck him, repeating:

"Never!"

In this moment she no longer had any doubts. She loved him madly, with an intensity that obliterated everything else. And now all this must be strangled; for, in her strange self-formed morality, such a love was unthinkable. The only man who had known how to take her, to see through her acting, to reach out roughly, brutally, like a master — this man belonged to another woman; — was barred to her forever!

"What have I done? Why — why should I be punished this way?"

Suddenly she seized a chair, and dragging it to the side window, sat down, her chin in her hands, staring through the glass at the sheer blankness of brick only a few feet away. It was beginning to be dusk. She felt herself caught; she yielded everything. The thought of pain was so abhorrent to her nature, she had always rushed so fearfully from the contact of suffering, that, now when she was caught without escape, everything crumbled. In this abject moment, as her body yielded to the pervading process of the dusk, she turned back over the entangled progress of her life, convinced that she was paying fearfully in retribution for selfishness and wickedness.

Life, which rises out of the past in its naked proportions only when we dumbly seek a reason for the calamity that overwhelms us, came thus to her as a conviction. What had happened must be her punishment.

She saw her progress as though she were looking down at great revolving spirals, complete in themselves, yet merging in an upward progress. How many men — not by tens, but by scores — she had deliberately used in her upward striving!

"Yes; this is my punishment!" she said breathlessly. She had a feeling that they — the others — were now to be revenged.

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She had only a faint impression of her home in a little village town of Ohio. Home it had never been.

Her father, brilliant, erratic, emigrant from New England, half politician, half journalist, had suddenly disappeared from her life when she was not yet in her teens. They had told her many things at the time. Afterward she had divined what must have happened — unhappiness, flight with another woman, divorce. Her mother, perhaps the most to blame, had remarried immediately. She had known nothing of her stepfather, only that he was some one in power in Cincinnati politics, and well-off. She had been left to the care of an aunt, and very soon she had realized that her duty in life was to make her own way.

And this way she had achieved, or rather had made others achieve for her. She had been precocious, feeling herself a little mongrel who must captivate by its tricks. How simple it had all been — this curious spiral mounting from the pillared house at the corner of the village green, through various strata, to this — to New York, and to the heart of New York at the last! She could never remember the time when she had not had the devotion of the opposite sex. No one had ever needed to teach her the art of pleasing, yet she had known how to exercise it everywhere. She remembered curious odd figures, girlhood admirers, whom she blushed now to have cared even to attract. How her ideas had changed! How she had been educated! And how many different types of men she had known! At first it had been the grocery clerk, a ruddy Saxon, who had cut prices and swollen measures, fatuously, for her sake; then a young engineer on the railroad who had appealed to her imagination; lit-

the storekeepers, a local reporter, the captain of the village nine — a giant in those days: not singly, but a dozen at once at her feet.

Next she had gone to high school in Toledo, where for the first time she had judged her local admirers by the standards of the city, a metropolis to her. There it had been another upward circle — students in the university, young lawyers, scrub doctors, embryo merchants, demigods by comparison. This first taste of the life of the city had decided her. She returned to her home but once — to leave it forever. She had sought a little capital and had obtained a few hundred dollars. There she had learned that her mother had been divorced, married again, and that it was quite hopeless to apply to her. She had had an enormous success on that return, with her city clothes and her imposing manners. The grocer's clerk had given up in despair at first sight; the others had hung back awed, realizing that she was not stuff for them. And here she had taken her first confidence, her first belief in her star — in her star, which was not stationary, but which should travel.

She had given, as excuse against the frantic objections of her aunt, that she must prepare herself to earn her living by stenography. She started zealously to equip herself, going to Cleveland and taking a modest hall bedroom at four dollars a week, board included. She continued firm in this resolve for exactly two weeks. But application was against her volatile nature. Besides, her masculine acquaintance had assumed such proportions that she could find no time for

work. And suddenly she had met Josh Nebbins, press-agent for a local theater.

She had been attracted to him immediately by his shoes — patent leather with chamois tops, that looked like spats and distinguished him from the common herd. He wore a colored handkerchief in his breast-pocket, English style, red or green shirts, and coats with curious pointed cuffs, which she felt only a New York tailor could have imagined. He had had the greatest influence on her life. He had shown her the easy way to things people coveted, analyzing the philosophy of her sex with his shrewd philosophy of life, contemptuous, successful and witty.

"Play the game, kid — play the game," he would say to her. "The world's full of soft suckers ready to fall for a pretty pair of lamps, and yours are Ai flashers. Make 'em give you what you want! Follow my tips and I'll show you how. And say, don't for one moment think you have to give up anything for what you get. No, sir, not Anno Domini, U. S. Ameriky!"

She had taken his tips, followed his leads. She had soon learned how to acquire whatever she needed. If it was a dress, there was always an admirer in a wholesale store who frantically insisted on the privilege of making a present. Another placed a carriage at her disposal, grateful for the privilege of her company when it pleased her. Other presents were easily convertible.

Nebbins had even changed her name. She had been called Flossie, a contraction from Florence. He

had disapproved and invented Doré, and she had accepted enthusiastically. She had a strange intuition that what he did would result for her good, and obeyed implicitly — yes, with even an uneducated admiration. They had become engaged. She would have married him, but he was too much in love not to be proud. He wanted three thousand in the bank, and so they had waited.

Through his offices, she had begun as a super in the local stock company, advancing to an occasional speaking part. She had been at home at once on the stage; she felt born for this. The next season she had entered another stock company playing a circuit, as a regular member. She had wept desperately on leaving Nebbins, completely under his ascendancy. She had even offered at the last moment to throw up everything and marry him. He had refused honestly. She had not seen him since.

This memory tortured her. She had soon progressed to where she had seen him in true perspective, or rather in his ridiculous lights. She quickly grew ashamed of the romance. It was something she would have blotted from her life, the more so because at the bottom she felt an obligation, and it revolted her to think that what she was become had, at a critical moment, depended on a Yankee press-agent named Josh Nebbins, who wore ridiculous patent leather shoes with chamois tops!

She was ashamed, and at the same time she was afraid — afraid lest at some time this persistent man, to whom her word had once indiscreetly been given,

should surge up out of the past and claim her! He had been the only man from whom she had ever directly accepted money. It had not been much,—a hundred dollars given as a reserve; they were engaged to be married; he had silenced her objections,—but still the fact remained. She had a thousand times resolved to pay it back—to rid herself of this fetter of the past. She had never done so. This was her greatest reproach.

From Nebbins on, the way had not been difficult. She had never saved much money, nor continued long in one opportunity; but she had learned confidence, and how easy opportunities rise for a pretty girl with audacity and wit. But always, in her progress from city to capital, from capital to metropolis, she felt a shadowy crowd of men, reproachful and embittered. She had never been affected by the pangs she had awakened, nor paused to think that there could be any wrong in using whatever presented itself to her—never before. But to-night, alone, facing her first defeat, revolted and stricken, she felt guilty—horribly guilty; and as her faith was simple, and God had always appeared to her as a good friend, she sought His reasons in her past, and said to herself:

“Yes; that is why it has come—that is why I am punished! Oh, I must be very wicked!”

In this conviction, her offending seemed to her enormous, unending. From the day of her arrival in New York until now, she felt that she had never been anything but selfish, cruel, mercenary and calculating. No! Certainly she had not scrupled to use men . . .

and what men she had known, had availed herself of, climbed above, and discarded. Now the smoke wreaths of her progress swirled more rapidly, thickly revolving, mounting more slowly. She had found her dinners in humble restaurants, paid for in half-dollars by young men already pinched in the struggle of salaries, young men in whom that spark of hope of which Harrigan Blood had spoken burned heedlessly — dreaming a miraculous future and the winning of another Helen. Next it was the coarse world of the theater and the restaurants — heavy sated types of men, demanding their brutal pay, men who disgusted her, with whom she could not share the same air, dangerous antagonists. Another swirl, another chance opportunity, and she was out of the contagion, unscotched, meeting at last men of good manners, gentlemen in name and often in heart. What an incredible progress it had been! She saw few faces distinctly, but in the covetous, brutal, chivalrous, or adoring crowd she remembered here and there a look, a word, something that had struck her by its ridicule, by its cruelty, or inclined her to a sudden gentleness.

She, too — how she had changed through all this! How ridiculous had been her early admirations, how childish her ambitions! What a change had come within — an education of all her tastes, a desire for the beautiful, a longing for refinement, a need of distinction to respond to her abiding sense of delicacy.

Yes; to acquire all this she had done much harm, inflicted useless pain on many. But now retribution had come, inexorable. That she had never thought of

—that she too could suffer. And she did suffer, abjectly, hopelessly, sitting there pressed against the window-frame, staring at the unseen wall across which the figures of the past went swirling down in long revolving spirals, like the slow undulating swirls of smoke. There was no way out. She would never see him again—he would never seek her. She was accursed, punished for all past wickedness, singled out for tragedy by fate.

What now could become of her. What could she fall back on? Who could help her? She was horribly alone—and afraid.

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That night she dreamed a terrible dream. She was dining at Tenafl's in the midst of a great company. Massingale was there. By some strange turn, Mrs. Massingale did not exist; instead, it seemed to her that he was bending over her saying:

"It's all a mistake. I'm not married; I've never been married. That was my brother's wife. You are to be Mrs. Massingale. Do you understand? That's why every one is here!"

She had looked around and seen so many faces: Sassoon, with his mounting mustache; Mrs. Sassoon, judging her through a lorgnette; Lindaberry, De Joncy, Mr. Peavey, who was wiping his eyes with a handkerchief, Busby, Stacey even.

All at once some one was standing at her side,—some one who wore patent leathers with chamois tops,—and Josh Nebbins, in a purple shirt and green and

black check suit, derby on one side, was grinning at her, saying:

"Hello, kid! Here I am. Made my wad. Come to get you!"

Next she was on the edge of a precipice. Some one had his arms about her, holding her back, and some one else was trying to pull her over.

She was crying:

"Don't let him throw me over. Don't, please! I'll love you, only you, Your Honor!"

But, to her surprise, it was not Massingale who was trying to save her; it was Lindaberry.

And the man who had her by the arm, pulling her over, she could not see; only she could see far down, hundreds of miles, to a little thread of a stream. Stones were slipping under her feet; she was going over; and all at once she looked up. A pair of patent leathers with chamois tops! It was Josh Nebbins.

She awoke with a scream.

CHAPTER XV

THE next morning she resolved to go at once to Blainey, to fling herself heart and soul into her profession, to get an engagement in some stock company. She hesitated, and ended by putting it off till the next day. She said to herself that she must seek relief in flight, a new life, new friends for a month at least, until she should be stronger. She said it to herself each day, and each day she tarried. Perhaps she hoped for some sign of weakness on Massingale's part, an overture that would give her the confidence of a scornful rejection. But each day passed without word or sign from him. This firmness, this regained control, this one man who could steadfastly avoid her, obsessed her. She sought not to think of him — and his image intruded itself every day, at every moment. When the telephone rang its always mysterious call, she went to it with a tense arrestation of her nerves expectant of his voice, fearing — hoping. At the theater or the opera, in her first sweeping glance over the audience, it was always his face she sought. She sought it in the chances of the crowded streets, and with a restless glance searched among the carriages as she passed alone, or in gay company, up the avenue. She knew where he held court, following the calendar in the newspaper, and often she was tempted to steal

in at the back of the dim, crowded court room, unobserved — just why, with what undefined hope, she did not know. This impulse she resisted but never confidently conquered. Each day she repeated that she must go; each day she tarried.

For two weeks she led a dulled and purposeless existence. She succeeded in crowding the day, in shutting out opportunity for thought, in consuming the night so as to return with enough fatigue to fall into heavy troubled slumber. The bright moments were those when she went with Snyder's little girl on brief excursions into the country, for a moment's forgetfulness among the woods, an hour of willing slavery to childish whims, throwing herself into foolish romping games that brought a comforting sense of the world's unrealities. The sensation that childish clinging brought her at times surprised her by its intensity. She had never thought of having children, and yet this child awoke strange yearnings. Troubled, she told herself that it was the weakness of her suffering intensified by loneliness, and satisfied herself with this reply.

Her days were curiously divided. She saw Harri-gan Blood and Sassoon, but to their assiduous pursuit she flung only crumbs. She saw them in the tantalizing publicity of the down-stairs parlor — rarely, for an hour perhaps; but she steadfastly refused further concessions. Busby, clearly inspired, sought to entice her to many alluring entertainments, some conventional, others not quite so. She refused all. She avoided all parties where she might encounter the one man, avoiding too that entourage of his which she had so eagerly

sought with a sense of right on the occasion of the luncheon to De Joncy.

Instead, she sought desperately to return to the light bantering existence she had formerly known. The glimpses she had had into the upper world frightened her. It laid before her crude vanities which she would have preferred to ignore; it started temptations where she had been conscious of none. In her present depression, an instinct bade her flee all that dazzled her; a voice whispered to her that, in the mad impulses of a groping despair, she might not always resist, or care to resist — that it were better not to know that luxury and power lay so easily at hand, ready on the feminine fingers of Sassoon or the imperious clutch of Harrigan Blood.

Nor was the temptation a fancied one, for the hunger that had awakened was an inner one. In her short glimpse of luxury she had become aware of new longings, material cravings, vanities of the flesh. Occasionally in the mornings, to escape from her moods, she went out for long walks past tempting shop-windows — those shop-windows of New York, more devastating than all the flesh hunters, on whose balances lie how many feminine souls! She would stop breathlessly, hypnotized, hanging on visions of gorgeous silks, imperial furs, opera-cloaks that might transform a peasant into a queen, jewels that danced before her eyes, fascinating them strangely with their serpentine coldness.

She could not prevent her lawless imagination from wandering, visualizing another Doré Baxter, who

swept gorgeously among the costly women of the opera and the restaurants, compelling a startled attention, luxuriant, radiant, triumphant with the sinister blinking eyes of Sassoon always over her glowing shoulder. What constantly started this torturing image before her was that she had now no doubt as to what she could do with him. At first, incredulously, she could not believe that his interest would survive a week — that he would not depart furiously, once the scales had fallen from his hungry glance and he had realized that in her mocking society nothing was reserved for him but humiliation and deception. But, to her amazement, she found it was not so; that something had penetrated profoundly into that chilled soul, and that the passion which had been kindled was one that sweeps men on to irretrievable follies, unthinkable sacrifices, at the hands of a calm woman. Sassoon — no. But Sassoon and the lure of a thousand shop-windows spreading before her their soft enwrapping mysteries of splendor. . . . Occasionally, gazing entranced before some bewildering evening gown, a peignoir all lace and cloud, a rope of milky pearls, she felt this sensation so compellingly that she would retreat breathlessly, trembling from head to foot.

What made the temptation doubly insidious was her own awakened point of view. She saw now the immense difference in scale between the upper world and the semi-Bohemian state of the Salamanders. Their desperate struggle to make both ends meet, their prodigies of imaginative planning, their campaigns of economy, all to procure a few insignificant dollars —

this struggle of wits which had once exhilarated her now depressed her fearfully. She had a sort of second sight; she saw now the approach of failure, the inexorable famine that lay beyond the short dominion of youth. She had always dimly perceived this danger, saying to herself that she could cast the die before another cast it for her. But now, thinking of her twenty-third year still six months away, she had a feeling as if she were being hurried toward her choice, frantically driven; and yet, she could not see where all this whirlwind force was carrying her.

At this moment her mentality began. She felt a new birth of her reason — that unquiet searching of the self so often child of grief. She began to question — to analyze and to strive to penetrate the future. She saw herself in others, the past and the possible future: Ida Summers, arriving like a skipping child, all heedless laughter, unconscious, holding out avid arms for flowers, and Winona, a figure with half averted face, hand upon the latch, ready to depart. No, she would not be like Winona; that was impossible, she said, with a shudder; Winona was but a figure standing as a warning!

Winona herself, occupied with rehearsals, went out of her day, momentarily. Doré took her to the opera on the Monday nights that Mr. Peavey had placed at her disposal. She never made the mistake of seeking a male escort. She felt always that Peavey's timid eyes were on her, hidden somewhere in that vast concourse, spying on her actions, waiting suspiciously to see if her companion were a man, a young and ardent

man of her own generation. Nor was this entirely surmise. The second Monday, he had loomed at her side out of nowhere, happiness in his eyes, radiant to find her so discreetly accompanied. He had taken them to supper afterward. It seemed to her that Winona had put herself out to attract him — excessively so, considering her proprietorship; for the etiquette of Salamanders is imperious on such points. But then, Winona was in a curious mood, brooding, gay by starts and as suddenly silent. Doré sometimes wondered if things were working out well at the theater.

In her determination to resist this life — Massingale's world, into which she had blundered so unluckily — she turned hungrily to the company of the other Salamanders, with a new need of woman's sympathy and understanding. Besides Winona and Ida, there were on the floor below Estelle Monks, whom she knew well and Clarice Stuart and Anita Morgan, roommates, whom she knew slightly, despite their repeated advances. They were trained nurses, lately arrived from the far West, older than the rest, but Salamanders by their craving for excitement and their fidelity to the rule of never allowing business to interfere with pleasure. Doré had always had that curiosity which each Salamander feels for another. How did they play their games? Had they methods which she had not divined? Above all, what was to be the end of the comedy? Readily welcomed, she drifted into their society for a week or so. They engaged themselves only for the day, and yet, despite the exacting strain they underwent (and, to her surprise, she soon discov-

ered that they were passionately devoted to their profession), each night by half past seven they came tripping down the steps to where Doré, with the escorts, was waiting in an automobile to whirl them to the theater, to a long drive into the country, dinner and an impromptu dance, and then home by the midnight stars, ready to rise with the dawn and begin the day's toil. They seemed made of iron.

They had their stories to tell, their analyses of men and life. Doctors, it seemed, were sometimes human, especially old ones. Often they had in the party men whose names were famous in the profession, abrupt incisive tyrants, neither abrupt nor tyrannical with them, submitting to their banter, prodigal of compliments, just as difficult to be kept in place as other men. Doré listened in astonishment to their conversations, amazed at the impertinence of the girls, and the ready laughing acceptance of those who, in the day, commanded them.

"Why?" said Clarice Stuart, when she had once voiced this amazement. "Putting a different coat on them isn't going to change them, is it? Lud bless you, girl, I thought the way you did, once. I got over it quickly! Do you want to know my first experience here, when I got to New York? An eye-opener, let me tell you! I was substitute on a surgical case,—private house, patient sleeping under opiates,—when Doctor Outerwaite, the same we were with the other night up at the Arena, came in for examination. 'Course, in that case, the family always go out of the room until the examina-

tion is over. Outerwaite! Lord, we'd heard nothing but Outerwaite all through the West! I was frightened stiff! They say he's a devil in the operating-room, swearing like a trooper if everything doesn't go like clockwork! Imagine me! First case in little New York! Well, I shooed the family out, closed the doors and stood at the patient's side — he quite out of his head, delirium and opiates; me watching the Doc, and ready to jump at a sneeze. And what do you think he did? Go to the patient? Nixie! He came straight up to little me, slipped his arm around, and said:

“‘Why, you beautiful creature! where did you come from?’”

She laughed in a superior worldly way, adding:

“They're not all that way; but there are some gay boys! Lord! I could tell you some story! I say, Dodo, if you ever get appendicitis, let me know. I'll fix it for you so it won't cost you a cent!”

So even distinguished surgeons, men of international reputation, had their little excursions behind the scenes, vulnerable as the rest before an impertinent, defiant Salamander! Curious, she asked questions, seeking to know how such wardrobes grew from modest salaries. Clarice was nothing if not direct.

“Graft!” she said, with a shrug of her shoulders. “Of course, the wages are good, but they don't set up a wardrobe of Paris models, do they? Well, it's a question of presents, see?” She laughed, shrugging her shoulders. “A patient you've pulled through pneumonia, or a case of trepanning, has a right to

periodic fits of gratitude, hasn't he? And, of course, when you leave there's always a present — money, if you're supporting the family at home." She emphasized this with a wink. "When you get a club man, a good sport who's been in a blue funk at dying, it shapes up pretty well! Of course, when you strike a woman, it's a scarf or a kimono. But we've been rather lucky!"

Then, become suddenly serious, she continued thoughtfully:

"I say, Dodo, it's real curious, the effect you get over a man when he's pulling out of a smashing illness! You know, if I'd wanted to I could have married —" She stopped, lost in a reverie. "A nice boy, too. Sometimes I think I was a fool!"

"Will you marry?" said Dodo curiously.

"Anita says she will. Don't know about little me. I'm engaged, you know." She held up two fingers and laughed: "But, lord! there's no hurry. It's such fun as it is!"

As she grew more confidential (and secrecy was not her failing), Doré herself was surprised at the daring of the nurse's life. She spoke lightly of things that Doré did not approve of — now. She had met men in unconventional ways, without introduction, according to a fancy — the expression is "picked up." When Doré demurred, she said, with western frankness:

"Say, how *would* I meet them, then? Oh, I manage them all right — after! That's where their little surprise comes in!"

And she began to tell of the time when she had flirted with two well-known club men at the Horse Show, men who were dying to speak to her, but were afraid on account of the presence of curious others. But, in passing near them, they had slipped their cards into her pocket. Of course, she had not written them — she had met them by chance afterward at a restaurant; but she had not been offended by their advance. They were of her steady acquaintance now.

But Doré's incursion into this curious society brought her small amusement. She grew tired quickly of these too easily read admirers. Then after what she had known, they were all second-chop. The company of Estelle Monks interested her more. Since the morning she had surprised her in the office of the *Free Press*, her curiosity had been stirred to further investigation. Estelle Monks herself forestalled her. She came into her rooms suddenly one morning, and plumping down, abruptly inquired:

"Do me a favor, Dodo?"

"Any!"

"Don't mention to Mr. Harrigan Blood that I inhabit these quarters!"

Doré, puzzled, a little embarrassed too, moved away, saying:

"What do you mean? Why not?"

"No offense to you, bless you!" said Estelle Monks, with a curious smile. "You see, I'm on the paper. He — well, he wouldn't quite relish the idea of tripping over me when he turns up with a bunch of flowers."

"You exaggerate," said Doré nervously. "Harri-gan Blood's not really interested."

"H. B.'s a damned fascinating man," said Estelle Monks directly, "but he doesn't like reporters about, whether he's serious or not — particularly his own reporters."

"He's not serious!" said Doré.

Estelle Monks smiled.

"That is, he only thinks he is."

"I guess you understand him, don't you?" said Estelle Monks, still smiling.

"Yes!" She looked at her friend, interested. "What are you doing on the paper? You never told any one."

"Raise your hand and cross your heart!" said Estelle solemnly. "I'm Ferdie Amsterdam."

"You?" said Doré in amazement. For under that pseudonym was conducted the famous society column of the *Free Press*.

"Expert on the Four Hundred — social dictionary."

"Honest?"

"Since two months!"

"But how do you manage?"

She told her story. She had come from San Francisco, where she had done some clever work on the papers. She had a few letters of introduction, and she knew a few men of the journalist emigration. She had gone to the *Free Press* office with an article in hand, *Impressions of a Western Girl*.

"What, it was you?" said Doré, suddenly enlightened.

"Don't wonder you didn't recognize the photo. Belonged to some one on the coast. Wrote my article in Chicago — fake, of course, but highly seasoned. I handed it over as if I owned a Middle West chain of papers; told them I'd go out and work up the names. But the feeling was all right, so it was! The stuff went big; I was fixed!"

Doré was on the point of divulging her own experience, and how she had been outstripped; but she held her tongue with a new caution, asking:

"But the society game, Estelle — how do you know about that?"

"I don't!" she answered frankly. "It started as a joke; it made good! The real Ferdie Amsterdam — that's to say, the last of the line, an old maid called Benticker — got a pain somewhere and was carted off to the hospital. I was put on the column and told to fill it up somehow. I sent in a hurry call to a couple of my friends, Ben Brown and Will Cutter — you know them, big magazine specialists — and we sat down with a couple of weeklies, and doped out a cracker-jack story. It amused them. They used to laugh themselves sick over being Ferdie Amsterdam. Since then we lunch at Lazare's every day and dope it out. And say, the boss is so tickled, he's raised my rates! What do you think of that? 'Course, now I'm getting the jargon, going out and meeting people —"

"Going out?" said Doré, opening her eyes.

"Some! Ferdie Amsterdam gets a bid to any big affair that's pulled off. Say, the way these leaders of society currycomb your back would paralyze you! Trouble to get information? Why, they're dying to crowd into print!"

"And so that's the way you worked it," said Doré musingly.

"Sure. Drop in to lunch with me and see the board in session!"

Doré liked Estelle Monks. There was something self-reliant and businesslike about her that inspired confidence. She had a big point of view, one who had unbounded charity and understanding. She invited Doré to go with her as her guest to several affairs, musicales, large balls and tableaux, but the invitation was always declined. As she knew her, though, Doré was surprised to find how naturally this confident little worker, with the slow and alluring smile, gathered about her men from the most fashionable sets, men whom she converted into friends, firm in their respect. She admired this gift, knowing how much more difficult it is to establish a friendship than to begin a flirtation.

She went once or twice to luncheon with her, amused at the facile clever way Estelle Monks enlisted the services of two such celebrities as Ben Brown and Will Cutter, and that in friendship solely. It must be a gift — a gift that was not in Doré's power. Even on the few occasions she met them, Will Cutter looked at her with awakened fixity, very different from the way he beamed jovially on Estelle Monks.

A smile, and Doré felt he would enlist under her banner. But she steadfastly resisted this disloyalty; for among Salamanders etiquette is strict, and possession is all points of the law.

For three weeks, then, she sought to immerse herself in this old life -- sharing the surface confidences of the Salamanders, playing her part in little financial intrigues, running into pawn-shops with Winona, or making profitable arrangements at Pouffé's for the crediting on flowers withheld for Ida Summers, who was new; working up the birthday game for Clarice and Anita, when consulted by admirers as to what would please these difficult ladies; raising her own capital by the reselling of the bi-weekly basket of champagne from Peavey, the flowers that Stacey, Gilday and Sassoon assiduously offered, receiving her share of convertible presents from chance admirers, hooked for a week or two -- at the bottom without zest, sick at heart, tired of it all. Then, all at once, one morning after she had gone to the door of the court-house where Massingale was holding court, in a sudden revulsion she fled to Blainey's office, wildly resolved on escape.

Two days later she found herself in Buffalo, inscribed on the list of a stock company, resolved to stay for months until her mental balance had been regained and the deep wound in her heart had become but a faint scar. She stayed just two weeks. The quiet, the relaxed air, life in so many ruts of the little big town, awoke in her a fear of the past, of being sucked back into the oblivion of early days, as if what

she feared night and day had already begun — retrogression. Was that the true reason of her return, or was there some impelling magnet too compelling to be resisted, or even to be acknowledged?

She came directly into Blainey's office, profiting by her entrée which carried her triumphantly past the crowded anteroom, where old and young, the hopeful and the resigned, the restlessly impatient and the suddenly passive, waited wearily, watching her with hostile eyes.

"Well, Blainey, I'm back!" she said abruptly, and nodding at the dapper secretary, she added: "Send him out! I want to talk to you."

"Well, kid?" he said, studying her shrewdly when they were alone.

"Well, I'm going to be square with you!" she said, crossing her arms defiantly. "I'm miserable, Blainey!"

"Trouble here?" he said, laying a fat forefinger on his heart.

"Yes."

"Ein — bad!" he said solemnly. He flung away the half smoked cigar, chose another and nervously turned it in his fingers. "So I'd sized it up — well, we all get it. Why? Lord love me, of all I've watched and stirred up, that's what gets me — why a damned clever girl like you, or a cold-headed old son-of-a-gun like me should ever fall — I'm sorry, kid! Are you going to make a fool of yourself?"

"I don't know, Blainey," she said, shrugging her

shoulders. She had a feeling, all at once, of confidence in his rough common sense.

"That's queer. I thought you were too keen!" He was thinking of Sassoon, wondering if she would throw away such an opportunity for a short romance. "Some youngster, eh? — without a cent — talking big!"

He lighted the cigar and puffed it reflectively.

"Kid, we Americans are a bunch of damned fools. Sentiment's our middle name! Why should I hand you a line of talk? Haven't I fallen for it a dozen times? Yes, and ready to begin all over again! We've got to love some one, or we get to wabbling!"

He looked at her, and again he thought of Sassoon, and what the situation might yield. He wanted to be honest with her, to give her good advice according to his lights.

"So that's why you shot off to Buffalo, eh?" he said, with a long whistle. "Bad theory! Stay by it; see the fellow ten times a day — that sometimes cures. Say, I'm going to hand you the truth like a Dutch uncle! You've got things going your way; you've got the whole game before you, cinched." He hesitated. "Sassoon, ready to back you to the limit, opportunity, money backing; you know the place." . . . He waved contemptuously at the warring world of the Rialto below — "And you know the game. Sassoon's good for thousands — in your hands. And then, there's the advertisement! Don't lose your head over a couple of square shoulders!"

She did not set him right. For her purposes she preferred that he should entirely misconceive her. She allowed him to go on, volunteering his worldly, well meant advice.

"All you say is true," she said finally, with an indefinable smile. "Blainey, I've always said I would make up my mind at twenty-three. Be patient. It may be sooner!"

"Wish I could take twenty-five years off my back," he said slowly, without rising. "Take your time — take your time; and if you get weepy, come in and use my shoulder. Understand?"

He rang the bell, waved his hand cheerily and watched her until she disappeared. She went, strongly impressed by his kindness, half inclined impulsively to return and begin in earnest.

She had gone directly to him from the station. Now she returned to Miss Pim's. When she was back once more in her own room, the sensation of homecoming was so acute that she could have sat down in the middle of the floor and cried for joy. But in another moment Ida Summers rushed in.

"Dodo! The Lord be praised! You saved my life! Dinner, theater and a gorgeous cabaret affair afterwards. Vaughan Chandler's coming for me at seven — I promised to get another girl. Every one you know is going. Every one's been asking for you. Swear you'll come?"

"Come? You bet I will!" she cried with a great burst of relief, flinging herself frantically in Ida's arms.

At eleven o'clock, after dinner and the theater they started in a party of six, hilariously, for Healey's, where a dozen crowds were to congregate for an impromptu cabaret dance. She felt elated, gloriously happy. It seemed to her as if she had regained the mastery of herself again, that the old zest had returned with the impulse of flirtation which she had already begun with a little reticence of youths who sought discreetly to seduce her by the confusion of the bumping ride. The dance was a series of ardent soulful messages, into her mooring eyes of cloudy blue. After all, the voluntary exercise served its purpose. It had showed her the stupidity of noogie. Life was too short to be taken seriously. Admiration of ten men was better, more exhilarating, more exciting, than ridiculous fancied passions *au sérieux*. She was so happy, so brilliantly gay, liberated in spirit, avid for excitement and admiration, that even Vaughan Chandler, Ida's cavalier by rights, watched her with amazed disloyal eyes.

Others were before them in the great Jungle Room which had been reserved. From below they heard the barbaric swinging music of stringed instruments, and divined the laughing, swaying, gliding confusion of dancers. Doré, with brilliant eyes and impatient tripping feet, hurried them on, eager to lose herself in the swirling throbbing measures, and the first two persons she saw on entering, were — Lindaberry and Judge Massingale!

CHAPTER XVI

MASSINGALE did not perceive her entrance. A moment later she was in the arms of one of her escorts, lost in the confusion of the dance. Whirling figures obscured her view. She caught flashes of his erect square-shouldered figure, glimpses of the high forehead and stern gaze, and the next moment she was flinging back a laughing salutation to a suddenly appearing acquaintance flying past her. Whatever happened, she would never look in his direction; he should never know that he existed for her! And still, in the kaleidoscopic hazards of the frantic measure, his face was the only fixed point which a dozen futile shapes strove in vain to obscure. He had his hand on Lindaberry's shoulder, bending over him in animated exhortation; other men, three or four, laughingly provocative or dissuading, were in the group. Then, all at once, an abrupt end, laughter, applause, a quick clearing of the floor, and Massingale, looking across the room, saw her.

She had no experience of the discipline of society; she understood only crude impulses of nature; she never believed that he would dare approach her. He came directly to her, offered his hand with perfect courtesy, gave a formal greeting, bowed and left her immediately. She was so taken by surprise by the ease with which he had surmounted a difficult mo-

ment that she suffered him to take her hand and to depart without the slightest resistance. But immediately afterward her anger flamed up. What! not a word of excuse, not a regret, nothing but a trivial evasion! And forgetting all her own resolves, she flung herself recklessly into the excitement of the evening, recklessly resolved to make herself a thousand times more desirable, to outdo even the most daring of the dancers, to draw on herself every regard, that he might see to what he had driven her. He continued to watch her, transformed into a spectator, arms folded, seeing no one else; and with a keen cutting joy she saw the furrow of pain and doubt which gathered across his brow, as she abandoned herself, head thrown back, laughing up at her partner, as she had seen Georgie Gwynne once in the embrace of Lindaberry. The men, already overexcited, crowded about her, contending for each dance.

Now she no longer avoided Massingale's troubled gaze. Each time she passed near him, she sent him a scornful veiled glance, a smile of derision and recklessness, which said: "There — you see! This is what you have done to me; this is where I am going!" A fury impelled her on; she wished to drive him, at all costs, from the room. But still he remained rooted by the piano, never averting his eyes. She saw that he suffered, and by every coqueting provoking glance, by every seductive movement of her body, by the very vertigo of her languorous, half closed eyes and parted eager lips, she sought to bury deeper the sting.

Lindaberry sought her, among others, and she

danced with him once, twice, a third time, granting him that personal distinction which would double the pain she was inflicting. This evening Lindaberry was different. She felt in him an agitation equal to her own. He danced extraordinarily well, with an impulsive sense of the alternately controlled or passionately rebellious movements of the dance. And the impulses within him which subdued her movements to his, fiercely checking them or suddenly enveloping her in a mad, surging, frantic rush which left her breathless, was something not of the room, or the mechanics of the step, but an inner fierce revolt that sought its liberating expression in this physical madness. Even in her obsession or resentment, she felt a curiosity to know why this was so. Other men enlightened her, whispering caution:

"For God's sake, Miss Baxter, don't let him drink any more!"

"He's been on a spree for a week!"

"They say he lost forty thousand last night at Canfield's."

She could not believe it. His face was so hilariously young, lighted up with such boyish laughter. To-night she had no fear of him; if he was reckless, so was she!

"This is nothing!" he had said to her once, when he had driven her about the room at such a pace that she had halted, laughing, protesting that it was glorious, waiting for breath. "How would you like to go spinning along at eighty miles an hour? That's sensation!"

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A Fury impelled her

She had not understood his meaning, but, the idea once in her head, she returned to it. It seemed to her all at once that in her hand lay the final stroke that would wound Massingale as nothing else would wound, which would show him how little she cared for anything now — reputation, danger, or what might come after.

"You like the feeling of eighty miles an hour?" she said to Lindaberry, the next time he came.

"Adore it!"

"Is your machine here?"

"Yes."

"Show me what it is like — eighty miles an hour!"

"Do you mean it?"

"Of course!"

"You've got the nerve?"

She laughed; it was not a question of courage.

"Come on, then!"

She nodded, and glanced about the room. Ida Summers was at the piano, clamoring for a certain dance, not five feet from Massingale. She went quickly, saying, in a voice that would carry where she intended:

"Ida, I'm off for a lark. Don't be worried if I disappear!"

"Heavens, Dodo, what are you going to do now?" said Ida, looking up startled.

"Great fun! Mr. Lindaberry's going to show me what it feels like to go a mile a minute in the dark."

To her surprise, she was instantly surrounded by

those who had heard her remark — a group in violent protest.

“You’re mad!”

“Lindaberry’ll wreck the car!”

“Don’t you know his condition?”

“Miss Baxter, it’s suicide!”

Massingale alone did not offer a word.

She put them laughingly away with double-edged words:

“Danger? So much the better! What do I care?”

But she had considerable difficulty in freeing herself. When finally she escaped, laughing, and had made for the entrance, Lindaberry, too, was facing a storm of protest from those who had learned of his proposed escapade.

“I say, Miss Baxter, I’m looked on as a slaughter-house champion here,” he said, laughing. “No one particularly cares about my neck, but a good many do about yours! What do you say? Shall we give them the slip?”

“I’m ready!”

“Can’t we put up a little bet on this?” he continued triumphantly. “It’s now ten minutes before one. Yonkers and back, despite cops, punctures and accidents, in forty minutes! Who’ll take me for a hundred, even at that?”

A chorus of murmurs alone answered him:

“Don’t be a fool, Garry!”

“Not I!”

“You ought to be manacled!”

"I'll make it two to one—five to one!" He stopped expectantly, shrugged his shoulders, and turned to Doré. "Miss Baxter, I give you my word of honor there's not the slightest risk. Still, it's up to you. Well?"

"I'm crazy about it!" she said, with a reckless laugh, slipping her hand through his proffered arm.

Below, she drew back suddenly. Judge Massingale was on the sidewalk, standing by the car. He turned at once to Lindaberry, looking steadily past her.

"Garry, this is sheer madness! You have no right to do what you're doing! Miss Baxter does not know what she is getting into!"

Lindaberry's only answer was a boyish laugh, and a hand to Doré, who sprang to her seat.

"Risk your own life. If you'll go alone, I'll take up your bet!"

"Listen to him, Miss Baxter!" said Lindaberry, with an airy wave of his hand. "Why, upon my honor, I'm the safest driver in New York!"

Massingale gave a groan of despair.

"Besides, if you're arrested and brought into court, Garry, Miss Baxter's name will be dragged —"

"I won't be nabbed. And, if I am, Judge, I'll telephone for you! Besides, there isn't a cop in the place that doesn't love me like a brother. Ask Mulligan, here!"

The patrolman on the beat, who had lazily sauntered up at his colloquy, grinned and shook his head.

"Why, every time I get in a scrap with one of them," continued Lindaberry joyously, "I send the

kids to college! They'd break my head open the first chance they got, but beyond that they wouldn't harm a hair. Eh, Mulligan?"

"Sure! That's right!"

Lindaberry, ready to take the wheel, bent over.

"I say, Mulligan, is De Lima on deck to-night?"

Mulligan gazed anxiously in the direction of Judge Massingale, who was standing helplessly by.

"Oh, the judge is a good sport!" said Lindaberry.

"Well, where's De Lima?"

"Above Ninety-sixth, I believe, sorr!"

"Good! I'll keep an eye out. De Lima's expensive! Well, Judge, too bad you can't join us. Little bet? Now, don't worry! I'll promise nothing faster than a mile a minute until we strike the country!"

They were drawn up in the electric flare of the side entrance. Quite a group of staring white-aproned waiters, impudent newsboys, appearing like bats out of the hidden night, chauffeurs and curious creatures of the underworld hung around open-mouthed, very black and very white in the artificial region of light and shadow. Massingale turned suddenly to her, forced to his last appeal.

"Miss Baxter," he said, looking up directly, "I wouldn't insist if I didn't know the chances you are running with this madman! Believe me, it is a reckless thing to do! Miss Baxter, please don't go!"

"Please?" she repeated, looking into his eyes with a glance as cold as his own was excited.

"Yes! I ask you—I beg you not to go! You

don't know — you don't understand. Mr. Lindaberry is not a safe person — now, under present conditions!"

She leaned a little toward him, modulating her voice for his ear alone.

"I'm sure, Judge Massingale," she said coldly, "that I will be much safer with Mr. Lindaberry, wherever he wishes to take me, than with some other man, even in my own house, alone!"

He understood: she saw it by the hurt look in his eyes. He withdrew without further proffer.

The next instant the car shot out, with the trailing scream of a rocket, shaved a wheel by an inch, swung the corner with hardly a break, the rear wheels sliding over the asphalt, and went streaming up the avenue, the naked trees of the park running at their side.

She sank back into the shaggy coat, adjusting the glasses which the wind cut sharply into her face, appalled at the speed, yet strangely, contemptuously unafraid.

"Fast enough?" he cried, and the words seemed to whistle by her.

"Love it!" she shouted, bending toward him.

She watched him, shrunk against the seat, her curiosity awakening at his mood, so married to her own. Massingale, the dancers, the stirring pain-giving world of pleasure, were miles away. She remembered all at once that she was with him — a stranger, wild as herself, heedlessly, recklessly engaged in a mad thing. All at once she laughed aloud, a curious sound

that made him jerk his head hastily back. If he knew how little she cared if the wheel swerved that necessary fraction of an inch!

"Crazy! We're crazy, both of us!" she thought to herself joyfully. At this moment of wild cynicism she felt that she had flung over everything, done forever with scruples; that, now that she had compromised herself so publicly, nothing more mattered. She would be cruel, selfish, mercenary, but she would make this city of Mammon that went roaring past her serve her by its own false gods of money and success. In the gathering roar of the hollow air, high roof and low roof, sudden sparkling streets, file on file of blinking lights, fatally brilliant as the lure of shop windows, black instantaneous masses on the avenue, streamed behind her in a giddy torrent. Yes, it was her last scruples she thus flung to the winds, and foolishly confident of divining inscrutable fates, she repeated fiercely, defiantly, drunk with the speed madness:

"What do I care! This is the end!"

CHAPTER XVII

"HOLD tight!"

She caught his shoulder at a sudden grinding stop, a breakneck turn into a side street, and the released forward leap.

"Look out! Don't touch my arm!" he cried warningly.

The next moment they had leaped an intersecting avenue, skirting the impending rush of a trolley car by inches. He laughed uproariously.

"Afraid?"

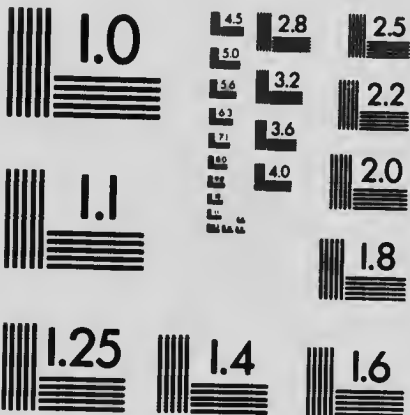
"No!"

Another turn, and they were on Riverside, the broad Hudson with its firely lights below, the Palisades rising darkly, like gathering thunder-clouds. There was no moon, but above their heads were the swarming stars, brilliant as a myriad sword-points. Once a policeman rushed with a peremptory club in their path, springing aside with an oath as Lindaberry set the machine at him — an oath that was lost like a whirling leaf. She no longer sought to distinguish the giddy passage at her sides, straining her eyes on the white consuming path of the lanterns, feeling all at once the hungry soul of the monster waking in the machine, strident, throbbing, crying out at the unshaken hand of man which dominated it. Then the



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Viaduct slipped underneath them, and below, in a swirling dip, the sunken city, hungry as a torrent, awaiting a single mishap.

She had a sudden remembrance of her dream — of Neb. ins pulling her over a brink, and the thread of a river grave miles below. Only now she remembered coldly, as if the speed at which they were flying gave her no time to associate two ideas. Suddenly, by an instinct not of fear but of disdainful certainty, her eyes closed before the impossibility of surviving a looming obstacle. When she opened them again they were among trees and fields, while the goaded machine hurled itself forward in tugging leaps. Now, as they seemed to fling themselves irrevocably on the destruction of wall or upstarting tree, she no longer winced or closed her eyes, but breathlessly waited the sudden liberating touch of the hand, which snatched them miraculously aside in the last fraction of time. She felt something that she had never felt before — an appetite and an intoxication in thus defrauding destruction; even her flesh responded with a tingling electric glow. All at once she perceived that he was trying her purposely — steering from right to left, seemingly bent on a plunging end, trying to draw a cry of fear. She laughed again disdainfully, and all at once the runaway came back into control, gliding into a smooth easy flight, slower and slower, until it came to a stop.

“By George! you have nerve!” he said, turning toward her.

“Go on! Go on!” she said feverishly.

He extended to her his hand, which was trembling.

"God! that's excitement that's worth while!" he said. "A fight every minute. Ugly old brute! Wouldn't it like to throw me just once?" He put on the brakes, drawing his sleeve across his forehead, which was wet with perspiration, taking a long breath. "Each century has its vice. By George, this is ours — speed! And it's got everything in it — gamble, danger, intoxication, all! Like it?"

"Yes!"

He remained silent a moment, as if struggling to clear his heavy head of befogging weights. Then he said slowly, a little thickly, curiosity growing:

"Why the devil did you do it?"

"Do what?"

"Risk your neck with a fool like me?"

"Oh, don't let's talk!" she said nervously. "Go on! Fast!"

"All right!"

They were off again, a wild liberating rush, and then a calmer motion, a gliding ease. She felt in him a different mood, a mood that sought an opportunity to put questions and weigh answers, and as she felt a desire to escape personalities, she said complainingly:

"But it's so slow — so tame! Let's go on running away!"

"This is different," he said, with a wave of his hand overhead at the myriad-eyed night. "You can't run away from this! The rest — houses, people, rotten brutality, useless things, yes; that's what I like to go plunging from — to get to this. I like the feel-

ing — solitude. George! if you could only go steering your way out of all the old into something new!" He repeated the phrase moodily, as if to himself: "If one only could — if it were only possible!" Then he broke off abruptly, laughing to himself: "You're too young. You can't understand. Everything is new to you. By George, marry me and start for Australia, or Timbuctoo, to-morrow! What do you say?"

"Look out! I might accept!" she said, laughing, and yet understanding.

"Every one thinks I'm a wild ass," he said grimly. "Wish I could do something really wild — make over the world! Look here; are you going to answer my question?"

"What question?"

"Why in the name of the impossible are we here to-night?"

"I wonder?" she said, half to herself.

The reply seemed to satisfy him; he continued a moment, absorbed in their smooth progress. Insensibly she felt her mood yielding to his, no longer impatient, vaguely content, lulled into reverie, giving herself over to a new strange companionable inclination toward the man who had revealed himself, half boy, half savage, in his first unconscious longings.

To escape from the old? No, she did not yet understand that; but she did comprehend the all-pervading serenity of the night, warm still with the touch of Indian summer. The grating strident sounds of the day were gone; the whisper on the wind was soft as a lullaby — sharp angles and brutally straight lines

lost in the feathery suffusion that lay on the fields. Ahead, the brave steadfast rays of their lamps pierced through sudden pools of darkness, that closed gently above them, and gave way again to clear visions of stars. Once or twice she saw across the enchanted blackness a distant trolley, unheard, rolling its ball of fire like the track of a shooting star. Again, the far-off leathery bark of a watch-dog complaining. But of man no sound. Only the mysterious shadows held a spirit of life; only a giant tree, silhouetted against the faint sky, seemed to move as they moved, racing with them past the vanishing road bushes. A rabbit, started from its security, horribly hypnotized by this chugging, fiery-eyed monster, scurried foolishly before them. Once a swerving bat zigzagged before her eyes like the cut of a black whirling blade. Even these were intruders, out of place in the old world, older than the pyramids, older than the first stirring of life—this waiting dominion of time, which reclaimed each night the futile centuries of men, secure of the hour when all must return in loyalty to its first silence. She looked at the stars, and the world beneath dwindled into nothingness, to the span of a hand before these twinkling immensities. Which was real? This night, where only the infinite and the inevitable reigned, or the day, with its clamoring intrusion of confusing and needless voices?

She put her hand on his arm.

"It's so strange. It's so long since I remembered. I had forgot!"

She had forgot, indeed, that world which lay be-

yond men's world; but she remembered it now — the strange night, which formerly in the quiet of a child's room came gently, like a friendly stream, across her white counterpane, awaking troubled questionings, impossible, terrifying confrontations of the beyond and the hereafter. She had feared these strange whys and wherefores then; and now they laid upon her only a great peace — perhaps because she sought no answer.

She wanted to talk to him as one could talk in the hidden night, away from foolish conventions. What did it matter what they said or did here in this engulfing quiet? Why should human beings be constantly at war with one another, stopped by vanities? She had forgot her anguish, in an impulse toward the weakness in the man.

He stopped the car and turned toward her.

"What's wrong? What's the trouble?"

"Mine's nothing!" she said. "Let me talk about you."

But they did not at once begin — a little at a loss.

"How old are you?" she said at last.

"Twenty-eight ages!"

"Is it true, what they tell me?"

"That I'm riding hellbent to the devil? Correct!"

He did not say it with braggadocio, and yet it seemed incongruous, after the glimpse she had had of the man.

"Why?" she said, laying her two hands impulsively on his arm and with every instinct of her feminine nature sending him a message of sympathy.

"It's such a long story!" he said slowly. Then,

with a last return of the Saxon's fear of sentimentality:

"If I were sober I wouldn't tell you!"

"You're not —"

"Drunk? Yes! For ten days," he said — "in my way! There's nothing to fear; never gets the best of me! When it does — crack! It'll be over in a second!"

"But why?" she asked helplessly.

"Why not?" he said fiercely. "All I care about is a good fight, and, by George, it *is* a fight, a real sensation. You can't understand, but it's so! To have your temples beating like trip-hammers, to fight the mists out of your eyes — a great brute like this whipping back and forth, shaking you off. One slip, a hundredth of a second, and then to beat it all, to master it. God! it's gorgeous!"

Suddenly, with an attempt at evasion, he drew back.

"You know, I had a mind once. I reason things out now — I see straight! Do you know how I figure it out? This way! What earthly use am I in the world? What earthly use is a cuss who is given forty thousand a year, without earning it, and told to amuse himself? None! By George! Sometimes I believe dissipation is nature's way of getting rid of us! And she's right, too; the sooner it's over, the more chance for some one real to come along!"

"Are you serious?"

He drew his hand across his forehead, pinching his temples.

"Curiously enough, I am! I'm quite hopeless, and

I don't care in the least! So don't let's waste time!"

He started to crank the machine; but she stopped him.

"There was a woman?" she said.

"Yes, but not in the first place." He turned to her, puzzled. "Why do you want to make me talk?"

"I don't know; I do!"

"What's your name?"

She hesitated.

"Dodo."

"I like that!" he said reflectively. "So you are really interested? And you don't know our story? Lord! That's funny! I thought every one knew the story of the Lindaberry boys! We certainly raised enough Cain! Do you know, I really was a damned nice sort of kid—men adored me!" He drew in his breath reflectively, conjuring up, with a tolerant smile, a picture out of forgotten days. "Yes, a real decent cuss who'd have done something if he'd had half a chance! There's only one thing I love in this world—a fight; and they took it all away from me!"

"Do you know, the finest days, the ripping ones, were those back in the old school, when I used to be carried off the field on the shoulders of a mob. That was something real! I loved it! We used to sing about shedding our blood, and all that funny rot, for the glory of the red and black—and I believed it, too. Lord bless that queer cuss. Good days! I used to play the game like a raging little devil, ready to fling my life away! The Lindaberry boys—they haven't forgot us yet! It was so at college, only

not quite the same. But at school, four hundred fellows, and to be king! Ambition? I was chock-full of it then. But they took it away from me! That's what knocked me out! And who did it? The one who loved us best — the governor!

"Out of college, forty thousand a year, and told to have a good time! Put that down for my epitaph! The dad, poor old fellow, didn't know any better! He'd worked like a pirate; said he'd never been young; wanted us to live! Forty thousand a year each, and let her go! I remember the day we started, with a whoop! Wonder is, we lasted a year! Tom, the young one, didn't!"

"Dead?"

"To the world, yes; asylum. Killed the governor. He tried to stop us, but it was too late! Now the race is between Jock and me. My lord, if they'd only packed us off — started us in a construction gang, anywhere, temperature a hundred in the shade — might have owned a state to-day! Remember what I said about the feeling you get out here alone — the awaking into something new? If Jock would go, I'd cut to-morrow — ship before the morn', and God take the rudder! He won't. But, by jove, to get into a new life, a new chance! You'll understand — or, no, I hope you never will!"

She could see but a faint blurred mass at her side. Under the goblin shadows of autumn trees, a brook sunk in the field told its hidden story to piping crickets and rovers of the night. She felt in her a great need of compassion, a yearning emptiness in her arms, a

desire to lay her comforting touch across his eyes, as once she had put into slumberland the tear-stained cheeks of Snyder's little child. No other sentiment came to mingle with this pure stream of maternal longing; but all about her and all within her so impelled her to follow the instinct of the ages that she drew back with a sigh.

"Here! Don't do that for me!" he said, straightening up ashamed.

She could not tell him what in her had called forth that sigh, so she said hurriedly:

"No, no. Then, of course, there was a woman?"

"Yes, of course!" he assented. He opened his match-case, lighted a cigarette and then flung it away nervously. "Lord, but I was a child in those days. I believed implicitly! Women? A religion to me. I was ready to fall down and worship! We were engaged — secret until I had got hold of myself. Easy? It was child's play! I could have won out in three months. Then, quite by accident, I found she was playing the same game with my best friend — how many others, God knows! Great God! talk about smashing idols for poor old heathen Chinese! Whew — there was nothing left! I didn't even see her. Went off, crazy as a loon. A wild letter, and good-by for a year. Bang around the world to get the poison out of my system. Little good it did, too!" He stopped, considered a moment, and added: "Now that I look back, I think she did care for me — as much as she could in her polygamous little soul — else she wouldn't have done what she did! When I got

back — fool that I was — I found her Mrs. Jock Lindaberry, and the devil in the saddle!"

"What! your own brother?" she said incredulously. "How did she dare?"

"You don't know the lady!" he said, with a laugh. "There's nothing in this world she's afraid of. And — God, how she can hate! Fine revenge, eh?"

"But you didn't tell —"

"Jock? No! What's the use? We never talk much — and he knows! Then, there's a child, a boy — a Lindaberry; and that holds him. She was clever enough for that!"

"You see her?"

"Never have entered the house!"

"You were very much in love?" she asked.

"At twenty-three? Mad, crazy in love! Ready to take any man by the throat who dared insinuate a word!"

"Aren't you over it yet?"

"I? Yes and no. It was Kismet! If I'd been lucky enough, even then, to have found a woman who cared, whom I could worship — who knows? Well! the other thing happened! Kismet!"

"But there are lots of women —"

"Yes, of course! But I — I've never trusted since."

"You are really a great coward, Mr. Lindaberry!"

She said it impulsively — yet, once said, resolved to stand by her guns, feeling now threefold the anger and irritation he had awakened in her at their first meeting.

He shifted in his seat, amazed.

"You give up at your first defeat — let a woman who isn't worth a candle wreck your life!"

"By jove!"

"Pride? You talk of pride and courage! You haven't a drop of either," she continued hotly. "So you'll give her just what she wants, the satisfaction of seeing how you cared! Yes, what a delicious revenge you give her! I'm a woman — I know! She hates you, and she sits back smiling, waiting for the end, saying to herself: 'I did it!' No; I have no patience with such weakness! You are nothing but a great coward!"

She stopped, surprised at a sob that arose, unbidden, in her throat. He gazed ahead, without answering, a long while, his fingers playing on the wheel.

"That's rather rough!" he said at last.

"You deserve every bit of it!"

"To call me a coward?" he said, with an uneasy laugh.

"A great coward! Oh, courage! Easy enough, when you know you've physical strength, to go smashing into a weaker man — or a dozen! That's so obvious, so easy. But when something difficult comes up —"

He swore impatiently to himself.

"Yes, something difficult. When the odds are all against you, you give up — do just what a cold-blooded little vixen wants of you. Why? Because you have no pride!" she cried heatedly. "Don't talk to me of

courage! I have a thousand times more than you, to come to-night!"

"By jove! You're right!" he said, folding his arms. "Hold up, now; that's enough. You've reached me. Don't say any more!"

She began to feel sorry for the way she had attacked him, feeling his utter loneliness. Finally he ceased humming to himself, and turned.

"You're an honest, brave little thing—a child!" he said slowly. "I don't know you at all. Who are you? What are you? I've only met you at a couple of rowdy parties, and yet you talk this way! Are you straight?"

"Mr. Lindaberry!"

"I mean no offense—I wouldn't care. You're genuine, that's the thing! I'm your friend, proud to be! Tell me about yourself!"

She saw that social judgments meant nothing to him; in fact, she was rather touched by the thought that, even if she had not been what he called "straight," he would have given her a loyal respect.

"Me?" she said dreamily. "I don't know what to tell you! I come from nothing—a little town way out in Ohio. Never had a home—sort of turned over to an aunt and uncle. I've shifted for myself, but I've never lost my nerve. I was bound to get into a bigger life, to do something—if only to be free, to live! I've done a lot of foolish things, I suppose, because I'm a little crazy myself—can't resist excitement!"

"You shouldn't have gone to that party at Sassoon's," he said. "You are too innocent to understand what it meant!"

"I'm not living in a sheltered house!" she protested. "I'm hurting no one. I face the world by myself, stand on my own feet, and I can take care of myself. I'm not ignorant!"

"Yes, you are. You can't know. You think you can, but you can't know! No girl can, until — until she's caught!" He looked at her steadily. "You know, at bottom you *are* a child. That's the danger! What the devil sent you out here to-night?"

"A good angel, perhaps," she said evasively.

He laughed obstinately, but with less resistance.

"No, that isn't it!" she said impulsively. "I am in a reckless mood myself. I am hurt — oh, so hurt! Disappointed in a man. You see, we *are* comrades, in a way!"

"Good God! Who could have hurt you!" he said roughly.

"It was all a mistake; it wasn't meant, perhaps, but that doesn't help much!"

He reached out his hand and laid it comfortingly over her shoulder, surprising her with the tenderness in his touch and in his voice.

"Sorry! I know. Queer, isn't it? We are sort of in the same boat! Queer world! Who'd have thought we'd ended up this way? Funny! You start up some of the old thoughts in me. I could have done something once, if I'd only had to! But I be-

long to a cursed second generation. We Americans weren't meant to be loafers!"

"Why are you, then?" she said impulsively. "Listen! I was hard on you when I went for you a moment ago! Mr. Lindaberry, we are in the same boat. Let me help you — see what I can do! No, wait! I'm speaking what I feel! I've been cruel myself, very cruel —"

"Don't believe it!"

"Yes, yes, I have; I've made others suffer!"

"Then it was their fault!" he said obstinately.

"It would mean, just now, a lot to me to count for something," she rushed on. "I can't tell you all the reasons — I don't know all — but I believe what I feel here to-night is the best in me. There is something in all this; I know there's some reason, back of it all, why we have been sent here. Oh, Mr. Lindaberry, do let me help!"

"Save me?" he asked, with an ugly laugh.

"Yes, save you!"

A long silence, in which she watched him breathlessly, hoping for an answer.

"Fight it out!" she insisted.

He turned suddenly, wondering if she knew how felicitous had been her appeal.

"Why, Dodo, I'm pretty far gone!" he said sadly.

"Coward!"

"No, by God!" he said fiercely.

"Let me see you fight, then!"

"What for?"

"For your own self-respect! See here, Mr. Linda-berry, fight it out for the love of a good fight, and let me be in it. Let me help!"

"You mean it?" he said slowly; then he nodded toward all that surrounded them. "This, you know, gets us — sentimental!"

"No; I want it!"

He laughed in his characteristic way as he did when he sought more reflection.

"The bets at the club are two to one against my lasting the year, Dodo!"

"Then take up the bet!"

"Why, that's an idea!" he said, with a chuckle.

He considered more profoundly, his arm still on her shoulder; but there was in it no acquiring touch, only a clinging — the clinging of a weak hand groping for companionship.

"I suppose I'm a lonely cuss at bottom," he said slowly, nor did she follow his thought.

"Anything I can do I'll do," she urged. "It'll be my fight too! Come to me, call me night or day, when you need me — when things are getting too much for you! I'll come any time!"

"You can't!"

"I can!" she cried defiantly. "What do I care what is said, if I know and you know that all is right! Thank God, I'm alone! I have no one to whom it matters what the world says. I'm only a waif, a drifter!"

"Drifters both!" he said solemnly.

She stopped a moment, struck by the idea, feeling their mutual clinging, and the incomprehensible, unseen winds of the night sweeping about them and carrying them — whither?

"Listen!" she added hurriedly. "This is my promise. Fight it out, and I will help you by everything that's in me! No matter whom I'm with or where I'm going, I'll turn over everything, when you need me, and come!"

"Even nights like this?" he said. "For that's when it'll be the hardest!"

"Especially nights like this!" she cried, opening her arms with a feeling of glorification.

"Tell me something," he said slowly; "and be honest with me!"

"I swear I always will," she said impulsively from her heart, devoutly believing it.

"Are you in love now?"

"Yes!"

"Are you sure?"

His arm, as if suddenly aware of her body, removed itself. He bent toward her, striving to see her face.

An instant before, she had sworn to herself, swiftly, in the exultation of a new-born spiritual self, that to this man, at least, she would never lie; and all at once, by the divining charity of her woman's soul, bent on saving him, she began her first deception!

"No; I am not — sure!"

She had a quick fear that he would spoil everything

by an overt movement, and shrank from him, conscious of the male and of her sex. But at the end he rose quietly, saying:

"All right, Dodo. The fight's begun!"

If there were a double meaning in his words, he gave no sign of it. He went to the front and cranked the car, then drew the rug about her with solicitous deference, that had in it a new attitude. He did not even offer his hand to seal the compact, and for that, too, she was profoundly thankful, watching him with slanted approving glances.

"Whatever he does he will do magnificently!" she thought.

"Comfy?" he asked in a matter-of-fact tone.

"Yes!"

They shot out into the white road. He did not ask her wish, but, as if sure of her acquiescence, went flying into the country, at times with magnificent ease, at others with wild bursts of speed, break-a-neck, the monster obeying the fierce exultant moods of the master. She lay back in the seat, her eyes on the jagged tree-line, where broken shadows spun past her, and the stars swam overhead. She felt his mood in every glide, in every resentful bound, knowing what was in his spirit, uplifted into a new manifestation, resolved, whatever happened, that to this one, at least, she would give the divine that was in her.

It was three o'clock by the paling of the dawn in the east, and the slinking scavengers in the streets, when they returned.

She fell almost instantly to sleep, for the first time

in long weeks. And as she tucked her hand under her cheek contentedly, in perfect peace, she had a satisfied feeling that God, her inscrutable friend, had not been so angry with her as she had believed; that in the moment of her failing He had shown her this way out. She did not question her feelings toward this new man. Pity? Yes, a great compassion, a tenderness and a sure belief in his protection, all were confusedly in her mind; but above all a great fatigue, and a wonder how the night would remain in the beating clarity of the day.

CHAPTER XVIII

HER first waking thought was not of Lindaberry, but of Massingale. It seemed as if he were beside her, his restraining touch on her arm, trouble in his eyes, as on the night before when he had pleaded with her under the hissing arc-lights and the background of curious creatures of the dark. Instead, it was Ida Summers, curled on the bed, who was tickling her arm with a feather, crying:

"Wake up, lazy-bones!"

Doré comprehended, even in her foggy state, that if such a reproach could come from Ida Summers, it must be very late indeed! She shot a hasty glance at the tower clock; it was nearing twelve.

"Any broken bones? What happened? You're a nice one! Why didn't you come back? Don't lecture me any more!" continued Ida, in rapid fire, and emphasizing her remarks by pinching the toes under the covers. "Poor Harry Benson! pining away, one eye on the door and one on the clock! Which reminds me — he's coming for lunch."

Harry Benson had been the youngest and most susceptible of Doré's abandoned escorts.

"Oh, is that his name?"

"Heartless creature!" continued Ida, rolling her eyes. "Three automobiles, shover, father a patent-

medicine king. I might have married him, Do, if you hadn't popped up! However, this is my business day; I forgot. How'm I going to get hold of Zip?"

"So that's the game?" said Doré, laughing for reasons that will appear. "Be careful how you do it, though; Mr. Benson strikes me as a very *rapid* advancer!"

"Yes, Miss Pussy," exclaimed Ida, laughing; "you give very good advice — in the morning. However, I just must have a fur muff I saw yesterday, and that's all there is to it! Also, my room's too small for visitors, so get up and dress, as I'm going to receive him here. What's Zip's telephone?"

"You'll find it on the pad," said Doré, rising precipitately.

"Good, the bait's planted," said Ida, presently reappearing. "I told Zip to be most *expensive*; Benson's a fierce spender!"

"How do you know?"

"A girl friend of mine," said Ida evasively.

"What's become of that little fellow you annexed at the *Free Press*?"

"Tony Rex? Bothers the life out of me. Got it bad! Sighs and poetry. Jealous as a Turk! Doesn't want me to pose — wants to shut me up in a convent. Lord! I don't know how to shake him!"

"I thought him rather insignificant," said Doré, at the dressing-table.

"Nothing of the sort!" said Ida vigorously. "Every one says he's a coming man — ideas, humor, massive brain, you know, and all that sort of thing.

Only — only, he gets in the way all the time — trip over him. Well, are you going to give an account of yourself last night? Say, what a shame it is some squillionaire doesn't endow us! It's such a nuisance getting your clothes!" As she forgot a question as soon as she asked it, she was off on a digression. "I say, Dodo, it's a marvel how some girls do manage! You remember Adèle Vickers, who's in light opera?"

"Chorus," corrected Doré.

"Same thing for the Jolinnies — only more so! Say, you'll die when you hear this! I was up in her hotel, calling, a couple of nights ago, just before dinner, when one of them married T-Willys blows in, with a how-can-you-resist-me-little-girl look. You know him — Penniston Schwartz, money-bags in something, death on manicures. Are you listening?"

"Go on. . . ."

"Del had no dinner in sight, so she winked at me to stick close, and waited for a bid, one eye on the clock. The old beau — he oils his mustache and looks at you with buttery eyes — kept telling us we were breaking up his happy home with our resplendent beauty, and a lot of fluff that was quite beyond the point, for Del was fidgeting, getting ready to *assist*, when the hope of the evening says:

"'Awful sorry I can't take you little rosebuds out to dinner,— fami'y, the dear family, you know,— but call up a waiter and let me order.'

"Order? You should have seen what Del concocted! There wasn't a dollar-mark got by her! It must have footed twenty plunks, at the least! 'Course

she thought he'd pay at the desk — naturally! That was the awful slip! No sooner had the waiter disappeared than he takes a fifty-dollar bill from his purse, flips it on the table, and says, with a wink:

“‘The change's for the waiter — of course!’

“I thought I'd die choking, watching Adèle, staring from the bill to the clock, aching for him to go, but quiet as a mouse — oh, perfect manner, crocheting away at a dinky tie until I thought the needles would fly in pieces! When the family man got up to go, say! you should see her bounce him out of the door and leap to the telephone, crying:

“‘Make that a veal chop and mashed!’”

“Too late?” said Doré, laughing.

“Well, we lost as far as the first entrée; but, as Del said, the next time such a thing occurs, there'll be a wise waiter on the other end of the line! Where's Snyder?”

“They opened in Atlantic City last week; expect to return Monday.”

“They say she's got a big hit! Glad of it!”

“So what's-his-name — your cartoonist — doesn't approve?” said Doré, smiling.

“He's a perfect pest. Furious at Vaughan Chandler and that crowd. Lectures me from morning to night — heavens!”

“What's wrong?”

“He's coming around for me at one. He'll be wild if he sees Benson! Lord! Dodo, what shall I do?”

“Leave word you're out with Josephus!”

"That won't stop him!" said Ida scornfully. "He's liable to go to sleep on the door-step!"

"Leave him to me, then," said Dodo, with the facility of long practise. "I'll receive him while you two vamoose."

"I say, Do," said Ida, with sudden gratitude, "I owe you a pointer." She went on tiptoe to the door of Winona's room, listened a moment, and returning stealthily, held up crossed fingers. "Don't trust her!"

"What do you mean?"

"Trespassing — examine your fences — all I can say!" exclaimed Ida, who fled laughing, not to be cross-questioned.

Half an hour later there was being played one of those little scenes so familiar in Salamanderland, the secret of which may bring enlightenment to several fatuous self-made young men of the world. Mr. Harry Benson, a young gentleman of great future intelligence, now extremely avid of all the mysteries of a puzzling strata of the feminine world, was strutting contentedly in the presence of Miss Ida Summers and Miss Doré Baxter, the actress, friend of such howling swells as Judge Massingale and Garret Lindaberry. The two girls, with a perfect sense of values, were listening with accented indifference to his flow of self-exposition, which consisted in a narration of how many bottles he had consumed two nights before, how much money he had won at bridge, what he had paid for his socks, his cravats and the silk shirts which bore his initials, when there came a slight deferential scrap-

ing at the door, and at a quick summons, the figure of a diminutive Jewish pedler appeared, doubled under a pack, bowing convulsively, wreathed in smiles. He had been christened "Zip," a contraction of some unpronounceable name, and his motto was: "Zip buys or sells anythings!" He was a general intermediary for the Salamanders, disposing of every conceivable article when money had to be raised; and as he enjoyed this confidential intimacy with lively and pretty girls, he contented himself, good-humoredly, with no more than two hundred per cent. profit.

"Oh, dear me, Zip," cried Ida instantly. "It's no use — come around some other day!"

"Brought der shtockings," said he, in an untranslatable accent.

"No money — I'm broke to-day! Next week."

"I trust you!" said the pedler, advancing benignly, perfect comedian that he was, by a hundred such performances.

"No, no!" said Ida firmly. "That's not my way! No bills; cash only!"

Mr. Harry Benson, who had been on the point of indiscreetly offering a loan, bit his tongue, thoroughly convinced by her manner.

"Oh, now, Mees Sumpers, beezness is beezness — ain't it right? I trust you!" said Zip, turning to one and the other with a look of the greatest dejection.

"Next week — next week."

Zip, during this preliminary canter, had slipped his pack to the ground and was uncovering the tarpaulin.

"Bretty laties must have bretty tings; vot? All

silk! Barkain! De most vonderful lincherie —
feren frend shmuggles it through de coostom house.
Sh'h dot's a secret! Look at dot hein?"

"No, no; don't want to see a thing. Don't tempt me!"

"Mees Baxter?"

"Impossible," said Doré, laughing. "Bad month! I'm saving up for Christmas presents!"

"Vell, it don't cost nottings to look, eh?" said Zip, suddenly bringing to light a mass of pink and white feminine lingerie. "Eef it don't embarrass de shen-temans?"

"Come on! Let's have a look at them!" said Harry Benson, gorgeously excited at the idea of this devilish pastime.

The two girls continued to protest, averting their eyes, while the prop, alternately eager and hesitating, afraid that too abrupt an offer would offend their sensibilities, continued to run through the bewildering array of secret silks and laces. Perhaps he was decided finally by an encouraging wink from Zip, who thus telegraphed to him that, being his friend, he advised him to dare. Anyhow, very red and confused, he blurted out:

"Look here, girls, don't be furious at me! Give me this pleasure, won't you? I've won an awful lot at bridge lately. Let me make a little present! By jove, Ida, your birthday's next week. Let me beat all the crowd to it. Vaughan'll be furious! What a lark! And you, Miss Baxter, do have a birthday too, won't you?"

She laughed.

"Mine's just passed."

"Passed? Then I come in late. Bully for you! It's a go, isn't it? You're the right sort! I can't tell you how I appreciate it!"

"I don't think I ought to," said Ida, looking doubtfully at Doré.

"It is unusual, but I think Mr. Benson won't make any mistakes," said Doré, beaming on him with a smile of confidence.

Benson shook her hand gratefully.

Zip rubbed his hands together in delight, wagging his bearded head.

"Goot, goot! Make de bretty kirls habby, eh? Vat apout it, hein? Trow in de shtockinks, eh?"

The two girls exclaimed furiously. Benson, laughing and roguish, defended the pedler from their wrath, protesting he was loaded with money, crazy to get rid of it, carrying his point in the end. Zip, recipient of a hundred-dollar bill, departed, grinning and wagging; nor did Mr. Benson, in the joyous delight of this newly permitted intimacy, for a moment suspect that the silks and laces which now lay so provokingly on the table would presently return to the pack of the histrionic Zip, at forty per cent. off for commission.

For the accuracy of historic customs, another detail must be added. When silk stockings were purchased, the color chosen was invariably pink, one pair of that color being in the cooperative possession, always at

hand, to be borrowed hastily and worn for a convincing effect on the last purchaser.

Ten minutes later Josephus produced a card which Ida, on receiving, said:

"How stupid, Josephus! That's for Miss Baxter. Come on, Harry. Dodo's most particular and secretive — we won't embarrass her, will we?" She opened the door of Winona's room, lingering a moment behind the laughing prop to whisper: "Tell Tony to telephone this evening. Say I've called up from a studio — had to finish rush job — awful sorry! Be particular!"

She disappeared, locking the door for security's sake.

The next moment Mr. Tony Rex entered, in evident agitation and surprise — Ida and Harry Benson slipping down-stairs by the second stairway as Doré was saying glibly:

"Oh, Mr. Rex, Miss Summers has just telephoned! She wants me to tell you —"

But she proceeded no further. Mr. Tony Rex was watching her with a sarcastic smile.

"Come off! Don't hand me any *useless* fibs, Miss Baxter! Ida's here; I took the precaution to find out! What's her little game to-day?" Suddenly, as if struck by an idea, he moved to the window. Below, Ida Summers was just springing to her seat in the big yellow automobile.

Doré had no time to prevent him; in fact, she had momentarily lost her wits. One thing had startled her on his arrival — his shoes: patent leather with yel-

low tops — not chamois, but close enough to recall the dreadful wraith of Josh Nebbins.

"So she's chucked me for a stuffed image like Benson?" he said grimly. "Oh, I know the owner; I asked the chauffeur!"

"What a terrible man!" she thought. Even in that he recalled that other persistent suitor! Aloud she said hastily, as he took up his hat:

"What are you going to do?"

He affected to misunderstand the question.

"Look here, Miss Baxter," he said abruptly, "I'm dead serious in this! I'm going to marry that little kid, and it's going to happen soon! Likewise, I'm a wise one, and I know just the game she's playing — and the dangers! Some of you can keep your heads — maybe you can and maybe you can't! She's nothing but a babe — she doesn't know! That's why I'm going to stop this fooling, P. D. Q.!"

"Look out! You can't drive a girl into things!" said Doré.

"Oh, yes, I can! Watch me!" he said confidently. "Now, I'm going to find where they're lunching, buy up the table next, and see how jolly a little party Miss Ida'll have out of it, with me for an audience! Lesson number one!"

He was off in a rush before she could recover from her laughter. Left at last alone, she sought to return into herself, to adjust the Dodo of the day to the surprising self of the night before. It even struck her as incongruous that, after the depths she had sounded in the silence and loneliness of the world, she should now

be forced to return to the superficiality of banter and petty intrigue. Lindaberry — she thought of him as of a great wounded animal lifting up to her a thorn-stricken paw. He would come for her in a few minutes, according to agreement, and she half feared the encounter. Would it be disillusionment? Would all that had so enveloped her with the mystery and charity of human relations now dissipate thinly in the commonplace day? Had they been swayed simply by a passing sentimentality, as he himself had feared? She did not know quite what she hoped. She did not feel the slightest sentimental inclination. She did not even attempt to dramatize herself as the good angel. She had only an immense curiosity as to herself, wondering if she had really discovered something new, if in fact it were possible for the same Doré, who selfishly, in will-o'-the-wisp fashion, enticed men on to mock their discomfiture, could open up a flood of womanly strength to one who came to her in weakness.

To return into the exaltation of the night was impossible. After all, the day was perhaps more real than the moods of dreams. She looked on the experience in a comfortable, satisfied way, always incredulous of her deeper moods, inclined to shun them with a defensive instinct that life was safer when lived on the surface.

But the night which had awakened so many dormant yearnings had brought back to her again the famine in her own soul. Lindaberry was yet confused, Massingale clear and insistent. She had arrived, at last, in her tortuous feminine logic, to the point where, in

her longing, she was willing to ask herself if there were any excuse for what he had done. Once she sought to excuse him, she found small difficulty. He had been very much of a gentleman. She had led him on, tried him beyond what was right; and, even after the explosion, he had recovered himself, tried to leave in order to protect her. There had been a moment of weakness; but she had wished for that — yes, even compelled it. And then, he cared! Yes, that was the great thought that emerged from the confusion of the night: he cared! She knew it by the wound she had drawn across his eyes, by the tone of his voice when he had pleaded with her at the last. He cared, and he suffered as she suffered, fought as she fought, to remain away! But he was married — he belonged to another woman!

Marriage was to her an uncomprehended world, an *impasse*: a man disappeared into it as into a monastery. When she had thought of marriage, it was always as the end of life, irrevocable, and she admitted it only when some one came so strong and bewildering that nothing else mattered. She never had thought of it as an experiment, nor as something that could be rejected if found lacking. That man and woman, if unsuited, could still be yoked together before the world, living each a separate life in private, was yet outside of her analysis of human experience. There was the world of pleasure, and that world of duty — marriage.

Curiously enough, Lindaberry's story of his own deception, and the marriage of his brother — the

glimpse he had given her behind the scenes of Mrs. Jock — had started new questionings. Who could blame such a husband for what he did? From which thought she proceeded to Massingale. He did not love his wife — of that she was sure. What was the arrangement, then? Perhaps he too concealed his cares, suffering in silence. Even the figures of the two men disappeared before this new obsession. She sought to create before herself the image of a wife — of his wife; for at Tenaflly's she had not, in her agitation, even turned to look. Sometimes, with a feeling of guilt, she perceived a weak creature, gentle and shrinking, all tears, before whom, at the thought of inflicting pain, she retreated instinctively. At others, she saw a woman in the imagined guise of Mrs. Jock, vulture-like, scornful, icy, narrowed by worldly cravings, a pretty brute. Then she had a feeling as if she were flinging herself between the two, husband and wife, shielding the man from the woman.

"I must see her!" she said to herself passionately. She thought of Estelle Monks. She would find some way where, unknown, she would be able to look upon the face of Mrs. Massingale. And, not realizing all the wilderness that was yawning before her, she repeated: "Oh, yes! I must see her. I shan't have a moment's peace until I do!"

As if any peace were in store for her — no matter what she found!

When Lindaberry came to take her for lunch at a quiet country inn somewhere up the Hudson, she went to him without reserve, surprised at the strength of

the impulses of tenderness, solicitude and protection that awoke within her. She had not yet named to herself the danger of the first overt step back to Massingale; perhaps, though, she intuitively felt the set of the tide about her, and turned to this better side of her nature. If what she might soon do lay beyond the permitted, at least this man, this saving of a soul, should be to her credit. Her religion was, indeed, of the simplest. If God would not approve of her yielding to the yearning to see Massingale again,—or what followed,—at least he would notice all the good she would pour into the life of Lindaberry. It was a sort of bargain which she secretly planned to offer: Lindaberry should buy her forgiveness! She felt glorified by this thought, finding in herself depths of gentle strength and maternal comforting which amazed her.

"Are we still dreaming, Dodo?" he said to her suddenly, when they were free of the city's clamor.

She smiled appreciatively.

"It's not a dream; it's real!" she said energetically.

"You've taken up a pretty big contract, young lady!"

"And you?"

He thought a moment.

"And I. Five years ago it would have been like a kitten toying with a ball. Now it's a question of the will—and the body! That's what we've got to find out. The body's a curious thing, Dodo, and it has curious ways of going back on you all at once, without as much as saying 'by your leave.' There was a chap in at Doctor Lampson's this morning — chap I

knew in college, strong as a Hercules, a body just glowing with strength. He'll be dead within the year — galloping consumption!"

"You went to a doctor?"

"The finest. Wanted to get down to facts, Dodo; find out what's going on inside."

"What did he say?" she asked breathlessly.

"He said it could be done!" said Lindaberry in a matter-of-fact way. "We talked over ways. But first, I thought I'd give you another chance."

"What do you mean?"

"Last night, out there — stars and all that — wasn't a fair start! How do you feel now with a practical old sun winking down at you?" he asked, with a quizzical smile that did not conceal the intensity of his suspended waiting.

"Oh, Mr. Lindaberry!" she said impulsively. "Do it for your own self! Be strong!"

"No," he said quietly; "I won't do it for myself. I'll make the fight for you — to please you, Dodo! You've got hold of me as no one ever has. And then you're not afraid, bless your childish eyes! Well, am I to do it for you?"

She was quiet a moment, thrown out of all her mental calculations by the swift electric appeal to her emotional self that came with his blunt declaration. Men had loved her sooner or later, mildly or with infatuation; but she had never before felt so deeply what she and a divine hazard could mean in one life. Her eyes filled with sudden tears.

"Do it for me!" she said gently, and the next moment her heart smote her as if she had been guilty of a second lie.

"Now is a good date—rather close to Thanksgiving," he said, in his chuckling Anglo-Saxon way. Then he laid one hand on her arm and said solemnly: "Wrecks oughtn't to get sentimental. I won't! But remember this, Dodo: you're the first breath of real life that's come to me. You've got hold of me—strong! I'm going to win out for you—and I'm going—" He halted as abruptly as he had begun. "Now, that's all till I get straightened out. If I don't, forget it!"

"But you will!" she exclaimed, forgetting all her resolves to enlighten him on the subject of her affections.

"There'll be some bad bumps," he said grimly. "I've got into this night habit pretty deep—insomnia, and then anything to eat up the night. Lampson's got some new system to try out on me. Later, perhaps, I'll beat it for the woods; but just at present, a few weeks, I guess you can do me more good than anything else!"

"Can I?" she said gratefully.

"Yes. Time for lunch now. Are you starved?" he said evasively. "I'll talk over things and ways later."

As they came back, he went into detail about the fight ahead. Much that he said was technical, and she did not comprehend all. Only that his body had been

fed too long on the consuming alcohol to be too suddenly deprived.

"Which means," he added, with a smile, "that you mustn't get discouraged if I break over the traces once or twice."

"Send for me!"

"Perhaps," he said doubtfully. "If I do, you need never be afraid, Dodo, no matter how much others are. I would always do what you ask!"

"I could never be afraid of you!" she answered truthfully.

The impulse that brought her closer to him was so strong that, though she said to herself that there was nothing of the sentimental in it, it seemed to her that it might be something nobler, more unselfish, more satisfying than that which she had conceived of as love between woman and man. She even went so far as to wish to herself that it might have been different, that she could have given him all without a lie, that she could have gone bravely, casting the die, into life with Lindaberry. If only she had not known Massingale! To give, to be loved, was one thing, if she had not known the blinding intoxication of being taken, of loving!

Three days later, after a half confidence to Estelle Monks, she went with her to a society bazaar where Mrs. Massingale was in charge of a booth. It was in one of the ballrooms of a new hotel, more overlaid with gilt and ornaments than the rest, specially and artfully advertised as quite the most expensive in the city. As a consequence, the rooms were packed with

a struggling gazing crowd, swirling about the counters where the social patronesses looked on with the disdain of lap-dogs of high degree.

"This one — lady in baby pink, sharp face," said Estelle Monks.

In that brief terrifying instant, before she was able to raise her eyes, Dodo was shaken from head to foot. Never before had so much penetrating despair crowded upon her in such a fraction of time!

She was at a counter of fragrant hand-bags, staring up into the face of a bored, hostile, sharp-eyed woman, struggling for youth and attention — a brown little wanderer from nowhere confronting a great lady.

"What can I sell you?" said Mrs. Massingale with an instantaneous social smile.

She found herself answering, breathlessly:

"No — nothing!"

The smile faded. The lady turned indifferently. It was close, she had been on her feet almost two hours, she was pardonably annoyed at this staring girl — and she showed it.

Suddenly, her face lit up, the surface smile on duty again. A group of men advanced effusively, taking her hand delicately, like a fragile ornament. She turned, and perceiving Dodo leaning vacantly, said:

"Excuse me!"

Without too much insistence she extended her fingers and moved her from the path of possible purchasers.

Dodo went, hurt, crushed and revolting. There had been nothing which the other had not had a right to

do, yet in those seconds she had experienced the deepest humiliation a woman can receive from another, the disdain of caste.

She had come penitent and full of compassion. She went in a dangerous mood; this woman, perfectly correct, perfectly emotionless, perfectly cold and brilliant, might be Mrs. Massingale; she could never be his wife!

"No, that is not a marriage!" she said indignantly to herself.

The thing she dreaded, and hoped for, had come to pass. She forgave him, and she understood!

Yet she hesitated day after day, until ten had passed in a whirl, alternately resolved, alternately recoiling. She had no defined morality. She was one of a thousand young girls of to-day, adrift, neither good nor bad, quite unmoral — the good and the bad equally responsive and the ultimate victory waiting on the first great influence from without, which would master her. She had no home; she was alone, a social mongrel. She could only hurt herself. What her parents had left her was only a heritage of lawlessness. Yet she hesitated, frightened by some fear conjured up from an unconscious self, like thin remembered notes of village bells, across the tumult of worldly clamors. At last, when she could see before her no other face, when the sound of his voice was mingled with every sound that came to her ear, when nothing else diverted her a moment from the insistent drumming ache of the present, she yielded. She went in the afternoon, just before four, to the court in Jefferson Market where

she knew he was, pushing her way through the miserable, the venal, the vermin of all nations, clustered and ill smelling.

He saw her instantly as she came into the aisle.

CHAPTER XIX

DORÉ had not been mistaken in her swift perception on entering the court room, heavy with weakness and discouragement. Judge Massingale saw her with a feeling of profound relief. Whatever came now, the responsibility lay on her head, not on his. Just how completely one memory had filled his days he did not realize until he experienced a sudden excited calm at the thought that she was there by his side, and that the long weeks of struggle had been in vain.

For, he, too, had struggled against every instinct in him, warned by his clear and analytical brain that his hands were on the curtains of a perilous and forbidden adventure. At first he had been immensely surprised that in his forty-second year it should suddenly flash across him, from the depths of eyes of cloudy blue, that he was as human as his brother. The memory of the soft white arms against his cheek, the ecstasy of the girl who, in a twinkling, had surrendered to his domination, withholding nothing, eager and unafraid, enveloped in the blinding halo of complete renunciation and faith, her look when her eyes sought his, her lips, the sound of her voice, the naturalness of it all, the human directness, all returned again and again to demolish and scatter the careful

intellectual theory of conduct which he had raised for his defense in life.

At the time when Judge Massingale, by a trick of fate, had blundered upon the acquaintance of Doré Baxter, he had arrived at that satisfactory station in life when he could look upon himself as a perfectly disciplined being. He had passed through a period of embittered emotional revolt which had threatened to carry him publicly into the divorce courts, and through a deeper period of moral revolt which came near sacrificing him on the altar of the social reformer. Now he had come to an attitude of tolerant and amused contemplation of things as they are, without fretting his spirit as to things as they should be.

His marriage had been a purely conventional one, contracted in the weak and vulnerable period of the early twenties at the instigation of his mother, who had become suddenly alarmed at a college infatuation for the daughter of one of his professors. Within a year the thoroughly unsuited couple had come to an amicable understanding of the duties involved in their covenant before the church.

Mrs. Massingale was incapable of an original mental operation, but she was clever enough to combine the opinions of those who seemed to know. She thoroughly disapproved of her husband's soiling political ventures, as beneath the dignity of a gentleman. Each week she devoted one afternoon and one evening to the encouragement of the arts; the rest was given over to the punctilious performance of the proper so-

cial duties to those whom she disliked and who disliked her. Absolutely cold and absolutely prudish, she had not hesitated, in that hazardous period of maidenhood, to effect the successful capture of such a matrimonial prize by subtle appeals to his senses; but as though bitterly resenting the means to which an unjust society reduces a modest woman to secure her future, she revenged herself on her amazed husband by a sort of vindictive antagonism.

He had fiercely combated this marriage, vowing he would marry the love of his college days, if he had to carry her off in the good old way. But his mother, being quite determined and unprincipled, paid the girl a visit, and contrived to make the interview so completely insulting that the rupture resulted immediately.

In the third year of his marriage Massingale had again become infatuated, this time with the young wife of an elderly friend. As the married relations on either side were identical, and each was chafing against the irritating and galling yoke, longing for life and liberty, the infatuation soon assumed tragic proportions. She wished to break through everything, ready to go openly with him until, their respective divorces secured, they could be married. He passed eight days feverishly inclined, debating the issue. But in the end, for the stigma that would lay across his shoulders, for the reputation of the family, the customs of a man of the world, and what not, he resisted.

He had thought then that he had sacrificed the world

and the heavens for a hollow recompense; but, as the years sent the drifting sands of their oblivion over the memory, he had come to look upon this emotional adventure as a great peril avoided. He had believed then in the union of man and woman as something like a divine rage, all-absorbing, obliterating everything else — this in the bitter revolt against the deception which had come in his marriage. Ten years later he had arrived at the point of looking back with tolerant humor, and confessing to himself that for his purposes he was perhaps fortunate in a union which brought no compulsion into his life, obtruded itself in no way, and gave him complete liberty to pursue his intellectual curiosity in unrestricted intercourse with men of varied stations.

From law school he had gone as an assistant into the district attorney's office, and the three years spent in those catacombs of humanity had removed the veneer of generations of inherited snobbery. The first view of the vermin-populated halls of justice had appalled him, and aroused in him a religious fury. The spectacle of the strong riding the weak, judges gravely listening to lying hypocrisies, criminals in gold buttons and uniform, the insolence of power, the cynicism of brains, and, below all, raw humanity gasping under staggering burdens, mocked, farmed out, betrayed — all this sank so profoundly into his young enthusiasm that he swore to himself that the day would come when he would lift up his voice against iniquity, no matter how intrenched it might rest.

If at this time he had had the courage to break with

social prejudices and seek reality and inspiration in the love of a woman ready to sacrifice everything for him, it is probable that he would have one day stirred the sophisticated forces of the city to furious invective, and accomplished little or great good, according to the sport of chance. But the impossibility of assuming responsibility before social conventions had its effect on the thinker, too. He gradually reconciled himself, lulled into tolerance by the good fellowship of those whom he would have to attack. He still disapproved, but he added to the first fierce protestation, "Things must be changed," the saving clause, "but I can not change them!"

Later, when, in a sudden burst of reform, a mayor, revolting against the machine, appointed him a municipal magistrate, he had progressed further, even to the point of saying that things had always been the same, here as elsewhere, that what was needed was to be practical, to accomplish quietly as much good as possible, instead of shrieking into unbelieving ears. His religious fury had subsided into a great compassion. He sought to save rather than to punish. He became known as a judge who could not be approached. He had had one or two conflicts with the machine of the shadows, and had come out victorious and respected. He was known as a very courageous man.

Life lay agreeably ahead. As the emotional and spiritual cravings departed, his curiosity increased. Life on the surface, life as a spectator, life as the confidant of others, watching developments, explosions,

consequences, was very satisfying, without danger. He knew from experience the sting of great emotions, and he said to himself that that man was securest in his happiness who depended on no indispensable friendship, who cherished in his imagination no ambition linked with the stars, who took the laughter and the smiles of women, and avoided the heat, the pain and the soul-bruising of a great passion. Such love was to him yoked with tragedy, conflict, disillusionment, subjection, or crowned with final emptiness.

He had indeed become the judicial observer, watching with unsated amusement, through his thousand points of vantage, the complex panorama of human beings groping, struggling, crawling, running, bacchanalian with sudden hysteric joys, or crying against little tragedies. His intimate acquaintance with men of every calling, open or suspect, was immense. His knowledge of the city, its big and little secrets, its whys and wherefores, its entangled virtue and vice, its secret ways from respectability to shame, its strange bedfellows, the standards of honor among the corrupt and the mental sophistries of the strong, was profound. For him the baffling brownstone mask of New York did not exist. People instinctively trusted him. Criminals told him true stories in restaurants where few could venture; women of all sorts and conditions, passing before him for grave or minor offenses, often returned for advice or relief from blackmailing conditions. The police swore by him, politicians admitted his fairness. He played the game

according to their standards of honor strictly on the evidence presented, never taking advantage of what was told him privately.

He was not insensible to the attraction of women. He sought their confidence, but returned none; amused at their comedies, as it amused him intellectually to reduce a lying officer to terrified confession. Twice bruised, he never attempted more than a light and agreeable comradeship. He had that curious but rather high standard of morality which one often encounters among men of his opportunity in life. He prided himself that no woman had suffered harm by him, which, translated, meant that he had never been responsible. In fact, he shrank from the thought of incurring responsibility. This was the horror that had sent him from Doré, for he was honest in his intellectual perceptions, and he saw at once that what he had blundered into was more immoral than the flesh hunter's seeking of the body, for this was trafficking with a soul.

When he had first paused to study Doré, he had perceived in her an unusual specimen of a type which he knew and enjoyed immensely. The interesting woman, to him, was the one who was destined to arouse passions and leave disaster behind her. The antagonism which had flared up between Harrigan Blood and Sassoon over her favors, the resulting quarrel as she had escaped, amused him immensely. He was not ignorant of the defensive alliance that existed between the Sassoon interests and Harrigan Blood's chain of papers, and though he judged too clearly not

to doubt that a rupture was but delayed. It struck him as the very essence of human drama that forces of such magnitude could be shaken by the impertinent turn of a head or a lurking smile.

"Here is a fine creature who is going to make a good deal of trouble!" he thought to himself, and interested at once before the possibilities at her clever finger-tips he had said to himself: "I am seeing the beginning of a career, and a career that will be extraordinary!"

With this keen curiosity in mind, not insensible to the fleeting compelling lure of the girl, he had gone up to her room, and suddenly, as, delighted, he had prepared to watch she not prepared for others, it had closed over him. He had had his doubts about Doré, that doubt which waits in the mind of every man before every woman; but all this left him the moment when, conquered in his arms, she had clung to him blindly, in ecstasy. He comprehended what had overwhelmed her — had overwhelmed her by surprise.

It was only when he had a dozen times sought to compose a letter which would be neither caddish, prodish, or brutal, that he perceived to what extent the old departed famine in himself had fiercely awakened. He had made up his mind instantly to master such a peril, but he had not succeeded. His conscience rose up at every turn, accusing him of cowardice. How deep had been the wound he had inflicted? Had he the right, for his own security, thus violently to separate himself from the girl who, without artifice, had suddenly revealed herself? And what would become

of her? This latter idea pursued him constantly, tormenting him. Finally, oppressed by the doubts which her absence made to surge about him, he had gone to her door. She had left that very afternoon. He did not leave his name, but retreated hastily, affecting to believe that Providence had thus interfered to save him from a great calamity.

When she had dashed into his life again, that night in the noisy Jungle Room at Healey's, as he knew she must sooner or later, he was stricken with the sudden imperious claim she exerted over all his impulses. He understood all she sought to show him in the bitterness of her mood, but, beyond all the pain he saw he had inflicted, he was terrified by the thought of the danger to himself. He felt the fatality that waited in the intensity of her nature, the fatality that for a glance and a word had made enemies of Sassoon and Blood. The sight of her in the arms of other men was intolerable, and yet he could not avert his eyes. He was afraid to speak to her, but at the thought of her risking herself with Lindaberry, he had broken through all restraint. When she had gone, he had a feeling of thankfulness. He had done all he could to prevent it. After all, what did he know of her? If she could go thus with Lindaberry, what had she done with Sassoon, Harrigan Blood, others? With fifty desperate reasonings, he sought to excuse himself and find a justified way out. But always the accusation in her eyes, as she turned scornfully, disdainfully to him in all the shifting points of the dance, remained.

"She will wreck my life!" he said to himself fifty

times a day, to prevent his going to her. "Why am I responsible? She knew what she was doing, that night!"

But at the first glimpse of Dodo in the blue Russian blouse, open throat and white toque turning into the aisle, he had felt a profound relief. He had done all that he humanly could do; he had resisted to the last, struggled against the impossible; and, now that she herself had resolved it, he felt immensely thankful.

The last case before him was one of daily occurrence — domestic trouble. A young mother, baby in arms, a child at her skirts, preternaturally bent and worn, had summonsed her husband into court on grounds of non-support, accusing him of intoxication. He looked at the couple, seeing deeper — the man vigorous and young, the woman whose prettiness had led him to vow eternal constancy, now lost in drudgery and unequal burden. What could he say to the unscarred young male who stood staring at him with awed glance — bid him to love what he had driven from her bed and figure? The mockery of futile charges!

"Why don't you support your wife and children?" he asked, for the thousandth time. "Why don't you stop drinking?"

The husband, a young mechanic, promised volubly what each knew he would not perform.

"Put you on probation for three months!" he said sharply. "She's your wife; you married her because you wanted to. Now, stop drinking and be a man, or I'll send you up to the island. Do you understand?"

The man bowed and went out, the woman at his heels, dragging her second child, believing that a word from His Honor could change everything. Massingale watched them go, staring a moment, glanced at the clock and ended the session with a nod to his officer.

"Does it interest you?" he said to Doré, in a matter-of-fact tone.

"Yes!"

She had not seen a thing that had transpired.

They went to his private room, noisy and dark as the rest, the window-panes rattling at every elevated train that went crashing through the air. He gave his gown to an attendant, issued a few orders and they were alone. Neither spoke, waiting silently the other's advance, afraid to speak that first word; for in such moments it is the first who speaks who must explain. He continued to look at her with his magisterial stare, at bottom suddenly vindictive, resenting this girl who had dared to return into his life, to reclaim him to uncertainty and perils against his logic.

She extended her hands in a little helpless movement, shook her head and said timidly:

"Well?"

A moment before, still counseled by his reason, he had been on the point of a cold answer, resolved correctly to beg her pardon and make this interview the last. At her surrendering gesture and the plaintive note in her voice, a great pity brushed aside everything else, and he said impulsively:

"I went once — you were away. I wanted to see you!"

"I did not know," she said hurriedly, rushing at the hardest to be said,— "that night — that you were married!"

"I understood that."

The court officer returned, announcing his automobile, and they passed out. They had said nothing, and yet everything had been said.

"Where do you want to go?" he said, smiling.

"Anywhere!"

He hesitated, and then gave her address.

"We've got to have a frank talk," he said lightly; "then we can run up somewhere for dinner — to celebrate. Did you notice Riley, my special? He's a great character!"

"Funny mouth; does it ever stop grinning?" she said, joyfully, wonderfully, perfectly happy. She leaned to him, whispering in his ear: "Was he shocked at my coming?"

He was about to answer indiscreetly, but caught himself.

"Riley? No; he's quite a man of the world!"

The sunlight and the frosty December air restored his clarity of thought. He would have the plainest of conversations with her. If they could go on as free comrades, well and good. Perhaps even a certain intimacy were better; it might serve to readjust certain illusions that lingered in the memory.

He glanced at her sidewise, physically comforted at the delicacy of her profile, the light airy youth that hung about her, intangible as a perfume. He had known ten, twenty women more beautiful than Dodo,

more stimulating mentally, with an elegance that she did not possess. It was impossible that this child, enticing and gay as she was, could really have stirred him to uncontrollable emotions! With these thoughts running through his mind, his confidence returned; he even began to wonder at his former fear, holding it ridiculous. If she were foolishly resolved in the conviction of a great passion, he was clever enough subtly to undeceive her, to regulate their relations and keep them within the safe limits of a confidential flirtation.

Pursuing this idea, he said nonchalantly, as they entered her room:

"Do you know, young mischief, that you have a great deal to answer for? Sassoon and Harrigan Blood are at each other's throats. Blood's been caught in the market, and is hammering the Sassoon interests like a wild one. What have you been doing with them all this time?"

"How false that all sounds!" she said abruptly.

Disconcerted, he changed his tactics, saying seriously:

"Dodo, you are a very combustible sort of person. Do you realize the danger of what we are doing?"

She shrugged her shoulders impatiently, going directly to the issue:

"Tell me about yourself—about your real self: your home, your wife! I must know!"

"I don't wish to talk about others," he said, irritated in his sense of delicacy.

"But I do!" she said passionately. "I saw her. There can be nothing between you—and her!"

He made an imperative gesture, checking himself immediately, saying with more restraint:

"There is nothing between us. Dodo, there are some things I don't think you quite understand. Whatever may exist, I can not discuss Mrs. Massingale with others!"

"‘Others’!" she said indignantly, turning from him, deeply hurt.

He took her by the wrist and led her to a seat, feeling the necessity of asserting his supremacy. She allowed herself to be forced into it, looking up at him with rebellious eyes, like a naughty child.

"Do you know the danger of what you are doing?" he repeated. And then he corrected himself — "What *we* are doing?"

Her face changed instantly, becoming very serious. Her eyes looked past him out of the window, beginning to be blurred by the gathering tears. He drew back hastily.

"Why do you talk to me like this? What is the use of it all?"

"Why?" he exclaimed fiercely. "Because you are a child; because you try me beyond my patience; because I want to be fair and honorable with you; because I could —"

She was on her feet instantly, clapping her hands together.

"Ah, that's what I want to hear again — again!"

He halted directly, with a helpless gesture.

"Dodo," he said firmly, "listen to me! I will not make another mistake! If you don't realize things, I

do. I want to be your friend; I do want to see you; but, unless it can be so, I —"

"Oh!" she cried furiously, dangerously near the point of self-dramatization. "Don't always reason; don't think of what is going to happen! Let's be as we are! I can't help it — can you? You know you can't!"

"And then?"

"Don't talk to me of *then*! Think of to-day! Do you think, when the first great thing has come into my life, that I'm going to put it aside for — *what*?" She flung her arm out toward the ugly brick side that symbolized to her all that she hated: "A little ordinary life, like every other ordinary little life? No! I told you I won't be like every one else! It's true! I don't want to live, if that's what life means!"

He said to himself swiftly that he had made a great mistake in coming; that he would end it as soon as he could; and that he would never venture again, even if he had to run away. For every accent of her voice, every flashing look, moved him perilously.

"What do you want? Do you know?" he asked roughly.

"I want to be near you; that's all I know now," she said, folding her hands over her breast and closing her eyes.

"And the end?"

She was at his side with a bound, clutching his arm.

"Do you know what is the difference between us? I am honest; I say what I think! You are afraid to admit what you feel!"

"The situation is not the same," he said stubbornly.
"The responsibility is all on my side!"

"Oh, Your Honor!" she said sublimely. "Don't let's talk! Don't you know it won't change anything? It will be such a great, great love. I know it — I feel it! So beautiful! And what else matters? It's our life, and you — you have never really lived!"

Her impetuosity sobered him. He made a turn of the room; when he came back he was smiling, with the smile she hated. "Dodo, I suppose at this moment you think you would go off with me anywhere."

"Anywhere!"

"But you wouldn't!" he said quietly. "Luckily, I understand you!" He shook his head. "Acting — always acting!"

"No!"

"Yes — acting with yourself, dramatizing a situation. But that's all! Just another precipice! Dangerous for you, but fatal to me if I were to believe you!"

"Oh, I swear to you that isn't so!" she cried, with a gesture that he appreciated, even at the moment, for its dramatic verity.

"Come!" he said quietly. "Let's be good comrades. Don't dabble with fire!"

"You think, when you leave, you will never see me again!" she said swiftly, surprising him by the penetration of her intuition. She went to him, fastening her fingers about him like the tendrils of clinging ivy. "Well, Your Honor. I will never let you go! Remember that! If you don't come, I will go and get you!"

You have caught me, and you can never get rid of me. I swear it!"

She sprang away quickly, affecting nonchalance. The door opened and Snyder came in, stopping short at the sight of the two figures, indistinct in the twilight.

"Come in, come in, Snyder!" Doré said hastily. "My friend, Judge Massingale."

Snyder gave him her hand abruptly, with a quick antagonistic movement, watching his embarrassed face keenly.

"Just came up to get my coat," said Doré glibly. "Going out for dinner!"

They left hurriedly, ill at ease. On the second stairway, in the dark, she stopped him, and approaching her lips so close to his ear that they almost brushed it, said:

"I am not acting; I mean everything. It is to be the great thing in my life!"

He laughed, but did not reply.

"I understand her now," he said to himself, with a feeling of strength. "She may deceive herself; she can not blind me!" Later he added uneasily: "If I ever believe her, I am lost!"

But Doré believed implicitly what she had said. At the bottom, what was working in her soul? That instinct, second only to the nesting instinct, in woman, that great protective impulse which alone explains a thousand incomprehensible attachments. He had taken her, caught her soul and her imagination, lawlessly, unfairly perhaps; but there it remained, an im-

perishable mark. Only one thing could atone to her self-respect — the glorification of this accident. Only when into his acquiring soul had come an immense overpowering love, could a renunciation be possible which would live in her memory, not to recall blushes of anger and shame, but to give the satisfaction of a heroic sacrifice. But the danger lay in his incredulity and resistance!

CHAPTER XX

ON their fourth meeting a furious quarrel developed. Dodo had expected that, with the difficulties of the reconciliation resolved, their relations would be resumed where they had been interrupted. She found, to her surprise, that only a new conflict had opened. She did not divine at once all the hesitation of his character, but she perceived an opposition which amazed her. In her infatuation, she wished to run heedlessly, with bandaged eyes and hungry arms, into these enchanted gardens of her imagination. She did not wish to visualize facts, hungrily seeking the satisfaction of undefined illusions. That he should follow gravely, with troubled searching glance, aroused in her a storm of resentment. She little guessed at what price he paid for his self-control. She could not comprehend this resistance in him. What was it held him back? He spoke of everything but the one vital issue — themselves. Unconsciously she felt herself forced to fasten to him, as instinctively she felt him seeking escape. But always, while thus led to compel him on she refused to consider where the road might lead.

Massingale, in fact, in the moments of her absence, was continually torn between his impulses and his logic. Logically he saw the danger without an at-

tempt at subterfuge. He did not believe in her, and he was certain that at the last crucial test she would never break through conventionalities; but he foresaw that the true danger lay, not in her romanesque imagination, but in the hunger that would awaken in him. Even the appearance of evil must always be inscribed to his account by that judgment of society that never goes below the surface and would persist in seeing in the present situation only an inexperienced young girl and a man of the world, married, who pursued.

By every reason he sought to liberate his imagination, and only succeeded in enmeshing himself the more securely in the silk imprisonment. To each clear and warning argument a memory rose victoriously, confounding reason and bringing new longings. When in her presence, he found the study of this perplexing and ardent disciple of youth, who had darted across into his life out of nowhere, one of endless mystification and satisfaction. He forgot all his resolves in the sensation of gazing into the profoundly troubling blue of her glance, watching the divine subtleties of that smile which began in the twinkling corners of her eyes and glided, with always a note of arch malice, to the childlike lips. Sometimes he incited her to assumed anger in order to watch the sudden lights that awakened in the cloudy eyes, the sharp little teeth, brilliant against the parted red of the lips, the heightened danger-signals on the cheek. And when, in curious restaurants, removed from the prying gaze of Mrs. Grundy, they ensconced them-

selves, laughing with the delight of truants at finding a hiding-place, the slight pressure of her foot against his, a moment offered and a moment gone, created new philosophies in his logical brain, and he repeated to himself again and again that he would change all to be a young cub, as the young fellows who surrounded them, starting life undaunted and free. To have the right, or to do no harm!

Often, watching her sparkling mood, that showed itself in a dozen laughing tricks with cutlery or glass, mystified, he asked himself:

"Does she realize what this means?"

There lay this great difference between them — he sought gloomily to foresee the end, she was in raptures only at the beginning. In this period which preceded the inevitable one when he would find subterfuge and evasion to put his conscience to sleep, a period in which he still felt the closing of the trap on his liberty, and saw clearly because he still wished to resist, Massingale asked himself logically where each step would lead. How long could his embottled control be kept to phrases? And when, in one combustible moment, he should obey the longing to recall that hour when, conquering her, she had conquered him, what would follow?

Shrinking from the thought of another solution, he asked himself once or twice if, under her artless insouciance, there was not a deep calculation; or if, indeed, she were planning to upset everything in his life, drag him into the publicity of the divorce courts, create a new home, dissolve old habits, estrange old friends,

and fasten on him new ones. He thought thus, not because he thought honestly, but because he wished to recoil from immediate responsibility.

Dodo had not the slightest care of the future. The next month or the next week did not exist; the day sufficed. She raised no questions; she contented herself rapturously with emotions.

"He will come at five—how many hours more? He will be here at five—where shall we go for dinner? Where can we be alone? He will come—"

Her mind satisfied itself with such speculations. If, at this time, he had again asked her seriously what would come of it all, she probably would have answered him pettishly, like a gay child:

"Oh, don't let's talk of annoying things."

He began a hundred comedies of resistance, some of which she detected scornfully, others which eluded, in their subtlety, her analysis. There were times when, uneasy at the growing responsibility that she was slowly drawing about his shoulders, he tried by artful questions to convince himself that she was not quite so innocent as he had believed.

"And how do you put off Sassoon all this time, and Harrigan Blood?" he asked her once, abruptly.

It was their fourth successive evening together. They had gone to the "Hickory Log," a chop-house on lower Seventh Avenue, secure of finding privacy. The walls had been decorated to simulate ancient Greenwich village, the floor, fenced off with green palings, affording convenient nooks. In the back, before a spacious open oven, chickens and steaks were

turning savorously over glowing hickory embers, that mingled their clean pungent perfume with appetizing odors. Up-stairs, in special rooms, some East Side club was noisily celebrating over a chop supper, while from time to time two or three young men in white berets and coats came singing down the turning stairs, saluting gaily the sympathetic audience.

Below, everywhere was the feeling of the people, happy, prosperous, relaxed, feasting on heavy bourgeois dishes flanked by huge bumpers of the beer which made the "Hickory Log" a Mecca for the thirsty. The floor was sanded, the tables bare of cloth. Opposite them a young man had his arm about his sweetheart, bending his head to her ear. When a group of the revelers saluted them with enthusiasm, each returned a laughing acknowledgment, but without change of pose.

"How natural all this is!" said Dodo, finding in her hungry soul a kindred longing. "How they enjoy things! We must come here often. This garden, this table — it shall be ours!"

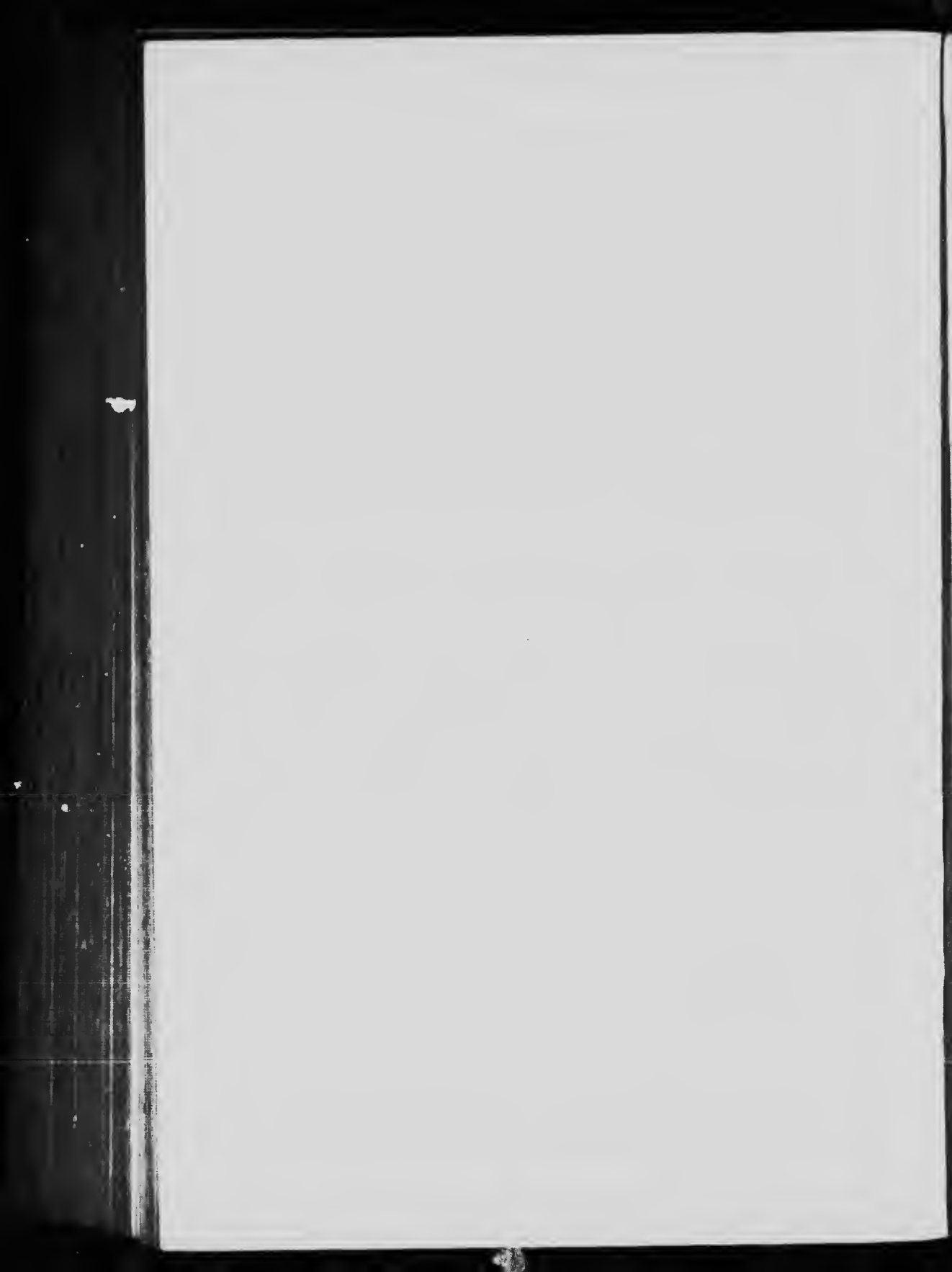
"And how do you keep Sassoon and Blood in good appetite, little Mormon?" he persisted.

She hated this incredulous cynical mood of his, and she disapproved of the epithet.

"Why do you always begin like this?" she said, chopping off the head of a celery stalk with a vicious blow of her knife. "I am not a Mormon, and you know perfectly well that no one else exists now for me!" She turned, saw his quizzical look, and added vigorously: "And I am *not acting!*"



They had gone to the Hickory Log



"Do, please. It is your great charm!"

"You are positively hateful!"

"Well, why did you encourage Sassoon, then?"

She looked at him with a little malice in her eyes.

"I suppose you want to think yourself one of many?"

This was too near the mark. He answered evasively:

"All I wish is to be your father confessor, you know!"

This simulation of friendship was another thing that always aroused her. She wished to punish him, and began to embroider.

"Yes, I encourage Sassoon," she said, leaning on the table, nodding in emphasis, and switching a celery stalk among the glasses venomously, like the tail of an irritated leopard. "Harrigan Blood, too. And I have my reasons. You think I am a wild little creature who never looks ahead. Quite wrong! Everything is planned out. Everything will be settled — definitely — soon!"

"When?"

"On my twenty-third birthday — on the tenth of March. Remember that date!"

"Very appropriate month," he interjected.

"Then I am through with this sort of a life — good-by forever to Dodo!" she went on rapidly.

"You don't believe me? I assure you, I never was more serious! Then I shall choose" — she raised her fingers, counting — "a great love, marriage, career, or" — she ended with a shrug — "lots of money!"

"I see," he said, comprehending her maneuver, and yet annoyed by it. "And so Sassoon is a possibility?"

"If you fail, quite a possibility!" she said, to irritate him further. "At any rate, I shall keep him just where I want him — until the time comes to decide!"

"You could never do that, Dodo!" he said sharply.

"Oh, couldn't I?" she cried, delighted that he had entertained the thought. "I'm quite capable of being a cold-blooded little adventuress! Perhaps I am one, and am only making sport of you. Beware! As for Sassoon — do you know what I'd do? I'd make him give me a career, and then, when I am very, very well known, perhaps — if I wanted — I'd make him divorce, and become Mrs. Sassoon! How would you like to meet me in society?" She laughed at the thought, but added immediately: "Oh, it is not so impossible, either! Nowadays, a clever girl who sees just what she wants can do anything!"

"Is that what you would do with me?" he said quietly.

She turned swiftly, abandoning all her pretense, pain in her eyes.

"Oh, no, Your Honor! Not with you! I would take nothing from you, now or ever!"

"Then don't say such things!" he said, strangely soothed by the passion in her voice.

"Don't be — friendly, then!" she retorted, and with a quick appealing raising of her eyes she laid her hand on his.

"I must talk frankly with her!" he said to himself,

with a groaning of the spirit. "She will not face the situation, and there can be no solution to it — no possible solution!" He turned heroically, resolved to lay down the law, and his stern eyes encountered hers, so troubling and so untroubled, tempting and yielding — glorified and inconscient.

"I am so happy!" she said; and, in an excess of emotion, as if suffocating, her eyes closed and her breast rose in a long sigh. Arguments and fears went riotously head over heels in flight.

It was almost at the end of the dinner before, his calm returning, he said:

"Let's talk of your career. Do you know, I believe you'd do big things!"

She glanced up suspiciously, judging the tone rather than the words.

"You say that because you wish to get rid of me!" she said abruptly.

He protested vehemently to the contrary.

"Yes, yes, you would! I'm beginning to know you and your tricks! But look out! I warn you, you will never get rid of me!" She rose impatiently. "I don't like it here. We do nothing but quarrel. Come!" Outside his automobile was waiting. "No, no; let's walk a little. It's good to be among people who are natural!"

"I have a meeting I can not put off — at nine; I told you," he said, irritated and impatient to be free.

It was cold, with a sharp, dry, exhilarating sting. The shop-windows were set with glaring enticements for the Christmas season — red and green or spar-

kling with tinsel and gold ornament. The sidewalks were alive with the sluggish loitering of a strange people, Italians, Germans, Jews from Russia, negroes flowing in from dark side streets, occasional Irish about the saloons, whose doors swung busily; but the signs above the shops were foreign, without trace of the first Anglo-Saxon emigration which had passed on to the upper city.

Everything interested Doré. She wished to stop at every window, mingling with the urchins and the curious, prying into cellars whence the odor of onions or leather came to their nostrils. He yielded his arm, following her whims, and yet unamused. A policeman saluted him, grinning sympathetically at the spectacle of His Honor unbending. Massingale did not look back, but he divined, with annoyance, the smile and the interpretation. All this sodden or abject world, which passed before his eyes day in and day out, with its unanswerable indictments, its bottomless misery, left on him a very different impression. He saw in it the quicksands of life, where those who steered their course without foresight sometimes disappeared, closed over by floods of mediocrity and poverty. Natural and happy? He felt in it only a horror and a threat. On his arm the touch of the young girl grew imperiously heavy, that touch which stopped him abruptly or forced him ahead, unwilling, bored and reluctant.

"I could be happy here — very happy!" she said romantically. There was something in this that recalled the few regretted sides of her early life. Sor-

row was sorrow, and joy pure delight, and each walked here, unhesitating and unashamed, unhampered by little spying social codes or the artifices of manners. Her hand slipped down his arm to where his was plunged in his pocket, closing over it.

"It's wonderful! So free, so *honest*! Don't you adore the feeling?"

"No!" he said abruptly. He had been thinking of a college mate of his who had broken through the permitted of society and married where he should not have: a forgotten friend who had dropped out, who might have ended,—who knows?—in a howling stuffy flat in just such a quarter.

She drew her hand impatiently away.

"I hate you to-night! I won't keep you any longer. Take me home!"

In his own automobile, surrounded by the atmosphere of things he knew and enjoyed, Massingale felt an easier mood. Besides, her indifference and flashes of temper always exercised a provocative effect.

"What a little whirligig you are, Dodo," he said, laughing. "Happy there? You wouldn't last an afternoon! Besides, romance is one thing, but think of the dirt!"

"You want to antagonize me; you've done it all evening!" she said, drawing into her corner.

He defended himself lamely, aware of the truth.

"Never mind!" she added vindictively. "I shall amuse myself to-night."

"Sassoon or Tarrigan Blood?" he said, pinching her ear.

"Perhaps."

She refused to be enticed from her offended dignity. When they reached Miss Pim's, contrary to his determination, he descended and went up-stairs with her, seeking, with a quick pity in his heart, to repair the effects of his ill-humor. Then, judging the moment auspicious, he began gravely:

"Dodo, where is this going to end?"

"What? Which?" she said, frowning and whirling about, as if she had not understood.

He repeated the question with even more seriousness.

"I want to be genuine!" she said, stamping her foot. "I don't want to be dissecting everything I do before I do it! Whatever comes, I want it to come without calculation!"

He groaned aloud.

"Hopeless! Crazy! Impossible child!"

"It's you who are impossible!" she retorted hotly. "It's you who are neither one thing nor the other! It's you who back and fill! I am honest; you're not! What are you thinking of all the time — your wife?"

His sense of decorum was shocked.

"Dodo, kindly leave my wife's name out of the conversation!"

"And why should I leave it out?" she answered furiously. "She's the one thing that comes between us! I hate her! I despise her! I could kill her!"

"Dodo!"

"Do you love her? No! Do you care *that* for

her? No! Or she for you? No! Well, then, why shouldn't I discuss her?"

When she fell into a passion, he no longer heard what words she said, fascinated by the impetuosity of the emotion that shook her — man-like, longing to have it translated into clinging in his arms. He felt himself beaten in this discussion where no logic was possible, and he said desperately that he would no longer quibble or avoid issues, that he would lay the truth before her, and pronounce ugly names. But, before he could venture, the telephone interrupted. She went to it joyfully, seeking a new means of tantalizing him.

He sought to catch some inkling of the man at the other end, but her ingenuity evaded him. Presently she leaned out of the hall, covering the mouthpiece with her hand.

"You are sure you have to go to that meeting?" she said, in a dry staccato.

"Sure!"

Then her voice rose again, answering the telephone.

"Yes, indeed — free. . . . Delighted. . . . Oh, longing for a spree. . . . How gorgeous! How soon?" She turned, glancing at Massingale.

He took up his hat, answering with asperity:

"Immediately!"

When she returned, they stood eying each other, rage in their hearts.

"Thank heaven, now I shall enjoy myself!" she said abruptly.

"And who is the gentleman?" he said.

"Any one you like; it's quite indifferent to me!"

"In that case, good-by!"

"Good-by — good-by!"

"Good! Now I am free," he thought, with a sudden liberation of the spirit, resolved to make this a pretext for his emancipation. He went to the door, but there a little shame made him halt. If this was to be the end, he wished to leave behind a memory of gentleness and courtesy. He returned and held out his hand, saying:

"I have been rather ill-humored —"

She looked up at him solemnly, hostility still reflected from his defensive antagonism. They had so opposed and tantalized each other all evening that all their nerves were on edge, vacillating toward a sudden obliterating reaction. He did not take her hand; his arms instead clutched her whole body to him, closing furiously over what he had resisted futilely all the day — every day since that first disorganizing embrace, until he could resist no longer. Her arms caught him. She gave a little cry that ended on his lips, her whole body relaxed, half turned and half fallen, as he bent over her.

This kiss, wrenched from him at the moment he felt himself strongest, obliterating useless exasperation and futile combat, ended his resistance. From his soul the eternal rebel cry of the transgressor went up:

"Ah, I must live!"

The moments slipped by unheeded, and still he held her, imprisoned. All the stifled side of his nature

started up. It seemed to him that all the genuine in his life was in this kiss: the denied ardent self; the young Massingale and the girl he had adored in his first extravagant passion: the Massingale in revolt, surrendering to the fear of the world, clasped in the last renunciation with the woman who might have been — the past and more than the past, the present and the exquisite pain of time, youth renounced and youth fleeting. He raised her, convulsively strained to his breast, closing his eyes, and breathing the same air that came to her, as if pursuing on her lips the last precious dregs of a cup that was almost drained.

“By heaven, I’ve done all I could! I’m not going to fight any more!” he said, in a rage at her, at himself, at life.

And as, erect, he held his head from her the better to study the faint face, the closed eyes and the parted lips, her body swayed toward his, one arm wrapping about him, one arm winding about his throat, the fingers closing over his shoulders like the tendrils of ivy, that subtle feminine vine that fastens itself to the monarchs of the forests, stealing their strength. Even in this moment he felt in her this fatality, but a fatality that drew him recklessly, gratefully on.

All at once she had a sensation of fear — as if the victory were over and another conflict were on. She sought to free herself, seeking air to breathe, afraid of herself, of these half lights, neither day nor the glaring night, of every vibrant sense, warned by some still unmastered instinct within her, that struggled through the dizziness in her mind and body.

She wrenched herself from him, springing behind a table, and once liberated, feeling an instantaneous buoyancy of triumph. He stood quietly, breathing deep, locking and unlocking his hands. She stood, as free as though a cañon separated them, watching him, her hands folded poignantly at her throat, her body leaning toward him, victorious, mentally alert.

"Oh, Your Honor, Your Honor, what's the use!" she cried. "You care—you do care! Say that you care!"

His answer was an exclamation, inarticulate, convincing, a cry rather than a word! The next moment, transformed, no longer calm, restrained, judicial, but tempestuous, revealing and defenseless, he stepped forward with a threatening gesture.

"Dodo, if you are acting! If you—"

"Ah, that's how I like you!" she cried rapturously, flinging out her arms. "No, no—fear nothing; I am not acting! You will see! You will be satisfied! When I tell you my plan—a wonderful, beautiful plan—Only, first I must be sure!"

She was transformed, radiant; but on her glowing face and glorified eyes he saw, with a return of incredulity, the elfish lights of the dramatizer.

He stood angry, perplexed, defiant, examining her with distrust. All at once he passed the table abruptly, caught her as she sprang away, turned her in his arms fiercely, roughly, pinned her arms to her sides furiously, more in anger than passion, covered her cheeks, her eyes, her lips with kisses, and suddenly, almost flinging her from him, rushed out of the room.

She rose from the sofa where she had fallen, listening breathlessly, a little frightened, satisfied at last. Then suddenly she ran to the window, flinging it open, leaning out, happy, victorious, eager. He did not see her; he was rushing down the steps abruptly, flinging himself into his car, departing quickly.

The reaction from all the petty miseries of the spirit which she had suffered in these days of fencing and resistance had been so acute that she returned in a perfect delirium of delight. Even the tragic shadow that hung about it heightened the heroism of their infatuation. At last she had shaken off the tentacles of the dreaded commonplace. She might suffer; what did it matter? All her life might pay for it; she did not care! It was not an ordinary bread-and-butter affection. It would be magnificent, like the great loves of history, tragic but magnificent! And the solution she had hinted of to Massingale, the end which she had imagined in her romanesque, runaway mind was something that seemed so supremely great, so extraordinary, that she abandoned herself into its misty vistas without doubt or hesitation, radiant, convinced.

"Ah, now I know — now I know what the answer is!" she cried rapturously. She went to the hostile window, shaking her fist at it triumphantly: "Ugly wall, horrid wall, hateful wall! You are beaten! I am no longer afraid of you! That for you!"

And snapping her fingers, laughing gaily, she returned, whirling on her toes like a child, crying:

"He cares — he does care!"

But the moods into which she had flung herself had resulted in such an intoxication of all her emotional self that she forgot her first resolve to remain quiet. She felt the need of more excitement: lights, music, movement, noise! She was too exhilarated, too tensely throbbing with conquest and recklessness. She could never remain now alone and still. She resolved to go out, for a little while only, for an hour or so. On her table was a note from Lindaberry, unopened. She had seen it on her first return. She saw it now in all her whirling progress about the room, imperative, appealing. But did she not go to it. It represented to her a self that she wished to avoid just now — for this bewildering night of senses and emotions. It was another world, the world of the hushed spaces and tranquil shadows, where her vibrant theatric self could not rest. So she let the letter lie unopened, fearing an imperative call, conscience-stricken at the neglect of these last days. When she returned at three o'clock, fatigued at last, she went precipitately to the letter, carrying it to the gas-jet, with an uneasy glance at Snyder, who was moving restlessly in a dream.

"Dear Dodo:

"Pretty tough going. Tried to get you many times. What's the matter? Tried to get you many times. Is the bet off? Wouldn't blame you. Will stop at ten sharp. At exactly ten. If you could — it would mean a lot. You see, it's — well, it's a backsliding day — at first, you know, hard going.

"GARRY."

The slight waver in the handwriting, the repeated stumbling phrases, told her everything. In a fever of

remorse and self-accusation, she flung herself on her knees at her bedside, vowing that never again would she fail him, come what might, resolved to run to him the first thing in the morning and repair the damages she had selfishly inflicted. She prayed fervently, accusing herself, unable to control her tears. Snyder, in the dim luminous reflection from the windows, bolt upright in her bed, watched her breathlessly, unperceived.

The next morning, when, after vain calls at the telephone, she went to Lindaberry's apartments, the janitor, with a shrug of his shoulders, informed her that he had not returned. It was not unusual: sometimes he was gone for four days, a week — God knew where!

CHAPTER XXI

DAYS passed without word of Lindaberry, and the fear of what might have happened was never absent from Doré. Other anxieties crowded in on her. One day she suddenly perceived that the bi-weekly basket of champagne from Mr. Peavey was three days overdue. She had heard little of him beyond the brief answers to her punctual acknowledgments, nor had she availed herself often of the opera tickets, turning them over to Winona, Ida Summers, or Estelle Monks. The automobile had been needed rarely, her entire absorption in Massingale leaving her little time. Once or twice Ida had repeated her mysterious hints as to Winona and trespassing, but, obsessed by the fever of new and strong emotions, she had paid little heed.

All at once this warning returned with a new suggestion. Had Winona, whom she had introduced to Mr. Peavey, been trying to supplant her? She went directly to Ida Summers, surprising her by the determination of her manner:

"Ida, is Winona trying to cut me out with Mr. Peavey?"

The look on the girl's face told her the truth of her guess.

"How far has it gone? What do you know? Tell me everything!"

"I have seen them at the theater together, at a restaurant once or twice."

"When? Lately?"

"No; when you were in Buffalo . . ."

"Alone?"

"Yes!"

"But since I have been back? Think! Be sure!"

"I am not sure, Do," said Ida slowly. "Lord! don't look as if you'd eat me up!"

"But you think —"

"I think he took her to the opera Monday night."

Dodo returned to her room in a rage. She divined at once the cleverness of the stroke. Each time she had given Winona her seats, the girl had called up Mr. Peavey as an escort — thus, even without a word, convincing him how lightly his presents were held. How far had Winona gone? She remembered now that since her return she had hardly seen her. Had Winona been deliberately avoiding her? Was she playing to marry Mr. Peavey? Had she gone so far even as to tell him of the true uses to which his presents were put?

Dodo, who was generosity itself, had also, when her sense of injustice was aroused, unfathomed depths of hatred and vindictiveness. Winona, to whom she had opened her slender purse a dozen times, whom she had placed with Blainey at the moment of her despair — Winona, of all the world, to betray her! She called up the garage and asked for Brennon immediately. From him she would get some information. Then, without knocking, she entered Winona's room. She

was not there. Doré, restless and suspicious, examined the mantel and the table, halting before three vases of gorgeous American Beauty roses.

"Can these be from Peavey? That's not like him!" she thought, wrinkling her forehead.

On a table was a present newly arrived, a cabinet of different perfumes, in red morocco and silver. There was a card still on the top: "Penniston Schwartz."

"Don't know him," Doré thought, forgetting Ida's story of the dinner. She continued her examination. On the bureau were several bits of silver that she did not remember seeing before; in the closet a new gown or two; but in all this no note of Peavey. What she was seeking was a basket of champagne, and though she sought under the lounge and the bed and in the dark recesses of the wardrobe, she found no trace.

Nevertheless, her anger did not abate. Winona had betrayed her: she would strike at once, and deep. She would go to Blainey and make a personal request for the part she had procured for the ingrate. When Brennon arrived, she remained a moment talking with him. Her confidence had solidified itself in him lately; from many things, she was certain that he was her ally, that she could trust him.

"Brennon," she said directly, "is Mr. Peavey in town?"

"Left this morning."

"Then he's been back? How long?"

"Three or four days, Miss Baxter."

"Has he seen my friend, Miss Horning, much?"

He nodded energetically.

"Look here, Miss Baxter," he said, with a sly important look, "been wanting to slip you a pointer for some time. She's not your friend. Danger ahead! Look out!"

"What do you mean, Brennon?" Doré said confidentially. "I wish you'd speak out! Mr. Peavey's been to see her a good deal, hasn't he?"

"No; but she's seen him! She's a sly one — clever, too; wouldn't risk his coming here!"

"Has she talked against me? What has she said?"

"We know what the governor's like, you and I, eh?" he said, with an impertinence that she did not notice, in her distraction. "Well, she plays the quiet game — home talking, family type." He leaned forward, looking at her directly: "See here! This is straight. If you've got your mind fixed in the governor's direction, better grab him now!"

"What has she said about me?" Doré said anxiously. Then, suddenly: "Has he asked you any questions? Where I go? Whom I see?"

He nodded, laughing.

"Sure he does — every time! Look here! He's one of those kinds you've got to snake with salt on their tails. But he got nothing out of me! Trust this old fox for that! I like to see a pretty girl have her fling as well as a man!"

"Thank you, Brennon," she said, without much attention, entering the car.

When she reached Blainey's office, she was forced to wait some time, Sada Quichy being in conference

with the manager. *The Red Prince* had made an enormous success, and the diva had leaped into instant popularity. Of a consequence, Blainey, who had treated her with abrupt tolerance on the night of the dress rehearsal, now accorded her the honors due to royalty. At the end of a quarter of an hour he appeared at the door, according her the favor of a personal escort, which she, comedian herself, repaid with an extra languishing adieu, each sublimely indifferent to the motley audience of actors, agents, authors and musicians who assisted respectfully at this sport of the gods.

Blainey perceived Doré, and giving her the preference with a curt bob of his head, reentered his den. There was in the gesture something unusually abrupt that struck her. When she followed him into the room, this impression was reinforced by the evident atmosphere of ill-humor.

"What's the matter with you, Blainey?" she asked directly.

He turned — hostility in every movement — flinging himself back into his chair, cocking his cigar in the corner of his mouth, running his hands into the arm-pits of his vest, frowning, determined.

"See here, kid, it's no go! Don't start anything! You've worked me for a sucker once! . . . Thanks; I've retired from charity committees!"

"What do you mean? I don't understand!"

"Ain't you come here to get me to take back that stuffed doll you panned off on me?"

"Take back!" she cried, amazed. "You mean to say Horning's fired?"

"Come off!" he said, grinning.

"Honest, Blainey, I didn't know! Since when?"

"Ter 'days. Say, she was fierce! I wouldn't trust her to carry a spear! The next time you try to work me, kid, on the charity racket, just pick my pockets. It'll save time!"

"Horning fired!" she repeated, suddenly furnished with a clue to all that had happened.

"Clever kid!" he said, watching her appreciatively. "You don't have to be taught!"

"Honest, Blainey, I didn't know!"

"What do you come here for?"

"I came to get you to bounce her," she said.

"That's straight!"

He gave a long delighted whistle.

"Cripes! Why, pussy's got claws! You don't say! What's she been up to? Crossing the heart line?" he added, possessed always with the idea that he had divined the cause of her troubles.

"No. Tried to double-cross me with a friend — but one that counted! However, if she's bounced, all right! No need to bother you!"

"No hurry, no hurry, kid!" he said, with profound disdain for the forty-odd clamorers in the outer purgatory. "Don't get a chance to look you over often. Well, how's the heart?"

She laughed.

"Better!"

"What's that mean — worse?"

"Perhaps!"

He shifted his cigar.

"Better get to work!"

"Be patient!" she said, shaking her curls. "Only three months more!"

"*Hein?*"

"The tenth of March is when my season closes!"

"Honest?"

"Quite so!"

"You'll begin to work?"

"Either that, or other things!" she said provokingly.

"What other things?"

"Oh, I might marry!"

He snorted with rage. Then, drawing his calendar to him, he turned ahead.

"March ten, eh?" He paused, and put a big cross on the day before. "I'd like an option of the ninth myself!"

"How so?"

"Let me discuss a little contract with you before you come to any other decision. What do you say? Promise!"

She laughed. She had no illusions in her mind as to the nature of what he might propose.

"Listen to what I've in mind before you close anywhere else!" he persisted.

"All right, Blainey!"

He rose, dragging himself up from his chair.

"Heavens, Blainey, do I get the honors of Sada

Quichy?" she said, laughing, as she perceived his intention was to accompany her to the outer door.

"Come to me, kid, when you need a tip or for anything else!" he said quietly. He put out his stumpy hand, tapping her shoulder. "I'd like to do a lot for you—know that, don't you? All right! Good luck!"

She gave him a quick pressure of her hand and went out. The atmosphere of the theater always impressed her, throwing her other life into futile outlines. Here was something definite—the satisfaction of a purpose, the reality of work. And as she returned, thinking of Massingale, of the wild romance she had created for themselves, she felt more and more drawn to a career. A woman who achieved things, who had even a trace of genius, had a right, in the eyes of the world, to her own life, to be judged differently.

The news she had received of Winona doubled her suspicions. If this chance had failed the girl, no wonder that she had set herself deliberately toward a marriage with Peavey. Dodo was wildly indignant at this double dealing. She considered the least of her admirers her inviolate property, and she never saw one desert without a feeling of resentment. In Peavey's case it was thrice blameworthy, considering all the prodigies of planning she had spent to bring him to the point and maintain him in the *status quo*. For Peavey was in truth, as Judge Massingale had laughingly expressed it, the "man behind the rock," and even in the wildest flights of her imagination she

retained, unconsciously, a prudent spirit toward the uncharted future. She might fly in the face of society, and then, again, at the last, she might not find in herself all the audacity she desired to believe in. Peavey was a bridge back into conventionality, security and certain necessary luxuries which she never for a moment, in her thrifty mind, intended to neglect.

As soon as she reached her room, she sat down to write to him. This letter called for her deepest intuition; it was a very difficult letter to compose. She tried a dozen methods, rejecting each as too obvious. In the midst of her labors, Josephus, to her surprise, arrived with the basket of champagne, which, strangely enough, it appeared, had been below, forgot, all this time. This at once relieved her, and suggested a bold stroke. She wrote:

"Dear Mr. Peavey:

"Thank you for the champagne. Certain things which have come to my knowledge make it impossible for me to accept any more such favors from you. Indeed, I reproach myself for what I have permitted in the past. But I have always had a different feeling about you, a real respect and trust, and I have always believed in you as an ideal of what a gentleman should be. I am very disappointed — very sad.

"Sincerely yours,

"DORÉ BAXTER.

"P. S. I thank you also for your automobile, which I shall never use again.

"P. P. S. I return the remaining tickets to the opera."

She studied this, well content with its indefinite reproach.

"There; he will believe I know more than I know," she said, with a bob of her head, "and he will have to come to me in person. That is better!"

Once Mr. Peavey was before her eyes, she had no doubt of the interview. She posted the letter immediately, telephoned again without being able to receive any news of Lindaberry, and went out to shop for Christmas presents for each of her score of admirers—presents which she would see were carefully delivered to their destinations by three o'clock on the *preceding* day. For a month she had carefully gone over her acquaintances, much as a fisherman overhauls his nets, consecrating hours at the telephone, fanning back into substantial flames little sparks of intimacy that were sinking into gray forgetfulness. She did not throw herself into such machinations with any relish, but as a necessity forced upon her; yet, once embarked, she did nothing by halves. She lunched, motored, descended for tea, dined, dipped into theaters and danced without a rest. She even revived the hopes of Harrigan Blood and Sassoon by a few discreet concessions—matinée performances, tea at five, or an innocuous luncheon.

With Massingale she was still far from that moment when she could distinguish the man who was from the romantic ideal her imagination had visualized. After the second meeting in her rooms, when she had a second time reached the man in the raw, each, as if by mutual consent, had avoided further opportunities of dangerous intimacy, each a bit apprehensive. But the conflict between them contin-

ued. There were moments when he seemed to abandon his attitude of incredulity, relaxing into humorous or confidential moods, and others when he seemed to be flinging barricades between them. If he had planned deliberately to seduce her (which God knows he hadn't!) he could have adopted no more adroit means than this intermittent opposition which rose from the struggle in his own conscience. She could not brook the slightest resistance in him. It roused in her a passion for subjugation, an instinct for reprisals which sought insistently to reverse the original rôles.

In the moments of these half-hearted retreats he adopted a policy of far-off analysis, putting questions with impersonal directness, inviting her into indiscreet confidences. She divined that all this curiosity had one instinctive object — to discover something in her harum-scarum present or devious past that could roughly and effectively repel him. At such times she responded with a violent antagonism, paying him back in coin, tantalizing him, inventing stories to plague him, and always succeeding. Once she said to him:

“You know Sassoon's getting reckless. Look out! Some day I'll disappear!”

He chuckled, inciting her on.

“You needn't laugh! I'm serious — he's serious, too. Where do you think I went this afternoon? To look at a house. Oh, the loveliest little house, a little jewel-box — within a stone's-throw of you, too;

and everything beautifully furnished, wonderful rugs, bedrooms in old red brocade, like a palace!" She continued with an account of details, warming up to the part: "Sassoon began by talking apartments. But I killed that quickly. Entirely too common!"

"But the house?" he said, forcing a smile.

"Only one thing lacking; yes, and I told him so at once — flat, like that!"

"What?"

"No garage!"

He affected to laugh hugely at this bit of fiction.

When he sought to explore her history she was ready with another artfully contrived story to infuriate him:

"My life? Oh, it's terribly exciting! Father was a gambler — Mississippi River, mining-camps and all sorts of dangerous places. Mother was in the circus, bareback riding — hoops, you know. They separated when I was five; had a terrible fight, they say. I went around with the circus, in the processions, dressed as a star. Mother was teaching me the tight-rope; I'd learned a bit of acrobating, too. There was a funny old clown."

She stopped, with a far-off pensive look. When she invented a story she had a natural gift for dramatic detail. She said very sadly, as if conjuring up the figure of a mournful child, sinking her voice to a whisper:

"My mother drank. When she was in her tantrums she was very cruel to me — she beat me! I

remember my poor little arms and legs all blistered and smarting! Then I used to run to Jocko — that was the funny old clown's name. He had three colors in his hair, red, white and brown — all natural, too! Jocko used to put a poultice on my wounds and give me candy. I loved old Jocko; he taught me the back-somersault, too. Then mother ran off with a dentist — one of the kind that travel around in a band-wagon from village to village, teeth-pullers, you know, and whenever a tooth is to be taken out the bass-drum goes off *bang!* so you don't notice the pain. The dentist hated me! He was a horribly tall, long man with a broken nose. I can see him leering down at me like an ogre and saying:

“‘Soon as you get your second teeth, little brat, I'll make a fine set out of 'em, worth seventy plunks at the least. Just you wait!’

“He used to pinch me and box my ears when mother wasn't looking!”

She considered this phase thoughtfully, satisfied that she had done it justice, and said suddenly:

“Then, one night, father turned up. Whew! that was a scene! He came up suddenly just as Crouch — that's the dentist — had finished with the cymbals and was beginning:

“‘Ladies and gentlemen, I come not to take your hard-earned money, but to do you good!’

“He always began like that. I can see it all now — the kerosene lamps flaring below, the country crowd standing around, gaping, and all of a sudden a Spanish-looking man, broad-shouldered, pushing his

way violently through them all, and then mother shrieking:

“‘My God! Crouch, it’s Baxter!’”

She drew a quick breath; the recital had made her tremble a little. He watched her closely, with that lantern stare with which he transfixed the accused at the bar, amazed at her exhibition, incredulous, and yet with a lingering wonder.

“Mother got away,” she said, resuming. “Crouch was laid up in a hospital for months, they told me. Father took me with him. He was very kind, very; but it was a terrible life; rough company, squabbling and shooting, no home, no rest, always taking French leave! Then he struck a run of luck and made enough to strike for Gold Fields and open a saloon — faro at the back. Gold Fields was worse. Every one drunk by eight o’clock at night; poker and faro until breakfast!”

“And you saw all that?” he said gravely.

“Yes, all!” she said simply, shaking her head. “Father dressed me up in red slippers and white stockings, red dress and mantilla, and rigged up a flower-booth for me — said it brought custom. And there I had to sit, so tired and sleepy, with all the vile tobacco smoke, and the men — black, red and white — shouting and singing. Once or twice I fell asleep.”

All at once, as if groping in the dark, her hand had at last found the door, she said abruptly:

“But one night a Mexican tried to kiss me, and father shot him. He fell across my counter, grabbing

at me. It was awful! The next night father was called to the side entrance, and when we found him there was a knife in his back, and he was dead!"

She rose.

"What, you're going to leave me there, Dodo?" he said maliciously, forcing a smile. "You're worse than a dime novel!"

"That's enough for now. It tires me! The rest for another time," she answered. "Now you can understand all that happened after,— I never had half a chance!"

The next time she began all over again, saying:

"My real story is much more terrible. Now, this is the truth!"

These inventions usually started from her insistence on discussing his wife with Massingale. She had an imperative curiosity, which always shocked his sense of delicacy, to hear him criticize her, to admit her faults, even to drop a hint that there might be other men — that, in fact, she lived her own life; which would mean, to Dodo's illogical need of self-justification, that he also had the right. But Massingale curtly, peremptorily refused to be drawn into such discussions. Whereupon a coolness arose, and she sought to annoy him by pretended pasts. He knew that she was embroidering, and yet the very facility of it amazed him. The past was one thing: he did not like her references to Sassoon and Blood and what they implied, even though he was sure it was specially fabricated for his confusion.

So, as soon as peace had been restored, he always

pressed her for a denial. Whereupon with a laugh, after some coaxing, she would admit the fiction. But the moment the next cause of conflict came, she was always quits by turning on him and declaring:

"You know all I told you? Well, *half* of it was true!"

At the end of the week she received an answer from Mr. Peavey. Contrary to custom, it was not type-written, but performed in his minute and regular hand:

"Dear Miss Baxter:

"Your letter has caused me the utmost pain. Please do not, I beg you, judge me by appearances! I have found, to my cost, that I have been greatly misled in the character of a person I trusted. I must see you and explain everything. I am now in the Middle West. I shall be able to run over to New York for five hours on Thursday next, and shall advise you. Believe me, this is the first opportunity I can make.

"Your devoted friend,

"O. B. PEAVEY."

She had found this letter, on entering, in the pile of mail that always accumulated on the hall seat, and had read it standing in the hall. She sought for other letters, and suddenly encountered one that made her halt with surprise. It was in Mr. Peavey's handwriting, and addressed to Miss Winona Horning. She took it and went up-stairs. Winona was in her room, looking up a little startled at Doré's determined interruption.

"I have brought you a letter!" she said very quietly.

The girl took it, glanced at it, but did not raise her eyes.

"Read it, why don't you?"

Winona Horning opened the letter and read slowly — once, then a second time. Then, without a word or a raising of her glance, carefully and scrupulously tore it into bits.

"Have you anything to say to me?" said Doré in a hard voice, triumphant.

Winona did not raise her eyes. From the first, she had not met Dodo's glance. She hesitated a moment, opening and shutting the case of red morocco, shifting the card, that lay too exposed. Then her shoulder rose defiantly:

"No, nothing! What's the use of words?"

Dodo remained a moment, enjoying her defeat, waiting an overt act, ready to blaze forth. But, Winona continuing inert and unresisting, she turned on her heel, with a final scornful glance, and went to her room.

"There's one thing, at least, she'll never be," she thought to herself, "Mrs. Orlando B. Peavey!"

Had she known then just what had transpired between the bachelor and the girl who shared the dingy wall with her, she would have been even more amazed — and perhaps a little inclined to make allowances.

CHAPTER XXII

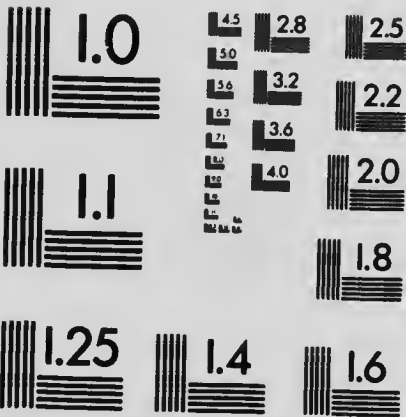
SNYDER'S attitude during this tumultuous time was exceedingly puzzling to Dodo. She seemed fairly to haunt the rooms, arriving at the most unexpected moments, remaining determinedly camped on her trunk by the window, endlessly silent and immersed in reading. Betty came often now in the late morning, or toward six o'clock, hours when Dodo was sure to be at home. Doré had a passionate affection for children, and remained for hours on the floor, romping boisterously, or with Betty in her lap, brown curls against her golden ones, exploring endless enchanted realms. Once or twice in the fairy twilight, when eyelids had gone nodding, overburdened with wonder and long listening, and she felt the warm flesh of tiny fingers clinging to her neck, she had waited, cramped and motionless, subjugated in a soft tyranny, glowingly happy and at peace. At other moments, with the little body pressed against her own, encircling arms and childish kisses awoke in her a sudden famine, poignant even as the emotion that flowed through her when Massingale had held her in his arms.

But Snyder she could not understand. She paid no attention either to Dodo or to the child, keeping always aloof, always with averted eyes. This indif-



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ference revolted Dodo. How could any one care so little for a child so young, so soft and so clinging! In her heart she resented it as something inhuman and incomprehensible, until suddenly, one day, her eyes were opened.

Their great enemy, the clock, had stolen around to the inexorable hour, and Snyder had announced the moment of farewells by starting from the trunk with a loud closing of her book.

"Time up!"

A cry from Betty, and a convulsive closing of arms about the protector.

"What! already?" said Dodo, with a sigh, coming back unwillingly from a painless world of dreams.

"Past time!"

"Just five minutes more!"

"Dodo!"

"Oh, dear!" she said, with a last protesting hug. "What a dreadful mother you have, Betty! How would you like to change mothers, young lady?"

A giggle of delight and a furious nod of assent.

"I'll be your mother, and you can come and stay here all the day and all the night, and then there'll be nothing but dolls and fairies and good things to eat all the time! What do you say? Will you come and be my little girl forever and ever and ever after?"

She had begun in a light tone, and had insensibly drifted into a tender note, hushed and with a touch of real longing. All at once she looked up, startled. Snyder had snatched the child from her — Snyder as

she had never seen her before, towering, with tortured eyes, stung to the quick.

"Why, Snyder!" she began. But the woman turned away quickly, with a murmur, gone before she knew it.

She was startled at this incomprehensible revelation. "What? She's jealous! Snyder jealous! But then, why does she act so indifferently to Betty?" she thought, amazed.

Still other things puzzled her about her taciturn room-mate — one thing in particular. Whenever Massingale came, Snyder was sure to appear, hostility writ openly on her direct eyes. Dodo almost believed that she had instituted an espionage.

For Massingale came in often now to her room after the close of the court. She had found, with a new rebellion, that there were bars beyond which she could not penetrate into his life, and much as she scorned the conventionalities, she found that on certain points she could not move him. In public places where they were apt to meet his world he refused to take her unless a third was provided. When she de-claimed he answered abruptly:

"I am a public man; you don't understand."

And he flattered himself that on this side, his public life, he would always be immovable, no matter what disorder she might exercise over the rest of his existence. This brought her a strange feeling of being outlawed, of standing beyond the pale. She resented it fiercely, not realizing, perhaps, how much she

cared, turning her anger against society, vowing vengeance, more and more determined to flout and affront it. Denied complete liberty to participate in his life, she had resolved to bring him into hers. He agreed readily to meet her friends, seeing in this a way to save appearances. Ida Summers amused him, but it was Estelle Monks who interested him most.

Like most women of advanced ideas, she held her opinions, not so much as convictions, but as a sort of revealed truth which it was her duty to spread; and she was determined to inflict them on her listeners, crushing out all disbelief, restless and unhappy before opposition. To her, marriage was the arch-enemy. Woman suffrage she dismissed lightly.

"That's of so little account. Of course it will come, sooner or later. That does not interest me. The great question between man and woman is marriage!"

"Perhaps it were better to say the greatest problem that the human race has had to consider," responded Massingale, smiling. "That's why we keep putting off its readjustment. What would you do? Abolish it?"

"Some day, yes!" said Estelle, without evasion. "I say flatly that two human beings weren't made to live together all the time. It may happen once in a million times, and then—do we ever know? What I hate about marriage is, it is so intellectually debasing: one has to lie all the time to make the other happy, and then you end by lying to yourself!"

Massingale, awakened from a tolerant amusement

to a quick curiosity by her boldness, shifted to a more alert position, asking:

"Just in what way?"

"The thing I want to do," said Estelle Monks, her face lighting up with enthusiasm, "is to think honestly, not to fool myself! Now what is marriage? It is really an institution for the assembling and transmission of property." ("Ah, she's been dipping into socialism," thought Massingale.) "Good! But, in order to make it convincing, we Americans try to give it a romantic basis!"

"And you think that's worse?" said Dodo, opening her eyes.

"Much! That's where the lie begins! We swear not only to live together in a business partnership, but to love and adore each other, and to love no one else for the rest of our lives."

"Why, Estelle!" exclaimed Dodo, who was profoundly shocked in her deepest romanticism.

"Yes; and in order to bolster up this absurdity we have to corrupt our whole literature. Young girls and men are brought up with the idea that God, in some mysterious providence, has arranged for us a special affinity — that there can be only one person to love in the whole world. Why, some are so fanatic that they are certain that they shall go on together riding a star for a few million years through a few trillion spaces! Now, that's what I call fooling your intelligence!"

"Yet I know those who have been married forty years and still love!" said Massingale seriously.

"As comrades or as lovers?" asked Estelle quickly. "Comradeship — yes, that I admit: comradeship between man and woman, each equal, each free, not forced to account to the other, comradeship such as exists between you men — absolute loyalty, absolute trust, each working for the same object, working together, an object outside of yourselves. That is life and liberty! And what is the other — your marriage? Each sacrificing what he doesn't want to sacrifice, unless, which is worse, one does all the sacrificing. What happens now? A woman exists as a free being for twenty — twenty-five years; then a man comes along and says, in so many words:

"If you have lived a virtuous life — which I have not — I will allow you to renounce all your male friends, or retain those whom I approve of as acquaintances, to limit your horizon to my home, to bear my children, to accept my opinions, never to be interested in any other man but me, to keep my house, amuse me when I'm tired, convince me of my superiority over all other men, go where I must go, and age before I must age; and in return for these favors I will swear to convince you that I have loved no other woman but you, will blind my eyes to all other women but you, and, if I die first, you will find me waiting patiently by the pearly gates!'"

Her listeners acclaimed this sally with shrieks of laughter.

"May I ask, out of curiosity," said Massingale, — for, these conversations being serious, frankness was

the rule,—“how you feel toward my sex — your oppressors?”

“Being a healthy woman who enjoys life,” said Estelle simply, “I like men very much — better than women, who are to me usually nothing but sounding-boards. More, it pleases me exceedingly to attract men, and to be attracted!”

“And if you fall in love, temporarily? Or perhaps —”

“Not at all! I desire very much to find a man big enough, courageous enough, so that I could love him. When I do, I shall live with him openly!”

Massingale looked up, rather startled; but Estelle, without embarrassment, in her simple fanatic way, continued:

“I should hope that it might be for life. If it were not, there should be no tyranny. Only, whatever I do will be done honestly and openly: when such a man comes I shall announce it frankly to my friends and to those who have a right to know!”

Massingale was about to interject that she would be a long time finding a man who, on his side, would have the courage to assume such responsibility; but a certain analogy to his own predicament tripped up his impulse and made him change his remark.

“Others have thought the same, theoretically,” he said carefully. “Few have dared to put it into practise.”

“Which is immoral, that or nine-tenths of the marriages to-day? Am I selling myself, as many a

woman in your world does who marries for ambition and retreats under the mockery of a legal phrase? And when love has changed into indifference or hate, is there anything more horrible, more brutalizing, than marriage, and is such a woman anything but a paid mistress? I know women who tell me their stories, who look at marriage as a sort of social umbrella. And they are right! Society demands only appearances; it never cares what goes on under the umbrella! That's why I want to live honestly and think honestly, and that's why I intend to have the courage to live as a free and self-respecting, intelligent human being!"

These extraordinary sentiments were pronounced with the fire of the revolutionary; nor was all that she had earnestly proclaimed without its effect on him. He did not seek to amuse himself, but, impressed as if seeking to perceive the extent of what might be coming, he asked:

"One question. You are a good reporter. You go everywhere, and women talk to you frankly. How many share your ideas?"

"As ideas — many!" said Estelle. "Unfortunately, women are still what history has forced them to be; their courage is in deceiving!"

"I know it is so!" said Massingale, aroused in a way that Dodo had never seen him — a perception which was allied with a little jealousy that Estelle should thus appeal to him. "It is inevitable, too. Women who are in revolt to-day see in marriage the instrument of all their oppressions. It is natural that

women are resisting the idea of marriage. But they are doing so blindly. They do not distinguish between marriage as an ideal, and the defective conception of marriage: just as people who violently attack the shortcomings of the church confuse a human instrument with a divine religion. I can answer you at once. Are you perfect? Am I perfect? Why, then, should marriage, which is the union of imperfect beings, be a perfect thing?"

"But such a union as I believe in would be a true marriage!" said Estelle Monks, restless under the doubts his words had brought to her philosophy. "You'll answer, 'Marry and divorce.' But that's all quibbling; my way is more honest!"

He did not continue the conversation, wondering to what extent Dodo had been listening to such an advanced apostle; but he said:

"Miss Monks, you're very honest, and I know you believe all you say; but — don't be offended if I tell you this! — opinions change with experience, and you have not yet had that experience with actual conditions that is necessary!"

Estelle Monks, piqued at this answer which precluded argument, rose stiffly and went out.

"Why did you say that?" asked Dodo reproachfully, yet not displeased to be left alone in the tête-à-tête which he usually avoided.

He was in a serious mood, and because he wished to be honest in his own mind, he answered warily:

"She is too fine a type. I'd hate to see her make a mistake!"

He was thinking how much of what Estelle Monks had said applied to his own marriage. What a mockery it was, and what right had two human beings who were driven apart by every personal antipathy — physical, mental and spiritual — to go on, bound by a convention, preventing each other from seeking happiness elsewhere? And, remembering her attack on marriage as the slavery of woman, he thought bitterly that she had expressed only half the truth. He was, indeed, neither married nor a free man, checked in every impulse, denied at every turn.

"What are you frowning about?" said Dodo.

He answered hastily in that language which, as has been said, was given us to conceal our thoughts:

"I was wondering how much she had affected you!"

"Not the least!" said Dodo, adding impulsively: "And yet, that is just what I feel!"

"You, Dodo?" he said anxiously.

She went to him with a sudden enthusiasm, taking his hands, perhaps subconsciously divining the bitter personal reflection that had been going on in his mind, feeling the moment to be propitious.

"Ah, let me tell you now what I want for us!" she began ardently.

"The great dream, Dodo?" he said, smiling.

"Yes, a dream, but a dream that will come true!" She hesitated, and standing before him, her eyes lighted up by the penetration of a woman, a glance that left him confused, she said directly: "You think you understand me? You don't; but I under-

stand you! You are afraid of me! You love me, but you try not to, because you are afraid of me!"

"How?" he asked lamely.

"Because you think that I want to interfere in your life. Oh, yes, you do! I remember the look in your face when I was romancing about Sassoon, making him divorce — you remember, when you asked if that was what I intended to do with you?"

"I was joking!"

"Not entirely! There's been a good deal of such thoughts back of your eyes. You are afraid I'll take it into my little head to be Mrs. Massingale. Don't deny it, Your Honor; I know! That's where you are totally wrong. I hate marriage; I could not stand it a month!" she said curtly. And she continued dramatically, stretching out her hand: "I swear to you now that, whatever happens, I will never be your wife! I've told you I would take nothing from you; I mean it!"

He watched her, erect and impassioned, weakly conscious of the dominion she had established over every craving and every impulse.

"Ah, no, no!" she exclaimed indignantly. "It's nothing so commonplace I want! There's only one love possible to me — a great transcending passion, which would be so far above all earthly things that a year — a month — would compensate for a whole life of loneliness! Don't you see, it's love, an immense love, such as only comes once in a million times, that I'm seeking?"

"How?"

Suddenly her mood leaped into playfulness, her eyes sparkled with delight, and her clasped hands pillowed themselves against her cheek, as if imprisoning in a caress a beautiful and precious thought.

"First, let's run away — away from all this ugliness, from all these eyes, from all this hateful, noisy, black-and-brown city! Run away! Oh, that's such a wonderful idea in itself, to go flying through the night, just you and I, leaving it all behind, to a place I dream of night and day — to some wonderful island, far off in the Pacific, where we can be alone, live for ourselves!"

He did not check her, though he was wondering from what book she had found such ideas, curious to learn to what extent she had visualized her romance.

"And how long would you keep the island, Dodo?"

"Not long!" she said quietly. "Perhaps a year, perhaps only a season. That must be agreed; and when the dream is over we would come back!"

"And then?"

"And then we would separate and never see each other again!"

"Why?"

"So that it could never become commonplace or stale — so that it could live in our lives as the one great memory, with no regrets."

She stopped, looked at him tensely, and went on:

"You would take up your life again, and I would bury myself in my career, and you would watch me, little by little, become a great name!"

"And never see each other —"

"Perhaps when we are quite old," she said suddenly. "You won't believe me! I would do it!" She clasped her hands tumultuously over her heart. "Oh, how easily I would do it! Ah, to have such a romance — anything might come!"

"What book have you been reading?" he asked quietly — yet feeling a little sad that he could not follow where her lawless imagination ran.

She turned away hotly, clenching her fists, crying:

"Ah, you will never let go of yourself! You are afraid — afraid of everything!"

He followed her, laying a hand on her shoulder as she stood by the window.

"Keep your island in southern seas!" he said, with such emotion in his voice that she wheeled about. "Believe in it all you want, extraordinary child, even if it ends by my paying all the penalty. Go on with your day-dreaming."

His glance lay in hers, his arms were longing to take her into them, when Snyder entered, with a quick knock that gave them only time to spring apart. At this moment Dodo could have driven her out, fiercely rebelling against this constant espionage. What right had Snyder or any one to interfere with her liberty, or to sav whom she should see? She resolved hotly to have an explanation when she returned. Now it was necessary to master her emotion.

"A moment — a moment to change my dress; ready in ten minutes!"

She ran quickly to trunk and bureau, gathering up

her articles of dress; disappearing behind a screen in the corner. Massingale, after a calculating glance at the figure of Snyder, rigid in the window, sat down, drawing a magazine to him. He no longer felt the unease he had experienced at the woman's first interruption. It seemed so natural to be there, in the musty high room, littered with trunks, with its patches of carpet and incongruous wall-paper.

In the closet, behind a discreetly closed door, Dodo was laughing at her narrow quarters. Outside, through the windows, the marshaled city was setting its lights for Christmas Eve — thousands on thousands of human beings disciplined under the old order of what is called right and wrong, the millions who never really entered *his* life and for whose approval his every word and action must be calculated.

"Snyder, come and button me!" called Dodo, emerging from the closet behind the screen.

She felt nothing unusual in this hidden change of dress, but to him the touch of intimacy aroused more than his curiosity.

When they descended to the closed car, gaily brushing the snowflakes from each other, a little moved by all that had passed, feeling, too, the obliterating unrealities of dark streets and lights glistening amid the obscurity, he said:

"Dodo, I wish it could be!"

"It can, it can!" she answered impulsively, excited at his approach to consent.

"The world's too big for us!"

"Some men would have the courage!"

"The trouble is, I am born under a curse," he said moodily. "I'm limited—a gentleman: that's the best and the worst of me!"

"A gentleman!" she repeated scornfully. "Yes, that's the whole of it! That's why you're afraid of everything—why you'll never, never dare!"

"That's true, Dodo!"

"And what is a gentleman?" she asked angrily.

He looked beyond her at the lighted windows of his club, arrogantly set in judgment over the multitude on the avenue, and answered, in mockery:

"A gentleman, Dodo, is one who is a gentleman because he associates with those who are gentlemen because they associate with him!"

She did not laugh at this; there was more below it than the sarcasm. Presently she drew his hand into hers.

"How much you need me, Your Honor!" she said softly. "What is the rest worth? Let me guide you!"

He did not reply. In fact, he knew too well that he had surrendered already, and in that moment, he said to himself that he would take his courage in his hands—that now, before the week had ended, he would go to his wife and claim from her his liberty, whatever her terms.

Doré returned early, after a dinner at the Hickory Log, riotous with the Christmas cheer. Massingale had an engagement; she wished to be in her room, childlike, eager for the excitement of arriving presents. Besides, she had planned a tree for Betty, and

with Ida's aid, she set delightedly to the task of arranging candles, twining tinsel, tying up presents in neat tissue-paper with enticing bows of red ribbon. She had depleted her slender treasury in presents for Betty, having bought almost a dozen, inscribing each from some imaginary fairy prince or goblin whom they had met in their enchanted wanderings.

By ten o'clock the tree was completed, the pile of her own presents had stopped at respectable proportions, and the wanderlust having come, Dodo — not without a little feeling of treachery to Massingale — allowed herself to be persuaded, and departed for a "spree." When they returned in Peavey's automobile, which Dodo had commandeered, there was already a slight covering of snow, and at the windows the slipping wheels flung flurries of white flakes.

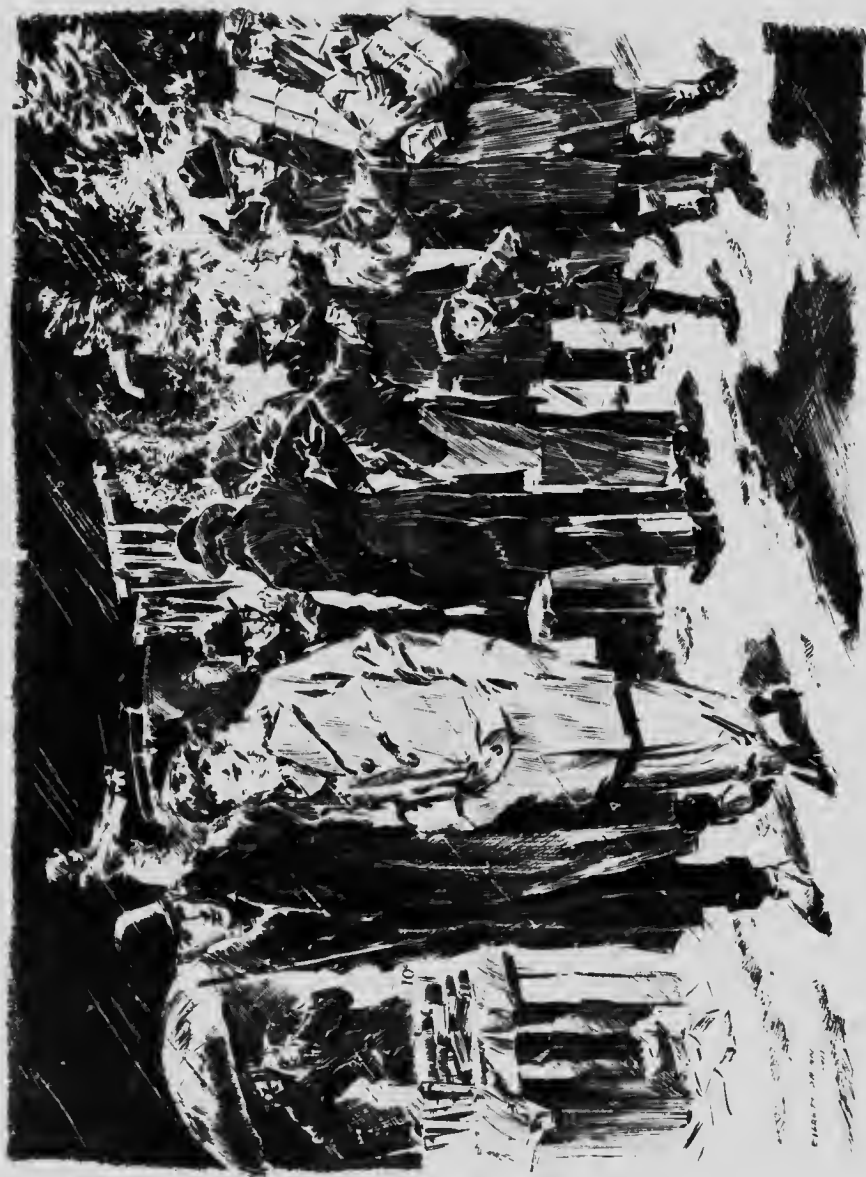
"I can't bear an old masher — a fossil that's falling to pieces!" said Ida gaily, returning over the events of the evening. "Did you see that old Caxton, that was buzzing around me all evening?"

Dodo laughed.

"He started after me, but I shook him!"

"Heavens, Do, how do you manage? I never can!"

"I gave him an awful shock," explained Dodo, continuing to laugh. "He'd been looking at me with big wolf eyes, licking his chops and telling me he'd leave his happy home for me — you know the stuff. He had me cornered at the upper table, and just as I started to slip away he caught my arm."



She was riotous with Christmas cheer

“ ‘ And what’s your fairy name, you darling?’ says he.

“ And I answered:

“ ‘ Gussie!’

“ You should have seen the face he made! He dropped me like a hot potato!”

Then she was silent, deliciously cradled in her own thoughts, convincing herself that what yesterday had seemed but a faint dream was now a possibility, visualizing, in dormant balmy seas, an island all white and green, a fairy island as enchanted as the kingdoms which each day she constructed for Betty’s wondering eyes. To be Mrs. Massingale, to enter into all the irksome routine of formal society — no, that had no appeal! A year or a season in a world of her own, a great romance, a love that would sweep them up like the magnificently reckless storms of passion which came to her over the inspired motives of *Tristan and Isolde* — that, and then a life of work and accomplishment, a career.

All at once, as the skidding automobile slowed and sloughed about a corner, a group under a lamp-post, black and silhouetted against the snow, sprang across the fragile fabric of her dreams out of the horrid world of reality — a figure that scattered all selfish thoughts and overwhelmed her with the power of a great remorse. She leaned forward precipitately, beating on the window for Brennon to stop, and even in the moment of her disorder, true to the Salamander instinct, she explained hastily:

"A cousin — oh, dear! he's been on a spree for months; the family's distracted. Stop! Wait — I must get hold of him. No, no; let me out!"

And to Ida's amazement, opening the door, heedless of the slush on her delicate feet, of the bitter night, of what any one would think, — obeying only an irresistible cry from her soul, — Dodo had sprung out and run to the sidewalk, where the ghost of Lindaberry, come up from the abyss, was standing embattled, torn and disheveled, magnificently crazed, and at his feet a policeman, knocked out.

CHAPTER XXIII

DORÉ went to Lindaberry, without a thought of fear, crying his name:

"Garry, it's I — Dodo!"

He turned, striving to recognize her through the blurred phantasmagoria of the week.

"Who?"

He drew his hand across his face, bending down a little, staring at her. At the moment she despaired of his recognizing her, suddenly he stiffened up, made an attempt to readjust his clothes, and doffed his hat. She gave a cry of horror: across his forehead was a seam of blood.

"You're hurt!"

"'S nothing," he said, drawing a long breath, and his jaw growing rigid with the attempt to recover his control. He relaxed his grip on the collar of the inert policeman, who flattened out against the trampled snow. "This little misunshtanding — gen'lman spoke rather rude. Sorry — little mussed. 'Scuse me."

The fear that others might arrive and find him thus, the dread of an arrest — a trial and publicity — gave her a new will; for, strangely enough, even before his wild demeanor she had no fear.

"I've come, as I promised," she said quickly. "I'm going to take you home. Come, Garry!"

"Any one else?" he asked, shrinking back.

"My maid," she said quickly.

He bowed and gave her his arm to the automobile. At the door he placed her inside, saying, with careful courtesy:

"Sit outside. Thank you. Not fit. All right!"

Aware of his condition, by some tremendous exertion of his will, he had flung back the lethargy that held his senses, and recovered his dignity. Dodo, in the car, was thinking rapidly. The first glance at his eyes and quivering lips had told her how serious was the crisis. Everything else disappeared before this insistent need of her — romance, intrigues, calculation, or care of what others might think.

"Ida, it's not true what I said," she said rapidly. "He's not my cousin, but some one whom I would give my life to save. I'm taking him to his house. You must come in with me — until we can get a doctor. I can't leave him. If you get a chance, tell Brennon it's my brother; he mustn't know."

She had anticipated a struggle to get Lindaberry to his rooms; but, to her surprise, he walked from the car without wavering, and up the flight of stairs to his apartment. The two girls, leaving Brennon below with orders to wait, followed quickly. In a few moments his valet, hastily awakened, had let them in. He was a young fellow, strong and intelligent, and he gave a cry of relief at the sight of the master thus returned.

"Dodo!"



She gave a cry of horror

"Here I am!" she said quickly, touching Linda-berry's arm.

"Oh!" He looked at her, and then, as if suddenly recollecting himself, imbued with the need of taking command, said: "Pretty bad; can't tell what happened. Doctor — Lampson — quick!"

She turned calmly to the valet, feeling a deep delight in her control of the situation.

"You know Doctor Lampson? Good! My car's down-stairs. Go and bring him immediately!"

She returned to Lindaberry.

"Garry, lie on the couch! You've got a scratch; I want to bind it up. Ida, bring me a couple of towels, sponge, water."

He obeyed her, but his glance started nervously at the sight of Ida Summers.

"Who's that?"

She comprehended his humiliation that another should see him thus, and replied again, with a warning look at Ida, who came in:

"My maid, Garry; that's all!"

"Tell her — wait — outside."

"Very well!"

Ida, at a nod, went into the library, not without wonder at the quiet authority of voice and action in her butterfly friend.

She made him stretch out on the sofa, and with sponge and towel quickly bathed and bound up the gash across his temple. The application of cold water seemed to calm him. He relaxed and closed his eyes

as she remained at his side, applying the healing sponge. She studied the racked body and disordered head with a tightening of her heart. The weak and quivering lips, the sunken cheeks, the dark circles under the punished eyes, everything cried out to her :

“ You could have prevented this ! ”

She accused herself with a thousand reproaches in the presence of this wreck she had made, and before his abject weakness her sense of possession awoke. He was hers, as Betty was hers — by right of the unanswered famine in her maternal heart. Come what might, she would not leave him until she had seen him back into strength and courage again. She called him but he had gone off into an unseeing delirium, wandering through what black and sunken ways ! She drew off his shoes, disengaged the stained tie and collar, and by patient effort slipped the torn coat from him, covering him with a clean dressing-gown.

Once or twice he sought to start up, but each time, at her hand across his forehead and her clear voice in his ear, he relaxed. This docile obedience, this willing trust in her little strength, one word of hers stilling the storm in his brain and bringing peace instead of fury, moved her almost to tears. She closed her eyes, her hand over his throbbing lids, and gave herself up to an impulsive prayer — another Dodo, back again in the quiet soul reaches of that unfathomable night when, reckless and defiant, ready to renounce the faith of a Salamander, she had suddenly found herself gliding into unforeseen deeps, miraculously inspired.

After a long half-hour Doctor Lampson came — a powerful man of quick eye, hearty laugh and abounding vitality.

"Hello, Garry! Been wrestling with skyscrapers?" he cried with a rumbling laugh, sitting down on the sofa. "Trying to drink up the Hudson River, eh?"

"Hello, Alex!" said Garry gratefully. He shook his head despondently. "Bad start!"

"Rats, man! Bad start? What are you talking about? Remember the first half of that Princeton game, when to nothing? That was a bad start, wasn't it. Didn't prevent you going through like a runaway engine for a couple of touchdowns, did it? Well, then! Don't talk to me! I've seen you start!"

"Good old Alex!" said Lindaberry, with a smile. "Oh, I'm in the fight!"

"Yes; you look as if you'd been fighting, all right!" said Lampson with a roar. "Now, just you shut up! What you want, man, is sleep! We'll fix you up in a jiffy!"

"Stay; get me quiet, will you, Alex?"

"Don't you tell me what to do!" said Doctor Lampson, with assumed fierceness. "Here, Rogers, get him undressed and into bed. Back in a moment!"

He nodded to Doré, and they passed into the next room.

"Pretty close to D.T's. I'll quiet him down, but we've got to get a trained nurse in here, Christmas Eve — bad time!" He began to whistle.

"But I'm here!" Doré said eagerly.

"You? My dear child, he may go quietly, and then he may take to chewing up chairs and walking on the ceiling. No, no! Who the devil could I get at this hour?" he said, studying Doré, at a loss where to place her.

A sudden thought came to her.

"There are two trained nurses where I live, friends of mine, just a few blocks away, Doctor. One is free — I know she'd come for me!"

"What's her name?"

"Stuart — Clarice Stuart."

"I know her. Good!" he said, breaking in. "All right! That'll do!"

Ida, with a note from Dodo, went off in the automobile, leaving them alone.

"You'd better go too, young lady," he said abruptly.

"I am going to stay!" she said, up in arms at once.

"This is no place for you!"

"If I were a trained nurse," she said obstinately, "it would be all right! Well, I'm some one who has a great deal more interest in saving him than any nurse, and I am going to stay!" She turned impulsively. "Doctor Lampson, Mr. Lindaberry started to get hold of himself for me. It's my fault, I didn't do what I ought to; now I'm going to think of nothing else! Don't you understand, this is *my* fault? I just must help!"

"Well, of course, that's different!" he said, still undecided.

When they entered the bedroom, they found Linda-

berry angry and excited, struggling to rise, against the efforts of Rogers to keep him in bed. Doré went to him without a thought of fear, laid her hand on his wrist, and said quickly:

"Garry, be quiet!"

He relaxed immediately at the one voice that penetrated the roaring in his brain. She turned with a smile toward Lampson, who was pulling his short beard.

"You see? He will do as I tell him!"

And there was something in her defiant attitude, the ardor of a woman fiercely defending her own, which convinced him that she had the right to stay.

At eight o'clock the next morning she returned to her room, a cloak which Clarice Stuart had brought thrown over her garments of the reveling night. Yet, keenly buoyed up by the sense of ministering, she had no sense of fatigue. She had been at Lindaberry's bedside constantly, combating the delirium that seized upon him in abrupt gusts of fury. And in these moments of frantic wanderings, as he tossed helplessly before the stalking phantoms that rose out of the grim yesterday, when real and unreal went rocking through his tortured brain, no other hand but hers could control him. He seemed to know the moment she slipped noiselessly away, turning convulsively, stretching out his arm, querulously summoning her back. She obeyed, untired, willing, rapturously content.

Rogers, the valet, in the next room; Clarice Stuart, in her blue and white nurse's dress, silently in a corner; Doré, in pink and white evening gown, buckled

satin slippers, with the odor of tired flowers still at her breast, sat endlessly, her eyes on the restless tormented head and the twitching lips that were never still, listening to incoherent phrases that still had intelligence for her.

What an inferno of desperation and defeat rose shapelessly about her! Through what dark corners of despair had he blundered in these last days! Sometimes, across the horror and the anguish of his mutterings, she heard her name called in a voice that rent her heart. But she thought no more of herself, only of the quiet that she must enforce on him; and quietly, smiling in the dark, she repeated in a gentle voice:

"I am here, Garry — Dodo; I am taking care of you! Try to sleep! No — I won't leave you!"

The hours rang from some unseen clock, and in the end the paling dawn filtered across the white roofs of Christmas morning. Clarice Stuart, noiseless as a shadow, rose and extinguished the useless candle. Some one touched her on the shoulder. It was Doctor Lampson, his finger on his lips. She glanced at the bed, slowly disengaging her hand. Lindaberry had fallen at last into a profound sleep, his hand clutching the bedspread, his head still impulsively turned toward her.

Once or twice she had wondered if she had been wise in introducing into this intimacy Clarice Stuart, whose frivolous side only was known to her. But, as soon as she had come, Doré knew she had made no mistake. Clarice Stuart, once in uniform, was an-



"No, I won't leave you."



other being, serious, matter-of-fact, concentrated, with a strength that surprised her.

"Cut out apologies, Dodo!" she had said, with brusk sincerity. "The presents are all in — the props can wait. What's a turkey between friends? This is the real part of life. You need me! That's enough, isn't it?"

She had asked no questions, and for that Doré was grateful.

When she reached her room, she calmed her nerves with a hot bath and went to sleep at once, without a thought of the heaped-up presents waiting to be opened, or the mail that had accumulated. She had only one idea: to snatch some rest, and to be back — on the field of battle. Snyder had been waiting, restless and apprehensive, looking innumerable questions at such an inexplicable return.

"Don't worry, Snyder!" she had said, with a tired laugh. "Nothing terrible's happened. Tell you later — must get sleep. Wake me at ten!"

But it was almost eleven when, impelled by some uneasy instinct, she awoke precipitately, furious at Snyder, who, on her part, retreated, dumb and obstinate. In the rapid ten minutes in which she dressed, Doré, remembering with fresh irritation the surveillance which had been instituted over her actions, burst out:

"Snyder, what's got into you? I'm beginning to get annoyed — yes, exceedingly so! I don't like your manner toward me. I sometimes think you don't approve of me! What is it? Do you think I am not

capable of taking care of myself? Or do you wish to select my friends for me? Which is it? Let me understand!"

"Well, yes! I don't want to see you getting in trouble!" answered Snyder abruptly.

"Ah, that's it!" said Dodo indignantly. "I couldn't believe it. Now I know! So that's why you come sneaking in every time I have a man calling here?"

"Not every man!" said Snyder, reddening. "One man!"

"Judge Massingale? Say it!"

"Yes!"

"Why?"

"You know very well!"

"I don't!"

"He means no good!" said Snyder obstinately. "Besides, he hasn't the right. And you care!"

"The idea!" said Doré, flushing hotly under an accusation which she knew had point. "I suppose you think I've been out with him? That that's the sort of girl I am? Thank you for your confidence! And may I ask why you take it on yourself to regulate my conduct? Have I ever asked you any questions? Do I know anything about you?" She stopped abruptly at the pain that flashed into Snyder's face, and, being sensitive to such things, added quickly: "You've hurt me very much, Snyder, by your attitude — very much! I didn't expect it of you!"

"I'll tell you — when you want. Yes; guess I have been sailing under false colors!" said Snyder, in a

blundering voice. "No, you ain't asked questions. But it isn't 'cause I want to judge you, honey! . . . Lord, why should I judge? I'd stick to you, no matter what you were. That's not it — only —"

"Only — what?"

"Only, pet, you don't know what's facts!" said Snyder, looking at her directly, "facts *and* consequences!"

"I've got a very wise head!" said Dodo, laughing to dismiss a subject she did not wish to discuss. "Don't you worry about me, Snyder! I've fooled many a man who thought he was clever. I won't make mistakes! Give me the mail! I'm off! Back at four for Betty and the tree. Be prompt!" She started out, then came back and caught Snyder playfully by the chin: "Why, you old dragon, don't you know I'm just amusing myself?"

But Snyder, always obstinate and direct, answered:

"Dodo, I tell you, you're serious!"

"Stuff and nonsense!" said Doré, departing with an exaggerated laugh.

Lindaberry was still sunk in long-needed slumber when she returned. Clarice, tiptoeing out, informed her that the worst had been avoided: he had a constitution and a will that was incredible; that alone had saved him from an attack of cerebral fever. What he suffered from most was insomnia and lack of rest; then, of course, there was the craving that had grown into the body, the hot thirst for alcohol. He would have to be watched every moment for days. There was the danger. She lay down on the sofa in the

salon, asleep almost instantly, while Dodo, stealing back to the bedroom, encamped in a distant armchair by a fugitive gray slit of light, began to sort her Christmas mail.

There were a score of letters in all, gay with green and red stamps: some from already forgotten beaus, others from girl friends; a long annual letter from her aunt and uncle, distilling the heavy quiet and enforced lethargy of the small town; a note from Peavey; sentimental scrawls from the various props; a line in Sassoon's brief peremptory style, saying that he would call that afternoon—an announcement suggestive of presents to appear; a missive from Massingale, which she reserved for the last; several envelopes in unfamiliar hands which puzzled her—in fact, odds and ends of all the curious threads that had woven into her life. She arranged them in order, the old memories first to be read and forgot the quicker, the outer cohorts of admirers, the initiated, and for the last Massingale and a letter or two that she had not peeped into, in deference to her love of the mysterious.

She began with the news from home, her body stiffening as her mind set itself to resistance. It was ten pages long, closely and painfully written out in the familiar faded and trembling hand: news of the weather and of the year's building, a record of illnesses and deaths, who had married and who had moved—the tabulated inconsequentialities of village life; and through all the complaining note of solitude and longing which always left her uneasy before the querulous pleading note of duty. She finished rapidly,

and drew a long breath. The next was from her old admirer, the grocer's clerk, now full partner, faithfully announcing his marriage. She stopped a moment at the name of the woman.

"Bedelia — Bedelia Stone? Funny I can't remember. Oh, of course! Delia — the girl with red hair and freckles who hated me so. Curious, I'd almost forgot!"

She went on to the next, shaking off the heaviness of spirit which these returning memories always laid across her ascending imagination. Then came Christmas remembrances from other outstripped chance devotees — one from a young dramatic critic in Buffalo whom she had enlisted in that short stop. She smiled at this fidelity, rather flattered. Peavey's letter, announcing a delay in his return, and the forwarding of a present, was signed, "Your devoted and faithful friend." This departure from formality left her in a reverie; she foresaw complications ahead, a new difficulty in the intimacy of the coming explanation which would require all her tact to prevent an open declaration.

Before beginning Massingale's letter she scanned anxiously the two unopened envelopes. What she had feared from the first nervous glance was a letter from Josh Nebbins. He had written her on her last birthday, and on the Christmas before — sentimental confident notes, the faith of a man who believes in the future. Each time she had determined definitely to announce the breaking of the engagement, — to her long since a thing of ridicule, — but she had delayed,

mainly from cowardice, for fear that that persistent, terrible young hustler would come straight to New York. Lately she feared him at every turn, obsessed more and more in her dreams by his pursuing shadow. To her relief, no word had come from him. Perhaps he too had forgot, after all! She raised herself and glanced at the bed, where Lindaberry was still moving restlessly, but asleep. Then she opened Massingale's letter:

"My Lady-of-Dreams:

"Merry Christmas, and everything you can desire, even to impossible islands in southern seas! The bracelet I send you carries a talisman of good luck to keep you from an ugly world! I'll come for you at twelve, to tell your especial ear all the things that are too fragile to put on crude paper, and if the snow holds, as seems probable, we'll get a sleigh and go jingling off into the new world, and I'll promise solemnly to believe everything you wish me to believe, never once to say *acting*, to be entirely docile and joyfully credulous, for a whole twenty-four hours.

"HIS HONOR."

She glanced guiltily at the clock, amazed how completely Massingale had gone out of her thoughts. It was almost noon. She arose hastily to telephone. But at this moment the man in the bed moved and opened his eyes, which remained profoundly set on her halted figure, so luminous and young in the glowing golden Russian blouse in which she had first appeared to him. She paused, poised lightly on her toes, as he stared out at her incredulously, striving to collect his thoughts.

"Dodo?" he said in a whisper, frowning before him.

She came to his bedside, all else forgot, smiling, radiant.

"Here I am!"

Suddenly some confused streak of memory seemed to cross his brain, and immediately he said, weakness in his voice:

"You — you ought not to be here!"

"I am not alone," she said, sitting down; "there is a trained nurse in the other room."

"I remember — last night — your coming suddenly. But —"

"Hush, don't try to remember!" she said quietly. "Rest; sleep all you can!"

He continued looking at her with great uncomprehending eyes.

"What day is it?" he asked slowly.

"Christmas."

"Good God!" He turned his face away, horror-stricken and ashamed; but she, struck by the movement and the shudder that passed through his body, called to him gently:

"Garry, I don't blame you. Look at me! No, don't turn away, please."

She stretched out her hand, and slipping it under his head, brought it back to her; when he lifted his eyes, hers were smiling through her tears, compassionate and tender.

"I went to pieces," he said slowly.

"Never mind! Now I know how much you need me — what I can mean!"

"I remember nothing. Good God! where have I

been?" he said bitterly, and in his eyes was the black fog of impenetrable days and nights.

"It was my fault, too; I made the mistake, Garry!" she said hastily. "All that is over, though. Now we'll make the fight together!"

He watched her mutely, his eyes seeming to widen and deepen with the intensity of his gaze.

"Don't go away — just now — to-day. . . ."

"I won't!"

"And wear —" He raised his hand and ran it caressingly over the golden velvet. "It's your color!"

She nodded, smiling down on him, her soothing fingers running lightly over his hot forehead.

"Lord! Such a defeat!" he said presently, shaking his head.

"Hush!"

"What can you think of me?"

She looked down at his great frame, at the bared muscles of the arm that lay at her side, the corded brown neck, rough cut of chin, the powerful features, now so weak and so appealing. The despondency she saw in that great strength and stricken energy brought her all the closer to him, with an impulse to join all her strength to his, to take away the sting and the mortification, to raise him with confidence and hope.

The clock on the mantel began to send out its twelve tiny warning notes. She did not remember. She was looking in his eyes, smiling, bending over him, claiming him by every gentle right; and the breath that came deeply from her moving breast descended to him, bearing all her strength, all her will, all herself.

CHAPTER XXIV

AT four o'clock, Garry once more asleep to the sound of her calming voice, she ran out for a brief visit to Miss Pim's. In front of the door was an automobile that she recognized — in the heavy mediocrity of the parlor, Albert Edward Sassoon. He came languidly to meet her (since her first reproof he had given up his pasha pose), unruffled and docile, assuming the rôle of good fellowship, despite the fretting of the spirit he had endured.

"Oh, is that you?" she remarked nonchalantly, and gave him a limp hand, arranging her toque in the mirror while listening to his Christmas greetings.

"The humblest and the most patient of your admirers, pretty tyrant!" he said, his tired eyes scanning her with mock humility.

"You are lucky to find me; waiting long?"

As she continued standing, without a move to be seated, he drew from his pocket two jewel-cases, and said, as he moved toward the sofa:

"I am going to let you choose, Miss Dodo, so that you may be sure"—he paused, and added with slow silky emphasis—"to get just what you want!"

"Oh, that's very nice!" she said, with a nod, a little intrigued at the suggestion in his voice, very curious to see what he would offer her. Between them she

was always conscious of move and countermove. Would he take this moment to make another overt advance, after these long weeks of acquiescence to her whims? Just how much did this infatuation and pursuit mean to him, translated into dollars? She sat down, keenly interested, holding out her hand.

"First, please!"

He laid a red plush box on her eager palm, slowly, delaying a moment *en connaisseur*, to appreciate the delicate wrist and the shell-pink fragile shades of the finger-tips.

"It's a ring, a valuable ring, to tempt me!" she thought, smiling wisely to herself. She opened the box — immensely surprised. Inside was a tiny watch bracelet in gold and enamel, rare in design, but quite modest as an offering from him.

She slipped it on her wrist, nodding appreciatively, choosing her words carefully.

"How cunning! What a dear little watch! How clever of you!"

"Wait!" He leaned forward, offering the other box. "There is a choice, you know!"

She pressed the spring, and remained staring, caught by surprise. Against a background of royal blue, a necklace of pearls met her eyes, luminous and humanly, nakedly beautiful — a necklace such as once she had stood before on Fifth Avenue, breathless with desire, coveting each pearl that lay like a rare and perfectly beautiful nymph asleep against the lawn. The choice! She understood the true cleverness of it now. She shut the cover quickly, afraid to let her fingers

know the delight of such a caress. Then she raised her eyes steadily to his keen scrutiny.

"You ran no risk!" she said scornfully.

"Take it! I ask nothing!" he said quietly.

"Then why offer it?"

"That you may understand my nature," he said in a lower voice — "how I am when I care!"

"You know I could not honestly take such a present!"

"Why not? You have warned me!" he still persisted.

"I think such a woman is worse than one who pays," she said disdainfully, and with an angry motion she pushed the box from her, rising.

"Miss Baxter," he said, with studied courtesy, putting the necklace back into his pocket, "it was bought for you; it will be waiting for you."

"Ah, that's what you've been leading up to!" she said sharply, a note of anger in her voice; for the love of the jewels had left an ache.

"Yes," he said frankly; "but they are yours — whenever you ask."

"Why don't you say what you want to say, Mr. Sassoon? Are you so afraid of me?" she said, looking him directly in the eyes.

"Perhaps!" he answered, pulling at his mustache. "And yet, we may as well be open, hadn't we?"

She studied him a moment, and then resumed her seat, making him a peremptory sign to continue.

"It is difficult to express, perhaps," he said — without, however, any trouble showing in his even tones.

He paused and looked at his hand, stroking it with the feline motion of his fingers. Then all at once he began:

"Miss Baxter, I have been careful to follow the laws of the game you laid down, haven't I? I have taken care not to offend you by word or action, haven't I?"

"Well?"

"Will you let me say this to you, little girl?" he said, finding all at once his note. "You are going to make up your mind very soon what you want in life. You are too clever to wait long. Now, to be quite fair, as you pride yourself in being, you know who I am, and you know what I want. Yet you are willing to see me, knowing that!"

She took off the bracelet immediately.

"I have not the slightest interest whether I see you or not!" she said coldly. "To be honest, I only care to annoy you, to pay you back for your impertinence at your luncheon, to teach you a lesson that every woman is not for sale — in a word, to humiliate you as much as I can!"

He did not receive this in anger — far from it: his eyes took on a sudden eagerness, an avidity that he had hitherto controlled.

"Are you sure that is quite the truth — all the truth?" he asked, smiling his heavy ironical smile. "Are you sure you haven't been a little curious to know what this might mean, before you reject it? No, don't fib!" he said quietly, as she turned. "Is there anything unnatural — extraordinary in that?"

Don't you think such ideas come into the minds of most women? If you are going in for a career, you know what you must face! This world is a ridiculous world; laws are made to crush petty offenders! If you allied your name to a little manager, every one would scorn you!"

"And if I were your mistress, Mr. Sassoon? Say the word!"

"If you were, with your cleverness," he said quietly, "you would be received wherever I wanted you to be received: more, you would be sought, courted, flattered by those who want something out of me. Or, if you wanted a career, every obstacle would disappear at one word! Ask any one, if you want to know the truth of what I say. That's the world, young lady." He checked himself. "I don't want to talk over that — now! You asked me a direct question. This is my answer. Accept me for what I am — considering me as a possibility. It's worth it; be sure that it is a bigger field than a marriage of drudgery that ends your liberty. Consider me carefully, simply as an abstract proposition! Meanwhile, give me credit for being quite submissive and obedient!"

She remained thoughtful, surprised at the keenness of his insight, feeling she had underestimated him, feeling, too, the dramatic opposition of herself, little wandering atom of mediocrity and the great powers of wealth that could impress her so convincingly out of the time-worn eyes of this bored man.

"What are you thinking of, pretty child?" he said, struck at her glance.

"It is only because you can't have me!" she said abruptly.

"Because you don't care for what other women do!" he said quickly. "Because I am tired — eternally tired — of women who fling themselves at me! Because you make me follow you. Listen! You won't believe me — it's true. You can do anything you want with me!"

"Harrigan Blood offers me himself!" she said maliciously, for she began to have the same instinct with him as she had with Massingale, to whip him out of his calm into a fury.

"Blood!" he said angrily. "Child, you would hold a man like that three months. He would devour you, crush you. That type only feeds on women! You think I don't care! Do you know that just because you turned up in my life I've broken with Blood — that we are fighting each other tooth and nail, that I've caught him in the market, and will wring him for forty or fifty thousand for daring to get in my path!"

"And he?" she cried, delighted.

He noticed the joy in her, the childish delight of mischief, which reckoned great disasters as a broken vase.

"Little devil! That's what I like in you!" he said, with a flash of his eyes. "Blood is hammering me tooth and nail. He'll put me back three years, perhaps, tie me up and cost me a million or two more. But that's all the good it'll do him! Well, are you pleased?"

"Yes, I like that!"

"And which is it to be?"

"The bracelet, please!"

He laughed, fastening it on her arm, taking no advantage.

"You see how domesticated I am!"

"You behave very well!"

"Grant me one favor, then!"

"What?"

"To see your room," he said eagerly.

She was about to refuse, when the thought of Snyder and Betty above made her bite her lip with malice, and ask:

"Well, for once! But why?"

"To see what you prefer to all you could have!" he said; but he said it impersonally, bowing his thanks, resolved to school himself to impassibility and patience.

No sooner had they reached her room than he comprehended her trap. But it was too late to retreat. He was forced to make the best of it, submitting to introductions, pretending interest in the child and the tree. Then, inventing a lie, aware always of the laughter behind Dodo's eyes, he drew a ten-dollar bill from his pocket, and addressing Betty, said:

"Miss Baxter was kind enough to let me come up just for the Christmas tree. This is my present; buy anything you want!"

And with a stiff bow, he fled from childish things, cursing his deception, rage and avidity in his heart. Dodo, with shrieks of laughter, threw herself rolling on the bed.

But all at once she rose anxiously.

"Snyder, did he come at twelve? You know whom I mean!"

"Yes, he came!"

"You saw him? What did you say?"

"Told him you'd been in — gone out — didn't know where!" said Snyder in her jerky way.

"Snyder!" she cried furiously. "Did he leave a message?"

"No!"

"Snyder, don't deceive me!" she said imperatively. "Where is the letter?"

The woman shrugged her shoulders, hesitated, then went to a drawer and flung a letter on the table. Dodo tore it open. It was brevity itself.

"Twelve to twelve forty-five.—Why?"

Though she herself was at fault, the curtness of his message aroused her irritation. She crumpled it in her hands, then tore it to pieces.

"Very well! Now for presents!" she said.

When, after the last mysterious box had been opened with rapturous cries, dolls dressed and undressed, enormous mouthfuls of sweets consumed and crackers pulled with shrieks of fear, Snyder went off with Betty in a gale of excitement. Dodo, left alone, hurried to her presents. The harvest had been abundant; the table shone with silver. Mr. Peavey had sent a magnificent toilet set, Harrigan Blood a vanity box in gold which she embraced in her delight, Blainey a brooch which had solid convertible qualities; scarf-pins and silverware abounded. There was

a set of sable furs from Stacey (heavens! how often she had feared he had not understood!), but only a silver-mounted umbrella from Gilday (like a card with "P.P.C." across, she thought!). Massingale's bracelet was of exquisite workmanship, oriental, inclosing a talisman set in rubies, her favorite stone. She slipped it over her wrist, fascinated and content with its elegance and charm, which she associated always with him. Overcome by remorse, she hastened to the telephone. She tried his club, but he was not in. She left her number, and hurriedly sent off a note by Josephus, promising to explain all, a note full of healing affection and contrition, giving him a rendezvous for nine precisely. Then she ran down the stairs, and hurried back to her patient.

He was awake, waiting her coming, and the nervous longing in his eyes changed to peaceful contemplation as she came daintily in.

"I hoped you wouldn't wake up until I got back," she said, throwing off her new furs and raising her little toque from her tomboy golden curls, which seemed to dance in joyful liberation. The red snap of the chill snow was on her cheeks, in her eyes unmistakable eagerness to be back.

He saw it, and smiled too, beckoning her with a little motion of his outstretched hand. Then his glance went anxiously to Clarice; but she, as if interested only in the furs, bore them out of the room. Dodo took her chair by his side, locking down happily.

"Many presents?" he asked slowly.

She nodded gaily.

"Heaps!"

He put his hand under the pillow and drew something out. He held it a moment in his hand, his fist closed over it.

"My present."

"Really?" she said, clasping her hands.

He watched her hungrily, devouring every fugitive flash of youth and beauty. Then he held up a ring, a diamond flanked by two rubies, in an old setting.

"It's been in the family — long time. My mother's," he said.

But Dodo, drawing back, confused, touched, resisted.

"Oh, no! I couldn't! It's much too valuable. Please, please don't ask it!"

"Too valuable?" he said, with a touch of anger. "For you? Give me your hand — left, please!"

As she started to protest further, he closed his eyes wearily. She stopped instantly, afraid of over-excitement. If he wanted anything that she could give him, it was his.

"Here, Garry!" she said. "I — it's because — I am overwhelmed!"

He took her hand, discarding with a smile the finger she offered, choosing the one that was reserved for the pledge of lovers, and before she knew it, slipped it on. She caught her breath, and a sharp pain seemed to go through her. She could not refuse; yet to accept seemed a treason.

"It doesn't bind you — means everything to me!"

"Does it?" she said, suddenly pliant.

The light in his eyes, struggling out of the shadows of defeat, alone was her answer. She made a quick reservation. If this could mean anything to him, could help him in any way, had she a right to withhold it? When he had conquered, when he was strong again, when he saw her with clear eyes as she was, so far removed from him — then she would tell him, and he would at least revere her memory. She felt a lump in her throat, a smile on her lips, and a wetness in her eyes.

"Wish it on, then!" she said, laughing merrily. "Do you believe?"

"I will believe!" he said gravely.

Then he chuckled at this bit of boy-and-girl sentiment, and she laughed back. It was so good to be there — so soul-satisfying!

A little before nine, with a promise to drop in later for a few minutes, she went back to keep her appointment with Massingale. But she was conscious of a little regret, an unwillingness to leave the quiet moods into which she had come. Then, there would have to be explanations, something invented, — for she could not tell him the truth, — and the thought of complaints and replies, discussion and fencing, all the nervous play and struggle of the last weeks repeated, fretted her and left her impatient. But when she had waited in her room until nine, and another half-hour had dragged on without his coming, she was a bit alarmed. She went slowly to the telephone, hesitating and deliberating. Then she stopped, shook her head and returned.

All at once the door of Winona's room opened, and the tall dark figure of the girl remained in the opening, silently, her hand on the knob, hesitating.

Dodo gave a little exclamation and drew back against the table, her head thrown back, proud, wounded and unrelenting.

This silent confrontation lasted a long moment before Winona said slowly:

"Won't you let me come in?"

Dodo was human, and the offense against her had been the blackest in the Salamander code. She felt no softness in her heart. After what she had done, the old confidential relations could never be renewed: what was the use of pretending? So she answered coldly:

"Why? There was no excuse for what you did — absolutely none!"

Winona, very calm, reflected a moment; then she answered abruptly:

"I know! I'm not asking forgiveness!" And, with a decision that astonished Dodo, she entered, saying, "No one will come — for half an hour at least? I've got something I must talk out, you're the only human being, Dodo — I must talk to some one, or I shall go mad!"

The obstinate reckless force in her words and gestures completed Dodo's astonishment. Instead of a suppliant, Winona had assumed control of the situation. She hesitated, on the point of an angry refusal. But Winona had not come to ask for forgiveness — for what then? She turned on her heel, sat down and

folded her arms aggressively, looking her sternest. Winona immediately placed herself before her, never avoiding her gaze, speaking abruptly, as if in a hurry, with hard cruel notes in her voice:

"Dodo, you were the only true friend I had in the world; you did everything for me; and I tried to take from you a man who means nothing to you. You have a dozen,—twenty, if you wish,—and I had none! I was desperate! I'm saying no more—what's the use? You wouldn't forgive me—I wouldn't if I were you; and, if you did, would that change matters? No! Some day—you will see matters differently." She stopped at an angry gesture of negation from the seated girl, and repeated, with a smile full of bitterness: "Some day—yes, remember what I say!" For a moment, through the hardness of her mood, a little bit of the old Winona appeared, gentle and tender, as she looked down with the first trace of remorse; but she crushed it immediately, and continued almost mechanically, as if reciting a piece committed to memory:

"What I tell you now, I tell you because you are the only one I can trust, and because, no matter what's happened, you are the one I want to understand. I have been married for five years!"

At this incredible announcement Dodo let her arms fall, half rising from her seat, open-mouthed.

"Married!"

"Five years!" Winona repeated, shrugging her shoulders. "Legally, that's all. Don't interrupt me; I want to get it over. I lived in a God-forsaken fish-

ing village on the Maine coast — God-forsaken eight months of the year, waking up in the summer for a few city folks, second-class, who'd come down for three months, four months, to keep us going the rest of the year. Father was a decent sort, sea captain, fussing about a couple of cat-boats in the summer, lazy, but kind. My mother was a devil if ever there was one; but she worked hard, washing, cooking. She couldn't read or write. Why he married her — don't know! Because she got him with her good looks, probably, the looks she passed down to my sister and me! There were eight in the family, and we were the eldest — village belles. Morals weren't any too strict there; lord, why should they be? With everything gone to rot, no hope, no life, just existing, dragging through one month after another — sleet, ice and wind, and nothing ahead but to get old! All right, when you didn't know that something else existed over on the mainland! That was the trouble! They educated us — sent us over for a year's high school at New Bedford, to stay with an aunt.

“New Bedford! Lord, I thought it was a wonderland then; Boston and New York couldn't be any finer. Then she brought us back, to help in the living, to wait on the table when the boarders came, to end up by marrying — work for some man who'd sit around, to be fed and clothed, to have his house cleaned — children and all the rest.”

She stopped a moment, frowning, and Dodo overwhelmed at this picture of isolation and drudgery, that started before her eyes in the gesture and the voice of

the girl, who seemed to have returned to it all, exclaimed:

"But why tell me?"

Without noticing the interruption, Winona continued, speaking as if to herself, seemingly unconscious of Dodo's presence:

"New Bedford and summer boarders! That was the whole trouble! I was eighteen, sister twenty, and the village belles! We used to get out of the windows, nights, and steal off for a dance, every chance we got. Lord! it was innocent enough, considering what the other girls were doing; but she — the mother — whenever she'd catch us, she used to go stark out of her mind, swear we were disgracing her, bringing shame on the family, insinuating — well, everything! That wasn't all! She tied us up and beat us with a strap — yes, just that! — until she couldn't beat or shriek at us any more. But that didn't stop us! It only made us hate everything — her, the home, the life! Once she beat my sister so that they had to call in a doctor. The next week she ran off — disappeared." Winona drew a long breath, and her arm swept toward the trackless city, lowering at their window-sides: "Never a word. God knows! The worst, I guess — here, perhaps — somewhere!"

"She wanted me to go with her; I hadn't the nerve. Besides, there was a city fellow, clerk in a shoe store, who was taken with me, and I thought — I was sure — would marry me and get me out of it. But nothing ever came of that. After my sister went, she, the mother, never beat me again. Father had had some

words with her, I guess. Only it was worse! She had bars put in my window, and she never let me out of her sight in summer. When she went to bed she locked me in herself. She swore she'd keep me, at least, an honest girl. Two years of that. God knows how many times I thought of ending it all!

"Then there was an old fellow from the city, who had come down ten years before, and stayed. Been a gentleman, or something near it. Drink was the trouble — but a quiet sort of an old bachelor. Took over the little ramshackle store, living by himself with a regiment of cats. There'd been something back in his life — scandal about something or other: none of us ever got the truth, but it took the ambition out of him. He didn't care. He rather liked the old hole, I think. The store, you know, was the social center. Anyhow, he got sort of hold of himself, and prospered.

"Now, what I did, I did myself. I made him fall in love with me — oh, it wasn't difficult! I'd known for a long time what was back of his eyes; only — well, I was the belle, and every one was after me, and he'd sense enough to know that a prize like that wasn't for him, at fifty-five. Well, the rest isn't important; besides, it was easy. He got infatuated, as I meant, and when it was time I made a bargain. I had talked him into believing I would have a career; only it wasn't that — I wanted to get away! And one afternoon in December, with the snow piling up against the door, when we were alone in his store, I made my bargain — over the counter just like any other sale.

"He was to supply me with money for three years, and at the end of that time, if I was a success, he was to join me; if I failed, I was to go back, forget and take up the old life again. It sounds queer perhaps; as a matter of fact, I played many scenes before I got him to that. I was clever then; I was only twenty-one! Then—well, I'd put the longing for me into him, and it was a bargain like any other. I wanted five years, but he stuck for three. I wanted an engagement only, but, though he was crazy for me, he was too canny. So we compromised: I met him in Boston, and we were married secretly, and I left him the same day. He took me to the train and put me on board, shaking like a fever, looking at me with eyes big as saucers.

"That was four years ago. I did not go back, and he stopped sending me money. I wrote him a hundred lies—told him I must have another year by myself, that I had a big opportunity, that I was sure to succeed, that he had not given me enough time, every excuse. But he stopped my money short, told me when I was ready I'd got to come to him—"

She stopped, drew in her breath, and then burst out fiercely:

"God! I may be a wicked woman, but how I have waited, how I have prayed, to be delivered from him! Yes, prayed on my knees for him to die—to make me free, to give me a chance! But what's the use? I thought I was so clever! Clever? . . . I'm a stupid little fool! Career? I haven't the ghost of a show! I know it now! There's no more hoping! I've had

chance after chance; what good did they do me? That last one — that opened my eyes! Blainey's right; he didn't mince words. It was what I needed; it convinced me! But, God! if he would only die!"

Dodo had sat breathlessly, even shrinking back in her chair, before these passions in the raw, flung out without pretense of concealment, horror-stricken.

"But what will you do then?" she cried, terrified at the expression in Winona's eyes.

The girl's eyes came to hers, cold, resolved, disdainful; but she did not reply. A horrible thought suddenly possessed Dodo, as of an ominous echo out of her own past.

"You won't go back!" she cried, shuddering.

"Go back to that? To that loneliness, that starvation, that slavery, after knowing this?" she cried furiously, clenching her fist and starting back. Then she caught herself, looked away, and presently turned, calm, with a light of bitter mockery on her set face. "No! That is one thing I won't do!"

She dropped her fist, which had been pressed to her throat, with a short rough gesture of finality, and went directly to her door.

"Whether you come to forgive me or not," she said, "if I ever can help you, Dodo, save you from anything, come to me!"

And without waiting for an answer, she closed and locked the door.

For minute on minute Dodo remained as she had sprung up, her chin in her hand, her knuckles pressed tensely against the sharp contact of her teeth, thinking,

hesitating, torn by conflicting impulses. Had Winona dramatized her story, as she herself had done a hundred times? Was it all true, or only half true? If it were true, then what had she sought with Peavey, if not to be his wife — what, then? Only Peavey could tell her, make her certain of the truth or falsity of this story. And yet, there were accents, cries of the soul, despair of the eyes, that were too poignantly felt to be counterfeited! Dodo tiptoed to the door, listening. From the other side came the regular tread of a pacing step, regular and nervous; but of weeping no sound! She remained still a moment, her hand pressed to her breast, irresistibly drawn to belief. Had Winona opened the door at the moment, she would have caught her in her arms.

Then she remembered Lindaberry, staring into the horror of the night — into the long wakeful darkness; and she said to herself, as she departed hurriedly:

“To-morrow I will go to her. It can not be a lie!”

She found Lindaberry flushed with a sudden fever, that burned brightly on his worn cheeks and in the luminous brilliant eyes, which scarcely recognized her. Doctor Lampson was there. It was an attack of influenza, brought on by exposure and the drain on his vitality, which might be serious in his present condition.

She remained obstinately all night, sharing the watches with Clarice. The fever, which flared up fiercely at first, subsided somewhat with the coming of the day, leaving him quiet, but in a dangerously weak condition. When again she had the opportunity to return to her room, she remembered Winona. The

fear of what might happen to the wasted man at whose bedside she had watched, the cleansing of the spirit which the single thought of death had brought, had washed away all bitterness. She opened the door with longing, her arms ready. The room was empty, the bed untouched! In the center a trunk stood locked and corded. When she returned again in the afternoon, even the trunk had disappeared. Miss Pim, who arrived with professional, calculating eye, answered her outpouring of questions by a magnificent gesture of disdain.

"Said she was going to a house-party — for a week. That's what she *said*! H'm, I've got the trunk, if I haven't got two weeks' board! We shall see what we shall see! *I* have my suspicions!"

CHAPTER XXV

DURING the days in which Lindaberry lay weak and shattered, slowly struggling back to strength and a new grip on things, some perverse spirit seemed to actuate Dodo in her attitude toward Massingale. She had remained without seeing him for forty-eight hours after Christmas, refusing to make the advance when he had stayed away. Feeling a need of retaliation, she went to luncheon twice with Harrigan Blood in the short hours in which she absented herself from the sick-room. When finally, the third day, Massingale capitulated and came to see her, she treated him with the greatest indifference, inventing new stories, incredible, but galling to his pride.

"Why didn't you come?" he said, without preliminaries.

"I have other friends and other engagements!" she said, shrugging her shoulders. "Besides, I have resolved to make it easier for you."

"For me?"

"To be just a father confessor!" she said maliciously.

He had no answer that he could phrase, so he waited, staring at his boot in perplexity, aware of the lights that were dancing in her roguish eyes.

"And dinner — Christmas dinner?"

"Engaged, too; my other friends don't leave things to chance!"

"Why do you treat me this way?" he asked, frowning.

"What way? I'm sure I'm very nice to you! I'm not even angry because you've been sulking all this time!"

She stood before him, laughing, her head on one side, her hands on her hips. He made a movement as if to seize her, and she sprang away.

"Don't let's quarrel; I've been quite miserable!"

"Serves you right!" she said, unrelenting, determined to teach him by a bitter lesson what punishment she reserved for rebels.

At this moment his eye perceived the ring that Lindaberry had placed on her finger. At the same instant she caught his glance, and flourished her hand tantalizingly before his eyes.

"Isn't it beautiful?"

"What's that mean?"

"It means I'm engaged!" she said demurely.

"Who lent you that thing?"

"I'm a very mysterious person," she said gravely. "Look out! Some day you'll find me married before you know it!"

He looked at her with his intimidating, magisterial stare.

"Oh, you don't frighten me at all, Your Honor!" she said, making a face.

"I don't believe a word you say! You've borrowed the ring, and you've made ready a fine story;

but I'm not going to give you the pleasure. Will you dine with me?"

"Previous engagement!"

"With your fiancé, of course?"

"Quite right!"

"That's serious?" he said, rising, and containing his wrath with difficulty.

"Very serious!"

"Good-by, then!"

"Au revoir or good-by?"

"Good-by!" he said dryly and with emphasis.

She accompanied him to the door with a well simulated mask of tragedy, shook hands gravely, and suddenly, with a burst of laughter, called after him:

"To-morrow — here — same hour! If you're not on time you won't find me!"

The next day she told him, very seriously, the story of the ring, and with the true spirit of fiction, assimilating all that came to her ear and turning it into personal experience, she profited by what Winona had told her.

"You are sure you want to know?" she began, with a little alarmed air.

He nodded with a jerky, irritated motion.

"You will be annoyed," she said, hesitating; "you won't like it!"

"Begin!"

"Very well! I've told you often my time is not my own. The truth is that at any moment I may have to go when I am called," she began. Her starts were always rather jerky until the mood had enveloped

her. Suddenly she remembered Winona and dashed ahead. "The person who gave me this ring is an old man, sixty-five years of age — very rich. You have often wanted to know how I manage to live. He gives me the money. I have signed a contract to marry him when three years are up. There! Now you know all! That is my fate — if he lives! To-day he is desperately ill."

She went to the window, draping herself in the proper tragic pose, gazing out into the clear frozen twilight, drawing a deep sigh.

"It was all before I knew you — when I first came, when I was desperate, without a friend, without a cent! It was either that or —" She left the window abruptly, overcome by the mood, and returning, sat down, her elbows on her knees, her head in her hands. "He is a gambler, a partner of my father's. He fell in love with me there at Gold Fields — you remember? When my father was killed, he sent me to school; he has always been kind, very kind. Wanted to marry me afterward, but I wouldn't hear of it. I ran away. I wanted to be young, to enjoy life, to live! He is very ugly, very old; his skin is all spotted and loose, and his eyes are watery and faded, and when he touches me I shiver."

She raised her head, staring before her, drawing down the corners of her mouth.

"I didn't see him again until — until I came here, and that was by accident. Everything had gone wrong! The company I had come with had failed; I could get nothing to do! It was very black. There

were men, horrible men, offering me — you understand! I sold newspapers, in all kinds of weather, until ten or eleven at night sometimes, to get enough to eat! That's where he found me, under an umbrella on a street corner, in a pouring rain, a bundle of newspapers soaking under my arm. I was crying; I couldn't struggle any more! He took me to his home, a beautiful place just off Washington Square. He wanted me to marry him then. I can remember every word he said:

"'I'm over sixty. I've lived hard. Two strokes — and the next will box me up. At the worst, girl, it'll only be four or five years and then seven hundred thousand coming to you!'

"I don't know what I might have answered, but he put out his hand — wrinkled chalky hand! I can see it now — and touched mine. Ugh! But I made the bargain then and there, signed it in black and white. Three years to do as I please, and then —"

"And the time is up precisely on the tenth of March?" he said, with a grim smile.

"No! I have eight months more," she said, furious that he should not have been convinced by a story which had moved even her. "Who knows? He is very, very ill; it may all be over in a week!"

All at once the true effect flashed into her imagination, she turned, seizing him by the coat violently, clinging to him, crying:

"Oh, Your Honor, forgive me whatever I do these days! I haven't told you the truth. I'm not engaged — I'm married to him! And it's horrible — it is kill-

ing me! I don't know what I shall do. I think such wicked thoughts. I hope he'll never recover! Can you ever love me now?"

His answer was effective. He swore a splendid, soul-easing oath, adding:

"Dodo, if ever I'm fool enough to believe you, I deserve all I get!"

She laughed through the tears which had come naturally.

"So that's all you'll tell me!" he said roughly.

"Oh, there's always some truth in what I tell you!" she answered; and she had so entered into the part, so completely dramatized herself, that all that day he could not succeed in drawing her back to plain matter-of-fact.

But, despite all the good humor he put to her caprices, the determination to plague him always returned to her in some animal revulsion on leaving Lindaberry. No sooner had she left this quieter self that she found herself seized by the need of violent reaction, to which Massingale did not always suffice. Consequently she gave more time and more opportunity to Sassoon than she ordinarily would have done in prudence. But Sassoon, as though the lion had clipped his claws, never made the slightest attempt to presume, acting mildness and docility. She even began to consider him as rather a safe person, who could always, in the last test, be found manageable — which was exactly what Albert Edward Sassoon had planned. Next mutually to provoke Judge Massin-

gale and Harrigan Blood, she persuaded them to lunch *en trois*. The alacrity with which Massingale (who, since the unexplained ring, was suspicious of Blood) agreed where she expected resistance, drove her to too overt a display of interest before Harrigan Blood, with his keen vindictive eyes.

This luncheon, the result of one of those unreflecting impulses which seem so casual at the time, was destined to have the gravest consequences. Harrigan Blood, suddenly enlightened as to the true state of Dodo's interests, perceived that the ruinous quarrel with Sassoon had been to no end, and disillusioned and duped, became a bitter enemy of Massingale's: for Blood, with all his idealism in the domain of ideas, was capable of petty and terrible vindictiveness when his desires were once aroused. This luncheon, in fact, cost Massingale a career.

But Dodo, having thus roused Harrigan Blood to an extent to which she little guessed, turned the tables on Massingale, who, claimed by the afternoon session, was forced to hand her over to the escort of Harrigan Blood and see them depart in the intimacy of a closed automobile.

"Thanks! now I know who is my rival!" said Harrigan Blood immediately.

"You think so?"

"I know!" he said pointblank. Then, with a sudden rage, he turned on her. "Do you know what you have cost me by making one mistake?"

"Yes," she said softly; "Mr. Sassoon told me!"

He swore at this, and went on:

"Look here! I want to understand things; I want the truth! I want some straight answers!"

He was one of those men of force who believe that they can resolve all feminine intrigues by brusquely bringing things to a point. She smiled to herself at this bull rushing toward a fancied light.

"Are you in love with Massingale? If so, I want to know!"

"I haven't made up my mind," she said, looking at him out of the corner of her eye.

"Are you playing a game with me or not?"

"That would be rather natural, wouldn't it?"

"What's that?" he said, amazed.

"We are rather different, aren't we?" she said quietly. "It's very easy for you to make up *your* mind to put out your hand and take me, as you once expressed it; that's not a very great decision for you. But it's a little different, you see—it takes a little longer—to persuade *me* that I want to be taken. You are a very poor hand at courting, Mr. Harrigan Blood; you go out to win a woman as you would bowl down a lot of ten-pins. Don't you see?"

"Lord!" he cried, angry at the fretting and time-wasting she had made him endure and would further inflict on him. "Will there ever be a woman who'll have the courage to say, 'I love you as you love me, and let's dispense with all this backing and filling, this fencing, this coquetting and vexing of the spirit!' And why? Afraid that if you give naturally you won't be prized. That's the littleness about you

women; you can't conceive anything on a big scale!"

"But I don't know at all that I love you!" she said quietly. His last words had brought to her mind an idea of Estelle Monk's, which she adopted instantly, as she had adopted Winona's story. Even as she began she was laughing inwardly at the effect she knew it would bring. "Win me—make me love you! You have big ideas; so have I!"

He came closer, putting his arm back of her shoulder, taking her hand with impulsive suddenness, excited by this first opportunity she had permitted him.

"Give me a chance, Dodo! Let me see you, like this, but be honest with me!"

"I'll be perfectly honest, Harrigan," she said demurely, smiling to herself at the thrill that went through him at this first use of his name. "You are very much mistaken if you think I am like other girls. I want to be honest, and I am not afraid. We have the same ideas about marriage. I want to be a pioneer, to have the courage to lead the way! I'm not an adventuress. I shall never be ashamed of what I do! I shall never marry, but when I know that I love, I shall go to the man of my choice—openly!"

He placed her hand to his lips enthusiastically.

"And I shall let the world know it!"

"What?"

"And I shall announce it to every one!"

A sudden chill came over his ardor; the hand that had gripped hers so passionately felt all at once limp and discouraged.

"Are you serious?"

"Absolutely! I have made up my mind to this for a long time!"

"It isn't so easy," he said slowly.

"All the better!" she replied enthusiastically. "It'll show we have the courage of our convictions! That's what you believe in, too, isn't it?"

"H'm — yes."

The conversation suddenly dropped. He began to stare out of the window, pulling at his short mustache, while Dodo, shrunk in the corner, was choking with laughter. When they arrived at Miss Pim's, she could no longer contain herself. He looked up suddenly, detecting her laughter, furious.

"What!"

"Oh, Harrigan Blood!" she cried, between spells of laughter. "What a chance you have missed — and you such a clever man!"

"You were making fun of me; you didn't mean it!" he cried angrily.

But Dodo, waving a feeble handkerchief, ran hilariously up the stoop.

She returned from these excursions into her dramatic self to her nest, so to speak, languid and eager for calm. How did it happen that she did not attempt to dramatize herself with Lindaberry? Perhaps she did; but, if so, it was always as something bodiless and mystic, a sort of dipping into a religious exaltation, conceiving of herself as a ministering sister of the poor, sexless and utterly unselfish. But she never, in the long hours when she sat by his bedside,

prattling gaily or reading him to sleep, set sail on the gentler seas of romance and passion. For him she had great depth of tenderness and affection, being often deliciously moved, as she was when Betty's childish body lay locked upon her heart.

When he welcomed her coming with a quick hailing motion of his hand, his face radiant with smiles, or when he listened, nodding or grave, fastening his profound eyes on her as if afraid the slightest turn of her head would escape him, he gave her a feeling of long intimacy; yet, when she spoke to him, even when she drew closest, it was always without the feeling of passion, of the realization of contact, which she always felt with Massingale.

Her idea of love was more and more something unreasoning, violent and stirring, something that upset all that had been planned, a flame that consumed the will — something that was perhaps greatest when it hung on the threshold of tragedy, madness in some form or other, sweet and bitter — bitter, in the end, as *Tristan and Isolde*. At this moment she could not conceive of this serenity that lay between her and Lindaberry as love; and, besides, it made her feel older, as if she were being hurried, as if something fragile and elusive were being stolen from her.

A curious thing — she sometimes had the feeling that she was married to him, that she was a wife, watching and devoted. It rather interested her to project herself thus. The feeling came to her at times strongly, when she rose to shift the pillows under his head, as Clarice had taught her, or, watching

his averted eyes, hurried to moderate the glare that smote them from the windows.

Sometimes she thought of it with a sort of regret, wishing that she were not constituted as she was, that marriage were a possibility, that another had not seized on her imagination and awakened in her such fever. Here, alas! everything was too permissible; it lacked the element of danger, of the forbidden which alone could make the perfect Eden. But she felt with him a vast security, and a curious oneness of sympathies. If she were only ten years older — if she were not Dodo —

But one day an interruption from the outer world arrived to cast a stain of the matter-of-fact across the fragile fabric of this dream life. It was the first day that he had received permission to sit up in a chair, and the event had been duly celebrated with much gaiety. Lindaberry, in manly vanity, had insisted on taking ten steps alone without the humiliation of feminine support, but on the return trip had been forced to capitulate weakly. Having installed him again in bed, while Clarice had hurried off for luncheon, Dodo was bending over him, supporting his back with one arm, piling up the pillows, when the door opened and Lindaberry's brother entered, followed by Doctor Lampson.

"Hello, there, old bruiser!" he began, in a rough welcome in which a note of anxiety was trembling. "You're a nice, brotherly person! Why didn't you send me a telegram?"

All at once he stopped, perceiving that Dodo was

not in nurse's dress. At the same moment she was seized with a sudden embarrassment. Doctor Lampson, in the background, equally at a loss, waited, rubbing his chin with quick nervous movements. Garry, engrossed in the joy of seeing his brother, did not at once perceive the situation.

"By the Lord Harry, Jock, glad to see you! I'm not all in yet, am I? Sat up — walked —" A little movement of Dodo's, stiffening and withdrawing, caught his eye, and recalled him to the necessity of an explanation. He hesitated only a moment, a little unprepared, but that momentary delay hurt her with a sudden swift pain.

"Jock, I want you to meet a good angel," he said quickly. He stretched out his hand, taking hers, and turned proudly: "This is Miss Baxter — Dodo. We are engaged to be married."

Jock Lindaberry's face at once lost the peculiar undecided stare it had borne. He stepped forward, bending over her hand with a trace of the old-fashioned courtesy that sat so naturally on Garry.

But the slight trace of awkwardness which had attended the explanation, a fugitive sensitive thought that Garry had said what he had to save the situation, — out of *noblesse oblige*, — had shocked Doré in her independent soul. She felt a sudden anger at the invalid, at the doctor who was a spectator, and at the brother who had made such an excuse a social necessity.

"Mr. Lindaberry is quite wrong!" she said hotly. "And his explanation is totally uncalled for, whatever

his motives! We are not engaged. I have never promised to marry him, and I do not need any such excuse to account for my being here. Mr. Lindaberry and Doctor Lampson both know what my motives are, and I consider them quite honorable enough to need no apology. Good day!"

Before she could be prevented, deaf to the entreaties of Lindaberry or the expostulations of his brother, she walked out, in a fine temper.

Lindaberry did not understand in the least the motive of her revolt. He rather ascribed it to a refusal on her part to commit herself. The next day, when she came, he stammered out:

"Dodo, look here. You don't understand! I'm not taking things for granted — I meant what I said. You're bound to nothing. What I —"

But she laid her hand across his lips, frowning.

"We won't discuss it!"

The evening came when Garry, still with a touch of weakness in voice and in complexion, was ready to go off for a month in the open with Doctor Lampson — a hunting trip in the clarifying wilds of snow-ridden Canada on the track of moose: a month in which to fight the first battles against old habits, with the strength of a devoted friend at his side, far from old associations, nightmares of interminable electric lights and the battering, nerve-tiring hammer of New York. He had come doggedly out of the shadow, fortified by the inspiration a great love had raised in him. Not that the fight was easy: on the contrary, alone he never would have conquered. He loved, and

he felt resurrected. He had no fear of the test. The old manhood, sharp and decisive, returned. Sometimes, when, on a sleepless night, he had gone trudging, in greatcoat and boots, for miles across frozen sleeping blocks, he would return to her home, gazing up at her window with the adoration of the Magi. For him she was the purest spirit that could exist, without evil — without even the power to perceive ugliness.

He had never again referred to their relations since the unfortunate introduction to his brother. He saw her every day, at every hour, but he guarded strictly the retinue of friendship, putting into this self-discipline a fierce pride. The result was that she little divined, under the soldier, how deep a love had been kindled. She believed in his gratitude only; but this, to her independent romantic spirit, raised an impossible barrier.

She went to the station with him, alone in the automobile, her hand in his all the way. He did not say a word. She spoke rapidly, and then by fits and starts, wondering at his silence. The truth was, he dared not permit himself a word, for fear of the torrent which lay pent up in his soul. Perhaps had the outburst come in one wild moment, it would have frightened her, given her a new insight, satisfied her and awakened in her other sides that craved for expression — the sides below the serenity and the tenderness that were so ready.

Doctor Lampson met them at the station, shooting a queer little glance at their quiet faces. The train was

ready, the great iron cavern filled with the monster cries of steam animals, bells ringing, crowds frantic, bundles, trunks, children, babies, rushing by in pandemonium. There was nothing else to do but to say good-by.

"Better be getting on — better be moving!" remarked Doctor Lampson, in his nervous rough way. "Good-by, Miss Baxter. You're a trump — the finest of the fine! I'll take care of Garry. He'll come back like a drum-major! Good-by, good-by — God bless you! Come on now, Garry; come on."

He turned obligingly away, shouting orders at a couple of negro porters staggering under valises and gun-cases. She looked up at Garry, a lump in her throat, thrilled through her misty eyes at the victory she had wrought in the erect and confident figure. Would he take her in his arms and kiss her, there, before all the people? She did not care . . . it would only be natural after all she had won for him. She did not care . . . perhaps, she longed for this embrace without knowing quite why.

"Dodo . . ." he began, and then suddenly caught himself, and his great chest rose. He stopped, took her hand, pressed it as though to crush it, did not even seek her eyes, turned and went quickly away.

"How he reveres me!" she thought, tears rushing to her eyes. She clung to the iron railing, her handkerchief to her face, a sob in her throat, following the strong figure, which the crowd slowly obliterated. Once she thought he had turned and she waved her white signal feebly — not quite certain. It seemed



"Good-by, Miss Baxter. You're a trump."

eternity waiting for the train to move. At the last she had a mad desire to run after him, to call him back, to hold him and to be held, to look in his eyes, to give up all the daring and the curiosity of life, to be just a weak woman and to hear him say those words which she had steadfastly forbidden. She was afraid to let him go. She felt as though she needed him more than he had needed her. It had all been so serene. The goodness in the world seemed to vanish with his going. What was left was so black, so impenetrable. If only she were different — like other women. . . .

The great black shape stirred at last, drew swiftly away and curved into nothingness. It seemed to her all at once as though a door had closed on her life, even as the iron gate had slammed against her tears. She drifted out in a daze. The whole clanging tumultuous station was empty to her eyes. Energetic purposeful crowds buffeted her and unresisting she went with the current and feebly home to where she knew Massingale at least would be waiting for her. For with all her fancied daring, she had a consuming horror of being left alone. The twilight electric world of New York roared in her ears and weakly she felt that to stand against this merciless leap of contending thousands she had no strength but the strength of the men her instincts could draw about her.

Massingale had been waiting interminably for Doré. He had come in a little after five to take her off to dinner, as she had ordered. But hardly had he arrived when she had told him a story he did not

believe: Ida Summers had quarreled with an admirer and had asked her to make it up for her; she would be only a moment below, half an hour at the most — would he mind waiting? He had assented heavily, with a new vexation, certain that this was but a new trial she was imposing on him, part and parcel with the misery of the wretched last weeks, and yet too proud to show the pain.

He sat down alone in the great vacant room — her room, in which every breath brought him some perfume of her, feeling her tantalizing presence in a hundred vanishing shapes twirling about him: in the alcove, a glimpse of pillow and counterpane, where she slept, unconscious of torture and craving; in the swung door of the closet, soft filmy fabrics that seemed yet warm from her body; in the ugly dressing-table, with its musty mirror which seemed reclaimed by the glamour of her reflection; in all the undisciplined touches, in all the poverty-conquering gaiety — her room, her world, into which she had drawn him as the Lorelei steals the fisherman from his boat. Outside, vacancy, a cold and colorless world, his world, the life he had chosen, believing it secure. He took up a magazine, gazed at a random page without turning and laid it down. Was it love or hatred? — the malignant, brute-to-brute passion for destruction of the male, tormented and defied! How she had made him suffer, wounded him in his pride, humiliated him before himself in all this blind clinging to something which had no answer! And here he was now, Judge Massingale, enduring new indignity, waiting

supinely in her room, exposed to the ridicule of any chance entrance. He glanced at his watch: forty-five minutes had already elapsed. He started up angrily. No! he would endure no more! The time had come to revolt! He would humble himself no longer; now, at last, he would make an end — once and forever! He went down-stairs quietly, and into the parlor. It was as he had surmised — she was not there. Only one more lie! Then, resolved, with a feeling of liberation, he went up-stairs again, took out paper and envelope, and sat down at her desk, saying to himself:

“This is the end, thank God! She is making a fool of me; I am only ridiculous! Now to finish it!”

Without phrasing or hesitation, he wrote with rapid furious scratches:

“My Dear Girl:

“You have been very clever, and I have been nothing but a fool, but for once you have gone too far! Thanks; it has opened my eyes! It is not only that I do not believe one single word you tell me, but that I see what a ridiculous rôle you have made me play. Don’t attempt to invent any new fiction — I warn you, I will not see you! I leave you without the slightest fear for your future. You are quite capable of taking care of yourself.

“M.”

Prudently he affixed only his initial, sealed the envelope, and rose, again glancing at his watch. It had been fully an hour and a quarter.

“If she is not here in five minutes —” he began angrily.

The door flew open, and Dodo rushed into his

arms. He crushed the envelope clumsily into his pocket, and caught her to him.

"Ah, hold me strongly!" she cried, quivering and breathless. "More — more! You are so kind — you are so patient with me, Your Honor! And I have been so cruel. How I must have plagued you! Forgive me! Forgive me! Forgive me!"

"It's nothing — nothing!" he said, troubled with her embrace, which had never seemed so complete an abnegation, a surrender and a seeking.

"Oh, I'll make it up to you now!" she cried, her cheeks wet.

She clung to him, craving affection, the pain of his clutching arms, the strength of his male body, in a strange impulse, the unconscious seeking from one man what another had roused. Did she know herself to whom she was clinging, or why she had such a wild hunger in her sorrow-racked body? She clung to him, but she did not cry his name!

CHAPTER XXVI

AS January went shivering into the slush and fury of February, and the fatal teeth of March drew nearer, Dodo found herself approaching the great test of her character. All the different dramatizations that she had permitted herself, with her joyful instinct toward comedy, suddenly loomed before her, no longer trivial and facile, but reaching into seriousness, fraught with the elements of tragedy. Impossible to describe the fever of emotion into which she now plunged, acting and reacting, perpetually in a whirl, avoiding solitude and rest, trying every impulse, frantically proceeding from one flirtation to another, aghast at the necessity which she had imposed on herself of definitely choosing what her life should be. She was rarely in bed before the wan grays were scurrying in their pallid flight before the dawn, like thieves across the city. She saw the heavy, jangling milk-wagons plodding to their deliveries, abhorrent figures combing the refuse of yesterday, groups in rags asleep on iron gratings which sent the warm blast of underground furnaces into the shivering winds. Often, heavy-eyed and vibrantly awake, returning in singing parties of four or six from long hours of dancing, she came suddenly upon night shifts emerging from their slavery in the

bowels of the earth, black shadows trooping up from the flare of kerosene lamps, an underworld which stared at the revelers in brutish hostility.

She consumed the night thus — fearing it, avoiding its quiet reflections, stopping her ears to its whispers of rules learned in childhood; afraid to face God, who, in her simple superstitious faith, was ever personal. She felt that if she did not recall herself to Him, God, who had so much to do, would not notice her. When she returned, she fell at once into profound, dream-driven sleep from which she woke at noon, heavy and incredulous, arousing herself into a febrile energy, impatient for the whirling day to start. At the foot of the alcove she had placed an enormous calendar; and each night, on entering, she tore off another sheet — counting the days that yet intervened before the coming tenth of March. In the whole room she saw nothing but these looming figures, black against white, marking her little allotted hours. She had so little time left to revel and dare, to skirt the edge of precipices or tease the leaping flames . . . such a little while to be just Dodo.

The pace she set began to tell on her vitality, to proclaim itself in the hollowing of her cheeks and the strained cords of the neck. Her eyes were never quiet, nor could her body find an instant's repose. Snyder, who had succeeded to Winona's room, perceived the danger, as did Massingale; but to the remonstrances of each Doré would run to the calendar, half laughing, half serious, drumming on it with her little fist, crying:

"Pretty soon — pretty soon. Can't stop now! Soon it'll be over!"

It was not simply three or four intrigues that she drove at once, but a dozen, keeping the threads from tangling, adding new ones each night, for a few days' mystification and abandonment. Yet, despite the nerve-racking and exhaustion, never had she felt so triumphant or known herself so desirable. The city which once had crushed her imagination in the first despair of her arrival, the city which she felt in all its moods, grumbling, defiant, waiting cruelly, submissive or ominous, now rolled before her in a brilliant succession of pleasures, her world and her destiny — theater and restaurant, opera and cabaret; and everywhere, in the burst of lights, or languidly sunk in the seduction of music, in the lure of shop-windows was the zest of precious temptations — dangers that it was an ecstasy to be able to reject. Everything succeeded for her: Massingale, Blood, Sassoon the patient, Gilday, Stacey and dozens of others. She managed as she wished, arranged her day so that they never crossed one another, and yet leaping from one dramatization to another. Never had she felt so confident of the mastery of her destinies, so avid of the delicious draft of pleasure. She felt that she was coming to a supreme sacrifice, self-immolation, but that the setting was superb and the climax must be magnificent!

She adored the reckless threading flight of taxicabs through the streets, plunging into sudden openings, grinding to hairbreadth stops, rounding abrupt

corners, tossed and buffeted, skimming into new perils. It was all something of herself, her reckless, daring, danger-loving self. Then, there was the telephone, which called to her twenty times a day: she never went to it without a little thrill of anticipation. She adored it as the gambler the rolling ball, this mysterious instrument which, with its startling jangle, could change the complexion of a dull and hopeless day and send her swiftly out on some new dare, throbbing with excitement. She appreciated it, too, for its mocking moments of conversation, engagements to take or to refuse, laughing excuses or new traps to set; but it was especially this quality of the unexpected she adored, the possibility at the last moment, after a day of calculated planning, to throw everything to the winds, to go rushing off on the hazards of the unexpected. During this period her passion for the opera increased: *Tristan and Isolde*, *Bohème*, *Tosca*, *Manon* — she never let a performance of these favorites pass unattended if she could manage it, hanging breathless on the passionate poignant tragedies at the end, soothed and satisfied, convinced, resolved, saying:

“Ah, yes! That is what love is — what it must mean!”

At such times, if she happened to be with Masingale, she would close her eyes, serenely content, her fingers fastened over his hand, clinging, as if her arms were wrapped about him. She was certain now that this was the best — if only she could bring him to the height she wished, if she could only make him

rise above the commonplace and know the tragic ecstasy. She knew now that he loved her; would it be as she wished, great enough to justify the sacrifice she would willingly make to grasp the dream? Perhaps, unconsciously, at the bottom it was necessary for her to know of what he was capable before she could decide what she herself would do. To force him to this was now her one idea; she was fiercely resolved that what had started as a casual flirtation should redeem itself in a heroic flame.

Besides, Massingale had a physical effect over her. In the anticipation of his coming she was always nervous and excited; in his presence always conscious of a feverish magnetized need of drawing closer, of touching his hand, his arm, of the pressure of his shoulder against hers, resisting the impulse to be caught in his arms; and always melancholy and depressed on his departure. This empire over her senses was so strong, she was convinced that this was the only way love could show itself. She was glad, at such times, that the day of decision was coming; for if, in her contrary moods, she inflicted torture on him, she, too, knew now what it was to suffer. The strong emotions on which she was living had at last aroused the elemental in her below all the mental hazards of the girl. If she had ever seen him clearly, she could not now. She had so completely visualized him in the image of what she imagined a lover should be that she might have created him herself.

At an earlier moment Massingale might have perceived this; but he had now drunk too deep of the nar-

cotic on her lips, and followed too long the firefly lights in her eyes, to distinguish fact from fancy. He saw he could no longer command, and he felt no strength in him to run away. He was resigned to letting her conduct them where she willed. For he, too, was in love with love for the first time in his life; yet it was not a hungry scanning of future horizons, but a profound melancholic reflection over the wasted past. He saw himself young, capable of dreams once more, remembering the hours when he fondly believed in a great destiny; and this longing, which, against his reason, had fastened him to the young, ardent and graceful girl, had she but divined it, was the same that made Peavey so ridiculous — the yearning back to a stolen youth.

And Lindaberry? Yes; certainly she thought of him often, but as something she had surrendered, that was not for her rebellious life. It was love, lawless and destructive, which she sought, not that quiet content that rises from the wells of peace and serenity. She was indeed a lawless waif of a law-defying generation, and her mind was set on great flaming sensations, hating conventions and resolved on rebellion. She saw her future in the hands of Massingale, Blainey — yes, possibly even Sassoon, if the others should fail; and conscious of the fierceness and selfishness of her desires, she judged herself unworthy of Lindaberry. Once or twice she had paused to consider such a marriage; but the affection for him which she termed friendship, sympathy, pity — everything but

love — was so deep that she shrank from the thought of inflicting harm, saying:

“If I married him, what would come?”

For occasionally she looked her image in the face, judging it mercilessly. Dodo married, she believed, would not be Dodo reformed. She would still run after adventures, still hunger for admiration, still be tempted to play with other men — many men at once; and when she saw herself thus, she recoiled at the ruin she might cause him, at the thought of bringing another deception into his life, of offering him anything but a complete self. But when his rare letters came she devoured them, and answered them while yet his words were in her ears. Then she thought to herself, since it could not be, at least she wished she could choose his wife — some one who would be worthy of the desperate battle he was fighting, of the big vision that was awakening, of the fineness and the gentle strength which glowed through every page and moved her strongly.

On the days his letters came, Doré could hardly control herself with Massingale; she was cruel beyond all reason, flying into a temper at the slightest imagined excuse. Occasionally they brought a reaction against the senseless fever in which she was caught, against these men of pleasure or craving who pursued her; and abruptly, throwing all engagements to the winds, she flung herself back into childhood, in long giggling, romping afternoons with Betty. With Snyder she never really conversed. Once or twice the

woman had made as though to open her confidence, but there was something that lay between them, that each was conscious of, that could not be bridged. She had ended by telling her of her adventure with Linda-berry. He had even, once or twice before his departure, met Snyder in her room, and disapproved too strongly of the friendship. But Massingale was a subject they could not discuss.

In the last week of February two events of importance occurred. Ida Summers was married, and Mr. Peavey returned. The news of the engagement came to Dodo as a great surprise. In the last month she had seen little of the other Salamanders, except in the confusion of gay parties—having no time, and, besides, rather avoiding them. Of Winona not the slightest word had come. Miss Pim, who retained embattled possession of the trunk, had decided “suspicions,” which Dodo did not share. For her, the worst of all fates had occurred: Winona had retroceded, gone back and given up the struggle, overcome. Ida Summers had somehow ceased to drop into the room, or rather their hours no longer coincided. Dodo was correspondingly surprised when, one morning as she was rising heavily and against the spirit, Ida, a vision of youth and health, burst abruptly in on her with the announcement that she was to marry Tony Rex, that the wedding was for that night, and that Dodo would kindly attend.

“Knocks you off your feet, eh? No more surprised than I am, Do!” she cried in her exclamatory style. “But, lord! what are you going to do when

a human detective agency like Tony camps on your trail and shoos all eligibles away!"

"Tony Rex!" said Dodo, with a gasp of astonishment. She was studying the brilliant beauty of the girl, wondering to herself if she would ever know what chances she had missed.

"Tony, God bless him!"

"Why?"

"Can't help myself! He's my kind, and I can't fool him!" cried Ida. Then she continued enthusiastically: "I say, Dodo! I'm tired of all that other crowd — the stuffed shirt brigade, you know. What's the use? I don't belong! Lord! I'd rather link my arm in Tony's and trolley it to a hot dog and a glass of beer, where you can talk English, than to stiffen up and act refined with a Sassoon or a Charley-boy, feeding me broiled lobster in a gilded caff! It's not in me. I don't belong — thank God!"

"Well, I never!" said Doré clutching a stocking.

"Now, just a word or two strictly on the Q. T.," resumed Ida anxiously. "Tony is a most hot-headed native; I think it just as well to cut out all references to a few episodes in the past. Do you get it?"

"I do!"

"He tells me I'm a blue-eyed baby somersaulting through a wicked world, entirely too innocent and fragile to understand — ahem! If that's what Tony wants, why, — God bless him! — I wouldn't have him disturbed for the world! Besides — lord! Dodo! I've been an awful fool; such risks — whew! I wish one particular party — well, ahem! It's to-night, no

fuss or feathers. That's Tony's way, quick, on the trigger. Gets me. He's got a best man: that'll make a party of four. Little Church Around the Corner, a good blow-out after — Mrs. T. Rex! Why don't you do the same, Do? Lord! I feel so happy I could jump fifty feet in the air and bite the feathers out of the lulubird!"

The marriage was very quiet. The sudden solemnity of Ida at the last, the proud carriage of Tony Rex, the new sidelong clinging of the young wife to her husband, half protection, half proprietorship, the glow in her eyes, the gay dinner and the trip to the station to wave them Godspeed on their mysterious journey into the new world — all this impressed Dodo strongly. At first it seemed a sort of treason: she resented Ida's succumbing to the impertinent mastery of Tony Rex — Rex, who always, with a shudder recalled to her that other figure who had once, in the forgotten past, domineered likewise over her. But the marriage service in the little chapel, the quiet of the party of four, the feeling of solemnity, the way Ida had turned for her husband's kiss, oblivious of them, had affected her curiously. She scarcely noticed the best man at her side. She was thinking of Lindaberry — how happy he would be if she should turn to him, if she could feel as Ida did! Lindaberry was in her thoughts all the evening, and again in her dreams that night. The next day she refused to see Massingale at all.

Mr. Peahey arrived two days later, and the moment she entered the musty parlor where he was fidgeting

before the mirror, waiting to take her out, she realized that a crisis was approaching. Luckily, another couple were by the window, impatient for their departure, talking in stilted phrases. Their greeting was therefore formal.

"Glad to see you!"

"Been an age, hasn't it?"

"Shall we go?"

They went immediately to his automobile, where it seemed to her that Brennon, the chauffeur, sent her a knowing glance from a malicious eye.

"I must leave right after for Boston," he said hurriedly. "I'm sorry, but I'll be back, the end of the week, for good. I broke the trip just to see you — first chance."

"What a lot of traveling you have to do!"

"Yes," he assented; "but it has been worth it. Things have worked out marvelously — better than I hoped. In a year I can retire: you've brought me luck! I'll tell you later."

He stopped, drawing a long breath, frowning but happy. The joy she saw on his face made her guess what he would have to announce, and set her busy imagination planning for some means to postpone an issue. They entered the restaurant of one of the quieter hotels. A table was already reserved, in a secluded corner, somewhat removed from the crowd, which had not yet begun to pour in.

While he busied himself with the ordering, she studied him, seeking some way to escape the proposal that she saw coming, as one sees an inevitable collision

on a narrow road. Above everything in the world, she wished to prevent a spoken offer. She was sure that, for the present, he did not represent a possibility; but there were unsounded currents in the future of which she knew nothing. At the bottom there was in her a prudent streak: she did not like to burn her bridges. Despite all the license she permitted her imagination, there was always back of it all a sober second sense. She wished to keep him as a friend until she was at least certain of other things—even perhaps as a refuge, if that were possible, for whatever turn fate might play her in the coming years.

She was not quite certain that it was possible to achieve this *tour de force*, but she intended to try; for, curiously enough, she doubted Massingale not so much now, in the impulses of his infatuation, but beyond, in the hazardous months that must succeed. Up to the present she had two refuges; Blainey, who would continue steadfast, and Peavey, who was a problem. They had always been fixed points in her moments of greatest recklessness. Youth was a madness; but, after that, what? And whom to lean upon? With these thoughts in mind, she looked at Peavey's honest simple features with a feeling of tenderness and wonder. If the end of the romance were tragedy and disillusion, would he forgive her? Would she find there the charity—

"I owe you an explanation, Miss Baxter," Peavey began abruptly. Then he hesitated, and rearranged the knives and forks. "Your letter caused me great

pain — the greatest! I would have come back instantly, if it had been possible without sacrificing things I had set my heart on."

"I was very much surprised; hurt, too!" she said gravely. "I have always thought of you — well, as different, don't you know?"

He bit his lip, and brought the knives over to the forks.

"I hope you didn't misjudge me?"

"I didn't know what to think!"

"I — I don't quite know how to explain. I did not realize Miss Horning's character. She confessed to me that she was in want; I thought of her as your friend."

"And you helped her?" she said, instantly alert.

"It was not much."

"It is true," she said seriously, "I introduced Winona to you. She has been a great deception to me, too. But why did you keep on seeing her without saying anything to me? Nothing wrong in it, but why hide it? That's what wounded me."

"Of course," he said miserably, "that was wrong. I don't know how it came —"

"Sympathy?" she suggested, with a smile.

"I was sorry for her."

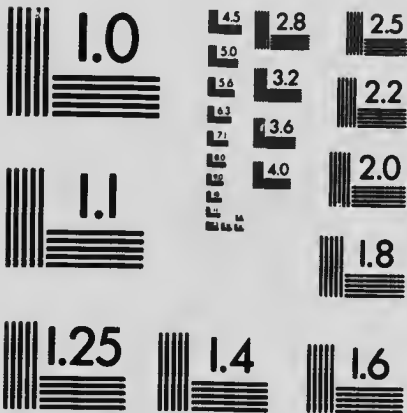
"She wished you to marry her, didn't she?"

"No, it was not that! It — was quite different!" he said, and his face crimsoned, while the knives were transferred hastily back to the right. He drew a long painful breath. "It's something very disagree-



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able — something I can't talk to you about! All I wish to say is, for your own good, Miss — Miss Horn-
ing is not a proper friend for you."

"She has been gone almost two months!" she said quietly. "Very well; we won't say anything more. You are too generous, too warm-hearted, Mr. Peavey! Tell me about what you've been doing."

Her doubts had been suddenly confirmed, but it gave her a sudden feeling of horror as she thought of the desperation to which Winona must have been driven to have attempted such a stroke. Then she was afraid of the opening into sentiment which she saw before her, and changed the subject quickly, but, unfortunately, to her disadvantage.

"I have carried through a great merger of our interests," he said, his face lighting up. "The last formalities will be completed to-night, in Boston. It will be" — he stopped, not daring to look at her — "very profitable. In a year I shall be, not a very rich man, but quite rich — yes, quite rich, even as things go to-day! My intention then is to retire, to travel, to see the great cities of the world. I don't care for money myself, except — well, to give everything possible in the world to the person I care for."

He was speaking rapidly now, staring directly before him at her hand, which was playing with the glass. She looked about in terror. The near tables were vacant; they were still practically isolated. In another moment it would be all over. The arrival of the second course momentarily saved her. She plied him with questions, signaling the waiter on a dozen

invented pretexts whenever the conversation turned to an intimate note. But at the end of the luncheon, as if overburdened with the strain of a great secret, resolved to end the torture, he said abruptly:

"Miss Baxter, it was not simply to explain I came here; I want to talk to you very seriously, on a matter that is everything in the world to —"

She drew back suddenly as if frightened, and her hand, apparently by accident, coming in contact with her glass, sent it tumbling over the table, drenching the cloth, amid a clatter of cutlery. The *maitre d'hôtel* came running immediately to her rescue, napkin in hand.

"Oh, dear! how awkward I am!" she cried, in great confusion.

"It's nothing — nothing!" Peavey said hastily, reproaching himself for having frightened her by the abruptness of his methods, here in a crowded restaurant.

But when they had gone into the anteroom, he said quickly:

"Miss Baxter, will you come into the salon here, or up-stairs? For a quarter of an hour — a few moments, just a second — I must speak to you. Now — at once — please!"

There was no escape; she resigned herself to following him. But as she entered the green-and-gold desert where intimacy could no longer be avoided, she thought to herself:

"Oh, dear! If I had only knocked it over my dress I could have gone right home!"

In twenty minutes it was all over, and very red, very quiet, he had conducted her to his car and sent her off.

"I'm sorry!" she said, distressed at his pathetic figure.

"Such things can't be helped!" he said, with a closing of the jaws.

"But let's be friends, can't you? Just now — I'm so young still — later — Please let's be friends, Mr. Peavey!"

He shook his head.

"I'm afraid — that's too hard, and — I don't think you'll ever change!"

"I have been honest!" she said sadly — which was true, in a measure.

"Very!"

He shook her hand with an exaggerated bow, signaled the chauffeur and went back.

All at once she had a feeling of utter loneliness and abandonment. He had been something so secure in her life, so dependable. To give him up was more of a wrench than she had imagined. It brought her a curious sense of peril. Would he wait, as she had suggested, or would this be the end, the last glimpse she would have of this strong, solitary, devoted soul?

She jumped out hastily at Miss Pim's, and then stopped to consider.

"Want me this evening?" said Brennon, watching her attentively.

"I don't know — yes — I'll telephone."

"Everything all right?" he asked slyly.

"What do you mean?" she said, frowning and surprised.

"Oh, nothing!" he said noisily. Then he leaned forward, his eyes fixed boldly, covetously on her. "I say, when you've got an open date, why not come joy-riding with me?"

"Oh!" She drew back, stung to the quick of her pride.

He misunderstood her action, perhaps. Shrugging his shoulders, he went on:

"Why not? I'm as good a spender as some of the high-rollers!"

"How dare you?" she cried, blushing hot under his look. "What do you think I am? Go with *you*!"

"You needn't be so particular!" he said, angry in his turn at her contempt. "A chauffeur's not a servant. And I guess I've kept your secrets, young lady!"

"What do you mean?"

"Look here! I'm no fool! Don't you think I know your game? Don't you think I got on to the brother racket that night? All right! Don't get in a huff! What've I done? Invited you out! What are you turning up your nose at me for? Come, now!"

He had ended in a conciliatory tone, smiling at her indignant face with undisguised admiration.

"Brennon, that's enough! I shan't want you, now or ever! Mr. Peavey shall hear of this!"

"Oh, will he?" he said, with an ugly look. "Then he'll hear of a good deal more! What are you but
- a -"

She gave a cry of shame at the word he flung out in anger, and rushed into the house, utterly crushed and revolted, wounded as she had never been before in all her life. The whole day had been one of blank defeat. Now with her body smarting as if from a blow, broken in spirit, clinging to the window-frame, she had a sudden ominous chill. It seemed as if in a twinkling everything had changed for her—that all that had been so rosy and brilliant before, was now become grim and black; that everything had been broken up; that, one by one, all would fall away.

And, as if her cup of bitterness were not full, in her mail she found the one letter she had dreaded for months:

"All over and I've won out, Flossie! Whew! Three months ago things looked so squally, I couldn't even write. If I'd gone under, I'd just have quietly dropped out, and, Kid, you'd never known what had hit me! But, bless the luck, I'm It! Clear the tracks for me! I'm coming East with the bells on! Listen! Six thousand eight hundred fifty-two dollars in the bank, salted away. Prospects, sixteen karat fine. Got a cracker-jack proposition; six cinematograph shows, one-fifth interest. In a year, Flossie, it's a gasoline buggy for you! I'm beating it to you, hot-foot. One stop in Des Moines to pick up some easy money, and me for the gay White Way! Watch for me about March fourteenth. Say, we're going to be rich, and don't you forget it! It's all for you, bless your pretty eyes! Do I love you? Well, say! I'm sitting up, talking to your little photo, foolish as a kid! I'm daffy about you. If you're still strong for Josh, why, set the date. Go the limit on the clothes—the best isn't too good for you! Don't keep me waiting, and don't go for to tease me, honey, for my heart's been true to you!

"JOSH.

"P. S. If you've got any foolish thinks in your sassy head

that you care for any cane-bearing dude, dismiss them! You don't! Sweep the porch and cut the hammock-strings. Don't fool yourself one minute—we're the team!"

She gave a cry of horror. The worst had come! The past was rising up to claim her, stretching out its cruel tentacles to drag her back, as it had done to Winona. How could she escape him? What could she say to him, after all these months of weak postponement? If only she could stop him by a letter or a telegram! But there was no address. All she knew was that somewhere, out on the cold brown sky-line, he was hurrying toward her, resolute, confident, a terribly earnest lover. All that night, in the midst of hideous dreams, where Brennon pursued her with his vindictive grin, she had the feeling of something advancing over the horizon, black, swelling like a tornado, roaring toward her, obscuring everything with its expanding darkness.

CHAPTER XXVII

IN a twinkling, from the heights of triumphant pleasure, Dodo found herself plunged into profoundest dejection. It seemed as if everything must turn against her, that there could be no end to the defeats that were to pile up. At the end of the week a curt farewell letter came from Mr. Peavey, in which she believed she divined the hand of Brennon. For the first time, too, she felt the clammy touch of poverty. In the last months, unperceived, the props had dropped away, one by one. She had been foolish, extravagant. She had wanted to be as well dressed in the eyes of Massingale as the women of his world. She had sold, through Zip, the furs Stacey had given her, for the exigencies of the wardrobe. Trip by trip, she had gone into the shadow of the pawn-broker, sacrificing the silver toilet set, Sassoon's bracelet, the vanity-box, earrings, brooches, every convertible thing, until only two remained — Judge Massingale's bracelet, and the ring that Lindaberry had placed on her finger as a troth.

When Peavey's automobile had been withdrawn, she had tried Gilday, only to find him out of town. When she had sought to bring Stacey back into the fold of the faithful, she found that his allegiance had been transferred. He came once to take her to luncheon, but it was out of a sentiment for the past, and a need

of unbosoming himself. She listened with a little lonely feeling to his rhapsodies about another girl, and when it was over she made no attempt to recall him. The time was too short to seek out other alliances: she resigned herself to going on foot. It gave her a curious sensation, as if she were suddenly bankrupt — as if she were slipping back.

Nebbins had written that he would come on the fourteenth, but she had a vague dread that he might turn up any day. She never let herself into Miss Pirm's hall now that she did not glance apprehensively at the musty shadows of the parlor, fearing to see the brisk red-headed apparition of Josh Nebbins.

Doctor Lampson returned the end of February and she went to his office for news of Garry. But at the sight of her, pale and restless, he had exclaimed:

"Great heavens! What have you been doing? You look like the ghost of yourself!"

"I've been worrying," she said quickly.

"Don't! Does no good! Besides, Garry's all right: he's coming out of it with flying colors! Hello! I almost forgot. Here's a letter for you," he added, with a twinkle in his eyes.

Doré took the letter, holding it without opening it.

"How long will he stay?" she asked quietly.

"I rather think he'll turn up here before the tenth," said Lampson, still enjoying his joke.

"He ought to stay longer, doctor!" she said, with a sinking feeling.

"Of course, but he won't! I can't imagine what it is; he seems to be fond of that date."

"It's my birthday!" she said, gazing at the rug, longing to take him into her confidence.

"Then you'd better get the roses back in your cheeks!" said the doctor briskly. "What do you think of these snapshots? Garry's more beautiful than I am, but I landed the first moose. Take 'em along!"

He put in her hand a dozen photographs, accompanying her to the door with the cordial respect he had shown her ever since that afternoon when she had indignantly disclaimed the engagement. There he took her hand in a fatherly way:

"Miss Baxter, you've one life to your credit, bless you! I didn't think it possible! You've got a better medicine than I have!"

When she went home, she sat a long while, staring at the curious figures in snow-shoes and sweaters; but she did not open the letter. She knew that he would return for the tenth, and yet the news upset her terribly. If she shrank from the necessity of telling Nebbins the truth, this was nothing to the dread she had of Lindaberry's being present. She had hoped, almost against hope, that he would stay away for months; that, as he regained his self-control, the feeling he had for her would quiet down into a sense of profound gratitude only, which would leave him not too long miserable at her flight.

She took up the envelope again, hesitated, ran her fingers along the edge, and glanced at the first page. Almost at once she rose, with a catching of the throat, thrust the letter back into the envelope and locked

it in her trunk. Then she went hurriedly, blindly, to seek Massingale in court, a thing she seldom did. All that evening she was very quiet, very clinging with him, studying him with wide serious eyes.

One day at the end of the first week in March, the boarding-house was thrown into a state of violent excitement: Winona Horning had returned, paid Miss Pim, tipped Josephus the enormous sum of five dollars, left an address near the park for her trunk, and departed, after an abrupt answer to Miss Pim's exclamatory questions, saying that she had received a small legacy. The truth was discovered an hour later by Josephus, who personally delivered the trunk at an impressive apartment in the West Eighties. Winona was there under the name of Mrs. Sampson, and the automobile at the door belonged to Mr. Gilday. The next morning a letter came by messenger which left no further doubt in Dodo's mind:

"Dear old Dodo:

"You'll know the truth by this time. Don't waste any sympathy over me! I don't care—the other was worse! I couldn't go back and starve! Don't blame Joe, either; it's all my doing! I suppose the girls will say terrible things about me. The Duchess told me Ida's married: I'm glad of it. Dodo, I wish I could see you some day, just to talk to, but I suppose that's impossible. Remember what I say—only I hope it won't ever happen!—if things ever go bad with you, and you're dead up against it, come to me! What you've been to me I never can forget! Perhaps now you can even forgive me about Mr. Peavey. I was desperate! Don't refuse the hundred dollars I send you in this. It'll hurt me terribly—and I owe you every cent of it, on my word of honor! Good-by, Dodo. You've got more chances than I had; only don't make mistakes!

"WINONA (Mrs. Edgar Sampson.)"

"P. S. Now, whatever you do, don't get teary about me. It isn't necessary. I don't care in the least—now! That's honest!"

Inclosed was a bank-note of a hundred dollars. The sight of this money coming from such a source brought to Dodo a sudden horror akin to the smarting shame she had experienced at Brennon's insulting advances. She went out hastily to lunch, alone, to that mediocre noisy restaurant on Lexington Avenue where she had gone so miserably on the night of her first meeting with Massingale, Sassoon and Lindaberry. There, in the quiet of a corner, she took out the letter and reread it. Her first thought was to rush to Winona and take her in her arms. No; certainly she had nothing in her heart now but charity.

How well she understood the horror of returning into the old! Why should not a woman have the right to progress, to free herself from hateful surroundings? Why should it be so difficult for a woman, when it was so easy for a man? Why should she only be forced to the wall? In the bare room, lighted by feeble curtained windows, she saw this other life from which she too had emerged, to which she was resolved never to return, but which frightened her now as a possibility. How tired and pinched these men and women were who surrounded her! And the women, how bare of coquetry and charm! Even the young men who clustered in a corner, talking languidly, had a tired air of being already middle-aged!

Her next impulse was to warn Winona of her insecurity: for she had read Gilday without illusions, and

if five months ago she had perceived what he would be to-day, she saw now the man of to-morrow, undisturbed by sentiment or weakness, avid of experience and sensation, an egoist soon evolved, who would never deviate from his own desires from any feeling of remorse or pity. She felt that his attachment could not last. She must warn Winona, open her eyes, prepare her for the worst! She went from the lunch-room with this one thought in mind. Only, as the interview would be difficult, and she did not quite yet know what to counsel, she began to wander aimlessly through the streets, gusty with the rage of March.

The figure of Winona haunted her, rising like an accusing specter against her conscience. If only she had understood in time! She saw her always weak and irresolute, obstinately shrugging her shoulders, her brow clouded over—rebellious and foredoomed. Again she revolted at the different destinies of the sexes, with a hot indignant anger. Why should the woman be cut off from all friendships, and not the man? Would it make any difference to Gilday's friends, or change his position in the slightest? That was the injustice of it all. And who was unjust? Her own sex!

"No! She needs a friend more than ever!" she said resolutely. "I'll go to her now—this instant!"

All at once, by one of the perversities of the city, as, come to the thoroughfare of Fifth Avenue, she was halted and crowded against the curb, a great automobile came swinging about the corner, with Gilday at the wheel, Adèle Vickers and two men behind, and in

front, laughing and elegant, Winona Horning. They flashed by without even seeing her, standing on the sidewalk, elbowed by the common crowd. She had but a glimpse of the girl who had shared her wall in Miss Pim's boarding-house; but the glimpse she had caught of the butterfly that had emerged from the grub tore down her last illusions. She it was who was left standing, depressed, struggling against the buffet-ing busy crowd, feeling all at once deserted and shoddy.

Until now she had never experienced the slightest temptation in regard to Sassoon. She had never deceived herself on that point, for she had a horror of ugliness, and it was not money, but romance, which she wished to force from life in this ardent fleeting period of her youth. Sassoon awoke, not her cupidity, but her curiosity. It was an unexplored world, and she was anxious to perceive its proportions. What would he do under strong provocation, and what, at least, would it mean to her if she were differently inclined? Besides, his docile attitude had disarmed her prudence: she believed in her control over him.

But to-day, one in the multitude that moved, heavy of foot and weary of heart, through the great shop-lit thoroughfares, she felt in a peculiarly vulnerable moment. She had been walking for hours in the effort to tire her brain, afraid to seek out Massingale for fear that another deception was awaiting her, beginning more and more to doubt that anything but empty dreams would ever come. This physical wear-

ness into which she had forced herself had brought a profound moral lassitude. She felt perilously near the point of surrender. At times she had a desire to take train and escape to somewhere unknown, to reconstruct everything from the bottom up. Ida's marriage, the departure of Winona, affected her in different ways. What better chance had she to struggle against the crushing weight of an implacable city? After all, was not Ida right? Did she really belong? How long could she endure in this rarefied air? At bottom, what did all these men really think of her — even Massingale? Did one of them consider her in equality?

Never had she felt the bruising brutality of New York so much as she did this evening, wandering aimlessly from shop to shop. What was the use of struggling against these enormous forces, that could reckon all emotions, joy or sorrow, love or despair, only in tens of thousands? What difference, after all, did it really make what became of her in this huge maelstrom of New York? Who would notice, and who would remember for more than a few hours, what came to one girl in the hundreds of thousands?

In her pocket was the money Winona had sent, from which her fingers had retreated in horror. Yet now no such sensation came to her. She was very tired, weary of the struggle, of being on foot, of defeat, of the contamination of poverty, of resisting temptation which could be so easily squared with her conscience. There was one particular shop-window past which she had gone a dozen times — a window

in which was a dress she coveted, all gold and black, the color men preferred on her, a dress she could have so easily for the mere acceptance of the offer about which her fingers clung. And, after all, it was but money returned, not a gift.

She was hovering before the fatal window for the tenth time, cold with the approach of darkness and the lack of the furs which had had to be surrendered, when suddenly Sassoon appeared at her side from some current of the crowd. She felt him at her shoulder, silently studying her, striving to seize her secret thought, and she started as if he were an apparition of the devil himself.

"How long have you been here?" she asked hastily.

"Four minutes — five," he said, shaking hands elaborately. "Well, what do you want?"

"Everything in the window!" she replied angrily.

"May I send them to you?"

This made her angrier still. She shrugged her shoulders and glanced at her watch.

"Take me to tea somewhere!"

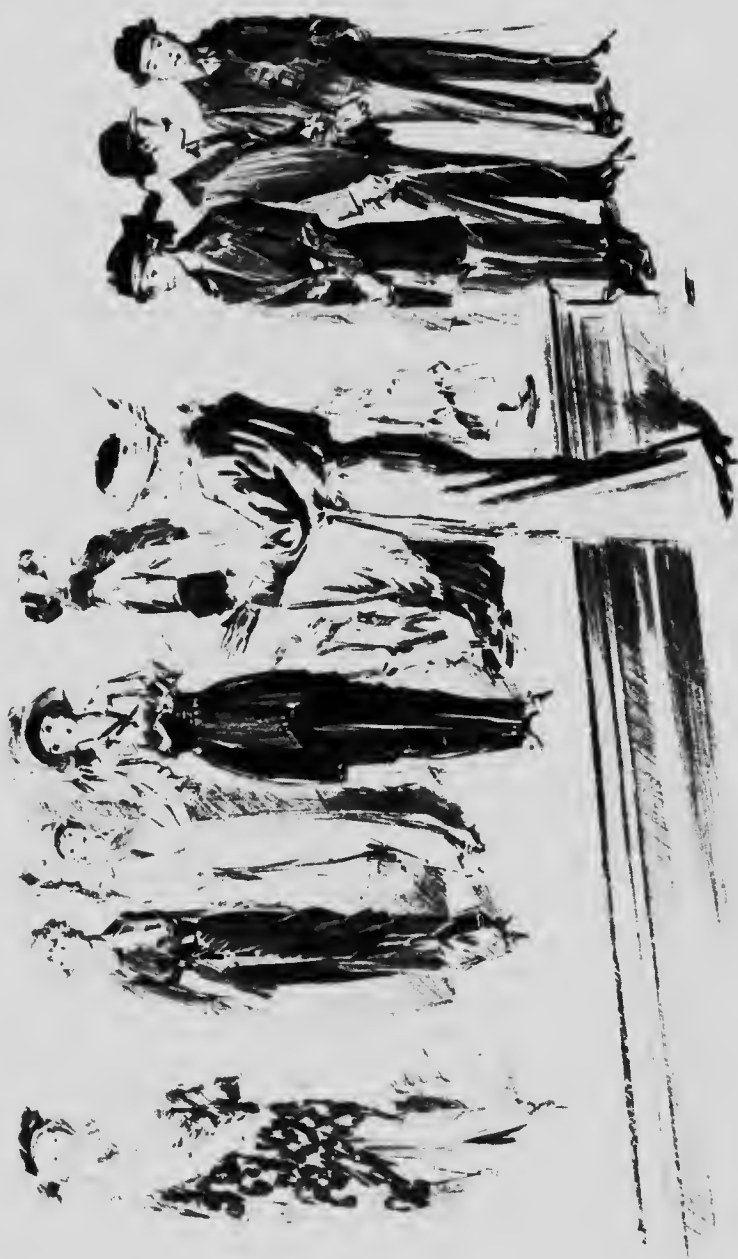
"A little run in the country?"

"I don't care!"

He put her into his automobile with an eagerness she did not notice, so delighted was she by the sense of escape from mediocrity which the elegance and ease of the car brought her. He considered a moment, and then, with a word to his chauffeur, followed her.

"Where are we going?"

"I thought it would be something different to run down a way toward Coney Island."



She was hovering before the fatal window

"I don't care."

"Blue?"

She nodded, her head turned to the flying shops, the cross streets, and the maze of traffic at her side. He put out his hand to take hers, but she stopped him with a warning finger.

"None of that, Mr. Sassoon!"

"I had no thought —"

"Yes, I know; but you know the conditions!"

"Why are you blue?" he asked, checking himself.

"Getting near the tenth?"

"That's it!"

"And you haven't made up your mind yet?" he said slowly.

"How can I?" she said, with an irritable movement of her foot.

"Don't forget that I have something to say to you before you decide," he said quietly.

"It will do you no good!"

"Are you sure?"

"Quite!"

"Sure there is nothing I could offer you that would mean anything?"

"Quite!"

But, though she repeated the word with extra emphasis, she felt all at once the beginning of a dangerous curiosity. After all, was there nothing he could offer her, who had gone so long, tired of foot and discouraged of heart, that might not cause her to pause and at least experience a regret — for an enormous sum, something fantastic, which no man would

offer? Yet the idea entered into her imagination and stimulated it. How many women would hesitate before a sum so great that it made no difference what people said? From which she began to wonder what might be her price to this experienced connoisseur, who had estimated and bought so many of her sex. Yes, what was his estimate of her resistance? This awoke a zest which soon dominated the lassitude of the afternoon. She must learn this price: it would be more than exciting.

All at once they seemed lifted above the city, soaring upward past the last sinking roofs, cleaving into clear air. They were on the great Williamsburg Bridge, the river far below, strewn with dusky moving shapes setting out faint lamps against the darkening day. Across the river gusts of steam or belching smoke thickened the gray horizon. Factories, come down like animals to drink at the riverside, stood in naked profile against the sky, pointing their rigid towers toward the stars, sending occasional flaming blasts across reddening lines of window-panes. Below, like the magic of invisible sprites, the jeweled strands of Brooklyn Bridge were flinging a brilliant span across the gulf of the night. About them, deliriously below, were the thousand waking eyes of mysterious hours, starting from the regimented lamp-posts that cut the city into squares of black. All about them was that day of the city which is the creation of man, which he has created in the need of forgetfulness, of doubling the span of his few allotted years in a sort of Promethean revolt. The day often op-

pressed her — the night never. She sat up, smiling and alert, and as if for the first time taking notice of where she was and where she was going, asked:

"What time is it?"

"Half past five only."

But she began to feel a menace in this other bank which they were nearing, in these long stretches of human wilderness leading to the sound. Sassoon was entirely too docile, she did not know why, but she scented danger in the air.

"We will go back," she said suddenly. "Brooklyn is too dreary; besides, it's late for tea."

"I'm sorry," he said, stirring in his seat; "I'm afraid you don't trust me?"

"No, I don't — not too far!"

"Supposing I decided to go on?" he said quickly.

"I should open the window and scream," she said, handing him the tube.

He complied reluctantly, seeking an excuse.

"It'll only take us twenty minutes. I wanted you to get the effect of New York coming back; in another half-hour it'll be magnificent!"

"I'll enjoy it very much now," she answered, laughing.

"You quite misjudge me," he said, without further trace of irritation. "However, as you wish. I saw you were blue, and I had planned something to distract you. But it's no use."

"What had you planned?" she said maliciously.

"To take you to a very nice party."

"What?"

"A supper with some interesting people — Emma Fornez, Sada Quichy —"

"Where?" she said suspiciously.

"At the Café Loo."

"Where's that?"

"In Harlem."

She reflected. She had expected him to give the name of some inn in the country where she would not venture; but Harlem reassured her. Perhaps the party existed, and, if so, she was crazy to meet Emma Fornez, of the Metropolitan Opera. Besides, she felt in a reckless mood, within certain safe limitations.

"If you asked me very nicely," she said softly, "you might be surprised —"

An hour later they came to a stop before a restaurant flanked with plants and shining with the dazzle of reflecting mirrors. It was of new creation, on the order of the German Gardens, situated on one of the great thoroughfares, a publicity which quite reassured her. They went in by a private entrance, and up in an elevator to a suite on the third floor.

"We're ahead of time," said Sassoon. "Dressing-room to the left. Leave your things there."

The room into which they had entered from an ante-chamber was a salon in false Empire furniture against plum-yellow carpets and hangings. Through a curtained door to the right was a glimpse of a dining-room in the corner of the house. She took in the surroundings with a quick glance as she went into the boudoir. What she had suspected was true. The party was an invention. She was alone with Sassoon.

CHAPTER XXVIII

SHE was not the least afraid, nor, in fact, was she unprepared for the discovery. When Sassoon had tempted her with the prospects of a party, she was not altogether his dupe. Yet, under safe conditions, she was disposed, to-night, to grant him the intimacy of a tête-à-tête. She knew that he had never yet said to her what he wanted, and she had a great curiosity to know what he would hold before her eyes. The respectability of the crowd seen through the brilliant windows, the publicity of the position, all reassured her that there could be no trap beyond the powers of her ingenuity. She examined the dressing-room hastily. Besides the door that gave on to the salon, there were two others — one, which was locked, to a farther suite, and a second, opening into the ante-chamber.

She went to the window and looked down on the flattened crowd flowing like inky pools under the phosphorescent arc-lights; the scurrying roofs of automobiles, darting across the lighted trolleys, calculating the effect of a cry. Then she opened the door into the ante-chamber, hesitating. It would be the easiest thing in the world to leave now, without noise, while Sassoon was busy with the ordering. But curiosity was strong, and the need of a sensation — of a triumph over danger, which would give back that old audacity that had almost departed in these last bit-

ter days. She bit her lip thoughtfully, hesitated a moment, and then, tiptoeing quietly to the outer door, removed the key, assuring herself that there were no bolts to fasten it. It might be the last escapade, perhaps the last time that she would baffle him. The tenth was only three days away and in the need of setting the stage for her final climax she felt the need, suddenly, of carrying this motive up to the brink — yes, even of calmly looking over.

She left her hat with her coat in the dressing-room, and came out confidently, her hands on her hips, which swayed slightly in the languorous movement of the Spanish indolence, mockery in her eyes.

"No one here yet?" she asked unconcernedly.

"Not seven," he replied, glancing at his watch.

"Artists are always late!"

He assented, watching her.

"This the dining-room?" she said, moving to the right.

"Wait!"

"Why?"

"I want to give you a surprise."

"I know it already!"

"What?"

"There's no party at all; we're dining together," she said, looking at him directly. "Don't lie. Besides, I knew it all the time!"

"What?" he said amazed.

"Naturally! Do you think I would be here if I didn't want to be? Well, to-night, then, is the big temptation? I hope you'll be very interesting!"

"So you knew!" he said, pursing his lips.

"You're disappointed because I'm not afraid!" she told him, laughing. "Well, I'm not! Besides, I have taken my precautions!"

"What do you mean?" he asked uneasily.

"There's a door from the dressing-room into the vestibule—you gave me plenty of time," she said quietly. "There happened to be a party I knew below when we came in, or we would not be here. They are to take me home—later."

"You went down—" he said slowly, at a loss whether to believe her or not. She nodded, and still incredulous, he went to the dressing-room, assuring himself that she had at least spoken the truth about the door.

"Well?" she said, folding her arms and laughing at him, but feeling every nerve and fiber alert with the sense of combat.

"Miss Baxter," he answered, standing by her and fastening his heavy oriental gaze on hers, "I have never, in all my life, wanted a woman as I want you!"

"I hope so!"

"Don't you know that?"

"It's the devil in me, then."

"The devil and the child," he said quietly.

She didn't like his look, so she motioned him away, saying:

"Something to eat first, please, and business later."

"With any other woman I would understand that," he said, without shifting his gaze.

"Perhaps I am simpler than you think?"

"Let's go in to dinner!" he said abruptly.

He went to the curtain and drew it aside deferentially. She went past him quickly, watching him from under her eyelashes, choosing that seat at the table which would give her quick retreat in case of need. The waiter, bald and correctly vacant of expression, arrived after a discreet knock, and with the swinging of the door came a sudden burst of laughter from an arriving party. She waved away the proffered cocktail.

"Nothing?" he asked.

"At such an important interview? Of course not!"

He raised his glass to her honor, and she nodded.

"You don't look so terrible, after all," she said, examining him with a critical smile; and to herself she said disdainfully, as she had said another time: "If this is a dangerous man, what is it makes him dangerous?"

But this query was not simply of amusement. The seriousness of life had so obtruded itself upon her, in the last preparatory weeks, that she wanted to know everything, to have before her in detail that existence which could depend on his soft hands and wearied eyes.

"So I puzzle you very much?"

"You know you do!" he said, with a slow smile, still resolved to continue the rôle of *bon enfant*.

"Most women are simpler, then?"

"Much!"

"And how do you do?" she said, her elbows on

the table, leaning forward eagerly. "Just say flatly, 'How much?'"

He ran a lean finger through the mounting mustache, smiling.

"Usually, yes!"

"And they all have their price?"

"Not all, no; but all that I want," he answered frankly.

"That must be quite exciting — the estimating, I mean," she said, to draw him out. "Imagine looking at a woman and saying: 'This one will cost me a thousand, this one ten thousand, and this one will be very, very expensive.' It must be quite amusing to see if you guess right!"

"Very amusing — yes."

"Sassoon, what's my price?" she asked abruptly.

"I didn't say you had one."

"You said all women you wanted."

"Miss Baxter," he said slowly, "you began this conversation."

"Yes — and let's drop all pretenses; let's *talk* to each other, since we are here. Let me know you as you really are. I wish it!"

"Very well!" he said, pleased. He rested his elbows likewise on the table, scanning his left hand, turning the great emerald ring that adorned it. "I believe every woman has her price, under certain conditions: first, that you know the need of money, and, most important, that you are old enough to understand what things can be bought!"

"You think I am too young?"

"I am not sure! You are very romantic," he said, and as she laughed at this interpretation, he continued: "If you were thirty instead of twenty-two, you could not make a mistake!"

"That's a curious way to put it!"

"I am not speaking of ten thousand or twenty thousand dollars," he said quietly. "You are the exception. You are the sort of woman that would hold a man for years. Miss Baxter, do you remember what the Comte de Joncy told you?"

"Ah, yes; he liked my eyes," she said, laughing.

"He estimated them at a million each. He knew!"

"What nonsense you are talking!"

"I am talking of a career," he said quietly. "Consider it. It's worth considering!"

"Ah, now I understand! Well, go on!"

"Just a little glass?" he said, raising the champagne.

"Sounds like Bowery melodrama," she said mockingly. "*The Wicked Millionaire*. Please be serious! It's so nice to talk of millions!"

"If you knew what I know," he said, looking beyond her and shrugging his shoulders, "it would be easy to discuss! There's only one thing important in life, Miss Baxter. Money!"

"And love?"

"Love! You will love ten—twenty times! What do you know of such things?" he said rapidly. "You have a vague illusion before your eyes, and in reality, what is guiding you is the same principle of nature that governs all life. A woman in the state

you are in now is really in a state of hysteria — an unnatural state, that causes you to do any number of illogical things, crazy things —”

“As, for instance, falling in love?”

“Falling in love with impossible people,” he corrected. “What do you know of love, anyhow? I may know.”

“You!” she said scornfully.

“Yes — now. I’ve seen the rest, and if I love, it’s the young, the beautiful, the past. I won’t explain: you must experience to comprehend! Another thing about yourself that you don’t understand: to love and to be loved are two different things. A woman like you will always be loved. You won’t love, really love, not for a long while — not until you begin to grow old! What stops you from using me? Family? You have none! Friends? Bah!”

“And the man?” she said coldly, beginning fiercely to resent the brutality of his philosophy, though she had determined to remain impersonal and amused.

“The man!” He laughed, throwing himself back in his chair, scowling a little at this direct personal allusion. “There you have it! With one question you have betrayed your whole morality — woman’s morality! The man! If I were a young cub with a romantic strut, talking big, it would be different; it would not be a case of selling yourself — it would be an infatuation!”

“Perhaps it is our morality,” she said indignantly, thinking of Massingale, and led insensibly into a de-

fensive attitude. "Say it is! It's at least natural!"

"You mean, in my case, the thing that makes you recoil is myself?" he said abruptly. "More than any other consideration? Say it!"

"Quite true!"

"If I were asking you to marry me, if you had that opportunity, would that feeling stop you?"

She was silent, surprised.

"It's a money transaction in either case, isn't it?"

"What a terrible view of life you have!" she said, appalled. She had been prepared for danger of an overt character, not for the insidious subtle poisoning which he was distilling in her ears. She drew back, breathing quickly, fiercely resisting his ideas. "Money, money — that's all you see, because that's all you understand!"

"I only wish to make you see!" he said, shrugging his shoulders, "that there is no difference in being what I offer you and in being —"

"Mrs. Sassoon!" she said curtly.

He did not like the reference, manlike, though he frowned and admitted the allusion with a wave of his fingers.

"As you wish!" Then he continued, with an unwonted energy for his tired attitude: "No, I don't say everything can be controlled by money, but that our world is. There are two sorts of human beings: those who work, and those who live for pleasure. It's the last we're talking about. What are you? You're a nervous, pretty little animal that has learned to

love luxury. You may know it, or you may not. You may have had the taste of it before you came here, but you've steeped yourself in it since. You couldn't help yourself! It's all about you; it's the corruption in every street; it's New York! Don't you think I know you? What were you thinking as you stood before that window to-night?"

"Yes I love luxury!" she said abruptly, admitting it to shut him off.

"If you had never known New York, you might be different," he continued triumphantly. "You might marry and be satisfied with a commonplace routine existence. But, little girl, you're what you are! You covet everything: jewels — oh, I saw your eyes when you refused that necklace; clothes — you know your own worth and you've dreamed, you must have dreamed, of what you'd be if you could wear what other women wear; you want to go where others go, pay what others pay; you want to be watched, courted, admired. Do you think you'll ever love any man as you love yourself?"

"It isn't true!" she said furiously; yet his exposition had left her weakly terrified.

"It is true! You know it! Stand up; look in the mirror! See yourself as you can be, with jewels in your hair, against your neck, in dresses that are worth hundreds, in furs that are worth thousands! Do you think you could go in any assembly, theater or restaurant, but every one wouldn't turn in amazement?"

She felt troubled, struggling against a heavy lassitude, regretting that she had given him this oppor-

tunity; and instinctively, by a force beyond her control, she raised her eyes to the mirror at the end of the room, and saw a little girl in a simple dress, her hair in a confusion of golden curls, and behind her the triumphant woman he had conjured to her eyes.

"No coffee!" she said, nervously averting her eyes from his eager gaze. "It's hot, dreadfully hot, in here."

There came a moment's pause, a lull after the first skirmish, during which he lighted a cigar and waited, well content.

"It's all a question of opportunity," he began again, while her troubled eyes went past him to the mirror of the future. "You can do now what you can't do later! Do you want to end in a boarding-house, Miss Baxter?"

"Why do you — care for me?" she asked him abruptly.

"In the beginning, because you resisted me," he said, turning his cigar in his fingers. "Now, because you hate me!"

"And knowing that I hate you, you want me?"

"A thousand times more!" he said, and for the first time the greed and hunger rose in his eyes. But quickly he controlled himself.

"The moment I stopped resisting you, you would not care!" she said slowly.

"True; but you would always resist!" he said quickly. "Besides, that is what I like — what you must always do!"

He spoke now with eagerness, a restlessness in his voice, uneasiness in his eyes. Despite the tenseness of the situation, looking on him thus, a flash of pity and horror came to her as she felt, in her progress into the knowledge of life, the hidden tragedies that lurk in the reverse of a glittering medal.

"You overestimate what I can do!" she said at last.

"What are you afraid of?" he asked her, ignoring the remark. "The opinion of society?"

She did not answer.

"Go on with your career!" he said impatiently. "The world will close its eyes to what you do! If you haven't the courage, there's always a way. Marry and separate!"

She looked so surprised at this that a thin smile came over his lips.

"There are a dozen men I can call on who will do you that slight service!" he said grimly. "Listen! Let it be so! I will procure you a husband, a very convenient, manageable husband, who will appear and disappear. You'll become Mrs. Jones or Mrs. Smith, and after a few months you can divorce. You will then be, in the eyes of the world, perfectly qualified to do whatever you please, without danger of criticism. That's society for you!"

"So that's the way it is done!" she thought, quite excited. For a brief moment she let herself go into the rôle he had opened for her, wondering if it were possible — if, under any circumstance, even if Massin-

gale should utterly fail her, she could succeed as he had prophesied. "Really," she said, amazed, "you have men who would sell themselves for that?"

"Do you wish to see?" he said, with a shrug of his shoulders. "It can be done to-night!"

"To-night?"

"You don't believe me? I'll telephone now; I'll have your future husband here in half an hour. Would you like to see him?"

"Not to-night!" she said, laughing. Then, pushing back, she added: "Are you through?"

"Not quite."

He rose, took from his pocketbook two bills of a thousand dollars each, and laid them beside her plate.

"What's this for?" she asked, raising her eyes.

"For the pleasure you have given me, Miss Baxter, in permitting me to take dinner with you," he answered, smiling.

"Just for that?" she said ironically.

"Just for that!" he repeated. He drew back toward the window. "You see, it was not so dangerous, after all. If you will get your things now, we shall go!"

Her sense of the dramatic was struck.

"Ah, that's very clever of you!" she said, quite excited. Two thousand dollars just for the favor of dining with her! How subtly he proclaimed what she might expect in the future! The bills were horribly real, seeming to adhere to her fingers. She repeated, wildly stirred: "Very clever!"

He came closer to her, with veiled eagerness.

"Well, what is it to be?"

She left the money on the table, answering quietly:

"You know, don't you?"

"You will —"

"No! — of course!"

He frowned impatiently.

"Think it over!"

"There's no need!"

"How much do you want? Come, tell me!" he said roughly, with a brutality from which the mask had been withdrawn.

She laughed triumphantly at the reappearance of the true Sassoon.

"Ah, I would be very expensive!"

"I don't care!"

"You haven't enough!"

"What!" he cried angrily, trying to seize her wrist. "You are fool enough to refuse? You can have anything you want. I will make you anything!"

"Sassoon, it's the man!" she said scornfully.

He drew back, red with anger.

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that everything you have said fills me with horror!" she cried, with a need of self-expostulation. "I wouldn't be you for all the millions in the world! Thank God, I can be a fool! I can love like a human being! I'd rather give up everything in the world to the man I adore —"

With an exclamation, he sprang toward her, rage and lust in his eyes; but, prepared, she flung a chair

against his legs and escaped into the drawing-room, slamming the door in his face, and darting from the vestibule into the hall as he came blindly in pursuit. She did not stop until she had descended the flight of stairs. Below, she turned, and perceived his passion distorted face glowering down from the upper landing.

"Will you kindly bring my things down, Mr. Sassoon? I'm going now," she said, breathless, but exhilarated by the escape and the victory.

"Come and get them!" he said furiously, and he disappeared.

She frowned, not relishing the turn, calculating how to extricate herself. At length, reluctantly, she descended the second flight, resolved to send a boy up-stairs for her things. The vestibule in which she found herself was a large one with glass doors opening into the noisy restaurant, played over by an energetic Hungarian orchestra. As she hesitated, conscious of the strange figure she presented, the glass doors swung hastily and Harrigan Blood came out.

"Dodo! I thought I recognized you!" he cried, stopping short. "What in the name of the incredible —"

She went to him quickly, grasping his arm, actuated by a sudden brilliant plan of revenge.

"Mr. Blood — Harrigan!" she said quickly. "I was brought here by a gentleman who had told me it was to be a party of eight or ten. I have just es-

caped from the trap he laid for me! Will you give me your arm while I go and reclaim my things?"

"Will I? I'll throttle him!" he said angrily. "The contemptible cur! Who is he?"

"Sassoon!"

"My God!"

They went upstairs, and pushed aside the half-open doors. At her entrance, Sassoon turned like a startled animal, his face almost unrecognizable with rage. In his fury he had caught his napkin and torn it into shreds. A couple of chairs were overturned, and the covering of the table pulled down. At the sight of Harrigan Blood striding in with menacing looks, Sassoon checked his first impetuous advance, halting abruptly, murder in his heart.

"I have come for my things, Mr. Sassoon, since you would not bring them to me," Doré said, "and I found a *gentleman* to accompany me."

"Is it true, what Miss Baxter says?" said Harrigan Blood, clearing the space that separated them. "Did you bring her here with a lie — to a trap?"

"Mind your own business!" cried Sassoon, with a scream of rage. "Who are you to preach morality to me? You're a fine one to reproach any one, you are!"

"I've done a lot of things in my life," said Blood, with rising wrath, "but I never took a woman with a lie — like a thief! Sassoon, you're a coward and a dirty cur!"

He caught him by the throat in his powerful grip,

and slapped him twice across the face; then, as a dog with a rat, he shook him in the air and flung him in a heap against the foot of a chair, where he lay, stunned and gasping for breath. Dodo, with her hat and coat, came out hastily, very much frightened, awed at the sight of men in rage and combat.

"Oh, let's go — let's go!" she cried. "Oh, is he hurt? You've not —"

"Killed him? No, so much the worse!" Blood said scornfully. "Now get away quickly; there must be no scandal!"

Below, on the sidewalk, he placed her in a taxicab, but refused to enter with her.

"No," he said, shaking his head. "I'm a very human person, Miss Baxter; I'm not going in the way of temptation, when I know there's no hope. It's good-by, young lady!"

"I do like you — I admire you, Mr. Blood," she said, retaining his hand. "Don't hate me!"

He looked at her for a moment, struggling with his emotion. At last he said quietly, watching her with his strange eyes, that had the glowing quality of the feline:

"Dodo, shall I come?"

She drew back as if wounded; then she closed the door, afraid.

"No!"

"You see? Good-by!"

"Don't hate me!" she said, suddenly leaning out of the window and seizing his arm convulsively.

"You mustn't! I'm only a wild, crazy little thing."

"You're all that!" he said gravely. "Look here! After to-night I've a right to say this. Look out! You're going to get into trouble; mind what I say — the game's dangerous!"

He raised his hat, signaled the driver and turned to walk in the direction of the subway. She was immensely sorry to lose him. She wanted to call after him again not to hate her. For she had a feeling now that all men, all whom she had gathered about her, hated her or would come to hate her; that it was not love she inspired, but only an antagonism. She was not sure even of Massingale. How could he love her, when she brought nothing but unrest into his life — when she did nothing but make him miserable and unhappy from morning to night? Then, she felt it was the approach of the fatal tenth of March that was disorganizing her, horribly hypnotizing her, shattering all her nerves, and she said to herself that it could not go on; she must find peace somewhere; she would not wait. To-morrow there would be a decision between Massingale and herself. Either that, or she would go to Blainey, where she belonged, and enter the world of work. To-morrow, without further delay she would decide her life, before Lindaberry could return, or that haunting image of her former life.

And when, at length, she had passed from the taxicab up the stoop and into the dim-lit hall, Josh Nebbins was waiting for her in the gloom of the parlor, as she had known for days he would come out of those musty shadows which were like mists of the past.

CHAPTER XXIX

HAD Sassoon himself imagined the climax, he could have found nothing more terribly efficacious than this recrudescence from the past of Joshua Nebbins. She was at the hat-rack, eagerly running through the mail, when her hand stopped, as if paralyzed, at the sound of a soft whistle from the parlor, two low notes and a higher, followed by a chuckling laugh. She turned, knowing instantly who it was.

"Flossie! Bless your sparkling eyes!" cried a voice.

She entered hastily, fearing the publicity of the hall. He was advancing, radiant and confident, arms open. She put out her hands hastily to ward him off. He saw, and halted.

"Oh! That's the game, is it? All right! Shake! Miss Baxter, how do you do?"

"Hello, Josh!" she said coldly.

Now that the meeting had come, like an animal driven to bay, she was possessed of a desperate courage. This interview should be the last! There would be no mincing of words. She must be free!

They stood a moment looking at each other. He had scarcely changed. She even seemed to remember the coat he wore, a golden brown whip-cord, which she had once so admired! Yes, he was the

same as she remembered him: a red tie, a death's-head pin, the thin carnine edge of a silk handkerchief protruding from the breast pocket, a buckskin vest with glass buttons. Probably the same shoes, too, were there, concealed in the shadows, patent leather with chamois tops.

He was not in the least abashed by the formality of her reception. He had never been abashed in his life, and he was looking at her now with an impudent confidence in the upstarting nose, the wide grinning mouth, the Yankee sharpness of jaw and cheekbones, and the alert eyes, which would admit of no refusals.

"Prettier than ever!" he exclaimed, after a long admiring whistle. "That's a new trick with the hair, and, Floss, you certainly are the swell dresser! Well, Mrs. Nebbins, how are you?"

He plunged his hands into his pockets, slanted his head and gazed at her for all the world like a saucy sparrow. She knew that half measures would be vain, and she went directly to the issue.

"Josh, I have a good many things to say to you, a good many to make you understand," she said abruptly. "Wait here! I'll be down directly, and then we'll go out somewhere, where we can talk!"

"Are you married?" he said, chuckling.

"No! Why?" she said, surprised.

"That's the only thing I was afraid of!" he said, shooting his cuff with a jerk of his crooked thumb. "All right, kid! Run along! I can wait! Patience is my middle name!"

She went to her room, running up the steps, her anger increasing, no longer fearing him, but a prey to all the cruel impulses of scorn and contempt. This past was too ridiculous! It must end, at once and forever! There was a note from Lindaberry, which she placed hurriedly in the trunk, where were already his other unread letters. She searched for the money Winona had sent, and suddenly remembered that it had been in her pocket all the time. One thing she was coldly determined on—to pay him back the old debt that had set like a leaden weight on her conscience! That, at least, should no longer stand as a reproach! But, to accomplish this, it was necessary to accept what had at first filled her with horror. This caused her to recoil a moment; but she remembered what sums she had just refused, and she convinced herself that she had the right to use this little amount for such a worthy object. Besides, she would consider it only as a loan.

Then she went to the telephone and called up Judge Massingale, giving him a rendezvous at ten o'clock, for she was determined to take no more than an hour to end all relations with the past she had so longed to see buried and forgot. That out of the way, she would be free to deal with Massingale to-night. With him she would have done with fencing and acting. She would meet him in simple trust, in perfect faith. Everything should be on the big scale—nothing petty, nothing unworthy. Now . . . have done with the other!

They went to the café of one of the great apart-

ment hotels off Madison Square, where she felt certain she would meet no one she knew, ensconcing themselves in a discreet corner.

"Don't mind my feeding?" he asked, in perfect good humor. "Couldn't stop for grub or anything else, when I had a chance to see you, Floss!"

He ordered roast beef hash with a poached egg, spareribs with boiled cauliflower, and two charlotte russes. The very sounds made her shiver. She glanced about uneasily; but the restaurant was deserted, except for a fat German in a far corner, languidly dipping his heavy mustache into a foaming stein of beer.

"Josh," she said suddenly, extending her hand where Lindaberry's ring shone, "I'm engaged!"

"Oh, that's all right!" he said, spreading his napkin, from the second button of his coat, and bisecting a loaf of bread.

"You don't understand!"

"Don't I? Of course I do! You're engaged? Well, I expected that! Not the first time, is it? It's a convenient sort of state to be in. That doesn't worry me!"

"If I'd known where to write you, I should have let you know!"

"Good reason why I kept quiet!"

"And," she said suddenly, producing the hundred-dollar bill. "I should have paid you this back long ago!"

He frowned and drew back in his chair, his knife in his fist, rather comic than terrible.

"Here! I don't like that! Not in the rules of the game!"

"It was a debt. I certainly am not going to accept money."

"Hold up!" With the point of his knife, disdainfully, he steered the bill from in front of him to a place of seclusion. "This ain't important, anyhow. It's your manner, kid. Rather uppish. Now, let's get a few things straight before we start. Do you remember one evening back in Cincinnati, in a howling dirty depot, when you wanted to give up everything and marry me? Do you?"

She looked at him, and she blushed. Great heavens! Was it possible?

"And what did I do? I was honest! I told you I was going to get a start first, to be sure I was the kind of a feller who could give you what you want. Didn't I?"

"You should have married me then!" she said quickly.

"Perhaps! But I didn't. Why? Or your account! Just let's keep these things in mind. If I come back now, I'm to get as fair a chance as the next fellow! Now, Floss, don't come any airs over me! It won't go!"

The hash arrived, and he attacked it, all smiles. How was she to make him understand the difference between them now—the immense worldly distance that now separated them? She remembered Sassoon's analysis, and adopted it as an inspiration.

"My dear Josh," she said in a more conciliatory

tone, "even if I were not engaged,—and engaged to a man I adore blindly,—there wouldn't be the slightest possibility for anything between us."

"We'll see!" he said, unruffled, his mouth half full.

"Your chance was in Cincinnati!" she said deliberately. "That was your mistake, or your good luck! I'm different now — so changed I don't recognize myself!"

"Rats!"

"True! I'm a vain, luxury-loving girl, who has got to live on excitement! I couldn't be happy a day away from all this! I adore New York! I've got to be on the go every minute! If I married a poor man, I'd ruin him in a month!"

"What?"

"In a month! I've got the taste, the habit of luxury; I just can't do without it! The man I marry has got to be able to give me everything I see other women have — dresses, jewels, automobiles,—or I should be miserable! You see, I don't spare myself; I tell you the truth. I've got to have money, and I've got to have New York!"

He reflected a moment, studying the sparrows, which had just arrived.

"Well, now, that might be arranged," he said thoughtfully. "I like this little burg myself."

"What's the use of beating around the bush?" she said suddenly. "Josh, this is the truth; I've grown away from you and from all that old life. I've gone into a new. I'm in love, madly, blindly, and there's no other man in the world for me! You won't under-

stand! You force me to be cruel! It's ended between us, and I never wish it to be brought up again. And if you are a gentleman, you won't pursue me; you'll go away!"

"Gentleman's a stretchy word, kid!" he said, refusing to be angry. "But I'm here, and I'll stick! You can't ruffle me! I'm not here to get frothy at the mouth; I'm here to win you back!"

She tried every means to open his eyes. She left nothing unsaid. It had no more effect on him than the wind against a cliff. He answered all attacks good-naturedly, perfectly obstinate and perfectly resolved. When they returned over the short blocks to Miss Pim's, she said at last, desperately:

"I tell you frankly, I won't see you!"

"Oh, yes, you will!" he said.

"But since you know I'm going to be married?"

"Don't know anything of the kind!" he said gruffly. "Now, Floss, just put this away in your thinker. You can't get rid of me. You'll never get rid of me until you're married—and then I won't give you up till I go to the church and see you come down—not up, *down* the aisle hitched to another man!"

"Another thing, Josh. If you don't take the money," she said, as they came in view of Miss Pim's and Massingale's automobile waiting, "I'll tear it up!"

"Hold up! I'll take it!" he said quickly. "Only this is the way you'll ask it: 'Mr. Nebbins, you were always square by me, and I'm grateful to you for it.

Thank you for what you loaned me, and do me the favor to take it back!' Say that, or ~~it can lie there!~~"

She had a horror of Massingale's coming in contact with this undisciplined savage. She would do anything to prevent that. So she swallowed her pride and repeated the phrase.

"Good, Flossie!" he exclaimed joyfully. "That's like old times, when you used to have your tantrums! Just remember, now, who knows you and who you can't fool! To-morrow?"

She stopped at the foot of the steps, holding out her hand.

"What's the game now?" he asked suspiciously. "Don't want me to come up? Oh, that's all right! Don't believe in mixing things myself! To-morrow for lunch?"

"Good-by!" she said emphatically, running up the steps.

"To-morrow!" he called after her.

When she entered, Massingale was in the parlor, and the bamboo curtains at the windows were still tinkling, where he had been posted in watch. Nebbins had filled her with such a fear of the old ascendancy that, despite the publicity of the room, she flung her arms about his neck and lay against his shoulder like a frightened fluttering bird.

"Ah, now I am happy!" she said softly, running her fingers in a caress over the tip of his ear.

"You change quickly!" he said coldly, resisting.

"You were at the window?" she asked, comprehending instantly the cause of his mistrust.

"I was!"

"I couldn't help it! It was —"

"Don't invent!" he said roughly. "I'm not in the mood!"

"No, no, I won't!" she said, with a sudden resolve. "Only, let's get away from here first. I have so much to say to you to-night!"

As they went down the steps to his automobile, she glanced nervously up and down the dimly lighted avenue. Nebbins was there, as she had expected, leaning against a stoop, his hat on one side, waiting to see if she would come out. She sprang into the closed car, extinguishing the light.

"Where?"

"Anywhere out of this. Up-town!"

They had to pass him, still waiting and curious, half revealed under the pale region of a near lamp-post. She waited breathlessly, hoping that Massingale would not perceive him. Vain hope! He leaned forward abruptly, saying:

"Who is that man?"

"I'll tell you everything! Just a moment!"

She drew nearer to him, fastening her fingers, like a lonely child, in the collar of his coat; laying her head against his arm, very quiet; tired, with a longing for strength and petting. But, stiff and resentful, he did not put his arm about her. Suddenly he burst out:

"Dodo! I can't stand it! This is driving me crazy! What do I know of you? What do you want me to think? You go and come. You tell me

one minute you love me, and the next, where are you? Where do you go? Whom do you see? What is your life? Who is this man who comes as far as your door, and then waits on the corner? Whom are you with until three o'clock in the morning? And Harrigan Blood, and Sassoon, and how many others? Dodo, I tell you, you are driving me wild. I suffer! If you knew what I've been going through these days, in every way!"

He stopped abruptly; he hardly recognized himself in this frantic complainant.

"Dodo, I tell you, I can't stand this any longer! You have disorganized everything in my life. I'm half mad!"

"Yes, I am very wicked, very cruel to you!" she said, with a lump in her throat, pressing his arm convulsively. "I know it! I know it! I've said it to myself a hundred times over. I can't help it! Why am I so? I don't know! Perhaps it were better if you went away, if you never saw me again. At least, you wouldn't hate me. Yes, go! You had better go! That's it. Go! Go!"

She stopped, and each was seized with the chill of this awful thought. He gave a deep sigh and put his arm around her. She crowded close to him, feeling so little, of such small consequence, staring out at the battling currents of brutal thoroughfares. The clamor of the city came roaring at their windows—immense glaring cars with strident bells, iron masses above shattering the air, even the earth below periodically shaken with the rumble of multitudes tearing

through the bowels of the city. Confusion, riot multiplied, echoed and reechoed; masses of sky-cleaving prisons; millions of lights, blinding and bewildering; and everywhere the multitude, humanity in thousands on thousands, crowding their path, spying on every action, drowning out sigh and laughter! What peace or tranquillity was there? What fragile thing could endure against the buffeting? What mattered? By Massingale's side, shivering, clinging, she felt the weak tears suddenly rising, seized by a horror of this life which had to be lived, some way or other, in fear of what might follow.

"Be honest! Tell me all you've hidden! Let me know the truth, at least!" he said suddenly.

She sat up, drawing away from him, readjusting her hat. Yes, she would throw herself on his generosity; she would tell him the truth — perhaps not the truth in every detail, but all that was vital. For she could not bear that he should see Josh Nebbins as he really was. The vulgarity, the pettiness of it, she would keep from him, divining how his aristocratic temperament would revolt at the thought that such arms had once held her as his now encircled her.

"It is nothing bad!" she said. "There is nothing in my life that I am ashamed of. That is the truth! Only, I am upset, irritated, terribly irritated. I am passing through a most disagreeable experience. The man you saw I was engaged to three years ago, when I was an ignorant foolish girl. I regret it bitterly! We were totally unsuited. Now it is ridiculous, humiliating! I never expected to see him again!"

"Who is he?" he asked.

"Oh, there is nothing wrong with him!" she said instantly. "He was in the ministry, in settlement work — very honest, very good. Then he went on a paper. I don't know how it happened! I was very religious then; I wanted to devote my life —"

"But why didn't you break it off, Dodo?"

"I did! But you don't know him! He wouldn't marry me then until he'd saved some money, writing articles and all that sort of thing. Now he can't see how I've changed, how impossible it would be. And oh, it makes me shudder! It's such a narrow walled-in little life! So barren, so ugly!"

"Send him away!"

"If I could! He won't understand. And when I'm with him I feel as if I were being dragged back to all I hate! He's a terrible man! Sometimes I really am afraid he'll force me to marry him. Oh, I assure you, I am very, very unhappy!"

"And the ring, Dodo?" he said, with a sigh of relief, leaning over and touching her hand.

It was as if a sudden blast of cold air had been let in. She drew back.

"I can't tell you of that now," she said hastily. "When you have the right — and that depends on you — I will tell you, for it is something that I am very glad of!"

"Dodo, I must know. I can't go on like this! I simply can't."

"Neither can I!" she said, with a sudden lump in her throat. "Don't you see how I am going to

pieces? Don't you know why I do such wild crazy things? Oh, if I were only sure of you!"

"If I could be sure of *you*!" he retorted bitterly.

"What would you do?" she asked, grasping his arm eagerly. "Would you do as I wish? Would you dare?"

"Dodo, I wish to be divorced and to marry you!" he said abruptly.

She shrank from him with a cry of disappointment. She sought romance, uncalculated and overwhelming; she wished to hear him, driven beyond himself, crying tempestuous words in her ears, ready for any sacrifice; and instead, he was concerned with planning a conventional solution.

"No, no!" she cried, bitterly disillusioned. "Oh, you don't love me as I love you, if you can think only of that!"

"But why not, Dodo?"

"Oh, not marriage! I hate the very word!" she said indignantly. "That would spoil everything! I want to be Dodo! I don't want to change. And you want to make me! What would happen? After a while you would want me to be like your formal women, society women, and I should be bored, or you would get tired of me. And then my heart would break!"

"But, great God! child, haven't you any morality?" he exclaimed, beyond himself. "Have I always got to protect you against yourself?"

"Is it my morality," she said, opening her eyes, 'or

what society will think of you, that you are worried about?"

He was silent, without an answer.

"Listen!" she continued determinedly. "This must stop! I said I was going to decide everything on the tenth. I'm not! I can't stand it! To-morrow I'm going to settle everything. Do you love me enough to run away with me to-morrow?"

"Do you really, honestly, in the bottom of your crazy romantic heart, believe you would do such a thing?" he asked solemnly.

She was instantly a-tremble with an electric ardor.

"Would I? Would I sacrifice this for something real, something immense, for a perfect blinding love? Oh, how can you ask!"

"And if I come to-morrow and say 'Come!' you will leave everything and go with me, anywhere?"

She put her two hands in his with a gesture of a Siddons.

"Anywhere!"

He retained his doubts, but he did not discuss. Finally he said:

"Very well! To-morrow afternoon I will come and tell you my decision! You are right. This must end, one way or the other!"

"When?"

"At five o'clock!"

"At five, then. If not —"

"If not, what?"

"I shall have made another decision!"

They said little during the remainder of the trip back, the gravity of the crisis that had been imposed affecting them both. She had only faint belief that he would come, as she wished him to come; and her eyes resting on the sudden electric paraphernalia of the theaters, the gilded outward trappings, the billboards, and the displays on the sidewalk, she lost herself in reveries, feeling the mountain of drudgery she would have to move. Besides, another thing obtruded itself between them — the lie, slight as it had been, that she had told. She was vaguely aware of it, unable to return into the intimacy of her first clinging attitude. Arrived at the house, he mounted the steps with her, and said gravely:

"Very well, Dodo! I take you at your word. I don't know what it will be. What you ask from me is as great, probably a greater sacrifice than you would make. But I may do as you wish! To-morrow, in any case, I will come!"

He did not attempt to kiss her in the shadow of the vestibule, nor did she think of it. It was very serious, this parting. She felt the weight of the impending decision as she went slowly to her room, and she found herself halting, from time to time, in the dark ascent, a little frightened, a little strange, asking herself if it were possible, after all, if the incredible were to come, if he really was to put her to the test.

CHAPTER XXX

SASSOON came to see her the first thing in the morning, just as she was completing her toilet. For, though over the city was the heavy somnolence of Sunday, she could not sleep; in fact, she had scarcely closed her eyes all night. It was daylight, and yet it was unreal. She was asking herself, incredulously, if the moment of decision had come,—the hour she had contemplated, it seemed, all her life,—when Josephus brought his card. It gave her quite a shock, this return of the persistent hunter, whom she had left, groveling and stunned, at the foot of a disordered table. What did it mean? She glanced at the card again. Across it was written in minuscule letters:

"Please see me, just for a moment!"

She hesitated, tempted by the sudden and the inexplicable. Was it possible that he credited her with acting a part, that his passion could crowd out all ~~sense~~ of shame? And, finally, what could he say, after last night?

"I'll be down in a few minutes!" she said, with a nod. Then she recalled Josephus hastily, giving explicit orders that, if Nebbins came, he was to be told that she had gone on a visit, that she would not be back until the next noon; under no circumstances was he to be admitted. She glanced un-

easily into the room where Snyder, curled up in a ball on the bed, was sleeping the heavy sleep of those who consume the night six days of the week. What would she say to Snyder, and how avoid her questioning glances, this day of days?

When, at length, she entered the stuffy parlor, she beheld Sassoon in the raw, no longer languid and heavy of eye, but uncontrollably aroused, pacing the floor in feverish impatience. The look he gave her was so like that of a maddened animal that she halted, afraid; and the fear that ran through her bones was not only of the present, but a sudden terrified comprehension of the past — of what she had risked and escaped. She remained standing, with the table interposed as a barrier between them.

"Sit down — please!" he said, looking at her eagerly, in his voice a note of hoarse avidity that gave it a strange hurried quality.

"What have you to say to me?" she said, without moving.

"Miss Baxter," he said abruptly, "make your own conditions!"

"What! You are not ashamed?"

"Make your own conditions! I will agree to anything!"

"There are no conditions!"

"Wait!" He drew from his pocket a document, his fingers trembling so he could hardly unbutton his coat, crumpled it in his emotion and resumed:

"First, I have arranged everything! You will marry — not a trainer or a secretary, but a gentle-

man, Captain Markett-Blount, an English gentleman whom I have bought. No — listen to me! Understand everything! I am not putting you into the demi-monde; I'm giving you a chance at everything. You will have a social position. You will go wherever I want you to go. You can remain married, or you can divorce, when you want. You will have a husband who will do as I wish! I give him fifty thousand for his name. I will give him the same to free you. You will marry the hour you say — to-night. You will dine at my house; you will visit me on the same footing as Mrs. Sassoon's friends. In a week you will join a party on my yacht, and go with us to cruise into the Mediterranean, to Egypt, anywhere! No one will say a word — no one will dare! You will be in exactly the same position as a hundred women in society — any one who would come at a whistle from me! As for you —"

"As for me?" she repeated, fascinated despite herself.

"I will give you now, simply on your word, anything you ask. Name any sum. More, I will do what I have never done. Here, look! Here is a contract in black and white. Have it examined by your own lawyer. Write down whatever sum you want. Make it for one year or ten — I'll sign it! You can hold it over me; you can blackmail me, if you wish! And that is nothing to what I'll give you — jewels, houses —"

"But you are mad!" she cried, horrified at the craving in his voice and the wildness in his eyes.

"Yes, mad, Dodo. You are right — completely mad! But profit by it! You can place yourself anywhere; you can have anything from me! I myself will tell you how to torture me, to rob me —"

"Never!"

"Yes, yes! You will! You can't refuse such things!" he cried. "You're not a fool! Ah, I *will* have you!"

Suddenly, as she shuddered and closed her hands over her eyes with loathing, he glided around the table and caught her in his arms.

"Sassoon! Here! You are crazy!" she cried, struggling frantically.

"What do I care!"

"Let me go! I'll scream!"

"What do I care!" His arms inclosed her with the strength of steel, gripped her to him, struggling to bring her face to his, crying incoherent brutal words that left her sick with loathing, a cold hard pain penetrating into her breast, frightened, helpless, trying to beat away the acquiring lips with savage fingers. At the moment when, despairing, she was about to cry aloud, mercifully there came a ring at the front door. He paused, trembling and breathless; and the next she had torn herself away from him and escaped up-stairs, shaken in every muscle, sick with horror and enraged loathing. Snyder up, stared in amazement at her disordered figure. The soiling embrace seemed to cling to her arms, to her neck, to the very clothes she had on. She tore them from her with disgust, with sickening.

"Lord! Dodo, what's happened?" cried Snyder, starting up.

"Sassoon! Beast!" she gasped, choking with rage. She flung her dress in a corner, and plunged her arms and head into the wash-basin, scrubbing them with a towel as if they could not be cleansed — as if nothing could ever cleanse them again.

Then suddenly she fell into a fit of hysterical weeping. Snyder, frightened, camped at her side, pressing her to her breast, calling her childish names, implored her to be calm. When at last, from sheer fatigue, she had grown quiet, she refused all questions, unwilling to talk; all at once solemn, determined, as controlled and impassive as a moment before she had been disorganized and frantic. Snyder, amazed, watched her as if she were a statue.

"You're all right now?"

"All right!"

"You can't tell me? Nothing?"

"Nothing!"

At the end of a moment she turned thoughtfully.

"Come to lunch, just in Lexington Avenue?"

"Sure, petty!"

"I have no money."

"Shut up! I have lots!"

"Good! Now, don't talk to me, Snyder! I don't want to talk!"

The woman nodded, uneasy and suspicious, moving about her way, but never losing sight of the girl.

Dodo went to the trunk, took out Lindaberry's letters, and returned to the window. Outside it was

raining by fits and starts, in swerving sheets, wind-driven, with the restlessness of March. Handfuls of drops flung against the panes with sudden rattling crescendo. She opened the last letter and read it without emotion, in a dull, listless, painless, concentration. It began, "Dodo, my good angel," and it announced the thing she had feared—his imminent return.

"He will get over it!" she said, staring down the avenue, where the rain-drops rebounded from the asphalt like myriads of shimmering insects, swarming hungrily. "He will get over it, and he will live his own life, and he will end by being grateful to me!"

She remained silent a long while, wondering, thinking of Massingale, of Blainey, watching the leaden clouds breaking and rolling above, feeling the spray that lashed the window, cooling her cheeks, fascinated by the rain-drops that swarmed, like myriad white insects, dancing below. There was so much to do—and she was unable to do anything.

At twelve she rose quietly, telephoned to Blainey for an afternoon appointment, signaled Snyder and led the way to luncheon.

She went to the theater by the subway on account of a famished pocketbook, and the depressing sensation of damp ankles and muddied skirts, which came to her as she clung to her umbrella and leaned against the wind, reinforced her determination to come to actualities.

"Hello! This is a surprise!" he said, when at last

she had come, with dripping umbrella, into his office. "Must have got my dates mixed!"

"No! It's I who am tired of waiting!" she said abruptly.

She shed her rain-coat, shaking her skirts and glancing at her muddy shoes in delicate disgust. Then she advanced in a businesslike manner to the seat which Blainey, contrary to his customary bluff indifference, was presenting to her with extreme deference.

"Blainey, I've come to the end of my rope!" she said, folding her arms over her breast. "I'm through with playing and cutting up. I'm going to make up my mind to something serious now! I've got to talk to some one about it; that's why I've come to you!"

"Good eye!" he said, nodding and reaching for a cigar. "I, too, have got something to thrash out. Well, kid, what's annoyin' you?"

"Things have been getting mixed up, Blainey," she told him seriously. "I guess I'm not as clever as I thought!" She stopped, thinking of the legion that had fallen away: of Peavey, who had gone; of Masingale, who was still a mystery; and of Nebbins, a present menace. "Either that, or I'm getting tired of fooling!"

He nodded wisely, waiting for her to continue. She noted the rough sympathetic cut of visage,—the mouth, which had changed its grimness to a tolerant humor, the eyes, which were fixed on her with keen perception, softened by a homely adoration,—and she felt that she could talk to him as to no one else. He

would understand everything, the good and the bad in her. He was nearer to her, to her kind, to an understanding of her longings and her temptations, than those other men who had never known the struggle of a self-made life.

"Blainey, it's awfully hard to decide," she said, leaning forward and clutching her knee. "I'm in a fix; I don't know what I'll do!"

"Well, first," he asked, with an encouraging nod, "how's the heart?"

She sat silent a moment, her hands locked, staring at the floor.

"I wish I knew!" she said slowly.

"Marriage?"

"No!"

"Sure of the man?" he said abruptly.

"That's it; I'm not sure of him!"

"And yourself?"

She tried conscientiously to see herself.

"Even of that — I don't know."

"Pretty hard hit, eh?"

She nodded.

"Go slow! Be sure!"

"I'm going to, Blainey!"

"What else? Marriage?"

She made a gesture of irritation.

"No; that's not for me!"

"You're wrong, kid," he said energetically. "You don't know the game!"

"What! You advise me to marry?" she exclaimed, in astonishment.

"You? Every time!" he said, straightening up. "However, we'll discuss that later!" He looked at her shrewdly and said abruptly: "How about Sassoon?"

A fantastic idea came into her head—to try to what extent his advice could be disinterested.

"Sassoon's the point," she said quietly. "What do you think he offered me this very morning?"

She detailed the terms, the proffered marriage and the contract, while Blainey, craning forward, listened with intense curiosity. When she had finished, he rose abruptly, eased the grip of his collar and moved heavily to the window. Then he made her repeat all that she had said, word for word.

"You're giving me a straight story?"

"Honest to God!"

He gave vent to a long whistle, drumming on the desk.

"Well, kid," he said at last, with an effort, "that's a pretty big proposition!" He shook his head solemnly. "I don't see how you can turn it down!"

"Well, Blainey, that's just what I've done!" she said evenly.

"Think it over! Better think it over carefully!" he advised anxiously. "Ten years from now you may get a different squint at life, and regret it!"

She laughed. She had an idea that what they were discussing was curiously immoral; but, strange as it was, she had a feeling that he was quite unselfish, and was grateful to him for it. In fact she felt nearer to him than ever before.

"No, no, Blainey," she said quickly. "Not for me! I'm not thirty-two — I'm twenty-two; and, thank heaven, I can be a little fool!"

He resumed his seat, unconvinced, half inclined to argue. All at once he looked up, with a snap in his gray eyes, at the girl who was watching him, amused.

"Speaking of marriage, why don't you marry me?"

She rose to her feet in amazement.

"Surprised?" he asked, grinning.

"Bowled over!"

"Rather expected another proposition?" he said bluntly.

"Yes, I did! Good heavens! Blainey, why do you want to marry me?"

"For about six hundred and fifty-two reasons!" he said solemnly. "First, because I'm fond of you. Second, because I'm lonely, kid! Third, because I'd like to work for you, make something big out of you, give you a career that would be a career. The rest don't count! You see, kid, I believe in you, and the contract I'm offering you," he added, with a sudden chuckling return to playfulness, "is the only contract I know that's worth a damn between manager and star. Of course, you've got to work!"

"Blainey, how much talent have I?" she asked passionately. "No compliments! Give me the truth! It may mean a lot!"

"I don't know!"

"And yet —"

"Talent be damned!" he said royally, as he said a dozen times a day. "Art be damned! It ain't tal-

ent, it's personality that counts — personality and advertising. Personality, kid, is the reason we build the stage three feet above the orchestra, to keep the bald heads from coming over. Do you think I'm in this God-forsaken business thirty-four years, and don't know the tricks? You'll be talking art to me next!"

"And I have personality?" she said doubtfully.

He smiled hugely.

"Would you be sitting here if you hadn't?"

"And you want to marry me, after all you know about me?" she asked solemnly. It was the one thing she did not like. Why was it impossible for her to go her way, free and irresponsible, as men went? Why was it that all sought this absolute control over her liberty? And yet, she was genuinely touched that Blainey, believing what he must, should have made the offer.

He shrugged his shoulders.

"My old dad ran a milk-wagon over in Brooklyn," he said. "I've pulled myself up by my boot-straps, and pretty much of everything has stuck to them on the way. I know what life is, kid. I stopped judging long ago! Leave that to a bunch of snobs in Fifth Avenue churches. Whatever you've done, you'd look like a white spot against me!"

"Blainey, I'll tell you something!" she said suddenly. "You've got me wrong! I'm as straight as they make 'em!"

"Don't lie, kid! It ain't necessary."

"Look at me! It's God's truth!" she exclaimed vehemently.

"Honest?" he said, opening his eyes.

"Honest!"

"Well, I'll be damned!"

"Blainey, you're an awfully good sort!" she said genuinely.

"Damned few would agree with you!" he said grimly.

"You've always been with me! Why?"

"'Cause I'm a sentimental nature!" he said, grinning. "Well, kid, how about it?"

"Well, Blainey, it may be yes! I shouldn't be surprised!"

He started up eagerly, with a look that somehow spoiled it all. She retreated instinctively, and perceiving it, he was clever enough to retain his seat, saying:

"When will you know?"

"To-night!"

"Telephone me here or at the hotel. Now, one thing more. This marriage means freedom to each — no spying and no interfering! It's a sentimental business contract for life. Savvy?"

She nodded.

"That's the best way!"

"You're free — I'm free!"

She nodded again, giving him her hand.

"Now I must go," she said hastily, with a glance at the clock. She went to the door, while he watched her without a word. Suddenly she turned. "If I decide, I want it over to-night! Do you understand?"

He nodded seriously. She smiled and went lightly out.

When she reached her room again she received a shock. Snyder informed her that Lindaberry had called twice, once while they were at luncheon, and again at three. Dodo was in a panic at the news, expected though it was. Josephus had informed her of Nebbins' insistent queries. All that she had planned dramatically, which now she wished to avoid, was rising up to confound her. She turned breathlessly on Snyder.

"You saw Mr. Lindaberry?"

"Yes!"

"He was here? Long?"

"About an hour!"

"Then you talked to him?" she persisted, suddenly suspicious.

"So-so," said Snyder evasively.

"What did you talk about? What did you say? What did you tell him about me? You didn't discuss — did he leave a message?"

"No, he left no message!" said Snyder obstinately.

"When is he coming back? You know!"

"No, I don't know!"

"Snyder!"

"I don't know!" she repeated, shrugging her shoulders and escaping into the other room, leaving Dodo in a torment of suspense, half inclined to flight.

She could explain whatever she intended doing to Blainey, to Massingale even, but not to Lindaberry. The thing was unthinkable. And she was afraid of

his coming, for she was afraid to destroy the illusion, fragile and beautiful, which she had built of herself in his soul. To undeceive him, to let him see her as she believed she really was, brought her pain that she could not endure. And at that moment, as the town clock was methodically beating out the hour of five, she stopped abruptly, suddenly recalled to Massingale by the sound of his step on the stairs, torn between hope and fear, but inwardly steeling herself against the shock of disillusionment which she was certain awaited her with the opening of the door.

CHAPTER XXXI

WHEN a man has taken a step across those limits which society imposes on his conduct, he immediately begins, with a certain anxiety, to seek for the visible results in those events, ordinary or extraordinary, which affect his prosperity. From the time of Massingale's meeting with Dodo, everything had succeeded with him. He had had a period of unusual success in the stock market. Property which he had accepted in lieu of a debt had unexpectedly proved necessary to the approaches of a new bridge and had returned him ten times its value. His kennel had swept everything before it in the Dog Show, and in the daily sessions at the card table his run of luck had continued with extraordinary persistence. Finally, the newspapers, lately, had given him columns of publicity. Certain criticisms which he had passed on the haphazard conduct of justice had been taken up and had set in movement great machines of investigation, which threatened an overturn at the coming municipal elections. As a consequence, he had received proffers of advancement, and a political career seemed within his reach.

Whatever vague rumblings of conscience may have stirred within him, they were, in a measure, stilled by these evidences of the good favor in which he stood

with Providence since Dodo's introduction into his life. He was resolved to see in her the explanation of all that was favorable, and he repeated, in daily self-justification, that if she brought him this good luck, there could be no great harm, else a moral Heaven certainly would not continue to shower him with blessings. He did not express the feeling in so many words, but it existed, half avowed, as often, when tendered a match, he would say to himself:

"If it remains lighted until it reaches me, it is a favorable sign!"

The first disagreeable shock had come in the form of a message from Harrigan Blood saying that he would oppose any attempt to raise Massingale to the Court of General Sessions. The message was delivered by a mutual friend with intimations that, on account of certain sides of his personal life, it would be better not to lay himself open to the attack of a vindictive antagonist. The truth was that Harrigan Blood, since the day when Dodo had been so unfortunately inspired as to bring them together, had conceived the idea that the luncheon had been arranged with the express purpose of making him ridiculous, and that Massingale had been a party to the plot. From the first he had felt the humiliation of the rôle he had been forced to play with Dodo. The quarrel with Sassoon had been costly; his sense of pride had been cruelly tried; on top of which the thought that she had paraded him for the delectation of a favored rival was unbearable to his sensitive vain nature. He took his revenge thus, from a need of

feeling that at the end the ridicule would not rest on his side. Massingale knew the man too well to have any doubts as to his yielding. If the political campaign were to be entered, he saw now that it would mean a distressing facing of every indignity. It was the threat, perhaps, more than the deprivation, that annoyed him; for at the bottom he had now come to a full realization of the utter disorganization which the pursuit of Dodo must inevitably bring him.

The morality of a man of the world after forty is largely a question of what is, and what is not, done. Massingale, without being aware of it, possessed this code to an unusual degree. Petty political grafting was something of which he would have been simply incapable, from a pride of caste. There were certain vices that were associated with a lower order of human beings. Courage, in such surroundings, was as requisite to a gentleman as recklessness before the consequences of a five-foot leap in the hunting-field. So, with Doré, his moral code of good manners (which might be expressed as eligibility to club membership) could not permit what, to the eyes of the world, must appear as a deliberate seduction. Despite the depths of infatuation into which he had plunged, the genuine outcry of his whole nature, the intense and ceaseless longing with which he was consumed, he never for a moment contemplated anything but the permissible: divorce and remarriage.

This decisive step he had contemplated now for more than two months, approaching and retreating. At times he had been on the point of breaking in

tempestuously on his wife and delivering an ultimatum, and the next day he had thanked heaven for the accident that had prevented a crisis. He was afraid of Dodo. Never for a moment had he placed the slightest faith in her romantic dramatization of a lawless elopement. Beyond that, a future in which she should join him as his wife was illegible to his eyes. He was too profoundly sensible of the utter change she had effected in his life not to fear where he might follow. He found that she consumed his day; that only the moments spent with her were vital. His old associations bored him.

His club friends of his age seemed hopelessly and incomprehensibly old. In their presence he felt unaccountably young, eager for youth. The evenings when Dodo punished him by departing with mysterious others were intolerably long and heavy. And then he suffered! He came to know all the torments of jealousy, hatred and submission violently reacting.

A little thing had perhaps more influence on his decision at this moment than anything else — the ring which Lindaberry had given Dodo, and of which she would furnish no explanation. This ring haunted him, terrified him. He was a keen enough observer to perceive instinctively its threat — that back of it was a deep import, not a mere passing entanglement of a week. Something else there was in her life, of major importance, he felt, strong enough to threaten him. Finally, on the night he had taken Dodo in his car after her meeting with Nebbins, this feeling of jealousy and alarm had become so intensified that he

had suddenly flung the future to the winds, and determined to be rid of the pain, the frenzy and the miserable longing which his resistance brought him in daily torture.

When he returned to his home, he learned from the footman at the door that Mrs. Massingale had entered half an hour before. He went directly to her rooms, giving himself no time for hesitation or reflection.

"Who is it?" cried a startled voice at his knock.

"It's I; may I come in?"

"But I'm not dressed! Is it serious?"

"Yes! Put on a dressing-gown!"

A moment later he entered. His wife, a frail, neurasthenic, thinly pretty woman of forty, was standing with a peignoir hastily clutched about her, a towel in hand, hastily rubbing off the cream with which her maid had been industriously massaging her face. On the dressing-table was a heap of hair in disordered braids. The mellow shades on the electric candles flung frightened shadows on the sharp oval face and the penciled eyebrows, that took flight above the nervous eyes, now white with an exaggerated alarm.

"Send"—he did not even know the name of his wife's maid—"send her away!"

"*Lucille, laissez-moi; je vous sonnerai plus tard!*" Mrs. Massingale said directly, her eyes on her husband's face. She went to the door, closing it and came swiftly back.

"Harold, what is it?" she cried breathlessly.
"Are we ruined?"

"No!" he said, with a touch of irony in his voice. "No; it is not money matters!"

She had seen the specter of bankruptcy before her eyes at his incomprehensible entrance. She shuddered and regained her self-control with a sigh, closing her wrapper more tightly over the disarray at her breast, as if suddenly aware of impropriety in the presence of this man who had entered her rooms after years.

"Sit down!" he said, straddling a chair and resting his arms on the back. "Clara, I am very — I am exceedingly unhappy!"

At the sound of his voice, more than from the authority in his manner, her alarm flashed up anew. She seated herself hesitatingly, scenting instinctively the approach of some formless danger. For a second she had a grotesque thought, caused by the sudden irruption on her cherished privacy, that he was going to ask her to surrender her own apartment and return to his.

"Well, well! What is it?" she asked, finally prepared to resist such brutality.

"Clara, I want my liberty!"

She relaxed a little. His liberty? She had never for a moment opposed that!

"This life I am leading is a ghastly mockery! I want it to end! I want to be able to lead my own life. I want a divorce!"

She rose in her seat, stretched out her hand and stammered:

"What?"

"I have come to tell you that I am resolved to divorce!"

"Divorce!"

All at once she fell back, limp and swooning, her head fallen forward on her breast. He rose, searched among the bottles, found smelling-salts, and methodically, not quite convinced, held them to her nostrils. Then, when she started, he placed the bottle on her lap and resumed his seat.

Her first emotion, on returning from the dizziness which had not been altogether assumed, was one of profound astonishment. After almost twenty years of married life, when she felt the completest security, when her life had run smoothest along the roads she herself had directed, all at once everything was threatened, without her being able to perceive at what point she had committed an error.

"You said — divorce?" she said weakly, staring at him.

"Yes! I have come to ask you to make no opposition, if I make whatever provision you desire for yourself."

Before the detail of his manner she could no longer cherish any doubt. She became suddenly the woman of astuteness and cunning that she really was, gathering every energy to ward off the blow.

"You are not serious! It is impossible that you can be serious!" she began. She rose quickly, and gliding to the door, assured herself that Lucille was not eavesdropping.

"I never was more serious in my life!"

"Then let me say right here — and I will never change," she said, returning defiantly, — "I am Mrs. Massingale. That is my name; that is my position in the world. I will never surrender it. I will never, never consent to a divorce, on any grounds whatsoever!"

"Let us discuss!" he said quietly, resolved to push the matter no further than the statement of intention, and, above all, to preserve his self-respect.

"Discuss? There is nothing to discuss!" she cried, with rising anger. "What have you to reproach me with? I have been a faithful wife all my married life. I have never made you ridiculous; I have never dishonored your name! Of how many women can you say the same in our world? I have run your house for you, and I have let you go your way, lead your life, do as you pleased, without complaint! And now, I am the one to be sacrificed? Never! You may have your idea of marriage. I have mine! I regard it as a holy sacrament that nothing can divide but death!"

"Clara, I warn you," he said quietly, "that the matter is too serious for scenes. I am fully resolved!"

"So am I!"

"May I ask you what our marriage has been?" he said, growing angry in spite of himself. "Yes, I believe in all you say, when marriage is a marriage! But when it is simply a convenient legal phrase to yoke together two human beings who have not the slightest interest in common in the world —"

"What?"

"My dear Clara," he said icily, "let me say a few plain words to you! We have lived twenty years together as you have wished it and as I have agreed. This house might be a hotel, and we passing guests. for all the marriage there has been to it! Let's go back! You married me for money and position!"

"Harold! I—"

"Don't lie!" he said, forced at last into the inevitable brutality of matrimonial discussion. "You never loved me! You loved what I had to give you! Come, you're not going to pretend, now, that there ever was a question of love in it? But then I thought so! You were very clever! More, you even made me believe—you, a young girl—that you loved me passionately, that you were capable of passion! You succeeded, as you intended, in carrying me off my feet!"

She looked at him, incapable of retort, overwhelmed with shame. She had never believed, in all these years, that he had comprehended this.

"Afterward I discovered the truth!" he continued. "I found I had united myself fatuously with a perfectly cold woman, to whom I was even repulsive!"

"Harold!"

"Physically speaking!" he added. "Who was cunningly intent on pushing me out of the way, and building up a hollow, conventionally brilliant, social life of her own. I ended by shrugging my shoulders and taking what I could out of the world in an amused, dilettante way. Every word I say is true! And now, when at forty-five I have the chance to live the life you denied me, you would stop me by any such mum-

mery as the sacredness of this marriage! What? You would prevent me now when I come to you gently, quietly, and say to you: 'I love, I want to live, I want to be free from a bond that is nothing to you, to know what is real'—when I ask you to give me a chance to find in another what you scorn to give!"

"But you speak only of the physical!" she cried, aghast.

"No; I speak of the difference between the living and the dead!" he cried passionately. "I speak of a woman who, when she is in your arms, clings to you and cries out words of love, whose eyes shine with your coming, who listens for your step, who doesn't hide behind prudery, but adores you as a living, throbbing human being, who is not ashamed of her love, who is natural, whose lips have kisses and whose arms seize you to her, who has youth, fire, life!"

"But you are mad, infatuated! You don't know what you are saying!" she cried, recoiling in terror. "But then, you wish to marry again!"

"Again? No! I want a real marriage!" he cried.

There was a pause, during which he brought himself back to calm, and she rapidly ran over in her mind the possible woman in her own set who might have thus awakened him.

"Clara, do not let us lose our sense of dignity," he said solemnly. "I do not expect you to answer to-night."

"I will never consent!" she cried, flaring up.

"I don't expect your answer to-night," he repeated slowly. "I shall return here to-morrow afternoon at

four. By that time you will have reflected; you will perceive the monstrous iniquity of keeping me from a happiness that is perfectly indifferent to you. Moreover, I will make any settlement on you that you indicate. You will probably realize by that time that nothing in your mode of living need be changed; this house shall be yours; all that is sacrificed is a little vanity, the public recognition of a loss that has never meant anything to you!"

"Wait!" she said, with a rapid calculation. "Do I know the woman? Is it one of my friends?"

"It is not! It is some one, a young girl, from an entirely different world," he replied, and went out.

She remained embattled, and yet with the hovering sense of defeat, striving to explain the catastrophe.

"Ah, if I had had a child this never could have happened!" she cried all at once, striking her forehead.

Despite his assurance, the next day, after a night of horror, she called up a dozen friends, seeking fruitlessly to learn of the woman. She consulted three of her most particular confidantes as to what course she should adopt. All three agreed on absolute resistance. The first said to her:

"My dear, treat him as a friend. Be sympathetic! Find out who she is. Point out to him that she is intriguing for his money. Act, not as an enemy, but as an adviser!"

The second added:

"Pretend to consider the proposition; then ask him for a year's delay, for his sake and for yours, to be sure that it is not a passing infatuation. In a year, es-

pecially if there is no opposition, great changes can take place!"

The third agreed with the others, with this addition:

"In a year he will either grow tired of her, or she will have become his mistress, and he may become thoroughly satisfied with the arrangement. Whatever you do, delay!"

At four o'clock, as the last adviser was hurrying out, Massingale entered. She was instantly struck with the intensity of the emotion that consumed him, which laid the telltale shadows of its fatigue in the hollows about his eyes and the stern drawn lines of his mouth.

"Before we go any further," she said carefully, "since I am to be sacrificed, may I at least ask you a few questions?"

"That is fair!" he said, deceived by her tone into a bounding hope that she would consent.

"Are you perfectly sure of this young girl, Harold?"

"Absolutely!"

"Who is she?"

He hesitated a moment.

"She is twenty-two; she is from the Middle West; she has been a little on the stage."

"And you are sure that she is disinterested?"

"Absolutely!"

"You are at the age when men are victims of such infatuations!" she said, looking down. "Perhaps I myself have been to blame! If you will wait a year,

be sure, positively sure"—she stopped, blushed red, and said rapidly—"I will try to be to you, Harold, all that you want."

Even in the tensity of the moment, the incongruity of this unexpected solution struck him as so sublimely ludicrous that he laughed aloud. Also he perceived her maneuver, at once undeceived. She drew herself up, stung to the soul, prey to an anger that swept aside all caution.

"Well, no! I will never consent! You shall never have a divorce so long as I can stop it! Go, live with your mistress."

"She is not my mistress!" he said, white with anger.

"A girl on the stage! You are ridiculous! You will make yourself the laughing-stock of New York, my dear fellow, with your little girl! And you think she loves you? Fool! don't you know what her game is?"

"Don't judge all women by yourself, Clara Bayne!" he said between his teeth, giving her her girlhood name. But instantly, digging his nails in his hands, he said in a different tone: "I beg your pardon! I am very irritated, in a very nervous state. I don't want to lose control of myself! Clara, you are too generous, too honest a woman, deliberately to force her to be my mistress!"

"I force her?" she cried furiously. "If she has taken the love of a married man, she is that already! Let her go on!"

"Do you mean this?" he said sternly.

"I certainly do!"

"You will not give the woman I love and respect the right to be my wife — to love me honestly before the world? Do you mean this?"

"I am your wife, and you shall never take that from me!"

"You have never been my wife!" he cried, beside himself. "You, a pure girl, deliberately set about to win me, as a *cocote* does! Wife? You have taken my money to pay for your pleasures and your luxuries, and you have not even been my mistress! You a moral woman!"

"How dare you?" she cried, unrecognizable in her rage.

"A last time. Will you permit me to get a divorce?"

"No!" She uttered it as a shriek, fallen back against the wall.

"Then, madam, I will force you to do it!" he exclaimed, slamming his fist on a little table with such violence that it sent a shower of books clattering to the floor.

He left her clinging to the wall, choking with rage, descended to his car, and gave Dodo's address. The interview had left him in just that state of frenzy he needed to do the thing he would have hesitated long to do in his day of calm. The life that he had claimed from his wife rose up doubly precious to him for the proclaiming. He would cut off his wife without a cent; he would force her to sue him for abandonment, if not from shame, from positive necessity. Anyhow,

the die was cast! He had cut away from all the old life! He would go with Dodo to-night, racing into the new, as she had wished. After a few months, a year, abroad, traveling in the new countries, when his wife had come to her senses and procured a divorce, he would marry Dodo. They would not come back to New York, but the world was wide. Marriage exalted everything. He would be the first so to do. Abroad, in Paris, London, he felt such romances were understood. He jumped out of bed and hastily up the stairs, knocked, and came tempestuously into the room.

He saw her with hands clasped over her breast, standing tremulously sweet, swaying with fear of his coming. He held out his arms, caught her violently to him, buried his head in the cool regions of her neck, caressed by the ~~fragrant~~ youth of her hair, uttering but one word:

"Come!"

She heard it, rather frightened, alarmed, too, at the personal disorder that shook him like a leaf, alarmed at the man who had at last come to where she had wished him. She said to herself, incredulous, that she was happy — wildly, deliriously happy; and she remained quiet, passing her hands soothingly over his bent head, alert, as if listening for some sound in the air.

"You will come?" he said suddenly, holding her from him.

"Yes!" she said in a whisper.

"Now — to-night — far off — with me?"

"Yes! How has it happened?" she said breathlessly. "Why now? Why are you willing, all at once?"

"Because I no longer care for anything else but you!" he cried—"friends, career, reputation. Because I can't live without you, Dodo! Because nothing else in life is life but you! Because I've come to hate it all—the rest! Dodo, I love you! I can't be without you!"

"At last!" she said mechanically, staring at him.

She did not draw away, though his lips sought hers. She longed for that oblivion which had first come to her in his arms, that quieting of the senses that drew the day from before her eyes and closed her ears to all but the faintest, far-off murmurings. She did not resist, but eagerly awaited this masculine mastery that once had awakened all the slumbering passionate fires within her. She wanted to forget again, to be overwhelmed, balanced in his arms, a weak contented thing, leaping hungrily to his contact, delirious and on fire. But no such oblivion arrived. She felt herself poignantly awake, curiously, critically conscious of a hundred questions against her brain, wondering at him, at his frenzy—feeling none herself, nor knowing why.

All at once from the other room the voice of Snyder startled them, singing raucously:

"Who are you with to-night, to-night?
Oh, who are you with to-night?
Will you tell your wife in the morning
Who you are with to-night?"

He straightened up suddenly, recollecting himself.

"Ah, no! Don't go!" she cried, as she had on that first night when they had been swept together. He seemed so strange to her now! She wanted to have time to know him, this new Massingale!

"No, no!" he said hoarsely. "I don't dare — I can't — it's beyond me! Dodo, at seven o'clock can you be ready?"

"Two hours only!"

"Take only a valise. Let everything be new! Can you do it?"

"Yes!"

"I will go and arrange my affairs, make preparations and be back here at seven precisely. We'll dine, and then — the night express for the West, as you wished!"

"Yes!"

"I will telephone. You will come down. I will be at the corner, waiting, at seven!"

"Yes!"

He caught her again in his arms, lifting her off her feet, half mad with recklessness and impatience, and started toward the door. Suddenly he turned, came back, and catching her shoulders in his two hands, looked at her savagely.

"What is it?" she said faintly. Could this be what she had made of Massingale?

"I am throwing everything to the winds, Dodo! — giving up my whole life for you!" he said breathlessly.

"You will come, Dodo?"

"I will — I must!" she said in wonder.

CHAPTER XXXII

MASSINGALE had come so tempestuously, had gone so like a roaring blast, that she had felt swept up and whirled about in a revolving, benumbing cycle. She followed him in a daze to the hall, leaning over the balusters, watching the slipping white of his hand descend and vanish. She crossed to the window, peering through the blurred dripping panes for a last sight of his skidding car. Then she returned, perceived the door left open, closed it and came incredulously back.

"So I am going! It's all decided. All!" she whispered.

It was no longer the fabric of dreams, but actuality, that confronted her. This was new, uncomprehended, despite all her dramatizations. This was a fact. She was to leave in two hours, vanish forever from the curious massive room, with its belfried clock over the roofs and its blank brick wall at the side, out into the gray restlessness of a March night. Whither? With whom? With a strange man — a Massingale she had wrought herself, and whom she now scarcely recognized.

"I love him. I said I would go! It's what I've wanted all along!" she repeated, struck by the idea. "Yes, that's true; it's what I've wanted!"

But now there was a difference. For the first time, it was not she who sought to incite him to misty romance, but the man himself who had come and asked. It was no longer a question of how he loved, where he would go at her beckoning, her will over him. All this had been miraculously achieved. It was now only a matter of what she would do, and she had said that she would go—in two short hours! She remained immovable and listening, and already it seemed to her that she felt the shaken iron rush of a flying train, hurrying her onward into the unknown.

“Snyder!”

Terrified, overwhelmed with loneliness, she had cried out, longing for a human soul to listen, ready to pour out her whole story in confidence. But no answer returned. She went hastily to the door and flung it open. The room was empty, filled only with the vague shadows in the same barren dusk that pervaded her own. She returned, lighted the feeble gas-jet by her bed, and going to the embrasure of the window, sat down, her hands weakly in her lap, her head thrown back, gazing inertly at the yellow clock-face rising through the rain flurries.

No! This Massingale was not the man who had held her in fascination by his quiet mastery, whom she had despaired ever to move! Yet she had wished to see him thus, uncontrolled, at her feet, wild and shaken! She had wished it; yet, at the bottom, had she ever really believed it possible? Now, the spectacle of his disorder rather terrified her, and this terror brought a certain liberation. She was satisfied; she

could wish for no completer victory over this man who, by a trick of fate, scarce five months ago had caught and tamed her. How the rôles were reversed! How abject was now his surrender! For her he was sacrificing everything — career, friends, family, all — to go out with her into dark ways. What had she wrought, a miracle or a crime?

"I must pack; I must make ready!" she said to herself. But she did not rise. No longer framing her thoughts, lost in indefiniteness, prey to a heavy mental stupor, her hands lay weakly in her lap, her head thrown back, staring. Later her fingers stopped upon the sharp facets of the ring which had been pledged as a troth. Garry! What should she say to him? How make him understand? She rose heavily, and going to the writing-desk, brought back pad and pencil. Slowly, seeing dimly the sheet on her lap, she began:

"Garry dear: I am going away—"

She stopped. She could not add another word. What could be added? The pencil slipped from her fingers, the pad slid finally to the floor. She returned again into the stupor, incapable of thought or action, waiting, seeing only the jerky advance of a minute-hand around the yellow surface, until an hour had gone by without a single preparation.

All at once a tear gathered in her eye and went slowly down her cheek — a tear of profound fatigue, of listlessness, rather than the touch of an aching thought. This tear, hot and unbidden, seemed to dis-

sipate, all at once, the frigidity of her mind. She sat up hastily, with a frightened glance at the clock. It was already past six.

"What am I doing?" she thought, dismayed. "He's coming! I must hurry!"

She went to the closet and brought out a dress-suitcase, laid it open across a table and gazed helplessly about her. What next?

Ten minutes later, Snyder, coming hastily in, found her camped on the floor, sorting an enormous pile of stockings, which she rolled and unrolled without decision. Nothing had yet been placed in the open suitcase, though every drawer was ajar and every trunk-lid up.

"Dodo!" cried Snyder, with a rapid survey. "In the name of heaven, what are you up to?"

Snyder's arrival was like a ray of hope to Doré. She rose quickly, her strength of mind suddenly restored — at last some one to whom she could talk, to whom she could tell of the great romance that was sweeping her on!

"Snyder, I'm leaving now, at seven o'clock," she said firmly.

"Leaving, honey? For how long?"

"I guess forever, Snyder!" she answered, with a little shortness of breath.

Snyder, with a quick motion, flung off her raincoat, rolling it in a ball and hurling it through the open door into her room. Then she went rapidly to Dodo, grasping her arms, peering into her face, crying:

"Dodo! That Massingale?"

She nodded, answering aggressively:

"I adore him!"

The woman recoiled, wringing her hands, overcome with grief, crying:

"Oh, petty, petty! I knew it would come! O God of mercy!"

"But, Snyder, I am happy!" Doré said. Yet the words seemed to her heavy, there in the shadowy room, watching, amazed, the agony of affection and terror that shook the woman.

"Happy!" cried Snyder, with a mocking laugh. God! Do you know what you are doing?"

"Yes, yes, I know!" Suddenly a thought struck her, and she added hastily: "Snyder, you are wrong! It isn't Massingale. It's I who have done it all!"

"That's what you think!"

"No, no; it's so!"

"Where are you going?"

"I don't know!"

"When?"

"To-night!"

"And after?"

"What?"

"And after?"

"I don't understand!"

"What's he going to do? Give up his wife? Divorce her?"

"No, no!"

"And after! — what's to become of you?"

Dodo was silent. All the fantastic scheme she had imagined — a year, and then each to return — seemed

so inadequate an answer now. All at once Snyder, in a sudden rage, bounded to the table, and catching the suit-case, flung it scurrying across the room.

"No, petty! You shan't do it! I won't let him. I'll kill him first!"

"Snyder, Snyder, you don't understand!" she cried.

"Don't I? I know! Honey, I tell you, I know! You're the one who don't understand! Honey, I tell you, it ain't a fair world! No; it's a rotten unfair world! The chances ain't equal! A woman ain't a man! Think of your own security first, honey. You've got to, or God help you! I know!"

"What do you mean, Snyder?"

"I mean, you shan't do what I did!" said the woman, clutching her arm—"what I did blindly!"

"You weren't—"

"Married? Never! You didn't know it? I thought you guessed. The others did!"

"No, no! I thought, at times—but I didn't know!"

"Do you know where I had my child?" she said, folding her arms across her heart and flinging back her head as if to breast a storm. "I, nineteen years old, a girl? In a charity hospital, between a black woman and a raging shrieking dago with the fear of death in her! The story? Hell! Any one's story! What does that matter? Anyhow, I believed! I had ideas, like you: liberty, woman same as man. That suited him! It suits them all! What do they risk? Honey, if I told you what I went through those last

months, you'd never look at a man again! You think I'm bitter, hard? Yes, I am hard, through and through! And I believed in him. And proud? God! how proud I was!"

"Snyder! Snyder!" She put out her hands as if to ward off the picture that rose luridly to her eyes.

"You don't know — no woman knows what the hell of suffering is," she continued doggedly, "until they're caught, until they've got to bring into the world another soul, and you stand branded, with every tongue against you! God! What a world! You marry — you're safe! You can be a fiend incarnate, lower than the gutter. Nothing to say! But the other? To be a girl, to believe, to love, to bear a child, as God intended you to, in love — every one against you, your own family cursin' you, closing the doors on you, telling you to go and starve! Don't talk to me! I know! Marry, honey, marry! You've got to, in this world!"

She was weeping now, and the sight of these unwonted tears on the iron countenance of Snyder terrified Dodo more than all she had heard. She felt now very little, very weak, far from the volatile Dodo of dreams and fantasies.

"Oh, Snyder!" she cried brokenly, "why didn't you tell me before? I've misjudged you so!"

"Yes, you've done that!" said Snyder, flinging away the tears and coming back into the steeled attitude again. "You thought I didn't care for the kid — for Betty; didn't you?"

Dodo nodded dumbly, great lumps in her throat.

"Why, honey, I love the ground she walks on! I

live for her! Every cent I can scrape together she's to have! She's to go to the finest school, to get an education. She's to marry, have a home! . . ."

"But then, Snyder, why put her away from you?"

"Why?" She stopped, drew a long breath, crossed her arms with a characteristic brutal motion and said, her face set in hardness: "That's the horror of it! Because, honey,—don't you see?—I'm training myself to do without her, training myself to go on without depending on others, doing for myself. You don't see? Supposin' I had her with me, bless her heart! Supposin' I got to tying up my life to hers, needing her, clinging to her? Then what would come? The day would come when she'd learn the truth, and turn against me. And—God! I couldn't stand anything more!"

"Oh, no, Snyder, she wouldn't!"

"Yes, she would! I know!" she said, shrugging her shoulders. "No. Better as it is! I'm getting used to myself. It's a rut, but it keeps me going!"

Dodo sank into a chair, shuddering and cold, burying her face in her hands.

"Snyder! Snyder! Why did you tell me?"

"Because I love you, honey! You know I love you! I couldn't see anything hard happen to you! It's not a fair world, petty! You've got to play the game. A woman's got to think of her security first, I tell you! For, when you get on the other side of the wall, it's hell! All your arguing about what ought to be don't change it! That's why I say to you, 'And after?' Supposin' you can believe him, suppose he

dies in the next months, where'll you turn? It's a rotten world. They're millions and millions, and you're only just yourself!"

"Don't! Don't! No more!" she cried. "Oh, Snyder, what am I going to do?"

Yes, she felt this inequality now. Millions on millions against one, all her courage gone, dismayed, aghast before the ugliness of reality. Courage? She had none, not the slightest shred of daring left! She drew back against the wall, huddled and little, so weak, so tired, so unable to struggle any longer!

"Ah, what am I going to do?"

"I'll tell you, honey," said Snyder, starting toward her with outstretched arms. But, as she advanced, there came a knock, and answering Dodo's terrified gesture by one of assurance, she went to the door.

"No one — no one! I can see no one!" said Dodo, recoiling.

Snyder received the card from Josephus, said something unintelligible, and came back radiant. One glance at her face made Dodo suspect the truth. She sprang forward with a frightened cry:

"Who is it? Snyder, tell me!"

But the woman, struggling, refused the card.

"It's not Garry? Not he?" she said frantically. "Any one but him! I won't see him! I won't!"

And, as she was still struggling to see the card, the door opened and Garry came powerfully in. Dodo stopped short, caught her throat with an exclamation of terror, her head thrown back against the table,

looking at the strong glowing figure with the light of resurrection in his eyes; and as she looked, all at once a beneficent calm seemed to fall about her, clothing her with peace. All the good she had accomplished was there. She looked at him, and she knew!

Snyder, gliding to him, said but three words:

"Now! At once!"

Then, drawing back, she remained by the door to her room, her whole being concentrated on the scene, her hands clasped as if in prayer.

He came directly to Doré, and lifted her up in his arms, clear of the floor, not rapaciously or uncontrolled, as the acquisition of the other men, but cradling her like a child, tender and strong, his lips on the lightest fluttering golden tress of her hair. She felt no passion, but a great thankfulness; and she closed her eyes.

"Ah, Dodo, how have I ever lived a day from you!" he said rapidly. "Child, how I love you! Poor, tired little child, with such a great strength! How have I ever existed a day away from you?"

Suddenly he set her down reverently, and said firmly:

"Now, put on your coat and hat!"

She looked up at him, too tearfully happy to comprehend.

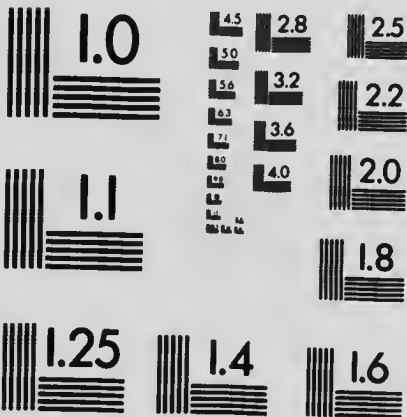
"Your coat and hat, and come!" he said, smiling his strong adoring smile.

The next moment Snyder had stepped to her side,



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holding out her coat. She had one arm in, her eyes on him, when suddenly she started away, comprehending.

"What do you mean? Where?" she asked breathlessly.

"To end all this, Dodo! To marry me — to begin a real life — our life!" he said firmly.

She went from him, shaking her head, putting out her hands in her characteristic defensive gesture.

"No, no, Garry, I can't! It wouldn't be fair — it wouldn't be just to you!"

"What wouldn't be fair? Child, don't you realize that you love me?"

"No, I don't, Garry; I don't know!"

"I know!" he said triumphantly. "Every letter you've written me has breathed it! And now — Dodo, can you doubt?"

"Listen, Garry!" she said, tormented with the fear of harming him, fighting against her own happiness. "I do care for you! I always have! But how? That I don't know! Garry, I tell you, I don't know anything to-night, but that I'm a miserable weak creature! Wait! Wait until I can know! Until I can be sure!"

"Put on your coat now!" he said, with a confident laugh.

"No, no! Don't you see?" she cried, shrinking away. "Don't you realize that I wouldn't harm you for anything in the world? I won't come to you until I'm sure I love you — *you*, and only you!"

"You will come now with me, and end all this nonsense!"

"To-morrow!"

"No, to-night!"

"But if I don't love you?"

"If you don't now, you will love me!" he said immovably. "Come, this must be ended! You're almost crazy now! You can't think or act! I'll take all responsibilities!"

He strode up to her, the coat in his hands, holding it out as she still shrank away.

"Oh, Garry! It isn't right! I haven't any strength left. I don't know anything! I'm not myself — no, I'm not myself! Be generous!"

"What are you afraid of? Of not loving me?" he cried.

"Yes — yes! Of not — of not —" She caught her voice and cried: "Oh, Garry! I am not worthy of you! I'm a vain, foolish, wild creature! You don't know me — how wicked I am! But I won't harm you! I wouldn't be unjust! Please! Please!"

She was struggling now, with a yielding strength. He caught her arms and drew her coat over them.

"Dodo, dear, I know! Believe me, I know!"

"But to-morrow?"

"No, now! Come! I'll take all responsibility!"

Abruptly, stridently, the telephone rang, and with it the booming notes of seven o'clock.

She gave a cry, frantic, remembering Massingale.

"No, no! Never! Not to-night! I will not!"

He stepped between her and the still ringing telephone.

"You shan't answer! You shall come with me!"

"No! For your sake, Garry, for your sake, I tell you!" she cried, her extended hands shaking with the intensity of her pleading. Massingale and the self she could not trust terrified her. No; she could never come to him with this fear of what another man had awakened in her veins. The telephone ceased. She had torn off her coat. He came quietly to her, unflinching in his resolve.

"Dodo, did you understand me, dear?" he said gently. "I will take all responsibilities!"

"You don't know what that means!" she said hoarsely.

"I do know!"

At this moment she saw Snyder in the corner, kneeling, her hands clasped above her head. A sudden flood of tears came to her. He drew the coat once more about her, his voice, too, shaken:

"Your hat now!"

She obeyed, reaching out her hand, holding it.

"Garry, I haven't the right!" she said brokenly. "If — if I weren't so weak! If — if —"

"Put it on!" he said.

"Oh, Garry! What will happen?" she said heavily. "Promise, whatever happens — forgive —"

She could not finish; her voice became inarticulate. And blindly obeying the touch of his fingers, she put on her hat, grotesquely turned about. The next mo-

ment his arm was about her, seeming to lift her from the ground. At the door, again the telephone burst out. She shrank back, afraid to pass it, seeing an omen.

"Come!" he said obstinately.

His arm tightened about her body, not to be denied. Her head buried against his shoulder, her hands clutching his coat, they swept out of the room, down-stairs and bravely into the pattering gusty night. Up-stairs the telephone continued to ring a long time, clamoring and insistent. And for a long time the figure of Snyder remained kneeling and tense and motionless.

At ten o'clock Snyder started from her seat. Dodo had come into the room. She was against the door, her face tortured and white, her eyes very big.

"His wife!" she said solemnly. She held up her hand, on which a thin gold band was shining. "We leave to-night. He is waiting below. Tell me, did *he* come?"

"Yes!"

"You told him?"

"I told him!"

She caught at her throat, and made as if to ask further questions, but suddenly checked herself, went to the desk and drew out writing-paper. She wrote but a few words, though once she stopped and rested her forehead in her hands. Then she rose.

"For him — yourself!" she said with difficulty. "To-night. This too."

With a hurried movement she joined the bracelet to the letter, and suddenly seized the woman in a straining desperate grip.

“Snyder! Snyder! If you’ve ever prayed for me — pray now!”

She drew her veil hurriedly over her tortured white face, and went rapidly away into the night.

EPILOGUE

AND what became of Dodo? Did she completely change—in a twinkling, and changing by the divine dispensation of being a woman, forget that other turbulent self? Only once again did she return into the hazardous life of old—a last flash of the dramatic impulse—and the adventure came close to a final tragedy. Six months after that rainy March night when she had gone weakly into the rain on Garry's imperious arm, she set foot in New York once more.

Perhaps it was the tragic splendor of these Towers of Babel aflame against the night, after all the grim months of victorious struggle and abnegation; perhaps it was something deeper within her that drove her to slip from the sober cloak of matrimony and once again try the perilous paths of the Salamander.

At three o'clock the next afternoon, she left her hotel, after procuring a promise from her husband that he would not attempt to follow her. Below Jock Lindaberry's automobile was waiting, a footman at the door. She gave the familiar number of Miss Pim's on lower Madison and sank against the cushioned back. A mirror caught her reflection and she gazed with a queer tugging sensation of the incongruities of time. It was Dodo and it was not Dodo at

all. The figure was still fragile, the alert poised eagerness was still in the glance and the arch mischief in the smile, but that was all. The old rebellion, the recklessness, the nervous unrest were gone. She looked incredulously upon a woman of the world, soberly attired in blues and blacks, correctly bonneted and veiled, a woman at peace, pensive and settled, with a note of authority. She gazed long with memory haunted eyes, half inclined to laughter and half verging on tears. Now that she had set recklessly out in search of the past, she began to experience a little doubt. Familiar corners, a glimpse of a restaurant, ways by which she had so often returned, brought her a strange disturbance. Which was real, Dodo Baxter or the present Mrs. Lindaberry?

At the door she dismissed the automobile, aware of sudden eyes in windows above and climbed the brownstone steps. The emotion of familiarity was so instantaneous that absent-mindedly she found herself seeking in her purse for a departed latch-key. Not Josephus but another darky answered her ring. On the hat-rack was a disordered heap of letters which other girls tremulously would come to sort. In the musty parlor with its Sunday solemnity a couple were whispering, sinking their voices in sudden consciousness at her arrival. She groped her way into the obscurity of the stairs, thinking with a little melancholy of the girl and the man below, playing the old, old game. On the second landing, from the room that once was Ida's, another girl in hasty kimono was saying,

"You answer — tell him I went out with another man — make out I'm furious —"

She caught herself at Dodo's rustling coming, eyeing her curiously and then as though reassured ended, "If he responds with a bid for dinner, grab it!"

The whispering plotters recalled a hundred fragments of the old life, as though one cry had started echoes from every corner and cranny. She went on a little saddened by the sound of old accents in new mouths. So even she had not been different from the rest. Other Dodos would come and go as she had passed, as everything changed and gave way to the same renewals. Then she opened the door of her room and saw Snyder standing — gazing eagerly at her.

She did not cross immediately, waiting by the door, lost in familiar details of patched walls and carpets, noting changes, the absence of confusion, the new note of bare simplicity.

"It doesn't seem quite the same — without the trunks. You've moved the couch, too. Funny, queer old room!" she said solemnly.

For the trunks that had served so often as impromptu bureaus, were gone, all save one, — those trunks that were always gaping open, in such fine disorder. Then there were no flowers, sporting their gay extravagance from rickety table or smoky mantel and the great gilt mirror which had leaned in the corner had departed, too. Yet all the familiar old seemed incredibly distant: even that rapid figure her imagination conjured up, perched on a trunk before

the dressing-table studying a disastrous hole in a golden stocking. Was that Dodo and if so where had been the present self all that tempestuous time? Suddenly she noted the figure of the woman waiting on her tensely. She raised her veil, crossed quickly, holding out her arms.

"How is he — how is Mr. Lindaberry?" said Snyder at once.

"Garry? Magnificent — every inch a man."

"And you?"

"And I?" she asked a little puzzled.

"You're happy, aren't you?" said Snyder breathlessly.

"Oh — very happy —" She added with careful emphasis, "Very, very happy!"

She slipped off her black fur jacket and was about to toss it on a chair when she stopped, folded it carefully and handed it to Snyder.

"I forgot. Seems like old times for us to be here and you waiting on me." She took off her gloves, rolled them in a ball and tossed them to Snyder who placed them beside the coat on the bed. She added, seeking to give the conversation a casual note: "You got my letter of course. It's all right? I can have the room for the afternoon — alone?"

"Sure."

"I don't need to explain, do I?" she said rapidly.
"It's —"

"Shut up, honey," said Snyder in the old rough manner, "it's all yours."

"No one will come?"

"No one ever comes."

"And who's in that room — Winona's?" she asked, walking to the door and listening.

"She's gone from noon — teaching Fifth Avenue to walk like Hester Street. Don't know her. She's new."

She passed the dressing-table, still crowded with her knickknacks and mementoes.

"Snyder," she said surprised, "you've kept all those crazy things. Heavens, what didn't I used to do!" She sat down before the table, shaking her head at the strange reflection. "Is it possible!" Then turning quickly she said, "And you, Snyder? Tell me all about yourself."

"Me? Sliding to fame on greased rails," said Snyder pleased. "Two hundred dollars a week now. Fact. Betty? She'll marry a dook yet!"

Dodo rose and taking from her purse a pendant, a diamond cross with a pearl in the center, held it out.

"It's for Betty — the first thing we bought. It's to bring her everything in the world."

"My lord —" said Snyder aghast. "Look here — that ain't right — it must have cost —"

"Hush, you funny old thing," said Dodo, silencing her. "Don't you know it never — never could cost enough!"

But before another word could be exchanged Miss Pim burst effusively into the room, ruffling like a motherly fowl.

"Dodo! Land's sake what a swell you've become!"

She bore down, open-armed, for a convulsive hug but Dodo extending a formal hand checked her.

"How do you do — very glad to see you, I'm sure."

"Two men, Dodo! Chauffeur and footman!" exclaimed Miss Pim, blundering a little over the defensive handshake, but unabashed. "My, I think I should expire on the spot if I ever went up Fifth Avenue behind a chauffeur *and* a footman. You lucky, lucky girl — who'd have thought you'd make such a match — you such a fly-away! Well, you always were my favorite."

Again the door slapped enthusiastically against the wall and Anita Morgan bounded in, all eyes and exclamations.

"Dodo! The lord be praised! Won't Clarice be surprised? Heard about her? She's domesticated too — oddles of money — old gent in splendid state of ill health! My, won't she be crazy to see you! How well you look! Clever puss! Always said you were the slyest of us all!"

"Heavens, Anita, do be careful," said Dodo, disengaging herse'f from the reckless embrace, "you're tearing me to pieces!"

Anita, jumping on the table, rocking enthusiastically, rushed on:

"How's Garry — the darling!"

"Mr. Lindaberry's health is quite satisfactory," said Dodo coldly.

"Come off!" said Anita with a laugh. "Guess I played round with Garry before you ever did. I say, Do, I'm just dying for a good old bust! Lord, it's

been slow since you went. Gee, everything's broke up. Ida's a hundred years married — can't talk anything but the price of eggs and Brussel carpets. Thank the lord, Dodo, you and Garry are back to start something!"

Snyder by the mantelpiece was standing grimly prepared, watching for developments, while Miss Pim overawed was listening open-mouthed.

"My dear Anita," said Dodo quietly, "I'm afraid you are going to be disappointed again. We are going to be very quiet — much too quiet for you!"

Something in the cold decision of the tone opened Anita's eyes. She looked at Dodo with a new vision, with a flare-up of that fierce caste antagonism which Dodo once had felt so brutally, face to face with Mrs. Massingale.

"Dear me, as late as that!" she said, glancing at a wrist watch with extra nonchalance. "I must be rushing. So glad though to have had this glimpse." She shook hands airily. "You look quite shaken down, dear — quite matronly. I should never have thought it. Good-by. My love to poor old Garry."

She went out languidly, her head in the air. Miss Pim remained, shuffling from foot to foot, awed and embarrassed, wondering how to exit with dignity.

Dodo, quite at her ease and determined, came to her aid.

"My dear Miss Pim, there are certain things I must talk over with Snyder. If you will wait for me — down-stairs, I'll drop in as I go out — since I was always your favorite!"

"Down-stairs?" said Miss Pim, absolutely dazed by this easy air of patronage.

"Yes, that's it."

"Oh, down-stairs?" she repeated, open-mouthed.

She turned, gazed at Snyder, bumped against the table and sidled out of the room, staring at Dodo in consternation.

Snyder who had been silently enjoying the scene stepped forward, folding her arms abruptly.

"Right, honey — you've got your chance now. Cut away all the rest!"

"Yes, I must," Dodo answered, drawing a long breath, gazing out of the great bay-window to where the Metropolitan tower, like a great stalk among the weeds, was silhouetted against the changing white and yellow clouds. She had been abrupt, she had been cruel, yet she knew she had only done what she had to do. Snyder had understood, the readjustment was to be profound.

"Sure, you must," said Snyder standing before her stubbornly. "Oil and water don't mix. Don't you get sentimental — don't you flinch — cut it all out! Start new." She nodded twice resolutely, turned and going to the bed, flung on her coat and slapped on her hat in her familiar way. She came back struggling in the sleeves. "The room's yours."

Dodo, a little embarrassed, felt called upon for an explanation.

"You see I want it for a particular —" she began, only to be interrupted.

"Cut out explanations. It's yours. Well, honey,

you've got a bully start, hang on to it — hang on hard. Good luck — good-by."

Suddenly Dodo comprehended. She caught the woman in indignant revolt.

"Not you, Snyder! Never you!"

"Oh, yes — me more than the rest," said Snyder heavily.

"Oh, no, no! Never!"

"What's the use of fooling ourselves?" said Snyder stubbornly. "You've found yourself — you've started a real life — Thank God. I've got no place in it." As Dodo emotionally stricken started to protest she shook her head, smiling a strange smile, taking up doggedly. "Let's be honest. See here — it is a queer world. We bumped against each other going through it — God knows how — you've been square to me and I've been square to you. Lord, that's enough. Precious lot more than most people can say." She stopped, locked her hands convulsively and avoided Dodo's eyes. "Well, your train has got to go one way — mine another. That's all. Here, give me your hand. We're not going to fool ourselves or each other. You know what's got to be. Good-by — good luck."

"Oh, Snyder, it's too cruel, life is too cruel!" said Dodo, her eyes blinded, her throat choking.

"You see," said Snyder, forcing a smile, "even you know what I say is right."

"No — no, I didn't mean it that way," said Dodo indignantly, but she stopped short, struck with the truth of it all.

"I know you didn't," said Snyder, fist to her eyes. "Hell, am I going to get sentimental?" Suddenly she took Dodo's hand, muttered something incoherent and raised it to her lips. Then she broke from the weeping woman and went hastily to the door.

"Remember," she said, "don't you flinch — don't you —"

Suddenly she stopped, caught her throat and went out with a last feeble wave of her hand. Dodo sank down, overcome with loneliness and the melancholy of other existences.

She had come indeed to set the seal on the past, to tie up old bundles, old memories, sweet and sad, regrets and failures; to arrange them into compact moral bundles, to be placed carefully on the shelves of oblivion, but she had not contemplated eliminating Snyder. Yet the pitiless verity had penetrated and convinced her. Nothing of the old life could travel with her into the new. When she had recovered herself she went rapidly to the narrow window and flung down the shade to blot out the impending side of brick. She threw open the trunk and the little bureau where Snyder had religiously guarded her things. There were a hundred reminders of the old life, scrawled notes from forgotten props, the card of Sassoon's with the scribbled entreaty to see him for a short time, typewritten business letters from Mr. Peavey, a confidential note from Harrigan Blood — a tintype she once had had taken with Nebbins at a Sunday picnic — a photograph of Blainey looking uncomfortably posed, scores of cards which had accompanied flowers,

Christmas offerings, pawn-tickets, birthday presents, what not, and in a separate packet done round with red ribbon, all that Judge Massingale had written her, beginning with that first miserable apology.

"Dear Miss Baxter:

"I was out of my head . . . I should have known my limitations . . . I didn't . . ."

She sat down, her lap filled, looking into the stormy past through this strange rent in the fabric of the actual. A knock sounded from the hall and she sprang up hastily, gazing in sudden fear at the round clock-face of the Metropolitan Tower. The successor to Josephus was at the door, hesitating at her appearance.

"Yes, it is for me," she said hastily, glancing at the card. "It's all right. Send him up."

She returned in a panic, closing the trunk, pushing in stubborn bureau drawers. Now that he had actually come, as she had written him, as she had not believed he would come, she felt cold and hot all at once with sudden irregular knockings of her heart within. What would be the end of it all? What power had he still over her? All at once she perceived the packet of letters on the bed where she had thrown them — his letters — and rushing over caught them up and flung them in the hastily opened trunk.

"Come —"

She turned instantly intent — rigid. But her ear had deceived her, there had been no knock. She caught her breath twice, dug her nails into the palms

of her hands and walked steadily away. When a moment later there came a knock, she was able to say calmly:

"Yes, come."

The door opened with a certain solemnity and Judge Massingale came in. She acknowledged his coming with a half-forward gesture of her hand, her glance on the floor, afraid of the first recognition, saying rapidly:

"It was good of you to come, very good. Thank you."

He stood, without movement to lay aside his hat and stick, self-possessed and cynically amused.

"I have come, my dear lady," he said evenly. "Well, because — I was curious."

"I had to see you," she said in a low rapid voice. "I could not bear — I had to see you — I wanted you to understand."

"Understand? What a curious word. You'll be saying forgive next."

"Ah, yes, forgive me," she cried impulsively, looking at him for the first time. "Forgive me for all the harm I've done to —!"

"And I came to congratulate you." He laid his hat and cane mathematically on a table and came forward with the same controlled smile.

"Oh, let me explain," she said, revolting at his manner.

"Explain? There is nothing to explain, everything is quite clear — to me at least," he said, and against

his intention a note of harshness came into his voice. "You played your game perfectly. You used me for just what you wanted: to bring another man to the point. Oh, don't apologize. It's done a great deal nowadays in the best of families. You have made a splendid marriage, Mrs. Lindaberry. I *do* congratulate you."

"You don't believe that," she said angrily.

"Pardon me, I do. I'm not reproaching you. I warned myself again and again. I said once if I ever was fool enough to believe you I would be lost. Well, I believed you. I blame only myself. You are a very clever woman, Mrs. Lindaberry."

She twisted her hands helplessly, staring out the window over worn roofs to storm-clouds piling against the sky, hurt and defenseless against his light irony.

"Yes, yes," she said tremulously. "You have a right — I deserve all that." She sat down weakly, her hands between her knees, staring out.

"Oh, please," he said, smiling at the dramatic assumption. "Don't let's take things too seriously. I was not so hard hit as all that. Honestly, now that it's all over I'm — well, rather relieved. It would have been rather a nasty mess. I like the ruts of life; I'm quite happy going on as I am. You see how frank I am — I won't play the injured hero. Now that I look back, critically, in my own sort of way, I assure you my only sentiment is one of admiration. Great heavens, what does it avail to have all the knowledge of the world against one little woman! Come," he

added with a certain nervous intentness, which belied the simulated lightness of his tone, "be frank. You know you never meant to go."

She shook her head slowly, staring ahead of her as though painfully distinguishing that other volatile and breathless self.

"It seems an awful thing to say now," she said slowly. "I think I would have gone if I'd been sure of you."

"If!" he said scornfully.

"You never really wanted to go!" she said, rising and approaching him swiftly, speaking rapidly with quick breaths. "You only wanted the sensation of the forbidden — you, too! All you say now proves it! You were always thinking of society — of what your friends — and the newspapers would say — always afraid, always hesitating, always a gentleman!"

"True, but not at the last," he said doggedly, forgetting his pose.

"Yes, yes, even at the last. Just the same at the last," she said angrily. "No, no! I was to blame! I saw in you what you were not, what you could never be. I was wild — crazy; but I longed for something beautiful — a great romance. I thought you understood — you didn't! It was never anything but an infatuation with you — just that and nothing else — something pulling you down!"

"That is not true," he said roughly, stirred by her charge. "At the end it was I and not you who would have made the greater sacrifice. I was ready to throw over everything!"

"No, no!" she repeated blindly. "You weren't going of your own free will. There were times when you hated me more than you loved me. At the end you were going like a criminal!"

"What! When I had told my wife all — broken with her — put myself in her power — turned my back on everything — yes, and gladly!"

"I never believed it," she said standing in front of him, inciting him by word and look. "I don't believe it now. If you had cared as I wanted —"

"Cared! Great God," he broke in passionately, "I was ready to exile myself, to throw my reputation to the dogs — to ruin my whole life. Cared!"

"You cared!" she said in rapid scorn. "You loved! And now six months later you can come here calmly, brutally, cynically, and say, 'I came because I was curious.' You *cared!*"

A blind animal fury swept over him. He caught her in his arms, murder and abject yielding wrestling in his soul.

"Dodo!"

She had swept aside all the artifices of the man of the world. The man beneath the veneer, rage or passion led, held her in a clasp that left its wounds upon her tender arms. Yet she did not move or cry out. He looked at her inertly thus, immobile as a statue and suddenly as though perceiving a strange woman, he released her roughly, amazed at himself.

"Good God," he said, striking his forehead, "haven't you done me enough harm already!"

She burst out weeping.

He turned, stirred to a guilty responsibility, trying to bluster into the better reason.

"Why did you bring me here?"

She made no answer.

"Dodo," he said angrily, wondering still at her motive with growing alarm, "I warn you; all is over between us. You yourself have done it. You belong to another!"

She fell back in a chair, her sobs redoubling hysterically; a wild laugh suddenly breaking through.

"I'm sorry — I'm awfully sorry," he said, stirred from his anger and his righteousness.

"No, no," she said brokenly, "you've done nothing — nothing, but what I wished."

"What!" he said in a voice of thunder.

"I wanted you to forget yourself — to take me in your arms," she said almost incoherently.

He could not believe his ears. Astounded, he seized her by the wrist, saying angrily:

"You — you did this on purpose!"

"I did, and oh, it is the worst, the most awful thing I've done in all my life — I know it, I know it! But I had to do it, yes, I had to. Oh, forgive me, Your Honor. I had no right but I had to know."

"What do you mean?" he said, releasing her and staring at her to assure himself that she was in her right mind.

She rose, the tears at an end, facing him calmly even with a new sense of power, which struck profoundly into his masculine vanity.

"I had to know that I was really free — that you had no more power over me — that I could go on with my life," she said simply.

It was too monstrous, he could not credit it.

"And you brought me here for that?" he said slowly.

"Yes."

"Good heavens," he cried, revolted and shocked, "you — you could do — such a thing, such an indefensible, outrageous thing as this. That is too much, I can not understand —"

"I did it," she said quietly, "because I want to be a good wife."

"Then it was not because you wished to get me back?" he cried, too amazed not to be indiscreet.

"Why, no — of course not!"

"It is incredible!" he said stupidly aghast at her candor.

"Then I wanted you to understand," she said swiftly. "Wait. You will understand," she added quickly, her hand on his arm as he started an angry gesture. "Yes, yes, you will, because I know you or would I have let you come here?" she said illogically. "You are too big — you understand everything — you will me."

There was a moment's silent struggle as their eyes met each other. Then without waiting his answer, confidently she said:

"You know, after all, it's very simple. You were right. You remember that first time here — you said

I was to end like all the rest,— just an ordinary little house-frau. Wasn't I furious though! Well, you were right! That's just what I have come to be!"

The incredible side of it all, the boldness of the situation, yet the naturalness of the incomprehensible Dodo doing just this, caught him with the old fascination. He yielded.

"You, Dodo, are saying this," he said, interested despite himself, "you who adored precipices?"

"Did I?" She shook her head, with a little catch after breath, in the suddenness of her victory which his surrender had brought her. "I think all my daring was just ignorance. Now, when I look back I am frightened to death. You thought I was such a wild breathless creature — no! I never really was brave. You see, I imagined a world as every girl must. It wasn't real, nothing was real. It was all just groping after something — just waiting, longing. And that's why I was as I was with you. I was impatient, tired of waiting. And I imagined the answer. Often I try to understand why I did what I did. Then I used to be so thrilled by every reckless, lawless thing I did. It gave me the feeling of a cork bobbing over hungry waves. What a pitiful little creature that Dodo was! She thought she could conquer life. She didn't know. She thought she was different from the rest. She was only restless, a helpless little rebel, with every man's hand against her. And because she didn't want to be like all the rest — what a terrible disaster it came near being!" She stopped, lost in the obscurity of the past and then turning to him, gaining confidence by

what she saw in his eyes, went on in soft pleading: "Don't judge me. The game wasn't square. It never is between a man and a girl. You would have had your man's world to go back to — and I? Oh, won't you understand why I did what I did? Can't you understand how hard it is for a girl, all by herself, to really know what she wants of life? Your Honor, can't you forgive?"

He had been profoundly moved by her words and by the deep tones of her voice, beyond any power of simulation. He knew he would grant her request and yet with a last personal feeling against the unreasonableness of asking it of him, he said:

"What difference can it make to you whether I forgive or not?"

"Oh, but it does — it does," she cried, joining her hands in a passionate entreaty.

"Dodo," he said solemnly, not daring to look at her, "I suppose you are my destiny. I shall always go on loving you. If you need this from me to be happy as I want you — you have it."

"Thanks," she said in a whisper.

He felt suddenly the finality of their words as though the shadowy hand of destiny had moved between them, parting them irrevocably.

"You have never been like any one else," he said solemnly. "I never thought I could forgive — well, I do understand. There is nothing more to be said. Write *finis* and close the book." He went to the rack and took up his hat and stick. "I suppose I shan't see you again or if I do it will be in the midst of a herd

of human beings — to pretend correctly we never once dreamed an impossible dream. Good-by."

Her lips murmured inarticulately.

He took a step toward the irrevocable parting, and then stopped seeking anything to delay the inevitable.

"One question — just one. You could not have loved him — your husband — that night. And now?"

"I did then though I wasn't sure," she said as though this were the most natural question in the world. "Now? Yes, and yet it is nothing to the way I am going to love him, the way I must love him."

"How can you say such things?" he said in a final stupefaction.

The battle she had fought, the incredible triumph she had won, had left her exalted, lifted out of the personal self. She spoke now, as though unaware of his presence, as though trying to comprehend things beyond her ken.

"What is a woman's life? Do you know? Just an exchange of illusions. I have put aside all the queer fantastic dreams of a girl — I haven't yet quite put on the new — not quite. I suppose for just this one moment — this one moment of absolute truth, I can see myself as I really am, just for a moment — perhaps I shall never want to look at myself so steadily again. To-day I can look ahead and know everything that is coming. I know that I shall make myself just what he, my husband, wishes me to be. I shall really become what he now thinks I am. I shall have chil-

dren — many children I hope. My home, my husband, my children — there will never be room for any other thought in my life. Mine — all that is mine, I shall cling to and keep!"

She heard the door close, as the man before the sanctity of the revelation, had gone in reverence. Then suddenly a horror of the past, of the room, of the Dodo that had been, seized her. She wished now only to finish, to escape and never to return. She ran to the trunk, seized the bundle of letters and keepsakes and flung them in the fireplace. Then seizing a box, she struck several matches and applied them feverishly.

All at once the door opened and the voice of her husband cried gaily:

' Caught! "

She gave a scream, reeling against the mantelpiece. He sprang hurriedly to her side, gathering her into his arms, apologizing for the fright he had given her while she lay trembling and shivering, quite hysterical.

The horror of what might have been, the last gaping pit of fate to which she had subjected herself, left her sick unto weakness. He knew nothing. He suspected nothing, and yet he must have passed Massingale on the stairs themselves.

"Good heavens, what a fool I am! I didn't mean to scare you. I'm a brute — you poor child!" he cried.

"When did you come?" she said aghast — holding herself from him and gazing in his face fearfully.

"Why, just now."

"You promised —"

"I know, but I couldn't keep away," he said, smiling penitently. "Wanted to surprise the Missis! Steady."

She reeled, catching his arm, fighting down a wild impulse to shriek out against what might have been, dangerously inclined toward a fatal confession. Then she saw a dark smirch across his sleeve and brushing it away, asked breathlessly:

"Where did you get that?"

"Coming up. Infernally black stairs — couple of fellows trod all over me. Bless your heart, Dodo, I say I didn't know you frightened as easily as that. What a brute I am. Come here!"

He sat down, holding out his arms.

"You mustn't frighten me, Garry — you must be careful just now," she said weakly, sinking against his shoulder.

He surveyed the room curiously, running his hand over her hair. "Odd old room. Seems like old times, doesn't it?"

"I hate it," she said passionately.

"It was pretty rough going," he said sobered immediately. "A pretty tight squeeze. But you pulled me out of it,— you curious, fragile little child. How did you ever dare?"

"Not such a child as you think," she said rebelliously.

"The idea," he said, laughing gloriously. Then he became serious again. "Dodo, that's what's marvelous about you women. You can go up against the

ugliness of life and never — not for an instant — even realize what you touch. Bless your innocence!”

She raised herself on his lap, her hands on his shoulders, looking deep into his unseeing eyes, realizing that he would never comprehend her otherwise. All at once she felt a fierce resolve to defend that illusion.

“Garry,” she said tensely, “that’s what you want me to be, isn’t it — just a child!”

“Dodo could never be anything else!” he said joyfully, oblivious of the recording hand of fate, writing on the woman’s heart.

“Then that’s what I shall always be,” she said softly. She relaxed, cuddling her head against his shoulder, repeating in a tired whisper — “Just a child!”

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The rest can be written in a sentence.

She became a conventional member of society, — rather extreme in her conservatism.

THE END

