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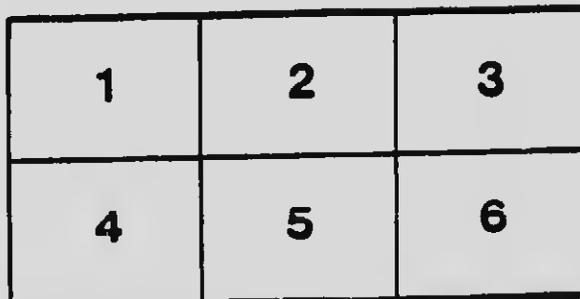
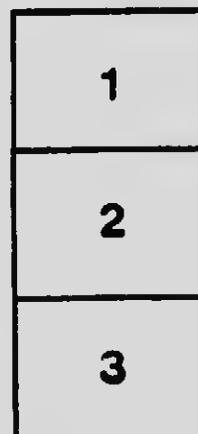
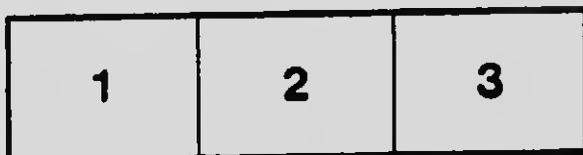
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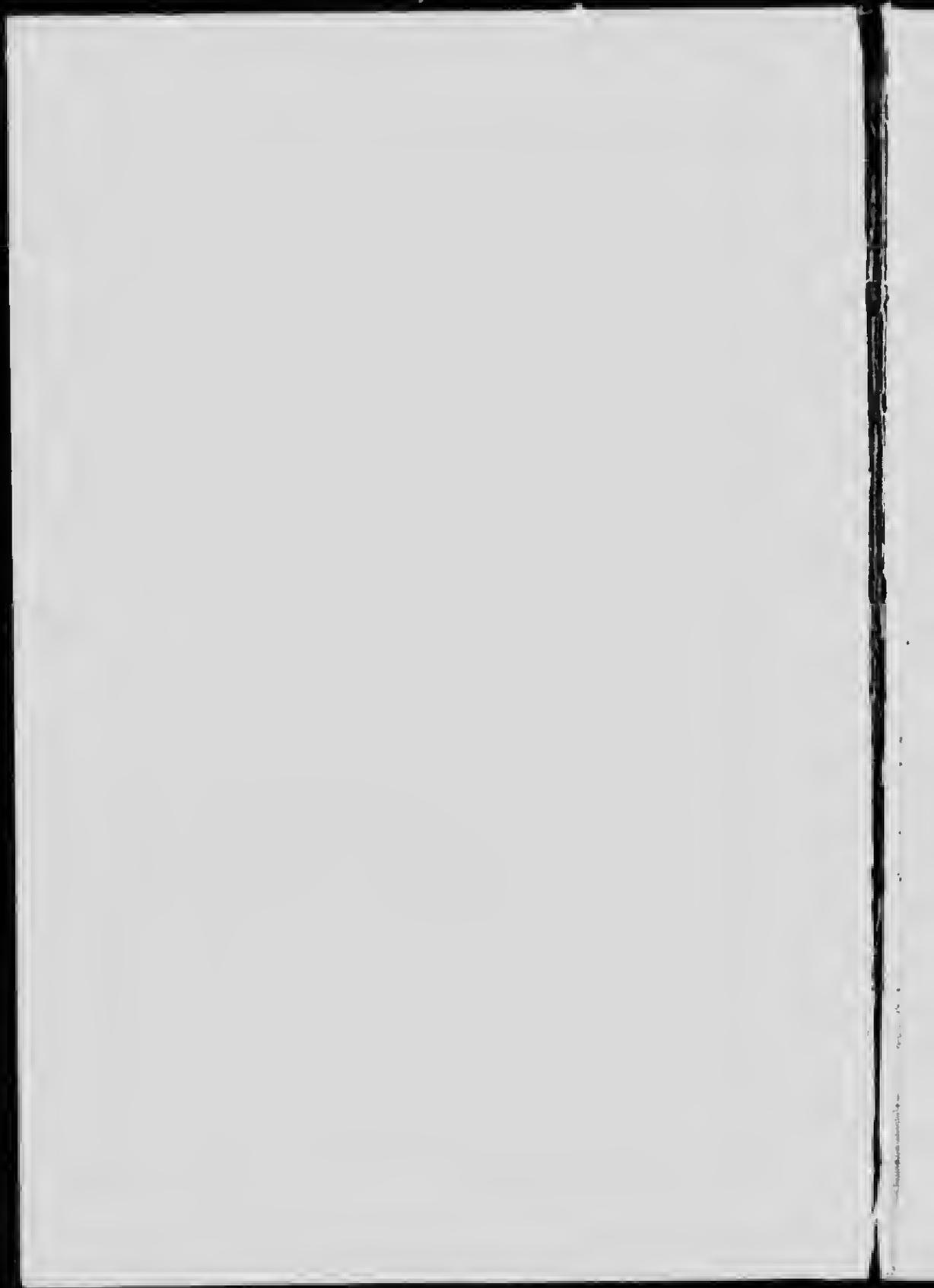
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THE MAN WHO FORGOT



THE MAN WHO FORGOT

A NOVEL

By JAMES HAY, JR.



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To
MY FATHER

WHOSE IDEALS IN LIFE
AND
CONSPICUOUS ABILITY IN STATESMANSHIP
HAVE TAUGHT ME THAT IN THIS GOVERN-
MENT THE RIGHT INEVITABLY WILL PREVAIL

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THE MAN WHO FORGOT



THE MAN WHO FORGOT

PROLOGUE

THE door shook, and there was the dull thump of heavy impact, as if the panels had been struck by a sack of meal. Old Sullivan, reading his paper behind the flat desk in the far corner, did not look up. That was the manner in which most of his guests came in. Simpson, who had signed the register and was on his way to the sleeping quarters, paused and turned his purplish face toward the door that had been shaken by the blow. Keener witted than most of the decrepits who drifted into this house of refuge, he wondered whether the place could furnish him amusement. Also, he was making a mental bet that there could come in nobody more wretched looking than he.

After a short, dead silence outside, there followed the sound of hard flesh and rough finger-nails scraping and clawing on the woodwork. The door swung in very slowly, and that which had sounded like a sack of meal stood wavering in the opening, like a spectre, his right shoulder against the door-jamb, his left hand

still on the knob. He trembled visibly, and, without removing his shoulder from the wood against which he leaned, passed his right hand wearily across his forehead, the long, pale fingers moving loosely against his coal-black, tangled hair. He wore no hat. His beard, a week old, completed the dark, circular frame for his dead-white face, made all the ghastlier by the big, fever-lit eyes.

The eyes were terrific. They had in them the flame of terror. It was as if the fierceness of it lighted up all the badges of misery that he wore. His collar was gone, showing the neckband of his shirt fastened with a bone collar-button. The rusty coat hung open, exposing a tear in his shirt just over his heart, and from the right cuff of his coat sleeve, as he moved his hand with that peculiar, crawling motion, dangled a long piece of cloth. His trousers, baggy and shapeless, flapped slightly as his knees knocked together. His clothes, too big for him, made him look like a draped skeleton. His torn shoes spread out as if they had been filled with mush.

The terror that was in his eyes was also in his heart. It was more apparent, more real, than any terror that had ever faced Simpson the bum, or old Sullivan. It was something supernatural—something ghostly.

Simpson shivered.

Sullivan, who had let his paper slide noisily to the floor, got to his feet.

"Hello!" he said, trying to make the word a mere greeting. In reality it was a command to the stranger to speak, to banish the spectral impression.

The trembling man sprang into the room with the agility of a cat, slammed the door shut, and fell hard with his back against it. He looked like one who has run a great distance and makes one last effort to escape pursuit. His burning eyes glanced at Simpson and then at the few articles in the barely furnished room, but they took no knowledge of what they saw. The flame of them, brilliant and steady, went toward Sullivan.

"What can we do for you?" the old man asked brusquely, disliking the brilliant eyes.

The stranger, a grotesque flattened against the door, licked his lips twice and tried to speak. When he did so, it was in a rattling whisper, and he moved his neck curiously as if his throat hurt him.

"Help me," he said, and there was in the whisper something that sounded unpleasantly like a whine.

"All right!" Sullivan, having pulled himself together, assured him. "Come over here."

The visitor trembled as if invisible, irresistible hands had hold of him, and again his burning eyes surveyed the room blindly. He came away from the door with an infinity of caution, his breath audible in his nostrils. He came slowly, his knees half giving way beneath him. As he walked, half of the

sole of his right shoe fell away from his foot and flapped against the floor. His arms hung loose at his sides.

"Will you"—he said, whispering, when he almost had reached the desk—"will you help—help me?"

Although the whine of appeal was still in the whisper, there was, back of that, something which sounded like a new definition of despair. It announced that he had no hope of finding help.

"Sure!" Sullivan answered him breezily.

The stranger lurched against the desk and fell forward, the hardness of his bony elbows making a knocking noise. With his head bowed, his nose mashed against the hard wood, he flung up his right arm, his hand shaking, the fingers moving through the air with the slow, crawly motion, and screamed aloud, one prolonged note.

"Ee-ee-ee!" he lamented shrilly. "I'm afraid of it!"

He lifted his head so that it was flung far back on his shoulders, and stared at Sullivan.

"I've run through the streets," he said in a whisper, "through the streets and through the fields—a thousand miles! And it was always—always behind me. It held on to my shoulder."

He clapped his left hand to his right shoulder, hesitated a moment, and grinned sheepishly, trying to cover up his failure to capture that which threatened him.

"Nearly got it then!" he declared.

The whisper, more than the burning eyes, made Sullivan all sympathy. He held forward a pen and spun the register around.

"Can you sign your name?" he inquired kindly.

The stranger took the pen and pushed the torn piece of coat-sleeve out of the way, preparatory to writing. He paused, the pen wobbling in his hand, while a new and grayer horror spread over his face. Then, with the new ugliness upon him, he began to laugh in a silly, scarcely audible, fashion.

"My name?" he giggled. "Somebody's stolen it!" Then, slowly, the words coming one by one through his vacuous laughter: "I—don't—know—my—name. Sort of a joke. I don't know who I am."

"All right," Sullivan said lightly, taking the pen from the other's palsied fingers. "I'll sign for you." He wrote it down and spoke it: "John Smith. There you are. That all right?"

"Yes."

John Smith laughed vacantly and began to look round the room furtively. The tramp Simpson, who had been watching him with absorbed interest, thought that every bit of the man's personality had been concentrated into the uncanny fire of the terror-stricken eyes. But apparently they saw nothing. They entirely ignored Simpson's steady, searching glance.

"Here, you, Simpson!" old Sullivan suddenly called out. "Get to your bunk! Don't bother this man!"

The tramp went out through the other door, but, as he went, he looked back over his shoulder at John Smith, and whistled softly to himself, expressing his amazement.

The stranger had let his head go down against the desk again. Sullivan, watching the shaking shoulders, saw that he was sobbing.

"How about you now, John Smith?" he asked cheerily. "Feel better?"

"Do I?" the other returned, bewildered, and lifted his head, resting his chin in the cup of his two hands.

He kept that attitude while Sullivan, recognizing the extremity of the man's suffering, unlocked a small cabinet back of the desk and brought forth a flask of whisky and a glass. Smith, watching him, sobbed once or twice convulsively while terror made new furrows in his features. His eyes grew in brilliance.

Sullivan, pouring some of the whisky into the glass, extended it toward him, with the pleasant invitation:

"Take this drink. It's medicine now."

Smith, his face writhing, his whole body jerking and contorted, fought against the agony of his fright. Then, by a supreme effort, he drew himself to his full height, like a man about to be shot, and put out a tremulous hand toward the glass. He tried to grin, but succeeded only in drawing his lips away

from his teeth as if they had been moved by strings manipulated from the back of his head.

"Go ahead!" urged Sullivan.

Smith took the glass in his right hand and immediately transferred it to his left.

"Look," he said timidly. "I've got it—right here—right here in my hand." He spoke now in a hoarse, deep voice, and put eagerness into his tone. "I've got hold of it—haven't I?"

"Sure!" agreed Sullivan. "Drink it!"

From somewhere strength came back to John Smith. There was in his eyes force enough to compel the gaze of Sullivan, and there was in his backbone strength enough to hold him erect. His big, bass voice boomed like thunder.

"Old man," he said, the glass entirely steady in his left hand, "I've come down from high, awful places—places so high that the peals of thunder sounded no louder than a robin's call—so high that the pale ends of lightning whips cracked harmless against my eyeballs—so high that escaping souls went by me like thin, white flames!"

He stood a moment rigid, his ardent glance holding Sullivan.

"Old man," he swept on, "I've come up from the blackest depths of deepness, where there was no life, not a bit, and yet worlds crawled in slimy, sickly motion, forever—where there was no light, and yet

millions of miseries swelled into my eyes—where there was no sound, and yet the passing of every thought was a screaming curse. Ah! that's a thing you'll know some day, that thoughts have tongues—shrieking tongues that lash and burn and shrivel up the heart."

He accomplished a smile, patronizing Sullivan.

"Old man, you've never been where I've been. I've seen dead souls shrouded in dreams denied—poor, still souls. I've heard dying souls sob and shriek when they were cast over the edges of eternity. I've learned that spirits die. Consider that! Spirits sometimes die."

He paused to set the glass on the desk, and the terror that had let him alone caught him up again, straining his limbs and making curious patterns his face.

"And I've come back—come back down long corridors that lead to nowhere," he mourned, flinging his arms wide. "I came because they drove me. They drove me with fear. They scourged me with terror. They whipped me with shame. A million bayonets always within a hair's-breadth of my back—a thousand swords, heavy as horror, dangling in the sunlight at the end of a silken thread—just above my ears!"

The strength returned to his backbone. He stood erect.

"They showed me no mercy," he explained, the ghost of pride in his voice. "I asked none. I did not look back or up. Without looking, I could see the bayonets and the swords. Old man, for at least a thousand years I've fled—fled with all the furies of hell at my heels."

He crumpled up on the desk, his misery-marked face in the cup of his two hands, and fixed the flame of his eyes on the wondering Sullivan.

"For God's sake!" the old man cried out. "Drink the whisky! Here!"

Smith began to laugh foolishly, a sound devoid of mirth or cheer, and, his shoulders sagging, backed away from the desk and the drink. He stood so a long moment, pointing a weak hand at the glass.

"And," he giggled, "I've arrived—after a thousand years—I've arrived at that!"

He came back to the desk and stared at the glass.

"Old man, do you know what that is?"

He was so subject to his own thoughts that he did not hear the street door open behind him. Not even the swish of a woman's evening gown came into his consciousness. Sullivan, leaving him staring at the glass, went to meet her. She was young, scarcely more than twenty, and tall and slender. She wore in her black hair a red rose, and her opera cloak, falling slightly away from her shoulders, showed her columnlike neck. As she stood, graceful even in

her stillness, awaiting Sullivan's approach, her welcoming smile illumined the grave beauty of her face. She seemed to sense the tragedy.

"Is there anything very wrong?" she asked in a whisper.

She was all loveliness and fragrance and graciousness.

"He's pretty sick, Miss Edith," the old man whispered back. "But don't you worry."

"Help him, can't you?" she questioned, and, seeing Sullivan's nod, added: "I came to see the matron. You know, I'm going to Washington tomorrow, and——"

Smith, pointing once more at the glass, had begun to speak:

"It's my enemy!" his voice boomed forth. "It's the thing that stole my soul away!"

The girl, motioning Sullivan to go back to the sick man, stood and watched the scene.

"It's a million women's tears, the fountain of another million women's tears. Women's woe! It's full of the blue lips and twisted smiles of starving children. Children of hunger! It's the ruin of strong men whom it has cheated. Poor, ruined men!"

He snatched the glass from the desk, spilling the whisky, and held it far from him in his left hand. Without taking his eyes from it, he put the heavy grip of his right hand on Sullivan's shoulder.

"Ah, man!" he entreated. "Look at it! Can't you see? There! The thing that makes its home there! His hands are too white, and he's got ashes on his shoes—ashes of dead souls. Think where he walks! He's dancing with a woman. She's a pretty woman. Ah, watch! She's laughing. They're going out through that door—and the laughter freezes on her lips! Out into the long, dark corridor that leads to nowhere—forever! And in that corridor are ghosts, grim ghosts, ghosts of murdered loves, ghosts of great intellects, ghosts of ambition, ghosts of those once virtuous. And she will meet them, will sit in that congress of eternal woe, weep forever with that everlasting troop of torment!"

Sullivan, submitting to the grip on his shoulder, saw that the girl at the door leaned forward, her lips half-parted, her eyes wide with astonishment.

"Look quick!" John Smith was saying. "He's talking to a young man, telling him lies, charming lies! But his lips are too pale, and there are ugly stains under his finger-nails. Did you hear that door slam? The young man's gone—gone! I heard one like him scream, up there on the edges of eternity."

His voice shrilled:

"Look how he works—lashing the backs of men, breaking the hearts of women, stealing away the laughter of children. Look at him—all ghoulish eyes.

His mouth's a grinning gap. And he's got ashes on his nice new shoes—ashes of dead souls."

He pushed Sullivan from him, and with both hands held the glass close against his chest, slopping over to the floor the last few drops of the whisky. There was no thunder left in his voice. Emotions played with him as high winds thresh the trees in November. All his old terror beat upon him.

"I'm afraid of him!" he shrieked, the sound bringing a half-stifled cry from the girl at the door.

His hands grew nerveless, and the glass dropped, unbroken, to the floor. He looked at Sullivan, the torches of terror relit in his eyes, and whispered hoarsely:

"Old man, that's what I'm afraid of. I'm afraid of him!"

On the end of that confession one great sob shook him, and he screamed, clapping his left hand to his shoulder:

"He's got me!" he lamented. "I've fled for a thousand years—and—he's got me!"

He stood, weak and uncertain on his feet, and wept, the tears flowing unheeded down his sunken cheeks. Then, suddenly, in a flash, fury tensed him, made him strong enough to grind the glass to pieces under the ragged sole of his shoe.

"Curse him! Curse him!" he yelled. "Damn him!"

Immediately, as quickly as it had come, the false strength left him.

"What's the use?" he moaned weakly. "He's got——"

The girl, rushing forward, reached him as soon as Sullivan. Both of them caught him as he reeled and was about to fall.

"Oh!" she said, looking down upon the pallor of his face while they held him between them.

"He's in awful bad shape, Miss Edith," Sullivan explained, his voice lowered involuntarily.

Smith, with a desperate effort, stood upright, shaking off their support. He was unnaturally calm. An insane smile played with his lips.

"Look behind me," he said, his voice low and strained, his eyes fixed. "Look behind me and tell me exactly where he's standing—exactly. You can tell him by the ashes on his shoes."

The girl, putting a hand on his shoulder, leaned forward and tried to engage with her glance his unwavering gaze.

"Who are you?" she asked.

He was silent, the smile still playing with his lips.

"He don't know, Miss Edith," volunteered Sullivan.

"Doesn't know?" she breathed, and urged him with a pressure on his shoulder: "Tell us. We want to help you. What's your name?"

There was no answer. Instead, Smith collapsed

in Sullivan's arms, his lips still lifted to a smile, his bluish eyelids falling like thin curtains over the fixed, flaming eyes.

"Very white ashes on his shoes," he whispered; "ashes of dead souls—ashes of—poor, dead souls!"

FIVE YEARS GO OVER



CHAPTER ONE

SENATOR MALLON was inordinately fond of two things: his reputation and his roses. He had cultivated both with the greatest care for many years. Seated at his breakfast table, the meal finished, he was reading a big-headlined article on the front page of his newspaper and was forming rapidly the conviction that his reputation was in danger of losing a little of its bloom.

His daughter, at the head of the table, gazed at the cluster of roses between them, the corners of her lips lifted by the touch of happy fancies. The roses were perfect.

The Senator threw down the paper and, straightening in his chair, looked at his daughter across the roses.

"This fellow Smith!" he said sharply. "I don't like him!"

Miss Mallon also straightened in her chair. If her father had been an observant man, her attitude would have reminded him of a strong, slender flower.

"But I do," she said, the statement completing the smile the roses had begun.

"Why? I'd like to know why! Tell me why!"

He made each of his phrases conversational pistol-shots. He was a nervous man of about fifty-five years, his voice sharp and authoritative. Before going to the Senate, he had done big things in business and had been accustomed to speak in the key of power. He passed his hand quickly through his sparse, bristly gray hair and jerked his glasses from his high, thin nose.

"Because he is what he is," she replied, totally unimpressed by the signs of paternal displeasure.

"What is he? Tell me what he is!" he demanded.

"He's a great man with a big idea," she said evenly.

"He's a big fool with a crazy idea—that's what he is," her father said flatly, picking up the newspaper. "Have you read this stuff about him?"

"Yes."

"Before breakfast, I suppose?" he suggested impatiently.

"Yes," she said quietly, "before breakfast."

The Senator's irritability merged into anxiety. He slapped the paper down on the table and leaned forward toward his daughter.

"Ah—er—look here, Edith," he said nervously. "You're not—you can't be thinking about this fellow seriously!"

She threw back her head and laughed, the sound of it soft and silvery. It was very much in keeping with the grave beauty of her face, with the fragrance

of the roses, with the brightness of the October morning sunlight in the garden outside.

"What do you mean, father?" she asked.

"I mean," he said, his irritation returning, "whether you intend to marry him!"

"Why, the idea! Why should you suggest such a thing?"

"I'll tell you why," he answered crisply: "Because you're seen too much with him, because he's too much at this house, because people are beginning to gossip, because he's a nobody, a crank, a lunatic. That's why!"

"Still," she said, quite serious, "I like him very much, very much, indeed."

"Bah!" he exclaimed. "Why? Will you tell me why?"

"I've told you why, father. He's a great man, and he's doing a great work. Why, think of it! He's come to Washington with the calm announcement that he'll compel Congress to amend the Constitution of the United States. Of course I like him."

"Amend the Constitution! And amend it for nation-wide prohibition! The thing's ridiculous."

"And yet," she persisted, her big brown eyes meeting the steely gray of her father's, "somehow, I feel sure he'll succeed."

He knew when his daughter's mind was made up. He knew also the quiet determination with which

she followed her own convictions. A girlhood and young womanhood without a mother, necessitating self-reliance, had given her a character-strength with which he could not always successfully cope. But this was something which might hurt his reputation. He could not afford to have his name or his daughter's linked with that of a cheap reformer.

"Edith, you amaze me!" he declared, rolling the newspaper tightly in his nervous hands. "This fellow is not the kind of man I want about this house."

Miss Mallon wished to avoid the argument. She was looking at the roses.

"You don't even know who he is," he continued sharply. "I don't know. Nobody knows."

She lost interest in the flowers.

"That's a peculiar thing to say, father," she criticised gently.

"A very natural thing, and I'll tell you why," he said, making his speech emphatic with a wave of the newspaper. "Nobody knew anything about him up to five years ago. At that time he became prominent among the temperance people as a street-corner speaker and cheap platform lecturer. He did some bizarre, effective work for those cranks in some of the liquor fights in the various states. After that he took a short whirl at the Chautauqua lecture circuit. Now he's come to Washington to take things by storm!"

"And that's why you dislike him?"

"Why doesn't he say who he is—who he was? Why all this mystery about him? Where's his family or his father?"

"Why should he say?" she inquired, her glance again on the roses.

"Because most of these people are reformed drunkards with a past that won't stand scrutiny. That's why!"

The Senator had lost his temper.

"He may be a murderer for all you know," he declared.

"No," she contradicted, her voice still calm and even; "I don't think so. He is merely a man who has reformed because he learned by bitter experience the evils of drinking."

"What do you know about him?" her father inquired, leaning still farther forward. "What makes you say that?"

"It is merely my idea."

He got up from the table and went to the window, standing a few moments silent before he wheeled toward her and delivered his ultimatum:

"Well, I don't approve of him, and that's all there is to it. I don't want him to come to this house any more. That was why I told you the other day I'd be glad to see you marry Dick Mannersley. Mannersley's a good fellow, one of the best in Congress.

Marry him—marry anybody you choose, but cut out this Smith person. That's my last word on it!"

More than ever, his daughter looked like a strong, graceful flower.

"Father," she said, her voice a whole octave lower, "I can't."

"What!" he stamped his foot. "I tell you there's something wrong with him—something wrong sure. I tell you he's unfit for you to associate with. The first thing you know, there'll be something in the papers about his coming here so much. I can't stand it! I can't stand having my daughter mixed up in something that would hurt the family reputation. It will get into the papers sure."

"That," she said, in the same low tone, "would make not the slightest difference in the world to me."

The atmosphere was becoming volcanic.

"Then," said the Senator, his head thrust forward on his long neck, his tall body bent forward almost like a half-hoop, "I'll forbid him the house!"

"Oh," she breathed, "you wouldn't!"

"Wouldn't I? The next time he comes here I'll—if it's necessary—I'll throw him out. I'll——"

The threat was interrupted by somebody who burst through the hangings at the door into the hall. The intruder, in riding costume, was blond and chubby and bubbling with laughter. The laughter still bubbled, even when she saw that her precipitate en-

trance had cut off the anger on the Senator's tongue-tip.

"Ah!" she cried, her face a conspiracy of dimples, "a serious discussion at breakfast! What a mistake! My dear Senator, no one can be human so early in the morning."

Mrs. Griswold Kane had to her credit widowhood, charm, and a great heart. Still aglow from her gallop in the park, she brought with her the suggestion of the russets and browns and reds of the changing foliage there. She turned to Edith.

"That is," she added, "not unless you ride. Give me some breakfast, do!"

The Senator started out of the room, with the explanation:

"I was lamenting the unreasonable demands of my constituents, Mrs. Kane."

"Oh," she corrected him, "constituents are things to be left at home. Never bring them to Washington with you. Politics wouldn't be any fun if you did."

She was all animation, excitement, glow. After the butler had brought her the coffee and rolls, she began to say to Edith the things she had made up her mind to say.

"There is," she remarked, munching a roll, "only one way for a man to make a woman love him forever. That is, to die within eighteen months after he has married her."

Edith poured her a cup of coffee.

"You know, Edith," she said next, "you are the most wonderful catch in this fair city of ours. You are rich and you are beautiful—forgive me, my dear, if I engage in this saccharine conversation at this ungodly hour of the day—and, what is more to the point, you have brains. Behold the modern miracle—a really lovely woman with real brains."

"Really, Nellie," Edith expostulated indifferently.

"And that is such a rare combination—so delightful!" Mrs. Kane bubbled on. "Think of me! I am not beautiful, and I have to overwork my brains to appear charming, to make my arms look chubbier, to gown myself stunningly, to disarrange my blond hair attractively—oh, everything. But you—you can have your 'Thursdays for girls,' dear work of telling the poor things how to make a living and not lose a virtue, and do all your other queer charities, and yet—and *yet*, be the belle of every ball!"

"Honestly, Nellie, what does it all mean?" the younger, more serious, woman asked.

Mrs. Kane put down her piece of roll and brought matters to a climax.

"My dear Edith," she asked, simulating real concern, "why don't you tell me whether you intend to marry the man?"

"What man?"

"Yesterday afternoon I played golf with Eddie

Foster—stupid thing to do; my knees always crack when I stoop, and *that's* not romance—and later we encountered his mother. Wonderful creature, that old woman! She imparted to me the interesting information that you are going to marry Dick Mannersley."

"Which, of course," commented Edith, "is absurd."

"Naturally. I knew it was false. Everything about her is false except her cardrums. And that's why I ask you to tell me whether you intend to marry Mr. Smith, Mr. John Smith."

Miss Mallon looked Mrs. Kane full in the eyes.

"How can I, Nellie? He hasn't asked me."

This was not sufficient answer for the young widow.

"I know," she said. "What I mean is, when, according to your plans, is he to ask you?"

Edith, her face grave, showing neither mirth nor resentment, reached over, and pulling one of the long-stemmed roses from the bowl in front of her brushed her lips with the flower of it.

"I don't think," she said, a little shade of sadness in her voice, "he will ever ask me."

Mrs. Kane cast off her lightness. She was as responsive to Edith's moods as flowers are to the dew.

"Oh!" she said regretfully. "Then you don't know who he is—do you?"

"I know what everybody else knows," the other woman answered. "It should be enough."

"No, no!" Nellie cautioned her. "Never make that mistake! It isn't enough."

Edith rose and went to the window, where her father had stood a few minutes before.

Mrs. Kane, looking at her shoulders, fancied that the graceful figure bowed a little.

"Accept this from me," she forced the gayety back into her voice; "if a man hides his past from you, you may kiss him—good-bye."

After a moment, she put a question:

"Who is he, Edith? Really and truly, who is he?"

Edith turned toward her, smiling.

"A great man. That's enough, surely, isn't it?"

Mrs. Kane regarded her seriously for a long moment.

"No," she said incisively, "not even if he were as great as George Washington, Napoleon Bonaparte, and William Shakespcare—all rolled into one."

CHAPTER TWO

THERE was about John Smith some indefinable thing which other men did not have, a tenseness and swift force that made him seem the white fire of life. He flamed through his days. He dominated dinner tables in the evenings. The quick turn of his head, the flash of his black eyes, the strong, fast movements of his hands, the sureness of his stride—these were the unmistakable, flaunting banners that caught the eye and drew attention to the masterful spirit of the man. He was brilliant. There had been born in him a marvellous faculty for stripping from a situation all extraneous and inconsequential facts so that he might see, and make others see, the stark-naked figure of an issue, a truth. The most striking thing about him was his confidence, his final conviction that what he proposed to do he would do. He was absolutely alien to doubt. And, while he devoted himself to a serious work, a tremendous task, he was alert, sparkling. His mind was electric. Physically he was like wires. Tall, thin, broad of shoulder and narrow of thigh, he perpetually was strung taut. His reserve energy never was exhausted.

He had come to Washington early in the preceding May to conduct a fight which made the young laugh and the old pray. Practically unheralded, entirely unadvertised, he had taken his place almost within the shadow of the Capitol's dome and had made the calm announcement:

"Whisky must be thrown out of the United States!"

Charles Waller—euphoniously known among his associates as "Cholliewollie"—printed in his paper a short announcement of Smith's arrival and mission. "What the agitator wants," the article said, "is action by Congress on the pending resolution to authorize an amendment to the Federal Constitution providing for the absolute abolition of the liquor traffic in the United States and its possessions. He says he will be satisfied with nothing less than that. He is not here for a compromise. He wants to force the big fight."

A few days later Waller called on "the agitator" in his unpretentious office in a small building three blocks to the northwest of the Capitol. Cholliewollie was always on the lookout for something unusual. He had decided to take Mr. John Smith seriously.

"What I want," he explained, "and what you want for the sake of your fight, is something hot, something that will be printed on the front pages of the news-

apers. Give me a good interview, and I'll fix it up in great shape."

Smith ran his right hand across his black hair—a characteristic gesture of his—and studied Waller's eyes.

"How," he asked, rising from his chair with his lightning-like rapidity of movement, "how would you like to have something about the attitude of the big men of the country in regard to the liquor question?"

"Pump it out!" Waller agreed pleasantly.

He was a stout, fair-haired man of about thirty-five, and carried a cane. He spoke in a slow, agreeable drawl, and his smile was always ready. He gave the impression that he could not possibly take life seriously, particularly Washington life.

"Why is it," began Smith, the embodiment of emphasis and fervour, "that neither of the great political parties in this country has ever had the sense or the courage to come out for prohibition? Why doesn't the party that's in power now come out for it? We hear a lot of stuff about the evil corporations grinding down the masses of the people. We read whole columns every day about the high cost of living, the education of the young, and a world peace. We are asked again and again to fight against the ravages of tuberculosis and to cut down the death-rate from cancer. Those things are not a drop in the bucket compared with the death-rate, the crime, the

poverty, and the women's tears that are caused by whisky."

He put a hand on Waller's shoulder for greater emphasis.

"Mr. Waller," he said, "according to the best figures obtainable, alcohol is killing off every year as many Americans as there have been men killed in many of the great wars of the world in the last twenty hundred years. Roll that over in your mind. Picture what that mortality is."

"Say!" interjected Waller, the drawl still in his voice, "do you mean you want me to quote you as attacking directly the party now in power for not coming out for this constitutional amendment for nation-wide prohibition?"

The reply was instantaneous.

"Most certainly I do! The big parties and the big leaders of this country have enough to say about every other conceivable subject under the sun. What I want to know now, and what the public has a right to know now, is why this party has failed to declare itself either way on this issue. Why are they immune from the charge of cowardice when they run away from the subject? There must be a reason for this silence in places so high, in places from which come great pronouncements about everything else that touches, or is supposed to touch, the public welfare. What is it? That's what I want explained to me."

"Make that a little more direct, a little more succinct," suggested the newspaper man, his attention utterly absorbed.

"Let's determine," replied Smith, "whether the saloon and the influence of the saloon are so wrapped up in politics that the politicians are afraid to go against it. Let's ascertain why men will not vote down a traffic on behalf of which all of them are afraid to lift their voices in public advocacy."

"And suppose they refuse to notice this challenge, as they probably will?" Waller's drawl elaborated the interview.

"That's their funeral—not mine!" Smith waved his right arm in careless finality.

"Also, suppose they become hostile to the prohibition movement as a result of this attack?"

Smith struck the desk once with his clenched hand.

"Ah!" he declared, exultation in his voice. "They don't dare! That's the remarkable part of this business. They work for whisky, but they do it in the dark. They fling a sop to the public conscience and the public demand by abolishing whisky and its use in the Capitol building, on Indian reservations, in the army and the navy. But they do the will of the liquor interests when they say to the masses of the people: 'We will not destroy your privilege of self-destruction. Our soldiers and sailors we will save.'

But you—oh, you can go to the devil your own way.' Why, it would be just as reasonable for the Government to pass a law licensing butchers and grocers to sell consumers a certain amount of typhoid germs every year!"

Waller knew his Washington. Back of his drawl and his cane and his air of boredom was a rare discernment, a fine eye for the real forces in life. He had learned the capital, had studied its strange army—great men doing big things on a large scale, little men trying sly games for small profit, successes with their names on every lip, futile men slipping into oblivion, the pillars of the country's business, the pirates of national and international affairs, the real and the fake. He knew the city—its beauty, its air of care-less gayety, its procession of cocksure men and well-dressed women, its thousands of blasted ambitions, its multitude of intrigues and love affairs. "They call it the home of greatness," he had remarked once. "In reality, it's the grave of greatness."

And, since he knew accurately the value of men and their methods, he had swung down the flower-hung Capitol Hill, boarded a street car, lounged into his office, and written the story of the Smith interview. He had done it in his forceful, picturesque style, and its publication the following morning had convinced Washington that there had come into its midst a New Personality. Senators and Representatives

laughed at the new arrival. A great many women rose up and called him blessed. Thousands of both men and women throughout the country began to write him letters of congratulation and encouragement. The great prohibition organizations called him into their conferences. Newspapers came to regard him as a regular feature. He had been properly introduced by Cholliewollie.

Then, one night in the middle of June, when the moon hung yellow as gold in the sky, and the slow breeze was heavy with the fragrance of many kinds of flowers, he had been presented to Miss Edith Mallon. She stood on the veranda of a country clubhouse, a knot of men about her, and, as he was about to pass, somebody called him and introduced him. It was during an informal dance, and the drum notes drowned whatever she said in greeting him. He did not notice even how she threw back her head with an odd little motion, as of astonishment, when she saw his face clearly under the electric light overhead. Most people were impressed by the ardour of his eyes. He was used to it.

He asked for a dance, and before it was over she was expressing her surprise that a "reformer" could dance perfectly.

"Somehow," she said, "I had never thought that temperance agitators were human beings."

"On the contrary," he informed her, laughter

crinkling the corners of his eyes, "they're the most human and humane beings in the world."

"But you!" she remonstrated, and added, a little breathlessly: "I mean you're such a man of—of the world. There's nothing clerical about you."

"Oh, no," he said quietly.

Something in his manner of saying that created in her the desire to seem interested in his principles.

"And your arguments," she said, as they found chairs on the veranda; "I suppose they're the old, familiar Biblical things. There aren't any brand-new ones, any real discoveries to make Congress do what you want it to do, are there?"

"Oh, yes," he replied, detecting the raillery in her voice.

"For instance?" she urged.

They sat near the veranda railing, the soft radiance of the moon falling full upon her, and making her black hair a part of the purple shadows of the night. Her neck and shoulders gleamed through a filmy scarf, and her face, looking very white, would have been all gravity but for the laughter in her eyes.

"Why do you laugh?" he countered.

His attitude was that of a man seeking valuable information.

"Really," she said quickly, "I'm not laughing—far from it. I never in all my life felt less like laughing. Tell me. What is the new argument?"

"I am arranging," he said seriously, "for the production of a moving picture which will show, among its features, a whisky manufacturer reviewing a procession of his dollars."

"How do you mean?"

"On the dollars will be the figures of the men and women his business has destroyed. It will be quite effective, I think: one by one, the grand total of how many men's lives, and how many women's virtue, he has ruined."

"Oh!" she said, with a quick little intake of her breath. "You are very direct."

He laughed in apology.

"I have to be," he said. "Whisky is."

"And you really care so much?" she asked, the laughter gone out of her eyes.

"Tremendously," he told her.

"Why?"

"For at least a thousand reasons," he answered, and added: "Ah, there's the music! Will you dance with the agitator again?"

CHAPTER THREE

EDITH MALLON, a few hours after telling Mrs. Griswold Kane it was enough to know that John Smith was a great man, sat before a slow fire in the parlour of the big house in Massachusetts Avenue and went over in her mind that first talk with him in which he suddenly, almost brusquely, had avoided explaining in detail his reasons for supporting the cause of prohibition so ardently.

"His real reason," she thought to herself; "that is what I would like to know, above all things. It is what he has never told me. I wonder why."

Since then he had seen her frequently, and he had established himself as a national figure. His speeches before the committees of the House and Senate having control of legislation affecting the liquor question had been carried verbatim in the newspapers and had found a tremendous response from the country. His gift for organization had been of incalculable aid to the prohibitionists. And, most of all, his logic, his presentation of the question to individual Congressmen, and his incessant industry in every phase of the agitation for the movement he represented, had

brought it to the front in public affairs. There was nobody, on either side of the controversy, to deny now that it was no longer a moribund matter. The fire of his spirit had breathed quick life into it and set it in motion.

"There is," he had told her more than once, "so terrific a sentiment throughout the country against whisky and its evils that, if ever the constitutional amendment is put to a vote, it will get far more than the two-thirds majority required in the House and Senate to pass it. Of course there will follow the more or less tedious work of getting the state legislatures to vote for the amendment after it is authorized. But that will come. My only concern is to get prompt action by the House. And your friend Mr. Richard Mannersley is the chief obstacle in my path—he and his blessed committee."

It was for Mannersley that she was waiting now. He and Smith were equally attentive to her. Nellie Kane had described her as the heroine of a political play in which the two men, representing opposite sides of a big national issue, brought to her their various arguments.

Mannersley came in, regretting that Congress was about to adjourn, which would necessitate his going back to campaign in his New York district. He looked more like a stockbroker than a statesman, his face devoid of any hint of imagination. In spite

of his expression of assurance and self-sufficiency, his florid features were too heavy. His light blue eyes were hard, and seemed, somehow, in keeping with his white, wiry hair brushed straight up from his forehead. His waistline had begun to disappear. He looked undertrained, too much indulged. Edith, while she talked to him, wondered why her father liked him.

"Besides," he was saying, "I hate to go, because it looks like leaving the field to the enemy."

The tone of his heavy baritone voice made her wish she could terminate the interview then and there.

"What enemy?" she asked.

"Mr. John Smith," he replied, succeeding in showing his real opinion that he had nothing to fear from the other man.

"But," she objected, ignoring any personal application of his remark, "the legislative field is clear until December. Nothing can be done until Congress reconvenes."

"I don't mean that," he said. "I dislike the idea of your—of his annoying you so much."

"But, really," she laughed lightly, "your concern is unnecessary. He doesn't annoy me at all."

"You mean you really like him?" He pretended to be astonished.

"Yes," she said, unhesitant; "I do."

"You admire this crank?"

He threw back his head, the movement making his thick neck bulge over his collar.

"Yes," she said flatly. "I admire his motives and his fearlessness."

"His reputation for fearlessness came from his brazen attack on our party," he objected, ridicule in his tone. "The world seems to belong to the impudent."

"But the party has never answered that attack," she reminded him.

"Why should it?" Mannersley asked in real surprise. "Why should anybody answer him? I wouldn't."

She regarded him a moment out of grave eyes.

"I wish," she said, "you could see the right of what he asks. As chairman of the Committee on Amendments to the Constitution, it is you who stand in his way. And I would so like to see him win."

Mannersley's eyes showed his chagrin.

"That," he said, "is the very reason I am here this afternoon."

"What has that to do with it—my wishing that you and he might coöperate?"

She regretted the question as soon as she had asked it.

He leaned toward her suddenly, some of the floridness fading from his face, and, when he spoke, his voice trembled with what was, for him, great emotion.

"Simply this," he said. "He and I never can cooperate—and I love you. I want you to marry me." He was speaking very rapidly. "And the thought of your—your considering him is more than I can stand."

Although she had sensed what was coming, his frank declaration surprised her, so much so that she hesitated a moment before she put the laughing question:

"Are you proposing to me, Mr. Mannersley, or correcting my visiting list?"

"He's attempting to destroy me," he insisted excitedly. She had never seen him so moved. "If his motives, which you admire so greatly, prevail, he will destroy me. Can't you understand what I mean? Political destruction would not matter if he did not adorn it with your approval."

"Oh," she said regretfully, "you exaggerate me, and——"

The expression on his face made her turn in her chair and look toward the door. Wales, the butler, had lifted the hangings.

"Mr. Smith!" he announced.

Mannersley got to his feet instantly, and was saying good-bye to Edith as Smith entered the room. The agitator came forward swiftly and took her hand. He turned to Mannersley, greeting him with almost excessive politeness.

Mannersley bowed stiffly.

"When are you leaving?" Smith inquired pleasantly.

"Surely," said Mannersley at the door, "*you* are not interested in that."

"On the contrary," Smith replied, "I am. I want to have a talk with you before you get away."

"Oh!" the other said dryly, as he took his departure.

"I'm sorry he was so—shall we say crude?" Smith said, taking the chair Mannersley had vacated. "It's an imposition on you to be annoyed by the differences that grow out of this fight."

She was relieved immensely by Mannersley's departure.

"Nothing about it annoys me," she said seriously. "Sometimes I wish I could help—the fight."

He looked gratified.

"You have, tremendously," he told her. "Every time I talk with you, you give me new inspiration."

He sprang out of his chair, with one of his sudden movements, and leaned against the mantel.

"That sounds trite and inadequate," he supplemented; "but it's more than true."

"I'm glad," she answered, looking up to him for a moment. "I like it, really—the atmosphere of fight, the knowing that you're going to win in the end. And there's something so very exciting in knowing

the mysterious Mr. Smith, the man who has set for himself the task of making Congress do a thing it doesn't want to do."

"It isn't particularly exciting, is it?" he inquired gently.

"Of course it is. The mystery in it is enough."

He made no comment on that, although she waited for it. She looked up to him again, the hint of reproach in her eyes.

"You know," she suggested, "I think you might confide in me."

He stood up straight and returned her glance for a moment. When she looked away from him to the fire, he paced the length of the room and back again with his quick, swinging stride.

"Honestly," he said, his voice tense, "there's nothing to confide."

"Nothing?" she asked, her glance still toward the fire.

"I assure you—nothing," he repeated.

She looked up and smiled.

"I almost wish there was," she said. He could not fail to note the tenderness with which she spoke.

She saw that he clenched his hands spasmodically.

"So do I," was all he said.

There followed a pause—she looking into the fire, he standing, erect and strung unnaturally taut, beside her.

"Of course," she said softly, "there is, if you care to confide it."

"What, for instance?"

She got the impression that he stood more like a statue than a man while he waited for her reply.

"Well, for instance," she answered, her words a little slow, "the story of how you became interested in the fight—why you took it up. Oh, I know all about your speaking and working in the states before you came here, but I mean why you ever started it."

"I can tell you that in a very few words," he replied with curt emphasis, looking down into her uplifted face. "I have an all-absorbing fear of alcohol, so far as I personally am concerned, and I have an ever-present knowledge of the ruin it works."

"And that is all?"

She, obviously, was disappointed.

"Yes."

There came another pause, during which she was painfully aware of the rigidity of his figure as he stood beside her. It occurred to her that a man faced by a great fear might be like that.

"I hope you won't think me persistent, but——"

"My dear lady," he interjected quickly, "you could never be."

"—but," she persisted, "I wish with all my heart that it wasn't all."

He flashed from her again. He seemed uncon-

scious that he moved as he went the length of the room and back.

"Why—why do you say that?" he asked.

"I am your friend. You know that?" She put the question slowly.

"The knowledge of it is my great delight," he said, his voice scarcely above a whisper.

"And all my friends," she explained, reluctantly, "know of the friendship between you and me. And they ask me—naturally—who you are."

"And you tell them?"

He leaned down so that he might implore her with his eyes.

She sank back in her chair and let her hands fall to its arms, making the gesture all hopelessness.

"I tell them all I know," she said, a trifle sadly: "that you are a very wonderful man, that you are doing a great work, that you are a Westerner, and that you prefer not to discuss your past life. I tell them there may have been something unpleasant in it, something of a painful nature."

He leaned against the mantel and took a deep, slow breath. He did not look at her.

"And isn't that enough?" he urged.

She moved quickly, catching his eye.

"Do you think it is enough?" she asked, her candid, steady eyes commanding an answer.

He broke away from her level look as if she had

been holding him by physical contact, and fell again into his stride up and down the room. Twice he returned to her, tried to speak, and kept silent. The third time he stood behind the back of the chair in which he had been sitting. She saw that the tautness, the rigidity, which had been in his figure had gone into his features.

"There is—there was," he began, "a tragedy. Surely I can tell you that."

He paused, discomfited, searching for the words to make his story. She leaned forward, her eyes like stars. It was as if she held out to him a helping hand.

"Let me illustrate, if you will," he continued. "I know you will understand. There was a time when I thought of love, of marriage, of *the* woman. I have a wandering fancy. I have often thought that she was near. At the theatre sometimes I have been convinced that in the soft notes of a violin there was the echo of her voice. I fancied that the swaying flowers in the park were intended specially to give me some idea of the exquisite sweetness of her presence. I believed that all the love songs of all the poets had been written merely as predictions of the unfailing sympathy and wonderful understanding I was to find in her soul."

He paused and looked at her, his eyes burning with the fierceness of the conflict within him.

"You thought that—once?" she said, her voice, too, little more than a whisper.

"Yes, once," he answered, struggling for all his self-control; "but not now. I do not permit myself. And I know, I feel, that I need say no more. It is, believe me, impossible for my past to interest you."

His eyes sought to compel her assent. She turned toward the fire and stared at the flames, her lips forming a half smile.

"There is something I've wanted for a long time to tell you—something about yourself," she said at last.

"About myself?"

"About you—and it was some time ago, a long time ago—five years ago."

His two hands grasped the back of the chair convulsively. His arms trembled like heavy wires.

"If there is anything you know," he begged, the rigidity of his features breaking up, "whether it be to my credit or my discredit, I implore you to tell me."

"You actually look frightened—almost," she said.

"No, not that," he managed to answer with difficulty.

He hung over the back of the chair, his arms set out from his sides and trembling noticeably while she told him:

"A little more than five years ago there was in Cincinnati a house of refuge for poor men—men who were down and out. The only rule governing the

house was that no man could stay there for more than four days, the theory being that a limit of stay had to be set in order to avoid having the place occupied always by worthless people. Four days was usually long enough for them to find something to do. It was my money, rather my father's money, which supported that house of refuge. It was called the Mallon Mission for Men, and I gave it my personal supervision."

His whole body shot forward, so that he seemed to be hanging over the chair in danger of falling. His eyes flamed anew, and his lower lip quivered.

"And I was there!" he interrupted her. "Is that what you're going to say?"

"Just a moment, please," she begged gently. His agitation had communicated itself to her. The quickness of her breathing made of her breast a little tumult. "The night before I came to Washington when my father entered the Senate—I was in a great hurry—I went to the mission—something about finances. As I went in, I saw a man in the little front room, the office of the house. He was delirious at the time, but I never heard in all my life such an eloquent description of anguish and woe as he voiced while he raved."

John Smith slowly got himself erect.

"Who was that man?" he asked, his voice metallic. Every vestige of colour had gone from his face.

"I don't know," she said, the words heavy with pathos. "I never saw him again."

"Never?"

"Never, until I met you that evening on the clubhouse veranda."

He waited for the end of what she had to say, a luminous wonder in his eyes.

"Ah," she said, pitying him, "you were that man. And I've never mentioned it to—to anybody. I thought you had a right to keep your own secret."

"How marvellous!" he said slowly. "What a marvellous thing that is!"

"But now," she concluded, "it might be different. You might trust me—might trust my discretion."

The way she spoke was a caress.

"I had forgotten that house," he said, still marvelling. "I had forgotten its name and location. Two years later I tried to find it, but to no purpose. And my condition was such when I left there that I had no clear idea about it." He paused and looked at her intently. "It is," he said, "the most wonderful thing I could possibly imagine—that you, you, were my"—he smiled wryly—"my hostess then."

"And now," she suggested, "since you know I shared all the time that much of your secret, is it quite fair to possess my friendship any longer and still keep me in ignorance about—about the rest?"

He turned and looked into the fire, the pallour still upon his face, the whole of him wrung by rigour.

"I want you to understand," she went on, the softness of her voice giving power to the words, "that I don't ask it for myself. It is for other reasons—for your own sake, and for the sake of this great movement which has acknowledged you as its leader. Oh, don't you see? Can't you realize the tremendous injustice that you do yourself and your cause by this foolish attitude of mystery?"

"Yes," he said, avoiding her eyes, "I suppose that—I see the possibility of it—now."

She made no comment, waiting for him to continue.

"I realize the truth of what you say," he admitted; "realize it now far more keenly than you do. But—but I cannot."

"You cannot tell me who you are?"

He started at the grief in her voice. His shoulders sagged. The stiffness, the tautness, melted out of his body.

"I cannot," he said dejectedly.

She shuddered, and, after she had been silent a long time, got to her feet.

"Then," she concluded, her voice dead of all expression, "there is something. There must be something which—oh, I cannot believe——"

She stopped and looked into his brilliant eyes. He stood and looked at her, his lips pressed together

to a thin line. While she went from him with slow steps toward the door of the music-room, he stood leaning with his elbow upon the mantel in an anguish of despair. At the door she turned and held out both her hands to him.

"You mean," she said, incredulous still, "you will not tell me what you have done or who you are?"

"I—can—not," he said hoarsely.

At that she gave a little cry and turned and left him.

He stood a few moments at the mantel, wondering that the silence of the room hung upon him like a weight. He, in his turn, shuddered.

"She would not believe," he whispered to himself.

"Oh, God! She *could* not believe."

CHAPTER FOUR

WHEN, ten minutes later, John Smith came out of Senator Mallon's house, he had put on again at least the outward semblance of his ordinary strength and brilliance. The battle he had fought for self-restraint rehearsed itself in his mind, but his features reflected none of its scars. Alternately and with incredible swiftness, two thoughts battered against his brain. One was that he should have told her everything; the other was his memory of her standing in the doorway holding out her two hands to him, while she swayed on her feet as a reed is moved in the slow current of deep, heavy waters.

"I should have told her," he was saying to himself for the fiftieth time, when he reached the sidewalk and saw who awaited him.

It was Waller—the imperturbable, drawling Cholliewollie—who stood with his back to the house, slowly swinging his cane, his feet set wide apart, as he watched the afternoon procession of the automobiles of the great and wealthy.

"Everybody in Washington quits work at half-past four in the afternoon," Waller remarked, swinging

into step with him toward Dupont Circle. "That is, everybody who goes to work at all. It's the easiest, laziest city north of Jacksonville."

Smith remembered that walk for many months—his answers to Waller's questions, his memory of the woman swaying in the doorway, the greetings of the men and women who passed him, his overwhelming sense of sorrow that he had refused the confidence Edith had asked, the children playing in the Circle, his calculation of what to say to give the best impetus to his fight—all of it stayed in his mind for a long time, a phantasmagoria of pain.

"Congress will be in session eight more days," Waller was saying. "Let's give them all we've got during that time. First of all, I want to print a story in the morning giving your whole theory about this liquor business."

"How do you mean?" Smith inquired, feeling the necessity of foreing interest in anything but self-thought.

"We've explained it all before, in broken doses," the other suggested. "What I want this time is to sum it up. Tell it to me. You always put something fresh into it."

"Suppose we put it this way," Smith replied, his swift pace taxing the gait of Waller: "prohibition of the traffic, manufacture, and sale of alcoholic liquors in the United States is the first essential. Put whisky

out of the reach of everybody. To shut off a state here and there is well enough in its way. It does good, but it does not regard the welfare of the other states. What we must have is national prohibition.

"Now, we cannot expect to take away from the public a vicious form of self-indulgence without giving something better in return. Therefore, the second article of my creed is recreation—good parks for picnics, municipal playgrounds for young and old, cheap but good theatres, public theatres if necessary, band concerts, everything that amuses and entertains. That is, we must have normal, wholesome amusements to drive away the loneliness and grayness of life that keep women on their doorsteps and drive men into the corner saloon. So much drunkenness is directly due to the inability of people to amuse themselves!"

"That is absolutely true," the newspaper man agreed. "About a year ago a wholesale liquor dealer told me—and he was exceedingly profane about it: 'In six or eight years we'll have prohibition everywhere in this country. Already the moving-picture shows have cut the profits of the corner saloon 50 per cent. That's our trouble. They're amusing people. Give 'em amusement and they'll quit drinking whisky.' The liquor seller agrees with you."

"It's an undeniable fact," Smith declared. "Now, the third essential is better sanitation, better health laws, better care of the poor, better housing facilities

for everybody. Sickness and disease are great travelling men for the whisky trade. It's the siekly, burnt-out man who tries to find false strength in alcohol. We must have a better general health. There must be fewer starving children, fewer women and men crushed by poverty in the slums. There must be preached a bigger gospel of charity."

"That sums it up just as I wanted it," Waller commented. "It shows so clearly that prohibition is necessarily more than mere prohibition. It is the cornerstone of a brand-new charity and citizenship. It brings with it more happiness, more health, and more holiness. It makes possible more delightful conditions than could ever obtain in the presence of alcohol. Isn't that true?"

"Absolutely!" Smith's old flamelike enthusiasm had never been more marked. "A man's body cannot be strong if it has to fight against a cancer. An army is whipped before it goes into battle if it is honeycombed with treachery. Whisky is like that. It is the cancer which wars against the best impulses and thoughts of the body politic. It is the traitor of every army of progress. Any man who drinks will tell you that."

"That delectable personality, that genius-infested person, that possessor of the close-cropped dome of thought," pursued Waller, drawing his sarcasm, "Albert Mitchell, your particular enemy among the

whisky lobbyists, is out in the afternoon papers with a long argument to show that prohibition laws do not prohibit, and that if men can't get whisky to drink, they find its substitute in patent medicines. How about that?"

"The height of absurdity!" flared the agitator. "To say that prohibition doesn't prohibit is just as sensible as to say that the man who has to ride forty miles on horseback to get a drink will do it as often as the man who can get one by stepping around the corner to a saloon. And the patent-medicine argument! There may be, I admit, here and there a drunkard who seeks such a substitute, but he is entirely a negligible factor compared to the young men who, through the absence of the saloon, will never learn to drink. Prohibition, Waller, is essentially the blessing and the salvation of the rising generation—and of women. Prohibit liquor to-day and you do away with drunkenness among all the youth of this country."

Passing through Dupont Circle, they had followed Massachusetts Avenue to Scott Circle. As they turned the corner that brought them into Sixteenth Street and set them face to face with the White House, Waller began a new line of inquiry.

"By the way," he said casually, "who are you, anyway?"

"What?"

Smith's tone was explosive. The question made his brain whirl. There crashed through his mind the different way in which Edith Mallon had asked him that only a few minutes before. The picture of her, swaying in the doorway, floated before his eyes. For a moment he doubted his ability to carry on any conversation at all with the man at his side. That this inquiry should come on the heels of the first, seemed to him more than he could stand. Why, he asked himself, should this curiosity about him accumulate so rapidly?

"Who are you?" Waller repeated, lifting his hat to a Senator driving by.

Smith forced himself to answer smilingly:

"John Smith—John Smith of Illinois, agitator by profession."

"And who were you?" Waller's slow words had in them the ring of inevitable pursuit. They represented to Smith what he might expect from the rest of the world.

"Oh," he said, his smile not bright enough to make Waller oblivious to the weariness in his voice, "what difference does it make?"

"Some day," his friend explained, exercising elaborate care in the selection of his words, "the whisky lobby is going to attack you on your past. It's as certain as that I'm a foot high. You can't duck it. Heretofore, there have been allusions to it.

They've sneered at you as a nobody, an unknown, an unimportant person without connections or any special identity. But in the last few weeks you've earned your reward. You've roused the country. You've put the public on the trail of these whisky people. And you've got to face what's coming."

Smith waved his hand widely.

"Oh," he said forcefully, "they can't hurt me."

"You mean there's nothing in your past that you fear?"

"Just that."

"And you think this air of mystery can't do any harm?"

"Why should it?"

"My rooms are just a block over, on M Street," Waller replied after a moment's thought. "Come over there with me, and I'll tell you."

CHAPTER FIVE

WALLER's study faced the afternoon sunlight.

"This room," he said, wheeling a big lounging-chair near one of the windows for Smith, "is like my life—full of everybody else's business, none of my own."

There was about it an air of comfort and coziness produced in some extraordinary way by the mixture of incongruous and unexpected things—Mexican pottery he had picked up on a brief inspection of Villa's army; autographed photographs of a President, a famous divine, and a woman socialist; nuggets he had accumulated in his visit to the Cœur d'Alene mining strikes; a rich Persian rug presented to him by an importer in New York; a revolver used by a murderess; curiously embroidered hangings, a gift from an appreciative friend at the Chinese legation; books and magazines everywhere; a photograph of St. Gaudens' "Nirvana"; paper-knives, pipes, cigarette cases, quaint Japanese jars of tobacco—all in apparent disarray.

"The people I've had to know and cultivate," he added, as if he regretted the fact, "reach round the

world. They're so many that I got tired long ago. There are so few that I like."

He lit a cigar and sank into the chair near Smith.

"But you're different," he excepted. "And it's because you're real. You're a disturbance—a disturbance that really disturbs. You know, Washington is waked up every morning by the cry that a Real Reformer is in its midst. And it goes to bed every night with the knowledge that it has been fooled again. You are the exception to the rule."

He smiled broadly.

"I'm a son of a gun if I don't believe you're going to last," he said, affection in his voice.

Smith's impatience broke forth.

"But tell me," he said, striking the arm of his chair lightly, "what difference can be made in this fight by what I divulge or do not divulge concerning myself?"

Waller puffed his cigar twice before he answered:

"I know you pretty well. It's my business to size up men as far as I can. And I know there never has been anything particularly bad about your past—but not everybody is as charitable as I am. Remember that. Furthermore, the whisky lobby goes on the theory that, when it hurts you, it hurts what you stand for."

"If they can produce anything to my discredit, Waller, they're welcome to it."

There was in the emphatic delivery of this sentence utter finality.

Waller returned to the attack.

"Honestly," he said, a puzzled look on his face, "why don't you end all this infernal gossip about your mysterious past? You've gotten by in society thus far simply because anybody with brains can get by that way in Washington. A man who can entertain a dinner crowd need never pay for a meal in this town—even if he's an escaped convict. But there's too much speculation and whispering about you even there. And, as for the political end of it, it just won't do—that's all."

Smith leaned back in his chair, the late sunlight full on his face. It was the only time Waller had ever seen him look tired.

"Let them gossip if they wish," he answered the other's protest.

Waller got up and put his hand on Smith's shoulder.

"Old man," he said with quiet forcefulness, "you can't ignore them. The moment they convince the public that there really is something in your past life of which you are afraid and ashamed, that moment you will begin to slip. And the public is a fool. It will believe anything if you print it in the newspapers often enough."

Smith made no reply. The memory of the woman

swaying in the doorway, for the moment controlled his thoughts.

"You're all wrong on this," Waller persisted. "Take my word for it. This isn't because I want a story. Strange to say, I'm interested in this movement of yours—the first time I've been interested in anything of the kind for I don't know when. I want to see you get away with it. But you can't do it in this way. I know the fellows who write the stuff the people read, and they can't get their hearts into stuff about a man who has hung a mystery about his neck—particularly when his enemies claim the mystery covers something criminal or shameful."

Smith felt the convincing sincerity back of what he said.

"I'm sorry, but there's nothing for me to tell—nothing at all."

"Then," Waller said sharply, "if you won't, they will. You can bet your last silver buck on that. And, if they don't get the goods on you, the real goods, they'll manufacture something. They'll put out something, and it will be rotten, and it will hit you at the worst time. You can count on it."

"Lies don't get anywhere these days," Smith objected warmly.

"Don't they?" countered Waller. "Print one, and then see how long it takes the truth to catch up with it."

"Oh, well," he dismissed the subject. "I stand on my work and the cause for which I am fighting. It's all I can do."

The newspaper man smoked in silence. He could not understand how Smith, so clear-headed in all other things, should insist on a policy which, in the end, must be his ruin.

"You might as well know it now," he said, the drawl pronounced in his voice. "You'll know it soon enough anyway. There's somebody in this town who knows something about this precious past of yours."

"Impossible!" exclaimed Smith, jerking himself upright.

"If there isn't, I miss my guess a million miles."

Smith's whole body bent toward him, as if to project with greater force the question:

"What makes you say that? What do you know?"

"I don't *know* anything yet," Waller replied. "So far, it's just in the air. But hints, intimations, are coming from the lobbyists, from Mitchell particularly. They say, if you don't give up the absurd attempt to lead this thing to victory, they'll show you up. They're insisting they have the man who knows the story."

"Just a threat, an empty threat," Smith dismissed the idea.

"I got it from Avery of the *Record*," Waller said, showing more plainly than ever his belief in the story.

Smith, gazing toward the setting sun, pursed up his lips as if to whistle, but no sound came from them.

"Well, what is it to be?" Waller asked, after watching him for several minutes and failing to get an inkling of what was in his mind. "Do you talk, or not?"

"Not!" was the answer.

He sprang from the chair, his alertness full upon him again. Waller followed him to the door, waving aside the thanks for his interest in the matter.

"You're making a grave mistake," the newspaper man said earnestly. "And there's one other thing: If you expect to get action on this amendment in the House in December, as you have said, you've got to hit these representatives of the people in the face with something big, a new idea. Light a fire under them. Force the fighting. This isn't a fight that can be won by the ordinary methods. Make them sit up and take notice. Compel them to act. And," he added persuasively, "get to it before the whisky crowd tries to get you. Have things fixed by December."

Smith, leaving Waller, went to his rooms on I Street. As he walked, the last drawling advice he had gotten from Waller revolved in his mind.

"Light a fire under them," he repeated to himself. "That's the thing. Get the best of the Committee on Amendments. Do that, and I've got the fight won."

In his apartment, a modest little affair, he paced up and down a long time, permitting himself to go over in detail the things Edith Mallon had said to him. She loved him. That was his dominant thought. It seemed to him a miracle that a woman like Edith should not only care for him but should actually come to meet him, should show him so unmistakably that she loved him, and should ask for his confidence. The most sought-after woman in Washington—and he an impossibility. He remembered her again swaying in the doorway, heard the little cry with which she had turned and left him. She even had asked him if he thought it a fair thing to keep her in ignorance. Was it fair? He put the question to himself. Then, clenching and unclenching his hands until the finger-nails rasped against the palms, breathing like a strong man who tries to support too great a weight, he struggled for the power to make himself think of something else.

Waller's idea! "Light a fire under them! Compel them to act!" He said these two short sentences over again and again while he paced the narrow space between his walls. Gradually he got down to something like connected thought. What could he do that he already had not done? What new thing could be injected into the fight? He worked over the problem, exercising his brain as if it had been an arm with great muscles in it. Could the new impetus

come from the people? Could he furnish it? What would "light a fire?"

He had done all within his power to beat the whisky people. How could he fashion new weapons, map out a fresh campaign? Was there a path hitherto untrod? How could he show the crying demand of the masses for relief from the one thing that brought upon them more harm than all their other evils? What——

He stopped, dead still, in the middle of the room, a slow smile driving away the anxiety that had been dragging at his features. He began to laugh, but checked his mirth when it was only half done. He walked to the window slowly, carefully, the motions of his body reflecting the intensity with which he thought, and studied, and calculated. At last he threw his arms wide, raised himself on his toes, and breathed a long sigh of relief.

"Ah!" he said, like one who yields to the charm of luxurious surroundings. "Ah-h! It will do! It will do!"

And immediately he turned on the lights and began to throw a few necessary articles into a grip. He was going out of town for a day to get the material for the "fire."

In forty minutes he was on a train bound for New York.

CHAPTER SIX

MR. JOHN SMITH folded up the papers he had spread out on the great man's desk. The great man, his face a moving picture of thought, left his chair and went to the window overlooking the swirl of the deep, narrow New York street. He was one of those who have done all things by striking adversity in the face and seizing fortune by the throat. He turned and faced Smith.

"Imagination," he said, "is the key to all things. Thoughts, brilliant ideas, are the foundation of business no less than of art. You have brought me a big idea."

"I came to you," said the agitator, "because I know that help must be given by those who have felt the force of the enemy. You, in your family, have suffered. That alone has taught you what the real philanthropy is—to save others from the thing that hurt you."

The great man, who handled dollars much as his visitor played with words, sighed. The sigh was almost a groan.

"My only son," he said heavily.

"And," Smith reminded him, "there are so many other sons—sons who cannot be saved by the endowment of churches or the building of hospitals or the erection of libraries—sons for whom there is only the one chance, the destruction of the worst foe youth ever encountered."

The great man returned to his desk and sat down.

"Let me see your estimate again," he requested.

Smith handed him one of the folded papers.

"It is a great sum, a lot of money," the New Yorker commented, running his eye over the column of figures. "And this estimate? Where did you get it?"

"As soon as I reached here this morning, I went to the president of a big railroad. He had the calculations made. They are correct."

"The cost is very high," the man of money said smilingly. And then: "You know, here we look first always at the cost. But the idea is great, the plan tremendous."

He sighed, and, letting the paper fall from his fingers to the desk, gazed out at the smoky sky.

"And my own disappointment, my own heartache," he went on, quite simply, "is your advocate."

Smith watched him in silence.

"The churches, the hospitals, the libraries"—the big man's lip curled a little—"some of them are merely advertisements of their donors. But this—this would go into the lowliest hut, into the most

luxurious palace. It would reach men and women everywhere. And I need not be known in it."

He handed the paper back to Smith.

"I agree," he said quietly, assuming his real business demeanour. "I stand back of it—for the amount you mention."

A few minutes later Smith, swinging down Broadway, caught the observation of those whom he passed.

A woman with cheeks too bright and eyes too dull turned and watched him out of sight. As she resumed her walk, picking her way on the ridiculously high heels of her shoes, she murmured to herself:

"I wish I had known one like him instead of——"

And a clerk, worn to the pale semblance of a real, animated, strong man, looked at him wonderingly, thinking:

"How can a man look like that after a day's work? He must be made differently from the rest of us."

Such was the elation, the fervid triumph, in the soul of John Smith because of the great man's promise.

CHAPTER SEVEN

ARRIVING in Washington at half-past seven in the morning, having lost but one whole day in his trip to New York, Smith left the sleeping-car and went straight to his apartment. The fervour of triumph was still upon him.

"It is settled," he said to himself, as he took a seat in the street car in front of the station.

He gazed with new interest at the great dome of the Capitol glistening under the white sunlight.

"So many things have been done beneath you," he said, addressing the big pile mentally. "So many great things, so many little things, have east their echoes to your roof—but nothing like this—nothing. You are about to reverberate to something new, something entirely and utterly new."

He hurried through his breakfast and went to the office building near the Capitol. The one room he had occupied at first had grown now into three, and he had found it necessary to employ two stenographers in order to keep up with the correspondence that poured in upon him from every state in the Union. His mail had been stacked on his desk. The first

letter he picked up was on Senate stationery. It was signed by Thomas F. Mallon, and it said:

MY DEAR SIR:

Owing to the marked difference between our views on a certain public question which you are so busily agitating, and because of the rather marked lack of any congeniality between us, you doubtless will realize the embarrassment that might follow our meeting in a social way anywhere. Consequently, you, no doubt, will observe the same care that I shall in the future to avoid the possibility of any such encounter.

I have communicated to my daughter my views on this subject.

Very truly yours, etc.

Without reading it twice, he tore it into small pieces, throwing the fragments into the waste-paper basket. His face did not change expression. There was no nervousness in his hands or in his movements. He looked up Waller's apartment telephone number and called for it. While he waited for the response, he looked through the window to the gorgeously coloured foliage in the Capitol grounds. His attitude was that of any man who uses the telephone on a matter of routine but somewhat important business.

"Hello!" came Waller's voice.

"Good morning," Smith replied. "Sorry to bother you so early in the day. Waller. Fact is, I didn't

stop to think of the hour. But there's something I want you to find out for me."

"Go ahead!" Sleepiness was in Waller's tone. "What is it?"

"Get a line on why Senator Mallon is so bitter toward me."

"But can I?"

"Certainly you can."

"All right. I'll begin on it to-day."

"That's the man! And I want it as soon as I can get it."

"That's me!"

"And, Waller, do it quietly."

"How do you mean, quietly?"

"I don't want him or anybody—anybody—to know that I care to find out about it."

"Leave it to me," Waller assured him. "Say, where have you been?"

"New York."

"Anything doing?"

"Yes. Meet me in Mannersley's committee rooms at two this afternoon."

"Mannersley's?" Waller's astonishment made the receiver rattle.

"Yes—at two."

"All right, I'll be there. Good-bye."

"Good-bye."

He looked at his watch and saw that he had only

an hour in which to dispose of the remainder of his mail. He turned directly to the task, going to a door and calling in one of the stenographers.

"Let's be as fast as we can, Miss Jeliffe," he said quietly. "I've an important appointment uptown."

Not once had it occurred to him that Edith Mallon could have had the slightest thing to do with his banishment from her home. Senator Mallon's attitude did not disturb him except that it struck him as an unnecessary insolence—and an inconvenience. If it did not worry her, he was satisfied. He would be able to deal with the Senator. He had dealt with Senators before. The lobby was attacking him in his social relations at last. Obviously, such a motive had inspired Mallon. And his experience had taught him the ease of fighting people whose tactics are the fruits of mean motives. As he worked, his serenity was unruffled.

Miss Mallon was not so fortunate. She was neither serene nor unruffled. Bowling down Massachusetts Avenue in her electric a few minutes before noon, she looked at the golden-brown and russet-red of the trees which stretched, like two big folds of fairy embroidery, on both sides of the street. It was a day when the world seemed awash with gold. A touring car, crowded with girls and young men, overtook and sped past her. On the sidewalk, at a corner, an Italian

ground his organ while golden-haired, freshly dressed children danced to the music.

"In the aggregate," she thought, "on the whole, the world is always lovely, always beautiful, as it is to-day. But, to make up that whole, how much of pain there is, how much of suffering!"

Her father's words at the breakfast table that morning still rang in her ears:

"I wrote to your friend Mr. Smith yesterday, forbidding him the house."

What an outrage that was! Why should anybody, her father even, presume to say who should be her associates or who should not? Of course it would be impossible for him to come to the house. She could subject neither him nor herself to the awkwardness of it, but, equally, of course, she would see him quite frequently elsewhere.

Why had she committed herself so utterly in her own heart? Why had she accepted, without argument, the fact that she loved him? Suppose she were called on to explain her feeling—what would she say? She dismissed these reflections as rapidly as they came. She loved him. And, since she did love him, she could see no reason for trying to disguise the fact to herself. She was like that.

Late the night before, with her brain reeling from the intensity and constancy with which she had reviewed and re-reviewed that scene with him when he

had refused her his confidence, the truth had come to her as a certainty, a conviction. She knew now. Nothing could have shaken her belief in the truth of what she knew. She knew, and she loved him. For her, those were the only two really important things in the world—her belief in him, and her love for him. She remembered a famous evangelist having said to her once: "There are only two big things in this life, Miss Mallon—the things we do to those who love us, and the things that are done to us by those whom we love." That had expressed her philosophy exactly. She was going now to call for John Smith at his office.

As far as she herself was concerned, her own intentions, her own trust in the future, nothing annoyed her. That which did attack her happiness was the fear of what he, through his quixotic ideas, his conscientious regard for her, might consider it his duty to do. Her memory of the grief that he had felt in refusing her what she had asked, the story of his life, was vivid before her. She feared to distress him again.

Edith Mallon was an unusual woman. Old Senator Watrus called her "the most wonderful among women." Washington is a city famous for its men rather than its women. The women, surrounded by affairs of state, immersed in a flood of political gossip, breathing always the atmosphere of national affairs, seldom make an effort to study and understand the

very thing in which their husbands live and move and have their being. Edith was one of the two women in Washington who read the *Congressional Record* every morning. Her mornings she kept for herself. Senators and Representatives charged with the framing of legislation affecting the humanities—better working hours for women, better health conditions, legislation affecting food, the betterment of children's conditions—found her a valuable adviser, sought her opinions on details which many hours of public hearings had not made clear. She was far more than a delightful partner at a dance, a centre of brilliance at a dinner, a woman whom men sought in marriage. She was a student. And, like Cholliewollie, she knew her Washington. Cholliewollie, who knew everybody, had told her once, at the end of an interview with her for his paper:

“You'd better look out for this woman suffrage stuff. Some day it will result in defeating your revered father and making a United States Senator out of you!”

In addition to the special and imperious attraction John Smith had for her, she realized to the full the greatness of the work he already had done. His conquest of Society, as Waller had pointed out, had been complete. That had been due entirely to the charm of his personality and the delightfulness of his wit. People had accepted him at face value. He was he—

that was enough. And, when the gossip had started about his mysterious past, old Mrs. Grover, who always suspected any strange man of being a chauffeur in disguise, had said, "If his past is as charming as his present, it has no terrors for me"—a sentiment that was received as an accurate description of the whole city's attitude toward him.

But the impression he had made on men, on officialdom, had been far more remarkable. Congress is like any other large assemblage of men. It is dominated by a small group—a little band of leaders in the House, another in the Senate. It must be so. Unless it were, nothing ever could be accomplished. And the leaders disregard outside considerations, extraneous issues, anything other than the legislative program laid down in the conferences between themselves and the President. That is, they disregard it until the popular voice—that vague, powerful, irresistible thing which they call "public opinion"—begins to cry like a wanderer in the wilderness. Even then they disregard it until it reaches a key which shows that, unless it is answered, vengeance will be visited on the responsible party at the polls.

She knew this as well as any of the lawmakers knew it. She knew, also, that the prohibition agitation had been for thirty years a cry in the wilderness, a call that Congress had disregarded. Since she

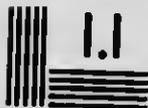
had met Smith, she had studied that problem as thoroughly as she had gone into many others. She knew the reluctance of any politician to touch the question. She remembered the motto in Washington: "If you're for liquor, off goes your head; if you're against it, off it goes." She knew that the bulk of the members had proceeded on the policy—the convenient policy—of saying: "This is nothing for the Federal Government to interfere with. Let the states or the various communities deal with it as they see fit." Of course it was cowardice, she argued, when makers of the law kept their hands off what they knew was an evil and excused their apathy by contentions that contained no common sense. But the lethargy had continued.

Then, when Smith had appeared, his first attack had been on what he termed "the hypocrisy, the smug slumber, of Congress." He had called them cowards openly, had stated in his speeches and interviews that only cowards would refuse to right a wrong that was patent to all. And, what was far more effective, he had told them, in terms startlingly clear, of the woe alcohol brought to the people, of the waste it put on the country. He had made the public see the individual sorrows of the burdened women, the pathetic ruin of the men. And, as is always the case in such an agitation, the response had come, slowly at first—so slowly that it had hardly



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dimmed the smiles of derision with which he had been welcomed to Washington—and then in increasing volume until Members had begun to “sound out” the sentiment in their districts and the whisky interests had sent into Washington a regiment of their smoothest, suavest men to act as lobbyists.

Now the fight was on. Only Mannersley and a majority of his committee stood in the way, refusing to report to the House the resolution authorizing the constitutional amendment. The House could not act without anything before it. And Mannersley and his colleagues, for reasons known only to themselves, shut their ears to argument and sat, stubborn, unyielding, unreachably by the friends of prohibition, while Smith and the organizations in sympathy with him headed the country's clamour.

Edith, making this mental catalogue of the marvellous work the man had done, was passing Lafayette Park on Jackson Place when she caught sight of him on the sidewalk in front of her. The first idea that came into her mind was that he had never looked so electric, so—so—“impregnable” was the word she hit on finally. She drew up alongside of him.

“On such a morning,” she invited, as he stepped forward to meet her, “and with such a chauffeur, won't you come with me?”

She thought he hesitated for a fractional moment.

Then, stepping around to the other side of the machine, he opened the door and took his place beside her.

"Anywhere," he laughed, his eyes all compliment, "with such a chauffeur!"

In spite of her air of lightness, he saw immediately that she was troubled. He wondered if she knew of his having received the letter from her father.

"Where have you been?" she inquired, as they bowed down between the White House and the State, War, and Navy Building, toward Potomac Park.

"I'm just back from the British embassy," he explained.

"And the secret mission?"

"The Ambassador wanted to tell me that Lord Kitchener is about to issue a proclamation asking the people of Great Britain to coöperate in his plan to keep liquor out of the army on the Continent. You know, the Ambassador got from me some months ago data about the physical effects of alcohol on the men."

"Isn't that splendid!" she applauded. "The Russians have come to the same way of thinking. The Countess told me yesterday that the Czar is immensely pleased with the effects of his order prohibiting vodka-drinking while the military operations continue. He is so pleased with the benefits to the peasantry that he has instructed his advisers

to draw up a financial scheme which will make the government independent of the revenue it now gets from vodka. He wants no more of it in Russia."

"And yet," he said indignantly, "we Americans, who boast of our common sense, submit to whisky!"

She turned the machine to the right, past the Corcoran Art Gallery.

"Have you time for a run round the Speedway?"

Her manner was suddenly quite grave.

"Oh, yes," he answered, looking at her keenly.

"There is something I want to talk to you about," she continued, "something that troubles me greatly."

"I think," he said, his voice warm with gratitude, "I know what it is."

"But I am wondering," she mused gently, "what you will say."

She had turned sharply to the right again, taking the long, flat road that leads straight into the west and seems to run sheer against the Virginia foothills, the white columns of Arlington, and the flags of Fort Myer.

"Is it," he asked, "so serious as that?"

"Quite," she said, turning to him so that he saw all the grave loveliness of her face.

CHAPTER EIGHT

HE HAD intended to tell her of the thing his trip to New York had developed, but his thought of her trouble kept him silent for the moment.

"I got your father's letter—this morning," he said at last, seeking to make it easier for her.

He was wondering that she should be so friendly, so personally interested, toward him after his behaviour two days before at her home.

There was a sharp little intake of her breath between her lips.

"It was such a brutal thing to do!" she exclaimed, "and so unnecessary, so inexcusable, so unjustifiable!"

"All of us make mistakes," he said gently.

"I did not know of it until this morning," she explained further, shame for her father's discourtesy flushing her cheeks. "He told me at breakfast what he had done."

"I am sorry—sorry it has annoyed you," he assured her.

"I can't understand," she said, "why he did it!" She added: "Even if he disliked you, disapproved

of you, why couldn't he have made some allowance for—for the fact that I was your friend?"

"Perhaps," he smiled, "that was what he didn't exactly like."

When they had swung into the road that follows southward along the bank of the river, she stopped the machine.

"I think I'd like to walk down there and stand on the edge of the river," she informed him. "Somehow, talking, real conversation, is so very difficult in a machine."

They went down the sloping bank, the long grass pulling at their feet, and stood on the rocks that rippapped the bank. Behind them was the tall, wavy curtain of the great willows. Before them the river, slow and heavy, was like dulled silver except when, here and there, the breeze moved it to catch the whiteness of the sunlight. Beyond the water were the Virginia hills, all yellow and gold and crimson, a light blue haze hanging over them like a thin veil. A freight train, bound southward, rattled across the long bridge. And far down, below the bridge, sounded a steamboat's whistle.

They seemed strangely alone, unnaturally isolated from the rest of the world.

"What a lovely city it is!" he said, voicing his enthusiasm. "And what lovely places hedge it about! It is the loveliest city in all the world."

"Yes," she agreed absently.

She was drawing off one of her gloves, not knowing at all what she did. She was regarding the haze-covered hills.

"I wanted to tell you," she began, a little hesitant, "that I—wanted to tell you with all the earnestness of which I am capable—that I always shall be—your friend."

He was unaccountably touched by her manner.

"You are very kind," he said, making a bow which, in spite of its apparent lightness of gesture, somehow emphasized his real feelings.

"Oh!" she replied desperately, "it's so easy to be kind!"

"Not altogether, I think."

"But," she continued, "I am also very humble."

She drew her lower lip between her teeth, and stood a moment, pulling slowly through her gloved hand the glove she had taken off.

"Humble!" he exclaimed.

"Yes," she said, her voice lowered, "humble."

She turned to him abruptly, dropping her hands to her sides so that she faced him, willowy straight, her eyes soft and glowing with the golden sunlight that fell full upon her face. Her lips trembled.

"I know! I know now!" she said.

Involuntarily, he took one step backward, away from her.

"Know what?" he asked, wondering.

She was pressing her lips together now, to imprison sobs.

"It was so foolish of me not to have known the other day!" she reproached herself. "You cannot tell me who you are because you don't know."

Her eyes were a mandate that he tell her the truth.

"That is true," he said, inexplicably calm. "I do not know who I am."

He waited for her to speak and saw that she could not.

"I should have told you when you asked me," he added. "I should have known that you would have understood."

"How foolish I was! How foolish we all are!" she said at last, trusting herself to speak. "Unless tragedy is plainly labelled and unless it cries aloud to us in the streets, we never see it. We never remember that all tragedies are clothed in commonplace."

"Don't! don't!" he begged. "I cannot endure to see you grieved."

"But you are so brave," she excused herself anew. "You laugh, and work, and do great things. I—I never suspected."

He held out his hand as if he supplicated her.

"Please," he implored, "do not—this little trouble of mine should not—should not distress you so."

"Ah," she sighed, "but it does."

He felt his helplessness keenly.

"But it shouldn't," he urged. "Why should it?"

Her eyes, meeting his, were deep and unafraid. His momentary thought was that she was very brave.

"Because you love me," she said, her glance still unwavering.

He smiled and bowed again, reverence possessing him.

"Ah, you have seen it!" he observed, lifting his head so that the sunlight left no line of his face untouched. As he spoke, there was a gentle raillery in his tone. It was like a delicate armour to enable him to withstand her loveliness. "But let me, in my own justification, explain."

"Ah," she breathed, "tell me."

"You have been to me," he said, the false levity lacing his words together, "what any man's conscience is to him, if he regards his conscience as his king. That is what you have been to me—something enmeshed in the glamour of the moon—a far glimpse of the lovely flowers of paradise."

"I should not have been that," she interrupted quickly, reproaching him.

The tenderness in her eyes throve.

"But to you I could have been——" he began, more than ever the graceful actor of a light comedy.

"Why, I was like a jester in varicoloured hose danc-

ing on a battlement, dizzy-high, for the passing pleasure of a lady of the court."

He smiled and spread out his hands in deprecation. The comedy was weakening.

"You know," he reminded her, "the clowns were always funnier when they were maimed."

"How can you?" she rebuked him.

"It could not have been otherwise." Rebellion against what he had suffered forced him to seriousness. "That is what I am—a jester, a thing for all the world to laugh at—the sport of fortune! Why, I don't even know my own name. My blank past robs the future of the promise of any good thing. I cannot remember. My memory is dead."

"And you have never known—who you were—since that night in the mission—in my mission?"

"Never—since then."

She looked again toward the hills. A touring car whizzed along the road behind them. The boat's whistle, far downstream, blew again. From somewhere up the river came the voices of fishermen in a rowboat. The world was all about them, but, to him, it had shrivelled to the width of a woman's eyes.

"And drinking, dissipation, whatever you please to call it," she said, her glance still toward the hills, "did this thing to you?"

"It must have; I am persuaded of that," he an-

swered, bending forward a little, as if his longing impelled him.

She turned and took one step toward him. They were very close together. As they stood so, he caught the fragrance of her hair.

"Why don't you try to find it—this past?" she asked.

She spoke the language of resoluteness.

"I have tried to find it," he answered, a trifle heavily. "I am trying. My life is an agony of exploration, an anguish of disappointment. I have employed agents, trusted men. I employ them now. The absurdity of it! They search the world to find out who I am!"

"They will find out! They must!"

He stood and regarded her, worshipping the valour in her eyes.

"So far," he said, "they have proved only that I amounted to nothing. Nowhere have they found even the shadow of my vanished personality." Despair clouded his face for a moment. "It seems incredible that any human being could have amounted to so little!"

Anxiety, something like indecision, assailed her for the first time.

"And the effect of all this on your work—here—now?" she asked, her lips uncertain again.

"You were right in what you told me the last time

I saw you," he admitted. "I know now they will attack me—the lobbyists—on the assumption that I have something in my life to conceal." He laughed lightly, without mirth. "That, you know, is rather amusing."

She did not smile.

"And it will hurt the work?" she persisted.

"I hope not," he said. "There is this to our advantage: it has gone so far, this movement, that it will keep on, no matter what happens."

She stood, leaning all her weight on one foot, her position making it seem that her shoulders stooped a little. Her eyes were still a question.

"I see now," he upbraided himself, "how foolish, how tragically foolish, I was in the beginning in trying to run away from my trouble—my disgrace. Nobody asked questions when I first began this work. Who was I, that anybody should bother? I was a nondescript, a nonentity, circling on the street corners. Then, later, when a few began to look up to me, I told myself it did not matter what I had been."

"It didn't, really," she comforted him. "People are forever asking what a man has done. That is not what matters. It is what he is, what he wants to be. If they would only understand that about everybody!"

"The truth is, I suppose," he went on, eager to

make her understand, "I was ashamed of not being like other people. And I tried to hide my difference from them. That was my great mistake. We can't hide anything we've ever done, can we? We are to-day very much what we did and thought yesterday, and we will be to-morrow, in great part, what we do to-day."

"Yes," she assented, "each year is beautified or made hideous by the lengthening shadows of those other years we have left behind."

"So," he forced again the raillery into his voice, "there is nothing more—nothing at all, is there?"

"Is it too late now to stop hiding it?" she put a final question.

He could see that she was fighting against her bewilderment, trying to beat down the doubts that assailed her.

"Under the circumstances, yes," he declared, putting with emphasis the result of all the thought he had given the problem. "Nobody would believe—nobody in all the world but you."

She smiled sunnily.

"You will know—always—that I do believe?"

"That knowledge," he said earnestly, "is to me like an order of knighthood."

She held out her hand and shook his, manlike.

"Now," she concluded, "let me drive you back. Gracious! How long we've been!"

Her cheerfulness, however, was assumed. It disappeared utterly when she felt the trembling of the hand which he put to her elbow as she stepped into the machine. As they rode, they were silent, or, when they did speak, it was of inconsequential things. He felt that there was nothing more to say. There was nothing, he knew. That was his tragedy. There was nothing more she could say. That was her grief.

In spite of his protestations, she drove him to his office.

"Always," she said, as he told her good-bye, "you will know that I believe."

"Yes," he replied; "and always you will know that I——"

He checked himself

"Yes," she said gently, the candour of her eyes like a benediction, "I shall know—always."

CHAPTER NINE

WALLER, languid and slow, entered the reception-room of the offices occupied by the Committee on Amendments to the Constitution. Then, very deliberately and with great care, he removed his hat and held it, with his cane, in his left hand while he closed the door.

It was a hobby of his that stupid people were the most interesting in the world.

"They have a secret," he explained, "something about them mysterious, which, so far, nobody has been able to analyze. Why are they cheerful? Why are they glad to live? What makes them contented? Wrapped in dreary ignorance, they enthrone themselves on content and defy the world. Why is it? It's a pretty little psychological problem which, by careful study, I hope some day to solve."

He found himself now in a position to continue his studies. The room was occupied by Miss Elise Downey, a stenographer. She was blond, by birth, and of a perfect complexion, by purchase. She had blue eyes, like a doll's, and she overshot the height of fashion in her dress. Her smile was eternal. Her

voice went into the nasal on her high notes, and it was always on a high note that she ended her sentences.

"Blond-headed, boneheaded, and garrulous—but good-hearted," he had described her on a previous occasion, and had added: "I wonder why she is good-hearted. I wish I knew."

"Good afternoon, Miss Downey," he greeted her, going slowly toward the typewriter desk at which she sat.

"How do you do, Mr. Waller!" She made the response shoot up in linguistic sound, like a ladder.

"Is that high-minded, constructive statesman, Mr. Mannersley, around—or any other noble defender of the grog-shops?" he inquired, swinging his cane and smiling.

Miss Downey became indignant.

"You shouldn't talk about Mr. Mannersley that way!" she objected.

"You are a disappointment, Miss Downey," he sighed. "You, too, spring hotly to the defence of anybody who happens to be your payroll."

"Oh, Mr. Waller!" She turned toward her notebook.

"And Mr. Smith—has he been in?"

"What Mr. Smith?"

"The only Mr. Smith in the world—the somewhat energetic gentleman who'll make the skylights of the House rattle before he gets through."

"Oh, that Mr. Smith!" Miss Downey's enthusiasm broke her record for staccato enunciation. "I'm just dying to see him. Madge Atkins—she works down in Congressman Blore's office, you know—Madge says she's seen him. She says his shoulders are just loves!"

Waller balanced himself against his cane and looked at Miss Downey in frank and open admiration.

"Will you," he asked, "tell me something?"

"Why, certainly, Mr. Waller!"

"Now, then, do you believe life's worth living?"

"Of course it is."

"I thank you. If you have found it so, it must be so. I bow to your superior judgment." He bowed almost to the floor. "But Mr. Mannersley—is he in?"

"Yes, he's in, but he's engaged."

"Then I'll wait."

He took a chair at the table in the centre of the room. On his right was the door leading into Mannersley's private office, and on the left another opening into the meeting room of the committee.

He addressed another question to Miss Downey.

"I beg your pardon," he said, in his most winning tone, "but do you drink?"

"Oh, I take a cocktail whenever I go out to dinner, Mr. Waller."

"You do?" His surprise seemed immense.

"Why, certainly!" Her manner would have been the same if she had slapped him on the wrist

"Why?"

"Oh, you know everybody thinks you ain't exactly—well, swell, if you don't do that!"

Cholliewollie looked at her in silence a few moments.

"I was right," he assured her solemnly. "I've been right all along. These whisky people who say prohibition isn't worth anything because, while the dry territory grows, the per capita consumption of alcohol increases, have overlooked the real facts in the situation. You see, now, the women drink. Not so many years ago only the men drank. I must tell Smith about that."

"All my girl friends drink—when they go out," she confided. "It gives you an appetite."

"For what?" Cholliewollie, having asked the question without due consideration, hastened to say: "Never mind! For the food, of course."

"Of course!" Miss Downey stabbed his ears with the exclamation.

"But don't let me keep you from your work," he apologized. "I am now about to wrap my legs around the greased cable of profound thought and sink into an abyss of reflection."

And he did, until Smith came in.

Waller watched him while he went to Miss Downey

and asked her to take his card in to Mr. Mannersley. More than ever before, he seemed surcharged with vitality, tremendous strength. Cholliewollie, lounging in his chair, thought he looked like a man in some way supernaturally alive, tensed, as if expectancy had tuned him to the limit of human efficiency. It was as if a gorgeousness of virility was within him.

"What's it all about?" inquired the newspaper man, after Miss Downey had gone into Mannersley's office.

"The line of duty." Smith wheeled toward him, swiftly brushing his hand across his hair. "I've come to make a last appeal to Mannersley. He and his committee are holding up this amendment. I've come to ask him for the action the people of the country want."

Waller sank deeper into his chair and became the picture of discouragement.

"It's bewildering—benumbing," he said drearily. "Why don't you try to jump over the Washington monument—or make government clerks work—or train a dozen oysters on the half-shell to sing a Greek chorus?"

"I'm doing only the fair thing," Smith replied, unaffected by the other's tone. "If the chairman of this committee is accessible always to the lobbyists of the other side, why shouldn't he be told what we have to say?"

"You overrate lobbyists," Waller replied calmly.

"How so?"

"It's a mistake that nearly everybody unfamiliar with Washington makes. The thing's a joke. People talk of lobbyists as if they had some uncanny power, like Aladdin's wonderful lamp, with which they influenced statesmen's minds and caused the current of legislation to change its course. And, of all the so-called lobbyists, this whisky crowd is the worst. Why, they know nothing at all."

"You go too far in your assumption that they don't count," Smith argued.

"Not a bit of it. Just take a look at them—imposing-looking overcoats, heavy walking-sticks, and wise looks! They haunt the hotel lobbies and slouch through the corridors up here at the Capitol. That goes for all of them, the whisky crowd and all the rest. I've heard a lot about lobbying and what it does. But in the ten years I've been in Washington I don't believe a lobbyist has ever changed a vote."

"That's a sweeping statement."

"But not too sweeping. I tell you, this crowd you have to contend with can't affect a vote—not a single vote! They're paid gossipers, salaried scandal-mongers—and that lets them out. They can't make Members listen to them. If they could, they wouldn't know what to say. If lobbying ever was worth any-

thing in this town, it's been a lost art ever since I've been here."

Miss Downey came in and went back to her seat.

"Mr. Mannersley will see you in a few minutes," she informed Smith.

"Why not now?" asked Waller, with his first sign of impatiencce. "What's he doing?"

Miss Downey rebuked him with tip-tilted nose as she replied:

"He's in conference with Mr. Mitchell."

"Albert Mitchell—the whisky man!"

"Yes, Mr. Waller."

"Ah," smiled Smith, "I thought they couldn't make Members listen to them!"

"This is different," contended Waller. "The whisky people elected Mannersley. They got him in his home district. That's the only way the crooks can affect legislation nowadays, by hopping out and paying a man's campaign expenses. Outside of that, the only voice that sounds out imperiously in Washington nowadays is the people's voice—really."

"That," commented Smith, "brings me to my story of what I accomplished while I was in New York. I want to tell you——"

He paused, checked by the entrance of a man through the door that led into the meeting room of the committce. The newcomer, hesitating in the doorway, looked casually at Waller, and, from that,

stared at Smith. The men's eyes met and held for a long moment. The stranger wore a flashy blue suit that had in it a broad, lateral stripe of white. Above a vividly flowered vest he had spread a curious cravat of brilliant red. His derby was slanted to one side. He looked like a low type of professional gambler. There was about him nothing striking except his vulgarity, but something in his stare built the encounter into a real scene. The hint of fear that had been in his eyes turned to effrontery. Standing there, perfectly still, his dissipated face a confession of sin, his clothing an outrage against good taste, his whole bearing an advertisement of weakness, he finally lowered his gaze from Smith's and laughed.

The insolence of it was so pronounced, so direct, that Smith looked questioningly to Waller.

The stranger, a smile of impudence still upon his lips, turned to Miss Downey.

"Where's Mr. Mitchell?" he asked.

Miss Downey evidently had seen him before.

"He's still with Mr. Mannersley," she replied coolly. She even forgot to end the sentence on a high key.

"Don't guess I'll wait any longer, then," he announced, going toward the door leading into the corridor.

As he went out he turned his head so that he might see Smith once more. He laughed again, this time

as if he felt some odd sort of embarrassment. He did not close the door after him, and Miss Downey rose quickly, as if by instinct, to shut it and keep out some unpleasant thing.

"Who on earth was that?" Smith asked, turning to Waller.

Cholliewollie showed real excitement.

"I'd bet a million dollars," he said in a low tone, "that that fellow knows something about you—knew you years ago!"

Smith did not reply. He had turned to meet Mannersley, who, followed by Albert Mitchell the lobbyist, was entering the room.

CHAPTER TEN

MANNERSLEY's bearing had in it nothing of cordiality. Halting after a step into the room, he looked at the agitator coldly, without either welcome or inquiry.

"Good morning," Smith greeted him.

"Well," he said, "what is it?"

Waller, still lounging in his chair and watching the scene intently, saw that the insult in the Congressman's voice stung Smith a little too much. He was afraid the agitator would lose control of the situation. He went to his relief.

"By the way, Mr. Mitchell," he drawled, as if trying to grasp a hazy recollection, "where was it you tended bar?"

Mitchell, burly, red-faced, each of his fat features a distinct definition of what whisky may do for a man when absorbed daily in regular potations, scowled. Miss Downey, by a heroic effort, saved herself from a snicker. Even Smith smiled before he replied to Mannersley's question:

"I have come to make a last appeal to you for action by this committee on the prohibition amendment."

Mitchell, maintaining his attitude back of the Congressman, devoted his attention to Smith. Waller's smile had not been affected by the scowl.

"You know my position on that," Mannersley answered curtly. "And you know the position of a majority of the committee. It's useless to discuss it."

"But is it?"

"Quitc."

Mannersley turned on his heel. There came into Smith's voice enough of command to prolong the interview.

"At least," he said sharply, "you will permit me to give you my reasons for making this final appeal to you—particularly because there is connected with it a warning."

Mannersley, facing him again, appeared affronted.

"A warning?"

"Say, rather," amended Smith, "a statement of what we intend to do."

The Congressman knew enough of what Smith had done already. If there was something more coming, it would do no harm for him to know it.

"Go ahead!" He assumed indifference.

Waller, describing the thing afterward, said:

"When Smith began to talk, he became immediately clothed in the purple of sincerity. There was upon him the regality of earnestness. He was imperious—an uncrowned king."

The agitator's figure seemed, all of a sudden, more erect. The feeling back of his words chiselled his features to a finer pattern.

"Then, Mr. Mannersley," he said, "I ask you and your committee to report favourably the resolution authorizing this amendment to the Constitution. I ask it of you, first, for financial reasons—money."

He waved his hands widely. His smile was persuasive.

"That appeals to everybody—money. I ask you to do your share in putting liquor out of the way because the cost to the public of caring for the crime, the pauperism, and the insanity caused by alcohol is more than two billion dollars every year. Two billions every year for housing and feeding and clothing the world of wreckage that is the work of rum—two billions of dollars every twelve months! And the total liquor bill of this country, the mere purchase price of the alcohol that is bought by the drink and in bottles and barrels, is two billion dollars a year. Two billions every twelve months for the stuff that is drunk! There alone you have four billions. Ah, don't smite your contempt! Those are figures that even the whisky people never have been able to disprove or combat. They are of official and medical record. Nothing can go behind them. Add to that the reduced efficiency, the untimely deaths, the careers ruined and cut short, the lack of employment,

and you have the grand, commanding total of six billions of dollars a year—six billions a year as the tribute this country pays to alcohol!”

Mitchell, shifting from one foot to the other, shrugged his big shoulders and laughed.

Smith, extending his right hand with lightning-like rapidity, accused him:

“You cannot deny it! It has never been denied successfully! That is what you, and the men like you, take away from the American people every year—six billions of dollars, six times more than is used to pay all the expenses of running this Government for a year.”

He turned to Mannersley, his head thrown slightly back, his chest expanded, his tense right arm compelling attention.

“That’s the money argument. Secondly, I present this thing to you from its moral aspects. Ninety-five per cent of all the cases of lawlessness and crime that crowd our court dockets to-day were caused by men being put back to lower levels of mentality and emotionalism by the use of whisky. Ponder that in your spare moments! Out of the whisky bottles has come 95 per cent. of our national disgrace!”

Mannersley stirred uneasily, like a soldier who realizes for the first time that bullets are falling too close about him.

“Oh,” he said impatiently, “I don’t believe all this stuff.”

"Then," Smith challenged him, his voice sharp and quick, "you don't believe facts—facts and figures that have been published time and again, and never controverted."

He advanced a step nearer to the Congressman.

"Finally," he took up the story he had come to tell, "I speak in the name of charity—the women and the children." His smile was at the same time an appeal and a denunciation. "Mr. Mannersley, every evil thing that has been wiped out of existence has gone to destruction before the awful strength of woman's tears. Have not our women wept enough? Every lovely thing that has come into the world has been builded out of the fabric of women's dreams. Are not the dreams of the women to be realized? In this evil thing, as in all the others, the prayers of the kneeling women will avail. Their tears cannot be denied. Their dreams must be fulfilled."

Mannersley started to interrupt, but Smith, his voice bell-like, his attitude heroic, swept on, refusing to be quieted. Two Members of the House and several employees in the building, attracted by the sound of the discussion, had opened the corridor door and were standing, silent, caught up by the imperious scene. Neither Mannersley nor Smith knew that they were there. Waller wrote about it afterward for his paper.

"Think of it, Mr. Mannersley!" his words rang out.

"You stand there, a whisky agent at your back, and utilize your official position to uphold the thing that starves children and impoverishes men—the thing that some day may break the hearts of your own daughters. It is useless to deny it. It is folly to call it by any other name. The statistics of investigators and the voice of your own conscience must be in accord. There is no escape from it! It is written on the face of this country—that whisky, the thing you defend, is our national disgrace, our foe, and our degradation. I have given you my arguments—the money, the sin, the misery. I ask you: what is your answer?"

He fell back a step, waiting. Miss Downey, surrendering to the spell of what he had said, placed her arms on the desk and, lowering her face into them, sobbed. The sob was almost a groan. The group in the corridor doorway was motionless, like figures on a piece of tapestry.

"And the right of personal liberty," Mannersley answered him, his voice cold and cynical, his manner reluctant, as if he argued unwillingly with the man confronting him, "the right of personal liberty, which is the keystone in the arch of our Government, our democracy? What of that?"

Indignation took hold of John Smith—indignation and scorn.

"Personal liberty!" he made the phrase a scourge.

"An argument for murder and a motto for anarchists! The cry of the coward—the refuge of the rascal! Mr. Mannersley, when will you realize that there is no such thing as personal liberty? When will you, and those like you, understand that nowhere under the stars of heaven can there be such a thing as personal liberty in the sense in which you have just profaned it? None of us can do as he pleases. Each of us is bound to many others by the golden chains of duty, the beautiful bonds of sympathy. Separate us and we are grains of sand, blown hither and thither by the winds of wildness, mere shadows that pass and leave behind nothing that is good, nothing that is strong. You are your brother's keeper. Deny that, and you deny all decency, all government, all civilization. You are your brother's keeper. You are!"

He paused, his right hand dropping to his side.

"So that's what you had to say?" Mannersley attempted to disregard him.

Smith smiled a little wearily.

"Surely," he said, "it is enough?"

"Quite," the Congressman replied dryly. "And, of course, it doesn't change the situation. We shall not report the resolution. You know that."

"You won't?"

There was in Smith's tone the promise of menace.

Mannersley, eeking the move he had made to turn away, laughed at him:

"Certainly not!"

"Then—one moment, Mr. Mannersley! We'll put this resolution through the House, through Congress, in spite of you! Do not delude yourself with the idea that eight or ten men can stand in the way of the wishes of the nation. Your committee will hold its first meeting in the first week of December, the beginning of the next session of Congress. And we will make you report that resolution—compel you! You will report it because, on the day of your meeting, there will be on the outside of the Capitol thousands, tens upon tens of thousands, of men and women demanding that you do this thing."

He turned, with one of his flashlike movements, toward Waller.

"That's your story for to-morrow, Waller," he declared, exultation in his manner. "In a little more than a month from to-day the multitude, the troopers of temperance, from every state in the Union, will thunder at the doors of the Capitol, will drive this committee to do the will of the public."

Mannersley, without making any sort of a reply, turned away and went back into his office with Mitchell. Before the door closed, the Congressman's voice was heard:

"Crazy talk! He hasn't the money to——"

Smith turned again to Waller. He was uplifted still by the "regality of earnestness."

"Money!" he triumphed. "They've used that against us always. But they're through with that—through! I'm not afraid of their money. Money! I've got money myself now—oceans of it. Their pestilence can no longer thrive on our poverty. I—John Smith—have the money to beat them!"

He paused, conscious for the first time that the group in the doorway still hung on his words.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

WALLER and Smith were walking across the great plaza to the east of the Capitol on their way from the House office building toward the agitator's office. On their right, as they walked, they could see the gold dome of the Library of Congress topping the russet trees, and on their left stood the portico and steps where the Presidents, newly elected and surrounded by the pomp and military display of their country, take the oath of their high office. Automobiles and pedestrians broke the monotony of the vast expanse of asphalt, and occasionally a Member whom Smith and Waller knew spoke to them in passing.

Smith walked with his strong, swinging stride, as if the exultation he had felt in Mannersley's offices were still upon him.

"You're immense!" Waller remarked finally. "What you handed Mannersley in particular and the whisky crowd in general was about the classiest bowling-out I ever heard."

"It was only the truth," Smith said, smiling. "You merely had failed to realize how powerful is the truth about whisky."

Waller's impatience and curiosity got the better of him, in spite of his apparent languid indifference. Back of his drawl was a very lively interest.

"About all this money," he said. "Can you tell me about that?"

"Oh!" Smith exclaimed, apology in his voice. "Of course I can! I'm very proud of that. Not all of it can be published, but I want you to know about it."

"Where did you get it?"

"You know the people who fight whisky hardest are those who themselves, or through their families, have been touched most nearly by its tragedy. Tragedies are great or small. Sorrow is a relative thing. But, of all the tragedies, of all the sorrows, the greatest I have ever seen is that of a big, strong man who sees his only son rained before his eyes, and he unable to help. That's the trouble about the man who drinks. To him it is nothing. He endures the physical suffering, and, under the false ideas the alcohol gives him, he schools himself to a perfect indifference toward criticism. But those who love him, ah, Waller, there is the sublimation of grief. The ones who love him—wife, father, mother, sister—they are the victims of mortification, vain regret, overwhelming grief. They see the sneers and the pity of the neighbours, realize the ruin that is being done. And the men of power who see their sons going

downstream, striking the rocks, being battered, their strength knocked out of them, their mentality destroyed—they are the ones who hate and curse whisky. You know that, don't you?"

"Certainly," the newspaper man agreed. He was thinking of things he had seen in the police courts, stories he had heard in houses of death and in the divorce courts.

"I found two such fathers in New York—great men, powers in the world. You know, Waller, you may talk about ambition and success and achievement, but, when all's said and done, when a man looks for happiness, he's got to find it within the four walls of his own home. If he doesn't, he finds it nowhere. Those two fathers, robbed of their happiness, despoiled of their sons, have given me the money to finance this march to Washington, this colossal demonstration that must make Congress do the right thing."

"How much have they given you?"

"One—million—dollars. One million! Think of that!" His eyes took on a new splendour.

Waller stopped dead still, his eyes bulging.

"A million dollars!" he echoed. "The thing's impossible!"

"I tell you the money's in the bank, five hundred thousand from each of them—half a million for each one's vengeance against the thing that has made all

their millions ashes in their mouths. It is not so incredible after all."

"Then explain to me what your plan is."

He did it in a few words: The railroad presidents were willing to coöperate with him.

"The railroads," he said, in passing, "don't like drunkenness any more than I do. Drunken men have killed more people and caused more wrecks than all the rotten bridges, defective signals, and mistaken train orders in the world. You know, more than forty big railroad companies in this country to-day have it as a rule that whenever an employee is seen taking a drink he is at once discharged. Efficiency doesn't come out of the bottle."

The railway expert had made the calculations. For a few thousand dollars over a million he could bring to Washington a crowd of thirty-seven thousand five hundred men and women, each state having its delegation and representation. That was what he would do, securing the coöperation of all the prohibition organizations to get the delegations together, to distribute the tickets, and to make the scheme work smoothly.

"We pay for the transportation of thirty-seven thousand," he concluded, waving both his arms as he always did when excited; "and the power of the cause, the fever of excitement, the righteousness of the thing, will bring as many more. They will come

from everywhere, from Maine to the Pacific Coast, from Chicago to New Orleans. The whole nation will knock on the Capitol's doors. The thing, I tell you, is irresistible!"

"What day will this be?"

"Thursday, the 10th of December."

"Why that day?"

"That will be the regular meeting day of the Committee on Amendments to the Constitution."

"What part of all this can I publish?"

"All of it, except the story about the donors of the money. Just say that the million has been given by men interested in the movement. They made that condition."

Waller thought a moment. They had crossed the plaza and were turning down the street to the north of the Capitol grounds on the way to Smith's office.

"It's unprecedented, the biggest thing of its kind in history," the newspaper man's sense of the dramatic gave the verdict. "Why, it will be better than an inauguration crowd. The effect of it will be beyond description."

"It will win the fight," Smith said, his confidence unqualified.

He was not dismayed by the immense amount of detail work that it necessitated. Keeping his eyes always on the final result, the intermediate stages did

not worry him in the least. He had solved the problem. That was enough.

At the entrance to his office building he paused, waiting for Waller to speak.

"I'll tell you something," Cholliewollie drawled, a little reluctant to intrude his advice. "I've a suggestion."

"Tell it to me," Smith said heartily.

"Well," he said, swinging his cane slowly before him like a pendulum to regulate the flow of his words, "if I were running this fight, I wouldn't fool with this committee any longer."

"What would you do?"

"I'd have some Member, one of the men on your side, rise on the floor of the House and move to discharge the committee from further consideration of the resolution and to pass the resolution at once."

Smith reflected.

"That would do it, wouldn't it?" he said at last.

"Why, of course. The House would have to vote on that motion. Under the rules, it couldn't avoid it. And it would pass the resolution. That would be your victory right there. You don't think there would be any doubt about the outcome with fifty or sixty thousand people massed outside demanding what was to be done?"

"Certainly not."

"I tell you," Waller contributed the fruits of his

observation, "there's nothing like a long and well-sustained howl from the populace to make your up-stage, constructive statesman do what he should do."

"You're right," Smith assented. "I think I'll take your advice."

Again Waller hesitated before taking his leave. He was gazing out toward the great lawn in front of the Capitol, where the long shadows fell black on the grass.

"Now that fellow with the beady eyes, up there in the committee room, the fellow who gave you that insolent laugh——"

Smith waved aside the suggestion he knew was coming.

"Do you know him?" Cholliewollie asked rather urgently.

"No."

"And you don't think he has anything on you—anything disagreeable?"

"Of course not."

"All the same," he said, shaking hands with Smith, "I'm going to look him up. I want to see him again. I have an idea I'd like to interview him. I'd like to know why he's here, why he was in Mannersley's rooms, why he wanted to see Mitchell. His eyes command my attention."

Smith laughed.

"You'll be throwing away your time," he advised.

"Oh, no." Waller, now down the steps, laughed back at him. "He'll be interesting. Some of the most interesting characters I ever encountered were murderers."

CHAPTER TWELVE

SMITH, arriving that evening at his apartment, found awaiting him a letter from Edith Mallon.

He told her afterward:

"It is the only real love letter ever written."

It was signed "Edith Mallon," and, without preface or introduction, this is what it said:

Fate?

You are Fate if, fashioning in every reddened dawn the flame-tipped spear of courage, you take the field,

And, single-handed, stand against the enflude of adverse circumstance,

And, wearing all the armour of self-faith, desert the camp of yesterday's defeats to rush the ramparts of to-day's success.

You, rich in the lore you learned from lonely nights and hungered days, burst the bonds of sightless years, break down the barriers precedent has built, and fling into the lap of life a Discovery—and men cry Fate!

You, with bleeding fingers and aching heart and indomitable will, crush from the bosom of the rock-ribbed hills their stores of gold—and men say Fate!

You, pursuing through the years the fading tints of sunset, and hunting for dimmer purples in the cups of violets, hang upon the walls of Art a fresh and unsuspected glory—and the cry is Fate!

You, capturing the woman who made a moek of men, take and wear her forever like a rose upon your breast—and again the cry is Fate!

There is no Fate—no Atropos: cut the thread of your endeavour—no blind woman's skirt behind which the blackness of failure and defeat may hide. You are a conqueror by inheritance, put here to fight, to besiege, to thunder in the charge—not to sit in idle ease among the flowers already blooming, but to snatch from the high cliffs of Impossibility blossoms closer to the gardens that the angels keep.

The thing called Fate is the soul of you—swifter than the flight of wings, stronger than the blows of accident, a radiance in a heaven star-hung with promise.

If you will, you can bend the frame of Fortune and hang on the palsied limbs of Destiny a robe more gorgeous than the world has ever seen.

You are your own to-morrow.

There is no Fate.

He read it three times before he put it down and went to the window to look down on the lighted streets.

“The faith of women!” he said, in a reverent whisper; “their wonderful faith!”

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

NEAR the foot of Pennsylvania Avenue, a few hundred yards from the Peace Monument, there are small hotels where a man with no baggage and a very little money may secure lodging of a sort. In a back room on the third floor of one of these hostelries a person with beady eyes lolled in a rickety armchair, his stockinged feet resting on the table in front of him. He had unbuttoned his vividly flowered vest, which let the full expanse of his garish red cravat riot down his chest. He had removed his derby hat. His purplish face had assumed a deeper hue than usual, and, as he inhaled and blew out the smoke of a cigarette, the sound of his breath was stertorous. Occasionally a smile, expressive of animal comfort, moved the disfigured features in a peculiar way. On the whole, the person with the beady eyes was enjoying life. He felt at ease.

There had been no warning noise of any kind in the corridor outside when the door opened, disclosing the face and figure of Mr. Charles Waller, who, without ceremony, entered the room. He had never appeared quite so languid, quite so slow, or quite so

indifferent. He seemed bored to the point of extinction. As he stood for a moment, surveying the room and its occupant, he even neglected to swing his cane. Life, it seemed, rested upon him as a burden.

He was followed by a uniformed policeman, who closed the door quietly.

The man in the armchair did not speak. He merely looked at the intruders. There was the picture for fully three minutes—he with the beady eyes motionless and silent, Waller still and interrogative, and the policeman like a statue. The man in the chair inhaled a puff of smoke and watched his visitors. Each waited for speech from the other. There was none.

Waller was the first to move. He stepped forward slowly and, in a manner that had the air of extreme consideration, grasped the ankles of the beady-eyed man and removed the feet from the table. The man in the chair submitted to that without sign of either pleasure or displeasure. Only, he became more wary, more alert. There was no longer any stertorous sound in his breathing.

The policeman, removing his helmet and keeping it in his left hand, sat down on the side of the bed. Waller, drawing a straight-backed chair to the table, took from his pocket a pack of cards and began a game of Canfield solitaire. He devoted to it all his

interest. The policeman, most of the time, looked straight ahead of him at the blank wall opposite.

The man in the armchair lit a fresh cigarette, and, as he tossed away the match, spun it from his forefinger and thumb so that it made a droning noise through the air. Little beads of perspiration began to show on the upper part of his forehead near the roots of his hair. Once he rubbed his stockingsed feet one against the other.

Waller, having "gotten out" five cards, ran the deck together and shuffled it eight times with great care. Then he began all over again. Neither he nor the policeman looked at the man in the chair. The newspaper man's luck at Canfield was decidedly poor. His second attempt got out only four cards. He shuffled the pack more slowly the next time, as if he calculated how much money he would have lost if he had been playing for real money.

He was in the midst of his fifth game when the beady-eyed man reached down slowly, and, pulling his shoes toward him, began to put them on. When he had them on and had laced them up, he rose to his feet. There were now little beads of perspiration on his nose. Nobody said anything, but the policeman went to the door in a leisurely manner, locked it, and dropped the key into his pocket. When he had resumed his place on the side of the bed, the man with the red cravat sank back into the arm-

chair and laughed awkwardly. It was the first sound that had come from anybody's mouth.

Waller, finishing that game, shuffled the cards and began dealing again. The policeman fanned himself slowly with his helmet. It was oppressive in the room. The man they were visiting began to look swiftly from one to the other. Fear got hold of his features unmistakably.

When Cholliewollie, still absorbed in the cards, was in the midst of his eleventh game, the strain became too great.

"Say!" ventured the man in the armchair. "What do you fellows want?"

The policeman made no sign that he had heard.

Waller finished his game and began to shuffle again before he glanced casually toward the man who had spoken, with the suggestion:

"Of course you'll tell us."

"Tell you what?"

The beady-eyed man took a brilliantly bordered handkerchief from his hip pocket and mopped his purplish face. He did it as if he had wanted to do it for a long time.

"What you know about John Smith—naturally."

Waller started the deal for a new game.

"Look here! I don't know anything about any John Smith."

Waller, his movements exceedingly languid, laid

down the cards, pushed his hat back a trifle on his forehead, and, leaning forward, picked up his cane and struck the beady-eyed man a sharp blow across the knees.

"Don't lie!" he said, languor still in his voice.

The man who had been struck jumped to his feet. As he gained the upright posture, the policeman sprang at him and thrust him back into the chair.

Waller laid down the cane and took up the cards.

"Oh, yes, you do," he said.

"I tell you I don't!" The purplish face assumed a mottled look. "And I ain't going to stand for this! Coming in here with a cop and assaulting a man in his own room!"

Waller turned slowly toward the policeman.

"Flenner," he said, "show him the picture."

The policeman unbuttoned his coat and took from his breast-pocket a photograph, which he held up so that the other could see it. It was a photograph of the beady-eyed man.

"Where did you get that?" asked the original of the picture.

Waller answered:

"Out of a little room in a big, white, marble building at the corner of Pennsylvania Avenue and Fourteenth Street, where police headquarters is located—out of the Rogues' Gallery."

The mottled face became perceptibly more puffy.

Waller's manner changed entirely. His languor and boredom slipped from him as if he had put off an outer garment. He became quick, lithe, sudden, as he slapped the cards down on the table and wheeled full-face toward the beady-eyed man.

"See here!" he said incisively. "Your name's Simpson, and you did time in California three years ago. Now don't try any funny business with us. Out with it! If you don't want trouble, tell it to me!"

Simpson grew sullen.

"Well, what is it you want to know?" he replied resentfully.

"You know what I want to know," Waller commanded him crisply. "Now tell it to me. What do you know about John Smith?"

"Nothing."

"Don't lie! What is it?"

Simpson, stirring in his chair until it creaked, glowered at Waller.

"Honest to God," he said roughly, "I don't know who you mean. I ain't never known any John Smith."

Waller leaned forward and laughed. There was in his laughter nothing but threat.

"The man you saw in Mannersley's committee rooms to-day! That's the John Smith I'm talking about. What do you know about him?"

"I've told you once," Simpson's shifty eyes looked

at both Waller and the policeman. "Not a thing. That's honest."

Waller began to pump questions at him.

"Why did you come to Washington?"

"Well, I might as well be here as anywhere else."

"You're a mechanical engineer, aren't you?"

"Yes."

"Ever do any work?"

"Whenever I can get it."

"Where do you get your money? Where did you get the money to pay for this room?"

"I got it working in Bluefields, West Virginia. That's where I got it!"

"When are you going away from here?"

Simpson defied him:

"Whenever I get good and ready!"

Waller laughed again.

"Oh, no!" he said. "You're going to-night if you don't tell me what you know about Smith. You knew him once. Don't lie! Tell it to me, here and now, or out you go to-night."

"Who's going to make me go?"

Waller jerked his finger toward Flenner.

"Suspicious character," said Flenner laconically.

Simpson's half-pent rage burst forth.

"Then, by God!" he said hoarsely, "I'll go. I tell you I don't know anything about John Smith or no other Smith. You guys are crazy!"

Waller examined the purplish face a long time. Then he rose, straightened his hat on his head, and stood meditative, swinging his cane in front of him slowly. All of a sudden his hand shot out and he rapped Simpson's knees for the second time.

"Tell me!" he thundered.

The voice, more than the blow, frightened Simpson.

"I would—if I knew," he said thickly. "Honest to God! But I don't know. You fly cops must be crazy."

Waller walked to the door and back.

"Flenner," he said at last, "out he goes to-night."

Flenner stepped over to Simpson, and, bending down, tapped him with his fingers on the chest.

"You're not wanted in this town—see? It's somewhere else or a cell. Get that now! If you're here at six o'clock in the morning, you'll go down to Oecocuan, where they make you do a lot of work for very little food."

A whimper came into Simpson's voice.

"I guess I got to go," he whined.

Waller was already at the door.

"No guess about it!" cautioned Flenner. "You go!"

The policeman produced the key and unlocked the door. As he followed Waller out, he looked back to say:

"Get it right now! Go!"

When they had left the hotel, Flenner said:

"That was a long chance to take, Mr. Waller. If we didn't know you so well, we never could have done it."

The policeman was not entirely in Waller's confidence. He was wondering what it was all about.

"He knows," Waller said stubbornly. "I haven't a nose for news for nothing. I tell you he knows! Why else would he be here now? Why would he be following Albert Mitchell around? He knows. That's what makes the story complete."

"Well, suppose he does know," hazarded Flenner. "What do you think he knows?"

"Oh, a whole lot," Waller replied vaguely. "He knows, and I'll get hold of it yet."

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

CONGRESS had adjourned, and a week had passed since the publication of Cholliewollie's article describing in detail the plan for the prohibition "on to Washington" movement. Every newspaper in the country was carrying daily stories on it now. From Washington dispatches went out setting forth the tremendous amount of work Smith had to do in order to arrange for an unprecedentedly large demonstration which was only a little less than five weeks off. From other cities and the smaller towns came the stories of how the clergy and the aides of the men's and women's prohibition organizations were working hand-in-glove and with desperate enthusiasm to make the thing a success.

John Smith became the topic of conversation everywhere, in Washington, on railroad trains, and in hotel lobbies throughout the country. Railroad men checked up his calculation that he would use the one million dollars so as to bring to Washington approximately seven hundred and eighty people from each state in the Union. This was based on the arrangements with the railroads, which meant that they

would carry each passenger both ways for the price of one straight fare. The experts examined the figures and found them correct.

Hotel managers figured on how many guests they could accommodate, and finally were persuaded that they would have to resort to the Inauguration expedient of putting cots in the hallways. Boarding-house keepers—those of the best class and those who spent the first part of each day in dingy wrappers—began their dreams of unexpected prosperity. The Washington Chamber of Commerce, through its various committees, went to work to get the matter of handling the crowd down to a system, prepared cards showing hotel and boarding-house rates, and began to call for volunteers to help in entertaining and locating strangers who would come into the city without any knowledge of where to seek accommodations.

The Police Department announced that it would have to have the help of the organized militia of the District of Columbia in policing and patrolling the streets and avenues on the day of the parade.

At first the newspaper correspondents, assembling each evening in the National Press Club—where they say what they really think—confided to each other their conviction that the plan was impossible, and a few minutes later wrote long, serious dispatches, declaring that it would be the greatest thing of its kind ever done. But even their cynicism was short-

lived. It became too evident that, back of the movement, was a marvellous personality which produced results. The arrangements were going forward with machinelike precision. The things mapped out in the little suite of offices in the shadow of the Capitol were being carried to fulfilment in Los Angeles, Kankakee, Galveston, St. Paul, Seattle, Baltimore—everywhere. It was impossible to believe otherwise than that the greatest army ever assembled for the purpose of championing a reform cause was coming into the National Capital.

Leaders and representatives of the whisky interests were practically forgotten despite their success now and then in getting into certain papers articles reflecting on John Smith, questioning his past history, and, in one or two instances, boldly asserting that he had behind him a criminal record. But they could not stop the interest in John Smith. No matter what he had been, he was now the head and shoulders of a brand-new thing. No matter what he had done, he was now doing something that had never been attempted in the United States. He had announced that he would throw against the doors of the Capitol such a crowd as would persuade every legislator under the Dome that the nation wanted and demanded the abolition of the liquor traffic. And, according to all signs and evidence, he was going to succeed.

Of course, through the chorus of comment ran the

argument as to whether the demonstration would have the effect he desired.

"Can he get away with it?" was the question oftenest heard. "Will Congress submit to what is, after all, a species of bullying?"

Cholliewollic answered that.

"Get away with it?" he drawled. "Why, the thing's as good as done already. The whisky men talk about the men whom they control in the House. Well, you know, there's such a thing as losing control."

Smith's work was incessant. The splendid energy he possessed was utilized to the full. Always at his office by eight o'clock in the morning, he seldom left it before midnight. There were several occasions when he stayed at his desk until much later. Waller put a stop to that.

"This thing's going to get heavier as the weeks go on, instead of lighter," he advised. "Take some care of yourself now. You won't later on. You must be in shape for the big show."

"I don't think I could ever break down," Smith answered.

"I doubt it myself," Waller agreed, "but you don't want to take any chances."

Cholliewollic was of incalculable assistance to him in connection with the publicity given to the project. It was he who got together all the facts as they developed each day and distributed them to the corps of

correspondents. Moreover, his knowledge of newspapers and their effect on the public mind enabled him to suggest what things should be printed and what should not be given out for publication. The volume of this sort of work in connection with an undertaking that affects every community in the country is vast. With the other things he had to do, Smith was bound to have his aid. Smith himself could not find time to give out to the various writers the interviews they called for. Finally, at Waller's suggestion, he made it a rule to receive them all in a body, once in the morning and once at six o'clock in the evening.

The agitator had not seen Edith Mallon since the day they had stood on the edge of the river and she had showed him so unmistakably that she loved him. Her letter—the "love letter"—he had not answered. He realized that she had meant it as a kind of temporary farewell, a parting message that she believed, that she had faith, an assurance that in the end the matters between them would come out as they should come out, and that, until then, she as well as he, would be patient.

Three days after he had seen her, he had called a messenger boy and had sent her a note. It had consisted only of the one line:

"Your face is ever before me."

She did not reply to that. He had not expected it. And afterward he had regretted sending it. He had done it on the impulse of the moment, yielding to the longing he felt to be in communication with her, to let her know that always, no matter what his business might be, his thoughts were with her and about her.

Waller had told him that the Mallons, like other Senatorial households, had decided to stay on in Washington, since the late adjournment of Congress made the term between the old and the new session so short. Mallon, not being up for reelection, had had nothing to take him back to Ohio.

In his own heart Smith felt that, as Edith had written him, he was his own to-morrow.

"I shall go through with his work which is at hand," he told himself, walking to his apartment early one morning. "From that, there may come—who knows?"

He thought that success in the one might mean happiness in all things. Then he smiled as he remembered one of Cholliewollie's remarks:

"All newspaper men and politicians are optimists. They have to be. If they weren't they wouldn't be crazy enough to stick to their jobs."

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

ON THURSDAY of each week Miss Mallon put her forenoon at the disposal of "the girls"—girls who, for any reason, wanted her help or advice. She believed in personal charity—the right word at the right time, the revival of hope, the strengthening of purpose, the taking hold again of high ideals.

"If they want to find work," she explained, "I can often help them. If they are in search of consolation, I can always help them. Women are so brave, but they have so much to fight against. Theirs is never the short, sharp struggle, the doing of big and startling things. Their fate is the little drudgeries, the heartbreaking trifles. Girls, all girls, are wonderful."

Miss Mallon's "Thursday for girls" had become a Washington institution. No girl was refused admittance. None ever failed to see her.

Her first visitor on this particular Thursday was Mrs. Griswold Kane.

Mrs. Kane added a general fluffiness to the atmosphere—fluffiness and gossip. She knew everybody and everything. That, she frequently explained, was

the essence of real living—that, and to know always that men were perfectly and absolutely unreliable.

“History,” she confided to Edith, sinking into a chair so big that it accentuated in an absurd manner her chubbiness, “repeats itself in a most annoying way. Things began to happen in this part of the world when one John Smith came over here from England. Now, everything that happens in Washington revolves around John Smith.”

“What have you heard?” asked Edith, recognizing the generality as an introduction to specific information.

“I have heard a most wonderful thing, my dear. It is complete in plot, detail, and theme.”

“What is it?”

“You are engaged to be married to John Smith, and, as your father dislikes him intensely, you see him only by stealth—at long intervals.”

Edith looked troubled.

“I hope,” she said seriously, “he will not hear it. It would be too bad for such gossip to disturb him at such a time as this when he needs all his thought and all his energy for his work.”

“You hope it don’t disturb *him!*” Mrs. Kane’s eyes became very round with a real astonishment.

“How about its disturbing you?”

“It doesn’t at all.”

“But I hear it everywhere! Mrs. Grover told

me—and Colonel Grimshaw—and Mrs. Ellis—and that Miss—oh, what's her name? She's single, but at the same time doubleminded—Miss Tevers—Carrie Tevers. And Elizabeth Beaureman—and—and the whole of Washington!”

This time Edith smiled.

“Really,” she said, “it doesn't annoy me in the least.”

“Edith Mallon, do you mean to tell me you'd think of marrying a reformer—this agitator?” Mrs. Kane's astonishment was stupendous.

“He hasn't asked me, Nellie.” Edith gave her the information with a little laugh.

“But if he does ask you?”

“If I tell you, you won't tell?”

“No.”

“If he asked me, I'd marry him to-morrow—this minute—any time.”

“But you don't know who he is!”

“I don't care.”

“And you love him?”

“Don't you think so?”

Mrs. Kane began to laugh, and changed her mind. She leaned far back in the ridiculously large chair and looked at Edith with a glance that, for once, was preternaturally solemn. Something like tears—something like the mist after rain—came like a curtain over the soft blue of her eyes. Then, impul-

sively, she sprang up and went over to Edith and kissed her.

"Anyway," she said, a little wildly, "I think you've more sense about it than anybody else in the world. My God! I get so tired of these imitation men with their money and these other men with their imitation money that I could scream! What I'd like to have is what I once had—some man to make me feel that he was the whole world, some man with real thoughts and real arms, somebody to laugh at me when I tried to tyrannize over him, somebody to make me know that I was nothing but a woman—for him!"

Edith, looking up at her, was tremendously surprised.

"Why, Nellie," she said, taking one of her hands, "I never—I never dreamed you thought this way about—things."

Mrs. Kane laughed, to cover up the fact that she was ashamed of having shown so much real feeling.

"Oh, you're like all the rest," she jeered lightly. "You think because a woman's a widow she has solved the problem of how to turn her heart to stone! But you take my advice: The man's the thing. There isn't anything else in the world that matters that much." She snapped her fingers by way of illustration.

Edith patted the hand she held.

"Of course," she said, "you're right. And now you know why I don't like to think of his being annoyed by this crazy talk about an engagement."

Mrs. Kane went back to her chair and sat down. She wore an air of contrition, as if she had broken her code or infringed on her rules by exposing her own heart.

"Tell me," she asked, putting lightness into the query; "you think he's going to ask you to marry him?"

Edith laughed whole-heartedly.

"I feel very sure."

"Well," Nellie gave it as her critical judgment, "I don't know what the man's past has been, but I will say this: he has a glorious future ahead of him."

Wales lifted the hangings at the door.

"Miss Downey," he announced.

Elise made her entrance exactly as she had built it up in her own mind and rehearsed it before her own bedroom mirror. There was in it only one flaw: something in her manner indicated vaguely that she regarded with awe the wooden-faced Wales. She was glad, it appeared, to get past him.

"I wanted to see Miss Mallon," she said, her concluding high note in perfect working order.

Edith went forward to meet her.

"I am Miss Mallon," she said, "and this is Mrs. Kane."

Elise shook hands with Edith and, in the midst of it, gave Nellie a bow slantwise.

"Glad to meet you!" She made the statement include both women.

Edith motioned her to a chair, which she took carelessly, not expecting the resilience of the springs, which let her down too far and bounced her back too high.

"I didn't come to ask for any help"—she began the conversation as she had intended beforehand—"fact is, I came to give some."

She looked at Mrs. Kane and turned again to Edith.

"Could I have a confidential talk with you?" she inquired blandly.

Her skirt was too narrow, and the unexpected action of the chair-springs had resulted in lifting it too high. The lack of ease that she felt on this account hurried her to the main point.

Nellie rose at once.

"Why, of course," she said. "I'm going into the music-room. Shall I play, Edith?"

"Yes, please."

Miss Mallon turned to Miss Downey with a look of inquiry. Nellie, in the music-room, opened the piano and began on "Nights of Gladness." Elise tucked one of her blond locks back up under her little round hat and passed her hand over her right

cheek. She was sure the purchased complexion was faultless.

"Suppose I make a little explanation first?" she suggested.

"Why, certainly," Edith agreed, really expecting some preliminary to a request for help of some kind.

"Then, I'll tell you"—Elise leant forward in her chair and became confiding—"I've a lot of heart. You know what I mean, don't you? I'm romantic. I mean I like real romance. It appeals to me. I suppose it appeals to any girl who's got real heart—don't you?"

"Of course." Edith was all encouragement.

"Well, that's me. I'm really romantic. I don't mean any of this mush the men try to hand you, but great, big heart events—the real things in life. They interest me. You take a girl with the right sort of feelings, and she likes love stories and things like that, don't she?"

"Naturally." Miss Mallon was thinking that Miss Downey was paraphrasing in her own language some of the things Mrs. Kane had said.

Elise's words flowed more and more freely. Miss Mallon, she decided, was like all other girls—with heart.

"And you can't fool a girl who's like that, can you? I mean her ideas and her intuitions. I've got heart and I've got intuitions. And I know I'm right.

Intuitions make up some of this story I've got to tell you. You believe a girl who has real deep feelings knows things, don't you?"

"Yes."

Elise was completely satisfied.

"I knew you would! From all I'd heard about you, I knew you were all right. That's why I came—that, and I do love real romance! My name's Elise Downcy, and I'm a stenographer in Congressman Mannersley's offices when he's in town."

"Mr. Mannersley's?"

For some reason which she could not explain then or afterward, Edith's attention was caught by the girl in a remarkable manner. She felt at once that what she was about to hear concerned herself nearly.

"Yes, Mr. Mannersley's. That's why I'm here. You know, I know now, just as soon as I've looked at you, there ain't anything to that story about your being in love with him. There ain't—is there?"

Elise's evident and deep concern took out of her question all its impertinence.

Edith smiled.

"No, nothing," she answered.

"I'm so glad!" Elise sighed audibly. "It shows I was right. I tell you, a girl who has heart is almost always right. Now, I'll tell you—there's somebody in this town trying to ruin that Mr. Smith—you know the man they say you're in love with."

"How do you mean—ruin him?" Edith asked the question very slowly.

"There's somebody that knows something about his past."

"Who knows it?" This time it was the older woman who leaned forward.

"A horrid man—a man named Simpson."

"What does he know? Tell me, child, what does he know?"

Elise gave her opinion.

"It's something awful," she said, her doll-like eyes looking like moons.

Edith got up and went over and sat down beside her.

"Something awful?" she questioned.

"So awful that it's going to ruin Mr. Smith."

Edith unconsciously grasped her by the arm.

"Tell me! Tell me!" she said, a little fiercely.

"What is it?"

While Edith clung to her arm, Elise elaborated her story.

"Mr. Simpson was up in the offices looking for Mr. Mannersley. He said he had something important to tell Mr. Mannersley. Then he ran into Mr. Mitchell, the whisky man, and I heard him tell Mr. Mitchell he knew who Mr. Smith was. I couldn't hear much because I was over at my desk in the corner and they talked low. Mr. Mitchell looked around

in a minute and saw I was listening. So they went into the committee meeting-room and had a talk, and then Mr. Mitchell left the Simpson man in there while he went in to talk to Mr. Mannersley. It was the day Mr. Smith came up there—and Mr. Waller was there, and——”

“You say Mr. Waller was there—when?” Edith’s brows were drawn together. She was trying to visualize everything Elise was saying.

“Mr. Waller didn’t hear any of the conversation. He came in a little ahead of Mr. Smith, but he saw the funny look Simpson gave Mr. Smith when he met him on his way out.”

Edith still had hold of the girl’s arm.

“Tell me!” she said tensely. “What is it you think this man Simpson knows?”

“It’s something about a woman—something disgraceful.” Elise made the statement positively.

“Why do you say that? Tell me! Why do you say that?”

“I caught the word ‘woman’ and something about ‘left’ before they went into the next room,” Elise explaining how she had worked out her theory. “And—and the rest was intuition—woman’s intuition, you see.”

For a moment Edith was suspicious. It flashed into her mind that, for some reason, the agitator’s enemies wanted to discredit him with her.

"Why have you come to me with this story?" she demanded, shaking Elise's arm.

Elise looked at her in unfeigned amazement.

"Why"—she took a great flight into the high notes—"you and Mr. Smith love one another, don't you?"

Edith still was avid of information.

"And that's why you came to me?"

"Why, of course! Didn't I tell you I liked romance, real romance? Ain't I got a heart, deep feelings, and all that? Everybody knows you're crazy about him. And I don't blame you. His eyes are just dears! And I said to myself you ought to hear this story—and I couldn't go to him. But with you, being a woman, it was different."

"Yes, of course," Edith agreed dully. She was groping for ideas, some thought of what to do or say.

"I know it's important," Elise insisted, "because Mr. Mitchell came to see me day before yesterday and took me out to dinner last night. He bought me three cocktails and wanted to buy me some more, but I wouldn't take 'em. I ain't been under the influence of alcohol—that is, strictly speaking—in all my life."

"What did he want?"

"He wanted to find out what I had heard, how much I had heard, of that talk in the office that day between him and Mr. Simpson. But I was too wise for him. Indeed, I was. You see, as soon as he

began talking about it, I knew it must be important. So that made me shut up. I let on that I hadn't heard a word. I thought, as it was important, I ought to tell it to you because you love the man. See?"

"Yes, oh, yes; I see."

It did not occur even in a remote way to Edith to deny or discuss her love for John Smith. All she sensed was that the girl before her had told her a story which might mean his ruin and hers—the destruction of their hope of happiness. And blindly, vaguely, the pity of it came home to her. It was as if she had heard the story of a plot to stab a man in the back, to strike him from the dark—a great, strong man who, at that moment, was doing a thing which commanded the attention of the whole country, a thing that must result beneficently for the nation.

"You think," she said, "it is about a woman?"

"Yes. And I think they're going to show him up. That's what I think."

"It may be. It may be."

"I'll tell you why. When I wouldn't tell Mr. Mitchell I had heard anything, he was awful impolite about it, real rude. He said I thought I was awful slick about it, not to tell him everything I'd heard, but there wasn't any use in me thinking I could help anybody else with it. He said if I tried to interfere,

it wouldn't matter, because they had the goods on Smith. That was what he said."

Edith took her hand from Elise's arm.

"I think I know what to do," she said, with no great show of confidence. "I think I do. You won't—of course you won't say anything about this to anybody else—anybody else at all?"

The insinuation hurt Elise's pride.

"Don't ask me that!" she answered indignantly. "Have I said anything about it? Didn't I come up here with it because I knew the man loved you, and you loved him?"

"Forgive me," Edith begged anxiously. "I didn't mean that—really."

Elise was mollified.

"It's all right," she smiled. "I'm glad I could do you the favour. I thought you'd know what to do. You know, you can't fool a girl that's got heart—and intuition."

Edith already was making up her mind as to what she should do.

"You don't know where I could—where this Simpson could be found?" she asked.

"No. I haven't seen him since. You might find him in some saloon, I reckon. Maybe Mr. Waller might get hold of him."

"That," Edith said, "was what I was thinking."

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

BISHOP REXALL, the head of the biggest diocese of a great church, had been glad to receive Mr. John Smith.

"Tell me," he said, "what is it you wish?"

His thin, sensitive lips moved slowly, as if he had learned long ago the power of all spoken words. He drummed lightly on the arm of his chair with his long, slender fingers, and his clear, gray eyes, as he looked at the agitator, were eloquent of wisdom and understanding. In spite of his white hair and his great age, he was strong. His strength was evident even as he sat far down in his chair, so that he seemed to rest on the small of his back, his legs crossed, his right foot moving slowly up and down with the regularity of a pendulum. His benevolence was upon him like a mantle. Any one, upon seeing him, sensed it and knew it, almost as if it had been a tangible, visible thing.

It was within three weeks of the date set for the "prohibition parade"—this being the name the public had given the demonstration. Smith, his wonderful vivacity undiminished by the work he had done and

was doing, had come into the room with his accustomed flamelike ardour—and this had suggested to the bishop the atmosphere of youth that always was about John Smith. The older man marvelled that one who seemed so young could have accomplished so much, or could have persuaded others to go with him into the undertaking.

“It is very simple, what I have come to ask,” Smith explained. “I am very anxious to have you lead the multitude in prayer, up there on the east steps of the Capitol at noon on December 10th.”

The bishop put the tips of his slender fingers together so that, with his elbows resting on the chair-arms, they made a gable over which he looked at the agitator. He smiled gently.

“There will be prayer?” he asked.

“Why, certainly!”

The bishop moved his hands slowly so that the gable divided and then shut again.

“Why?” he inquired.

Smith sprang to his feet.

“Why, bishop,” he said, stating a self-evident proposition with the enthusiasm that always was in him, “there must be prayer! The opposition to whisky was born in the prayers of women, has been fostered in the prayers of women, has gained its full strength from the prayers of women. It is the women who really know how to pray. It is particularly

the women who know how to pray for the success of this movement. That is why, at the crucial moment, such a gathering, in which women will predominate, should be led in prayer. You may say that this is a political thing, that there may be in the crowd those who are irreligious or indifferent to the church, that this is merely a big show, a spectacular performance to gain a certain end. But I do not believe there is a living soul totally irreligious or entirely indifferent to the majesty of praying thousands. And this is not politics. It is salvation! It is mercy! It is morality! It is the destruction of the most hideous evil against which we have to fight."

He stood and looked at the bishop expectantly.

The bishop let the gabled fingers rest lightly upon his lips.

"The prayers of women!" he said in a low tone, as if his lips, in forming the phrase, handled a sacred thing; "the prayers of women!"

He looked up over his hands at Smith and smiled.

"Sit down, my son," he said gently.

He looked down at his slowly moving foot and up again at Smith. The smile on his face was like an old and exquisite picture, subdued, delicate, rich in memories.

"There is something I remember," he explained, "something you might like to hear."

His manner suggested vaguely the opening of a treasure-chest and the bringing forth of precious things for the scrutiny of appreciative eyes.

"I was twenty-four years old when I entered the ministry," he began. "Before that my friends were the usual young man's friends. There was one— young and married—of whom I was particularly fond. I loved him. He had a way with him—a way!"

The bishop closed his eyes for a moment. When he opened them again, they were untroubled.

"That has been so long ago! There were times when he drank too much. Those times became more and more frequent. One night I took him home— into his house. His wife met us at the door. She was very calm. I don't remember that she did anything much to attract my attention particularly, except that she wrung her hands one against the other very slowly and very monotonously. I suppose, my son, when one's whole soul is tortured, it is not easy to command the muscles of one's whole body. She did not know about her hands. Perhaps she had wrung them that way, one against the other, slowly and monotonously, many nights before. At any rate, she had schooled her eyes against tears."

The bishop let his hands fall to the arms of his chair and looked up at Smith a long time.

"She let me look after her husband. I went into

the bathroom to get some cold water. She had washed her handkerchiefs and spread them on the mirror in the bathroom to let them dry. It seemed that it was necessary for her to economize that way on the laundry bills. It had become necessary."

The bishop lifted his hands slowly and made out of them a little gable again.

"The little miseries, the dreary little economies of such houses," he said, "are legion. But the sermon of those handkerchiefs—it was powerful. The next day I decided to go into the ministry."

He paused long enough to convey the impression that he was closing the treasure-chest which he had opened that day for the first time in many years.

"The little miseries, the humiliations, those are the things with which such men break the hearts of such women. That is why the women pray. That is why they have to pray. She did not live long. I think she wanted to die. I don't think she could have wrung her hands, one against the other, so slowly, so monotonously, if she had not prayed to die."

The bishop looked down at his swinging foot.

"You"—the agitator made the statement without thought of curiosity—"had loved her."

"She had been to me," the bishop said softly, "all the flowers of summer, but——" He waved his

hands gently. "A woman loves where she loves, and is very brave. That is all."

He closed his eyes again. When he opened them the picturelike smile, exquisite, delicate, was on his face.

"The prayers of women!" he said, the note of reverence in his words.

John Smith was profoundly moved. He stood up and took one of the bishop's slender hands in both of his.

"Then," he said, a little tremulous, "you will lead the prayers at the Capitol?"

"Oh, yes. And about the west front of the Capitol? The crowd will be all around the building. There is Fraydon—Bishop Fraydon, you know. I will see that he helps, that he stands on the west front. Don't you think that would be well?"

"If you only will!" Smith accepted the offer with intense gratitude. "There will be choristers, you know, a tremendous choir. They are rehearsing every day now—a thousand voices."

The old man got slowly to his feet and put his hand on the young man's shoulder.

"You are doing," he said, "what any man would be proud to do. Your youth! How gorgeous it is! And it is from such a man as you that the call for this reform must come. From the lips of old age the cry falls with a certain weakness—having in it

the provocation to mockery, as if men might say: 'He is old; his blood has dried up within him; he chatters coldly of virtues; he has forgotten that he once was human.' It is so, my son—just as they say sometimes of the churches: 'Naturally, they preach against whisky, but the cry has in it nothing of sturdiness, not enough sincerity.' They do say that. Wherefore, the fight against whisky is the young man's fight. It is the struggle against the false pleasures which whisky throws around itself. It is the effort of youth to free itself of its greatest and most insidious foe. Surely you realize that the fight must be made by the young men—because the women pray?"

"I do, most deeply." Smith felt unaccountably touched by the old man's fervour.

"You are wondering," the bishop continued, "why I hesitated when you made your request."

He smiled, as if to deprecate his conduct.

"It was merely to hear what you had to say—the voice of a young man against the young man's enemy. I liked the music of it, the ring of it. It was an old man's whim—his delight in seeing that for which he had prayed many years—youth in the battle against this terrific thing."

His old, cool hand, with its slender, graceful fingers, took Smith's in a steady, prolonged pressure.

"I shall pray that day," he said, sweetly solemn;

"and that prayer, I believe, will take me closer to God than I have ever been. It will be strengthened by the women's prayers."

That afternoon, when the agitator received the newspaper correspondents, he still had before him the recollection of the bishop's smile, subdued, rich in memories, delicate. He stood, his hand upon the back of a chair, confronting them as they ranged themselves in a semicircle before him. It was practically a duplication of the manner in which they were received by the President at the White House. With the bishop's closing words still in his ears, he noticed that all of them were young men. He was glad that most of them were friendly to him. He waited for their questions.

"It has been pointed out," one of them, a tall, wiry man with spectacles, began, "that the attendance here on the 10th may be cut down by the cold weather."

"I don't think so," Smith replied. "The weather here is open, I am told, until after Christmas. Many men have walked through snow and rain and braved death to get whisky. Surely there are as many to walk through the cold to put it out of the way."

"But suppose the weather should be bad?"

"It wouldn't matter. But I don't think it will be bad. Let's go on the theory that it will not."

His engaging smile somehow "put over" the belief

in the minds of all of them that the 10th would be a bright and balmy day.

A saturnine young fellow, newly assigned to Washington, asked the most interesting question of the afternoon.

"What have you to say, Mr. Smith," he inquired, "to the criticism that many men who will march in the parade will be users of alcohol—men who drink?"

"That," the agitator replied swiftly, "is not a criticism. It is a tribute to the justness of this fight. Some of the bitterest opponents of the whisky traffic are the victims of that traffic. Your drinking man knows the evils of drink—none better. If he wishes to fight the thing that is destroying him, we welcome him to our ranks."

"You know," Cholliewollie confided to several of the writers after the interview was over, "the thing that hits you hardest about Smith is that he's got a whole lot of ordinary, serviceable, garden-varicety common sense. Put common sense against whisky, and the answer's easy."

"Say!" the saturnine young man inquired eagerly, "why won't he talk about his past?"

"Some day, I fancy, he will," Waller replied, a little coolly; "at least, I hope he will."

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

WASHINGTON looked at Smith and wondered. Individuals who came into contact with him were astounded by his unfailing, inexhaustible energy. The city as a whole, seeing the results of his labours, was astonished. Nothing like it had been done ever before. The only thing approaching it had been the inauguration of a President, when the combined efforts of a tremendous committee of citizens and the machinery of the United States army and the national guard had achieved the desired results. Here, however, was an individual from whose brain emanated all the details of a monster movement and meeting. Here was a man whose gifts were such that he could keep his hand on the slightest and smallest affairs that built up and completed the perfect whole. His assistants were many. The popularity of his cause raised up regiments of helpers, men and women, but his was the commanding voice, the controlling mind.

Much has been written and said about the "Washington atmosphere," its peculiarity, its mystery, its difference from the rest of the country. People have looked at the diplomatic corps and said: "Ah, that

makes the atmosphere of the city—the great brains, the mysterious men, the brilliant women!” Some have looked at Congress and said: “That is the atmosphere of the Capital—the great men, the leaders in politics, the students of human nature!” Others have been impressed by the official functions, the carriages and automobiles banked in street or avenue, the high officials, and said: “That is the peculiarity of Washington—the rulers of the nation in brilliant display and animated recreation, a unique Society!” The truth about the matter is that Washington is like any other American city, except for the fact that it is a residential rather than a business and manufacturing town. The working hours are easier than anywhere else. There is a certain laziness throughout the general population.

And in Congress, the House, and the Senate, there is merely Americanism of the best type—hard-working, conscientious, brainy men attending to the business of the country just as the affairs of a big corporation are managed. The diplomatic corps is nothing in the life of the city as a whole. Society is merely the supplement of the busy political life. And American politics is like anything else American. It is hustling, up-to-the-minute, alert, on the watch for opportunity. The impression of an unusual thing on Washington must be the same as it would be on any other American town.

Consequently, the Capital regarded Smith with all the interest and all the admiration that would have been given him elsewhere—possibly with more, for the people of Washington know the really great from the sham, and reward it instantly. The “Washington atmosphere” responds to brilliancy just as any other “atmosphere” must do. Members of Congress, particularly, now that their vanguard was coming slowly back for the new session, stopped in the corridors of the Capitol and on street corners to comment on the effectiveness with which this young man had not only appealed to the country but had also compelled the country to answer his call.

It was true. His work was unprecedented in many ways—in its volume, its far-reaching influence, its immensity of detail, its largeness of program. And to all of it he gave his flaming, imperious attention. The arrangement of the bands, the placing of the big choral clubs and singing societies, the laying out of the line of march, the placing of the state delegations—all passed through his hands and were bettered, altered, or approved.

He personally felt a consuming passion for the work. He never tired, consciously. Often he found himself fearing that he was driving his fellow-workers too hard. His enthusiasm made him feel that he could throw his hat against the stars—and his enthusiasm was so great because his desire to win the

fight was so intense. He was determined that nothing should stop him and the movement which recognized him as its necessary leader. If anybody questioned his powers of endurance, he merely laughed. His strength, he told himself, could not be exhausted.

But Waller, watching him with hawklike attentiveness, thought he detected in him little signs of weariness, trifling evidences of the terrific strain. And the newspaper man, having seen all manner of men in all kinds of work, hit on his own solution of the leader's trouble. It was not the work that bothered him. It was another labour, a different kind of strain. It was his overmastering longing to win to that position where he could go to Edith Mallon and ask her to marry him.

"His pride is being hurt," Waller thought. "He will not go to her now. He figures that, if he wins out in this thing, his position will be such that he can more properly ask her to marry him."

But even Waller's analysis of the situation was incomplete. The iron that had gone into John Smith's soul was that he could not know whether he was in a position to marry any woman. And yet, he practically was convinced that he could. His thoughts, his ideals, his dreams, concerning Edith were enough to convince him that, whatever might have been in his past life, real love for a woman had never figured in it. Most of the time his work absorbed him

utterly. This had to be so, for his own sake and for the sake of the work itself. But, whenever his thoughts went to her, he became a king of romance—that kind of romance which is in the heart of every man who fares forth to win the one woman. It was an imperious thing. He could recognize, even in his darkest moments, no insuperable obstacle in the way of his winning her. A confidence that at the same time was blind and yet definite held him up.

Only, there were times in the early morning hours when he clenched his hands and thought:

“I can overcome whisky in the mass, for the benefit of the whole people, but what it did to me I cannot remedy. The sightless years, the days that will not come back to me, the things I have done! A stone wall, the wall of my ignorance of myself, keeps me from her. What hope—what possible hope is there for me—or for her?”

Then, with the great will that was his, he compelled consolation for himself with the thought:

“There must be a way out. There is a way out of all things evil and ugly. But how long must I wait? How long? Surely I have waited long enough!”

That was the thing that added a fine line here and there under his eyes—his great, personal grief.

And yet, in that grief, as is the way with provident nature, he found always new fuel for the energy he needed in his fight before Congress.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

DR. JOHANN VETTER read the card which the nurse, entering his consultation room with noiseless step, handed him:

"Miss Edith Mallon."

He reflected for a moment.

"Show her in," he said finally.

Doctor Vetter was a man of great stature, and fat. He weighed more than three hundred pounds. But, unlike most fat men, there was about him no air of jollity and laughter. The expression on his round, fat, clean-shaven face was, rather, one of solemnity, almost sadness. He was an authority on the diseases—the peculiarities, the quirks, the tragedies—of the mind, and anybody who knew his profession and observed him would have said that his vast knowledge of his subject made him mourn. Those who met him casually, on the street, or at concerts where his great love of music made him a familiar figure, would have described him as crusty, monosyllabic, difficult. But those who had come to him with their sufferings and

sorrows told another story. He became, it seemed, quite a different sort of person in that spacious, half-lit, quiet room, where he listened to what tortured men and women had to say while they begged him for relief. His compassion was infinite. His sympathy was tremendous. There were one or two who said there were moments when his soul came out and trembled on the edges of his eyelashes—a great soul that knew the sufferings of other souls and went to meet them halfway.

As the nurse closed the door after ushering in Miss Mallon, he got to his feet. Edith noticed that, in the movement of his vast bulk, there was some degree of gracefulness. He took her hand and held it a few seconds longer than was necessary, she thought, as he stood and looked smilingly down upon her. He always gave that impression—he looked down at people, individually and collectively, as if he studied them and built up instantaneously in his own mind little stories and conjectures about them.

“Ah, Miss Mallon,” he said in a strong bass voice that had in it also the promise of tenderness, “I am glad to see you. You do good things. We hear always of people who do really good things.”

She took the chair to which he motioned her.

“You are very kind, Doctor,” she acknowledged his greeting, “you who do nothing but good always.”

His answering smile was slow, appreciative.

"It is my profession—to try to help," he said; "but you are a volunteer."

"It is because I relied on your kindness, your generosity, that I have come to you this afternoon," she explained. "I am not ill—but I am anxious for information, for advice."

"Ah, then you want to help some one—don't you?"

He was looking at her very attentively.

She hesitated a moment.

"I hope to—with your help," she said at last.

"We must be allies, then," he answered, unhesitant.

"Tell me, what is it?"

She looked at him with frank, unwavering eyes.

"It is very important—what I want to know," she replied; "important to me, and to others."

"Nothing," he said gently, "can be very important to one person alone."

"Yes, that is true. I want you to tell me, out of your great experience, your rare knowledge, what alcohol can do to the human brain—whether it can destroy memory; that is, destroy it irretrievably."

"Ah-h-h!" he said, the exclamation coming like a low whistle through his lips.

He turned half from her in his revolving chair and looked through the window to the trees in the park across the street. She sat, still and expectant, awaiting his reply. It occurred to her that he knew at once

about whom she had come—even that he knew she realized his appreciation of the situation.

He swung back toward her, his great hands occupied in manipulating, idly and with remarkable deftness, a little paper-cutter.

“Ah-h!” he said again, and explained; “I shall not answer you too briefly. In too few words, it might pain you—much.”

“Do not mind me,” she urged in a low tone. “It is the truth, the real facts, that I want.”

He balanced the paper-cutter on the second knuckle of the forefinger of his left hand and let it slide slowly to the blotter on the desk. He watched the progress of the little knife with great attention. When he looked at her, he encouraged her with his smile, as if he knew his words might bring her small comfort.

“Miss Mallon,” he began, “alcohol can do anything—anything injurious—to the human nerves, the human brain. Shall I explain?”

“Please.”

She leaned back in her chair, never once taking her glance from his face.

“We have to take such things progressively, step by step, in detail, when we discuss them—is it not so?” he prefaced what he had to say. “Now—you see, these things have been worked out by great physicians, wonderful psychologists, trained men, the pick of the scientific world. It is facts that you want. Good!

We shall confine ourselves to facts—facts being, after all, things that have been shown to be truths by many investigations, patient experiments, and tireless study.”

“Yes,” she agreed; “all the facts, from which we may get the big, individual fact—the one that I want.”

“Quite so. Now, this alcohol: if a man drinks a glass of beer, he lowers his general efficiency that day 8 per cent. If he drinks three glasses of beer a day for twelve days, his efficiency at the end of the twelve days is reduced sometimes 25 per cent., sometimes as much as 40 per cent. It depends, somewhat, upon the man’s physique and temperament and upon the kind of work he does. But always his usefulness is lowered between 25 and 40 per cent.”

“Impossible!” she exclaimed involuntarily.

Vetter waved his right hand in mild denial.

“My dear child,” he said, the gentleness still in his voice, “it has been proved—so often. Again: life insurance companies are governed solely by facts and figures. Unless their statistics and averages are correct down to the smallest fraction, they lose money and cannot exist. Figures collected by such corporations show that, while the death-rate among total abstainers from alcohol is 560 per year out of every 61,215 of the total population, the death-rate among liquor users is 1,643 out of every 61,215, making,

you see, the death-rate among consumers of alcohol three times what it is among those who do not use it. What I have mentioned has been just a few instances to show the general and unfailing effects of alcoholic drinks. Men training for athletic events are kept away from alcohol. Brain workers become exhausted and of no account if they use alcohol. Every big thing that men attempt is crippled or ruined by alcohol."

He played with the paper-knife a few moments.

"But it does more than reduce efficiency and destroy life. It tears down the brain structure, confuses the thought processes, makes of the mind a jumbled mass of refuse. Men, under the influence of alcohol, lose their memories for a few hours very frequently. There are many men who get so drunk evening after evening that they go home, undress, and get into bed without knowing in the morning the slightest thing about what they did the night before. It is called temporary alcoholic aberration.

"There are other men who never get helplessly drunk, but take a few drinks every day, year in and year out, and finally reach the point where they have fixed alcoholic delusions. Such men are those who often conceive unfounded jealousies of their wives. They claim they never get drunk. If they do not, they go crazy. It is as much tragedy one way as the other."

He let the paper-knife fall and folded his hands on the desk before him.

“And there have been extraordinary cases of the loss of memory for months, for years, forever, as the result of the use of alcohol. If it can be lost for a few hours or a few days, then, naturally, it can be lost for months or years or forever. There was one celebrated case, attested by physicians and borne out by competent witnesses. Shall I tell you?”

“Please.”

“An old man who had been a heavy drinker died. He had been a notorious character in the small Western town in which he had lived. His profanity had been of an unusual, picturesque, amusing type. His costume—a high silk hat, a frock-coat and gray trousers—had been a proverb. Also, he had been very fond of dogs. Three weeks after he died, a young man who had been on many sprees with him got drunk, and, while standing in a saloon, all of a sudden broke into a stream of profanity that was a duplicate of the language the old man had used. The young man employed the same inflections, the same gestures, all the mannerisms of the old man. He declared that he was the old man, and introduced himself to everybody as the old man. Furthermore, he went immediately to a store and bought and put on a high hat, a frock-coat, and gray trousers. When he came back up the street to the saloon he had several

dogs following him. Those are the main features of that case. For seven months the young man was the old man in every detail and particular. At the end of the seventh month, as suddenly as the thing had come upon him, it left him. He regained his own personality. Of course he remembered nothing of the seven months during which he had 'been' the old man."

Edith was listening eagerly, her lips half-parted, her breath coming and going very fast.

"Tell me," she asked, "have there been many such cases?"

"A great many. And, as I said, there have been, oh, so many, where the memory left for years—or for life."

"And the remedy?"

"Many can be tried."

"And they are not effective—always?"

"Not always."

She grew slowly erect and leaned toward him, as a flower is moved by the wind.

"But sometimes?"

"Yes," he said, the tenderness mighty in his voice; "sometimes."

"What do you do?"

"We talk to the patient, suggest things to him—ideas, words, places, anything, over and over again, hour after hour, day after day. It is with the hope

that the association of ideas will bring results—that one thing may suggest another until, like an endless chain, the words will grow into an idea that will awaken memory.”

“And if that fails?”

“There is one other hope: The victim may be cured ‘by accident.’ That is, for no reason that is apparent the memory power may come back. Or it may be brought back by a shock of great joy or great grief. Those are things we have not yet been able to explain. But they happen—sometimes.”

She drew her underlip between her teeth and looked at him out of wide eyes.

“And alcohol docs these things to men?” she breathed.

Vetter nodded a little grimly.

“These things, and many others,” he assented. “It destroys memories, minds, bodies, souls.”

He turned half from her again and looked out to the park. She waited for him to speak. When he looked at her again, his eyes questioned her.

“Of course,” she said, a little brokenly, “you know.”

He nodded his big, round head slowly.

“My dear child—yes. It is a great pity.”

She sobbed once, scarcely audibly. He was still looking at her. There were no tears in her eyes.

Meeting his glance, she was reminded that she had

heard about his soul coming up to his eyelashes and meeting other souls halfway.

"It is a great pity," he said, "but he is very brave."

"How did you know?"

She spoke hardly above a whisper, as if the exertion of utterance hurt her.

"He told me."

"He told you?"

Vetter rose with surprising swiftness and went to her and took both her hands in his, his great figure looming, it seemed to her, grotesquely large above her.

"Dear child," he said again, his hands moving hers slowly up and down, "for five months I treated him—tried to help him—and——"

He did not finish the sentence, but stood looking down at her bowed head, his hands moving hers. After a few moments he stepped back from her.

She stood up and looked at him, her lips pressed close to control the mutiny of her grief. He waited for her to speak.

"But I am not afraid one bit," she did speak finally.

He looked at her a long time, compassion giving place in his eyes to admiration.

"There is in nature," he consoled her, "a wonderful economy. Nothing happens without cause or without beneficent result in the end. It is so, I believe, with that higher thing we call Providence, or that greater Power we call God. Surely, for such a man

as he, there must be a recompense, a repayment. I believe there must be."

"You do believe that?"

"I do. I have seen so much of suffering, so much of grief. Pain is the key to power. Out of grief comes greatness. That is why I am confident."

She began to weep, softly, steadily. He forced her back into her chair, the touch of his monster hand light as thistledown.

"Dear child, it is good," he comforted. "Our hearts do not break when we can weep. And tears freshen the flower of our valour."

It was late in the afternoon when she got back to her home.

She went to the telephone on her desk and called up Waller. He had promised her the night before that, if it were possible, he would find Simpson. He had been impressed, as she had been, by Elise Downey's story.

"I'm sorry," he told her in response to her call, "but the man has disappeared. There can be no doubt about it. I see now how crazy I was to have him run out of town. It was exactly the wrong thing to do."

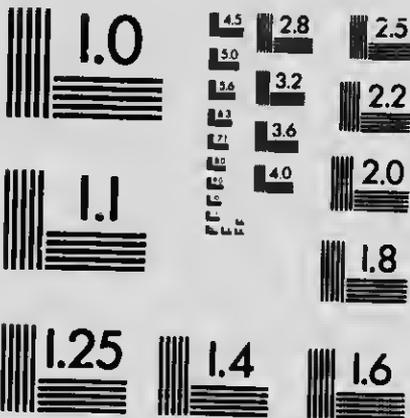
She thanked him and hung up the receiver.

"Still," repeating what she had said to Vetter, "I am not afraid one bit."



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CHAPTER NINETEEN

CHOLLIEWOLLIE and Mrs. Griswold Kane were having lunch together in a downtown café.

"You disappoint me terribly," she lamented, when the salad had been brought.

"Naturally," he agreed. "People usually are nothing but a series of disappointments to each other. But what is my especial sin—to-day?"

"You have no curiosity."

She was her best self. Her arms looked chubbier, and her hair was more attractively disarranged, than ever. Her general effect of fluffiness was perfect. And, in addition, there was in her eyes the glow of real excitement.

"You do me an injustice," he protested, his drawl unusually soft and pleasant. "I have curiosity. I worship curiosity. I commend curiosity. It is the one thing that makes my business a necessity and enables me to work. If people had no curiosity, there would be no newspapers. So, you see, I am all curiosity."

"Then," she demanded, "why don't you ask me why I wanted to see you to-day?"

He laughed his enjoyment.

"Because I know," he answered her.

"You do?"

"Of course. It is about Mr. John Smith and—Miss Edith Mallon. Isn't that true?"

"That much was easy to guess."

"But there's more. Miss Mallon wants to communicate something to Mr. Smith, and, under the present circumstances, there must be go-betweens. There you have it—you and I are the go-betweens. I rather guess it is more than that. Am I far wrong when I think you and I will—ah—er—chaperon or arrange their meeting?"

Mrs. Kane looked at him in frank and large admiration.

"And yet," she mourned, "they say men have no intuition! You are, Mr. Waller, perfectly correct—and a perfect detective. There is just one little detail you've overlooked."

"And that is?"

"It will be in your apartment!"

"When?"

"To-night."

Cholliewollie paused before he made any comment on that. She fancied that he looked a little worried.

"Surely," she said, "you don't object to that!"

"Oh, no."

He began on his salad.

"Tell me," she persisted, "what are you thinking?"

"Tell me," he countered, "is this meeting a necessity? You know, this is the last day of November. There are only ten days before the big affair."

"I don't know that it is a necessity. I do know that Edith is very anxious for it—and she must have a reason. What possible harm could it do?"

"Probably none," he admitted, the drawl in his words making them sound reluctant; "possibly much. I don't believe in his taking any chances. I don't believe in his doing anything from now until then except work on this demonstration."

"Tell me what you mean—and don't, *please*, talk so much like a Chinese puzzle!"

"He is being so closely watched, so bitterly attacked; that is what I mean. And a clandestine meeting—oh, I know this could not be misconstrued by people in their right senses, but not all are in their right senses now. And politics turns out some incredibly clever liars, Mrs. Kane. I would not, for anything, have it known that he and she had met anywhere but in her own home—just now."

"She thought of that," Mrs. Kane explained, fortifying herself. "That is why we picked out your apartment as the ideal place. Nobody would ever suspect her of going there. She and I would go

together. Later you and he could come in. Besides, she says she *must* see him."

"Perhaps," he agreed after another period of thought, "it can be arranged—safely."

"Why are you worried?" she came back to her question. "I thought you considered him impregnable in this thing."

"No man in public life is impregnable against sudden and treacherous attack," he said gravely. "Calumny and slander can work terrific injustice in a few days, and require weeks for retribution."

"Explain it to me."

He pushed aside the salad and lit a cigarette, so absorbed in the subject that he forgot to ask her permission.

"In a movement of this sort, Mrs. Kane," he said gravely, "which affects everybody in the country more or less, which affects most people tremendously one way or the other, there are bound to be two parties, two sides. As things stand to-day, Smith has the majority, a vast majority, with him. His cause itself, his picturesqueness, his marvellous ability, and his indomitable will have made that sure. Already the march to Washington has begun. You can look around this café and see at some of the tables people who have been brought here by him. They are the vanguard of the greatest thing in the history of this country. His name is on everybody's lips."

"Of course," she assented; "on everybody's lips."

"Exactly. But how? Many bless him and praise him and admire him. But there are those who sneer and revile him. You must realize that. Not only the whisky interests fight him, but all the other interests allied with whisky—you can realize what they are—are against him. This formidable array, enlarged by the ranks of the stupid, would like nothing better than to see him fall, to hear of his being discredited. More than that, they would do anything on earth to bring it about. They'd lie, steal, even murder, to put him down and out tomorrow morning. They go, as I have told him, on the theory that, if they can hurt him, they can hurt his cause."

"But do you believe that?"

His answer was very slow.

"Mrs. Kane, there's nobody on earth who can tell how the American public will receive a fact or even a bare assertion of a fact. Here in Washington we learn that—if we learn anything—that nobody can foretell what the public will or will not do to a man for this or for that."

Mrs. Kane's cheery fluffiness was submerged in solemnity.

"You mean," she asked, "if they could discredit him, this demonstration, this parade, all that it means, might fall through?"

"I mean just that," he replied with great earnestness. "I mean it's entirely within the realm of possibility that, if anything were brought out tomorrow—whether it were the truth or a lie, makes no difference—to create the impression that John Smith was an unworthy man, the whole business would crumple up, fall flat, and the crusaders would never crusade. I say it is possible."

"I wouldn't have believed it."

"Nowadays," he elaborated, "the people look once at the platform and twice at the leader. It may be unreasonable, but it is their habit—which we cannot change."

Mrs. Kane went back to her mission.

"But Edith insists that she must see him."

"Very well," he said. "As you suggested, nobody would ever think of their meeting at my apartment. Besides, there will be four of us."

Mrs. Kane laughed.

"Your acceptance of the situation, after your gloomy forebodings, amuses me," she explained.

He produced another cigarette and regarded her closely.

"May I confide in you—absolutely?" he asked, the drawl going out of his voice.

"Absolutely," she assured him, somewhat surprised by his solemnity.

"The thing that keeps me terrified all the time,

utterly frightened," he said, "is my belief that they've got something on him now."

"Got something on him now? What do you mean?"

"That they know something about this blessed, mysterious past of his, about which we know nothing, and that they're going to spring it on him."

"When?" she inquired in big-eyed amazement.

"Whenever it suits them, whenever they think it's the psychological moment."

"What do you think it is?"

"I don't know what it is," he confessed; "but I believe they've got something—something real. Honestly, Mrs. Kane, I believe they've got something true. I don't want to believe it, but I do."

Cholliewollie looked sad, actually grieved. If he had stopped to try, he could have counted up how many years it had been since he had allowed himself to feel sorry for a public man. His boredom and blasé emotions were failing him. Mrs. Kane, watching his face attentively, thought he seemed tired.

"Oh, Mr. Waller!" she said, feeling some of his uneasiness.

"I wish the ten days were over—that's all," he replied a little petulantly. "It's enough to cut the heart out of a giant—this suspense. Here we are now at a point where we can hear the gathering of this extraordinary army. The reports are coming

in every day of the last preparations for the departures from the little towns, for the meetings of the delegations at the central points, for the special trains, the brigades of children, the singing clubs. Why, it's like turning the whole country upside down. That's what it is! Washington is the goal of everybody who can travel! Nobody ever saw anything like it before. The hum of it, the stir of it, the thrill of it is already here, in the hotels, in the streets, in the corridors of the Capitol! And all because a man with fire leaping through his veins has sprung to the head of a tremendous movement—has made the movement."

He smiled at her half whimsically.

"And here I am scared half to death! Why he isn't, I can't understand."

Mrs. Kane struck the tablecloth with her chubby fist.

"Why won't he tell us?" she demanded in desperation. "Why won't he tell you? Why won't he tell Edith about himself?"

"That's what I don't understand again," he admitted, "why he doesn't tell Miss Mallou."

Mrs. Kane had an inspiration.

"He may to-night!" she exclaimed.

"I wonder," Waller said slowly, "if that is why she wants to see him."

They made their plans for the evening. Waller

would have Smith there by seven o'clock, and Nellie and Edith were to come in at eight. The apartment house was a small one on an unimportant street. It seemed simple enough.

For the remainder of the afternoon Waller worried not about the meeting that evening but about the general outlook. He could not shake off his belief that the other side knew something that would hurt the agitator. And, when he considered that, he thought also of the minority of haters which might become overnight a majority.

"The public" he concluded gloomily, "is a fool. I ought to know. I've been writing for it long enough. But if they throw this thing down now, they're crazier even than I thought—which is going some."

CHAPTER TWENTY

ALL of it was done so quickly, with such sure deftness and skill, by Mrs. Kane that Edith found herself alone in the room with the man she loved before she quite knew how it had been brought about. She had come in with Nellie and had spoken to both the men, and immediately Nellie, explaining that she must see the tapestries Waller kept in his "showroom" and talking glibly and uninterruptedly all the while, had whisked Waller out with her, closing the door behind her.

A long, high-backed couch was set before the open wood-fire, and behind the couch was the table bearing the reading light. The glow from the flames was almost as great as that from the lamp. The room, with its medley of colours, its conglomeration of furniture and ornaments from all parts of the world, was in itself a curious expression of isolation, silence, withdrawal from other people. He felt somehow that never before had he been so entirely alone with her.

They were standing, facing each other, in front of the fire. As the door closed behind the others she

looked at him and smiled. He stood tense and erect, as if he tried to comprehend something greater and more gorgeous than he possibly could have expected.

"I'm afraid you're thinking," she hazarded, a little uncertainly, "that I was very silly to—to want to see you here—or anywhere."

He took her hand and led her a step to the couch, arranging the cushions for her comfort as she leaned against them.

"I was marvelling," he answered her gravely, "that the human heart could feel such happiness as mine does now."

She indicated with a wave of her hand the place near her.

"Sit here, beside me," she invited.

He sat down, turning so that he might face her and watch the play of the firelight on her hair and features.

She was looking into the fire, her beauty softened and made more exquisite by her expression of sweet solemnity.

"Waller told me," he suggested, "that there was something very important."

She did not answer.

"Is there?" he asked after a pause.

She turned to him and smiled slowly and brilliantly. All of a sudden he was tremendously aware of her charm, her loveliness, the fragrance of her, the mystery-lights of her eyes, the sweetness that was hers.

"Very important," she replied, the words coming through the smile. "I think, Mr. John Smith, it is merely another case of a woman pursuing a man."

Her eyes, smiling, held his gaze. There was a little catch in her voice.

"My Lady Bountiful!" he managed to say.

She turned from him and looked into the flames.

"There are only ten days left," she began with wonderful directness, "and I knew you would—might want to know that the woman you—you love—that her spirit always is with you—always."

She fell silent, the reflection of the fire stealing under her lowered lids and making new lights in her eyes.

A red rose dropped from her corsage and slid from her knee to the floor. He picked it up swiftly and slipped it into the breast-pocket of his coat.

"I wish," he said, his voice breaking, "I could tell you that I love you—how much I love you, my—My Lady Bountiful."

"And I understand," she murmured. "You cannot."

"No; I cannot."

She looked at him, turning her head with a quick, imperious motion. He saw that there was in his eyes the hint of tears.

"But," she said, "that doesn't make the slightest difference to me. Some day you can."

"Do you feel that?"

"I know it," she answered, her trust absolute.

"I wonder sometimes," he said, "why we do feel so sure of—of the future."

For an instant she laid her left hand, light and tremulous, on his coat-sleeve.

"Tell me," she asked, "what your attitude about it is—exactly."

He laughed.

"All I can think of now," he protested, "is the wonder of your love for me—your acceptance of me on trust. I did not know, I could not realize, there was such heroism in woman."

"It is not heroism," she denied. "It is merely that I love you—and that you love me. That, also, is why we both know that ultimately happiness must come to us."

"Yes; that is why." He looked at her as religious devotees look at sacred things, from afar, or as lovers of the beautiful at a work of art. "Somehow, I am convinced that the doing of the work before me will bring its reward. That reward is you. I—both of us—try to serve others. Surely that is the only real way in which we can serve ourselves."

She started, remembering what Vetter had said—almost the same thing.

"If you will listen, if it will not tire you," he went on, "I shall tell you a story, my own story of my idea of what this life, this service, must mean in the end."

She recognized the growing ardour in him, the enthusiasms coming to the surface, the breaking forth of his peculiar strength under the influence of what she had said to him.

"Ah," she breathed, "do tell me."

She leaned far back in the cushions, sometimes screening her face from the flames with her uplifted hand, now and then flashing to him a look of understanding or appreciation, while he talked, his voice vibrant, low, more musical than she ever had heard it.

This is the fanciful, beautiful story to which she listened:

The young man who travelled the Happy Highway wore on a finger of his left hand a ring of gold, wonderfully wrought and set with a pale, translucent emerald. All his apparel was like that of a king's son. And the sunshine, creeping into the ringlets of his hair, became wavy, vibrant gold.

The smile of the young man was the most beautiful the other pilgrims on the Happy Highway ever had seen. Since nothing in his conscience reproached him, it was unblemished by grief; and, since he had found nothing to fear in all the world, it welcomed everybody who approached him; and, because he had nothing to conceal from the gaze of men, it was radiant with delight.

“He is not only beautiful,” said a bent old man; “he is the best-natured young man who ever has trod the Happy Highway!”

“He is so,” agreed an old woman in a funny little treble voice. “And all of us must keep him happy forever.”

Thus it came about that the young man’s days and nights were perfect, for all the joyous company heeded the old woman’s advice. Care never came near him, and pain could not touch him.

As he strolled along the highway, men and women of all ages brought him wonderful gifts and did him service and pleased him. They arranged it so that the purple plumes of lilacs shaded him always from the noonday sun, and, as he walked, red roses, the reddest roses that bloomed, swayed forward from each side, and, moved by unseen hands, washed the air with their fragrance.

At night somebody—anybody he chose—fanned him with fans made of the leaves of blue-purple poppies, for sleep. Always, when he slept, he was housed in sumptuous places, and his pillows were so soft that, as he rested his head upon them, they did not disturb the lovely ringlets of his hair.

Like all the rest, he was travelling toward the House of Happiness—the great place about which all had heard and toward which all turned their faces with a longing that was quite beyond the power of

words to express. For it was a gorgeous palace, with many rooms, some of marble, some of purple porphyry, some of light green jade, and some of rare, reddish alabaster—all of them lighted from above through a roof that was one unbroken sheet of gold beaten so fine that the sunlight came through it in softened yellow splendour.

But the strange thing was that, although the House of Happiness seemed a very short distance away, the Happy Highway was long. The House of Happiness should have been reached within an hour, but there were those who had travelled the Happy Highway for years and years.

This, however, did not worry the young man. He was beautiful, and he was young, and his smile played always upon his face until it seemed that magic brushes had painted upon his lips the picture of perfect dreams. And this was no surprising thing, for all along the highway, which was a deep, yellow carpet of asphodel, hundreds upon hundreds of people vied with each other to do him service.

All his wishes were gratified, and the hours were, for him, fairies of plenty flashing past him on jewelled wings.

"I saw yesterday a young girl whose hair was like a rain of stars," he said once, "and the snow of her breast was lovelier far than the snow of the breast of any other young girl. Why can I not have priceless

jewels to hang about her neck—jewels to pay her for the kiss she gave me when I passed?”

And immediately a great strong man came up to the edge of the highway and spoke to him. Over the edges of the stranger's hands, which he held in the shape of a bowl, jewels of red and green and blue and dazzling white flowed, a cascade of colour.

“All these,” the strong man said, “are for you—to pay the young girl for the kiss she gave you.”

And the young man's smile was brighter than it had ever been. Its loveliness was not marred, even the slightest bit, when the bent old man, who had long, snowy hair and an expression that was like a blessing, pointed out that the House of Happiness was still a long way off.

“I heard a woman sing sweetly this morning,” he said on another day, “but she was far away, and the distance spoiled the perfection of her voice. Why cannot some woman sing to me here in the shade of this linden tree?”

And immediately a woman with eyes that were deeper than many seas came and sang to him. Behind her were three maidens who followed the air of her song on queer, stringed instruments the like of which he had never seen but which laughed with joy and sobbed in sorrow, so that, even if the woman had not sung, he would have been moved greatly by the music. But the woman's singing was sweeter than

that of nightingales and mockingbirds, and, as he looked at her, he fancied that her teeth were the edges of a crystal bell against which her tongue rang like a clapper made of one great red ruby.

"I like to sing for those who like to listen," she told him, "and I will come again to sing to you here in the shade of this linden tree."

And his smile wore a new beauty because it had in it the softness of dreams. Its radiance was not dimmed, even the slightest bit, when the old man pointed out that the House of Happiness seemed as far off as ever.

"The world is so big and its loveliness so wide," the young man said later on, "that I have not time to see it all. Surely there are wonderful pictures that have been made. Why cannot I see the great pictures men have made?"

And immediately a man, whose eyes held in their depths lights so elusive and mysterious that nobody could read even a few of them, brought him pictures of mountains wrapped in shadows like purple velvet, of hillsides gay in the royal splendour of October's green and gold, of lovers, bare-armed and with mouths that were to each other like honey, of a woman whose smile had shone through many centuries, of men going in their gorgeous strength to battle and death.

"These pictures," the man said, "were made by the great dreamers of the world, so that all other

men, less fortunate, might be able to see from afar how splendid it is to dream. And, if you call me, I shall come again and show you more of the great pictures men have made."

And the young man's smile was more radiant than ever because he had been led into the company of dreamers. Its beauty was not disturbed, even the slightest bit, when the bent old man suggested that he still was far from the House of Happiness.

"The perfume of the flowers about me," he said one day, "is exquisite, but surely there are sweeter fragrances to be found. Cannot my senses be wooed by a perfume surpassing all these?"

There came up swiftly from one of the fields a little woman who was of a great age, and she carried very carefully in her hand a tear jar like those that were fashioned centuries ago for the women of China. And she removed its stopper and held it close to the young man's nostrils. The sweetness of it was ineffable, so overpowering that for a moment he nearly swooned away.

"This," she said, "is the breath of a flower that bloomed a thousand thousand years ago. Few of the sons of men ever knew of it. It was grown by the priests of a forgotten religion, in a walled garden, for the pleasure of a king's daughter. But on the Happy Highway it is possible to find all these things."

When she was gone, the young man smiled again,

and his joy was so great that he sighed after he had smiled. But he did not sigh when the bent old man pointed out that the House of Happiness was yet a long way off.

"Women have been kind to me," he said on another day, "and their arms have been warm about me, and they have sung to me by day and by night all the songs that stir the souls of men. But surely there must be in this perfect world one perfect woman. Why have I not found her?"

And lo! there came to him beside the fountain at which he sat a woman whose walk was like the beginnings of music. Her hair was softer and blacker than the soft, black reaches of the night, and her breast, which stormed tumultuously because of him, was fairer than any ever uncurtained by the reverent hand of sculpture. Her robe fell about her loosely, and her long black lashes half hid her eyes, as if she awaited but a word from him to lift them and let him read all the sweet secrets of her surrendering soul.

He kissed her that day and for many days and many nights thereafter, and they made songs together, sitting by the fountain. Great visions came to them unbidden, and he was king and she was queen of the land where dreams come true.

When she left him, he was smiling, and, still smiling, he bent over the fountain to drink of the delect-

table waters. And the untroubled surface of the waters was a mirror, which showed him the exact picture of his smile.

He started back, affrighted, desperately eager to disbelieve what he had seen. But at last he looked again. And he knew that his eyes did not deceive him. His smile was twisted.

It was no longer a beautiful smile. In fact, he told himself, there was in it some little thing which made it hideous, entirely different from any of the smiles he had seen on the faces of the thousands who travelled the Happy Highway.

A young girl, holding a rose by its stem between her teeth, stopped and looked at him.

"Tell me," he said anxiously, "is my smile hideous?"

The young girl looked at him a long moment, and her eyes were troubled.

"It is not like anything I have seen on the Happy Highway," she answered, and turned from him.

The bent old man was regarding him steadfastly.

"Why is my smile hideous?" asked the young man, wringing his hands in anguish.

"It is a message from the House of Happiness," the old man said with an earnestness that barely escaped being sadness, "the writing from the ruler of the House of Happiness. Sooner or later it comes to everybody on the Happy Highway.

“The man bearing the jewels for the young girl who kissed you as you passed—you failed to note, perhaps, that his shoes were dusty and his hands knotted and searred.

“The woman who sang to you—you did not read the story in her deep, deep eyes—the shadows of the longings and sorrows that had shaken her and bruised her that she might at last put her soul into a song.

“And he who pleased you with pictures—you did not see that he was thin and tremulous with weakness because of hunger and suffering. The makers of pictures starve and suffer and die so that they may leave behind them the glory they have in their hearts.

“And the tear jar with its wonderful perfume—you have not learned that flowers are the spirits of dead loves and lonely women’s tears.

“But the woman who came to you at the fountain and made songs with you—she gave you herself, all her visions, all her dreams. And yet, you gave her nothing, and you let her go. The suffering and the sears of all these things were as nothing to the woe you brought to her and the scar you put upon her soul.”

“But what does it all mean?” asked the young man, heartbroken and astonished.

“It means,” said the bent old man, “that all may reach the Happy Highway, but that the only staff which will support any one to the House of Happiness

is kindly service. You will observe that the blessed palace is far away. All these pilgrims served you, and you have served none. They are rewarded. Look!"

The young man looked, and he was amazed by what he saw. Far down the Happy Highway, almost within the shadow of the House of Happiness, were those who had served him and been kind to him—the strong man through whose fingers jewels ran like a flood of colour in the sloping sunlight, the singing woman followed by the three girls with their strange, stringed instruments, and she who had kissed him many days and many nights and made songs with him by the fountain.

And the young man stood and thought for a great, great while after the bent old man had left him. The long mauve shadows fell longer and longer across the Happy Highway. And the one bird who sang at that hour made of her song one lingering, plaintive note. The House of Happiness was swallowed up in the distance.

"I must render service to others," the young man said softly. "I have taken everything and given nothing. I must make somebody happy. I must hurry to the House of Happiness."

And he wept bitterly.

Then, suddenly, even while he brushed away his tears, he found that he was running, light-footed,

along the deep, yellow carpet of asphodel and that he could see again the lovely gold roof of the House of Happiness!

On the end of his story there was in the room absolute silence save for the whimpering of the flames. He sat, his elbows on his knees, his hands hanging free, his eyes busy with the changing lights of the fire. After a little while he could hear her quick, sharp breathing, and then the silk of her gown stirring against the silk of the cushions as she moved.

Her two hands closed over his, and she was whispering, her lips close to his ear. The fragrance of her hair was all about him.

"It will be so!" she breathed, strangely exalted. "It will be so!"

He bent his head and kissed her hands.

"Even when the man may not kiss the woman he loves," he said, his voice also a whisper, a whisper curiously coloured with forced levity, "the Jester may touch the hand of the Princess—your Royal Highness!"

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

ON THE following morning a Washington newspaper printed the flat and unqualified announcement of the engagement of Edith Mallon to John Smith. The story was put up in great detail. It recited the "widespread interest" that must be felt in such news because of the fact that the agitator's great demonstration was but nine days off. Reference was made to the breach between Smith and Senator Mallon, and, in a slightly veiled way, the intimation was carried that the marriage of a woman socially as prominent as Miss Mallon to a man of whose standing in "Society" so little was known was, to say the least, a sensation. The article dwelt on the "interest she has shown for so long in the Smith propaganda," and referred to the fact that, soon after she had met him, she had ceased serving at her entertainments alcoholic drinks of any kind—"a fact that caused in the world of Society quite as much comment as was the case when the Secretary of State inaugurated grape juice as the drink of diplomats in Washington."

Edith's first knowledge of the announcement came from her father. A little late for breakfast, she en-

tered the dining-room with hurried step, a faint smile on her lips, and in her eyes a reflection of the still look of wonder she had had when John Smith had finished his story for her the night before. She realized at once that her father was angry, more infuriated than she ever had seen him.

He half-rose from his chair and held out the open newspaper across the table toward her. She was astounded to see that there was vindictiveness in his face. His thin features each seemed drawn tighter and finer than was natural. There was a little white line across the bridge of his nose. As he stared at her his eyelids were half-lowered, as if involuntarily he sought to hide some of his anger.

"Why, father!" she exclaimed, taking the paper from his quivering hand. "You look as if you hated me!"

"Read it!" he exploded, pointing wildly toward a column on the page in front of her.

Her eyes fell on the headlines concerning herself and John Smith. For a short moment she looked at them, trying to understand them. When their full significance came to her, she let the paper slide from her hand to the table.

"Oh!" she said softly.

She was a little pale.

"Now," the Senator supplemented, "what have you to say about that? What can you say?"

She took her seat at the table and looked at him over the clustered roses. She was a little afraid, but not of him. There rioted through her brain the thought that the printed words she had seen were about a great man and that, in some way, they might hurt him, might weaken him with all those who followed his leadership. She did not know why the thought came to her, but it did, like a premonition. She had not begun to think of herself.

The Senator's impatience grew under her groping gaze.

"Well!" he said fiercely, "What can *I* say about it?"

"I wouldn't say anything if I were you, father," she suggested, her voice low, almost supplicating.

He frowned more darkly.

"Why?" he demanded contemptuously.

"In the first place, it isn't true, of course."

She put out her hand to fix his coffee.

"I can't understand you!" he protested roughly. "Here is the published statement in a newspaper that you are going to marry this man! And you sit there, entirely calm, utterly indifferent, and say you wouldn't say anything about it!"

"I wouldn't, really."

She poured out the coffee. Her mind was busy with wondering how the agitator could be hurt by

the story. She even wondered why she thought he could be hurt.

"Why, the thing's absurd, ridiculous!" her father went on. "It makes a laughing-stock of you and of me! I forbid him the house, and here comes the story of your engagement to him! My daughter engaged to this wild-mouthed, idiotic temperance agitator—this street-corner blowhard—this faker!"

She, in her turn, was indignant and distressed by the injustice of what he said.

"He's nothing of the sort," she said steadily. "He's a man who has realized the greatest truth in life—that we get from the world exactly as much as we give to the world."

"He's crazy—that's what he is! He's mad! Just because you let him come in at the front door, he's going to marry you!"

"Father!" she cautioned sharply. "You know he didn't have this article printed. You know he didn't. And you know we're not engaged."

The Senator regarded her with amazement as she handed him his coffee.

"The idea of your thinking it necessary to tell me you're not engaged to him! The whole thing's preposterous! He's beneath contempt—an upstart without family, without position, without means!"

"It seems silly to say that he is nobody," she contradicted him evenly. "At his call thousands upon

thousands of people are coming here to compel Congress to do a big thing. He is a great national figure—a wonderful man.”

Her memory of him the night before, the realization that others attacked him as her father was doing now, the thought that in many cases there was nobody to defend him, the mental picture of his swiftly catching up the rose she had dropped at his feet—these things flashed through her mind, aroused in her a great longing to protect him, to help him.

“I only wish,” she concluded, looking at her father out of wide, utterly frank eyes, “I were his wife today.”

“Then you had that thing printed!”

His tone was brutal. He struck the table with his fist, and, as he did so, his knuckles, grazing the saucer, tipped it over suddenly, throwing the cup of coffee clear of the table and to the floor. Wales, hearing the noise, came into the room.

“Get out!” Mallon thundered at him, causing his instant retreat.

The Senator’s eyes were bulging. He was in a berserker rage.

“Father!”

Edith spoke in sheer surprise. She could not understand the bitterness, the intensity, of his anger.

“Now, I require this much of you,” he said, a little thickly: “you must have the common sense not to

talk this way to other people! I won't have it as long as you are my daughter and as long as you stay in this house! Understand that thoroughly. If you have these disgraceful ideas about this man, keep them to yourself. Keep them out of the newspapers!"

He left his chair and started to go from the room.

"Aren't you going to eat your breakfast?" she asked, forcing herself to calmness.

"When you've finished yours, when you've left the room!"

"Oh, father," she begged, "please, *please*, be more kind, more just."

He stopped in the doorway.

"You know," she added, "we are not engaged."

"Yes!" he exploded again. "And everybody else will know it! I'm going to send word to the papers right now that I want to issue a denial of this absurd report. I want the reporters up here just as soon as I can get them. I'll have the denial printed to-day, this afternoon. I won't stand this foolishness!"

"Then," she said, her words hesitant, "I'll have to—have to——"

"Have to what?" he broke in.

She caught her lower lip between her teeth for a moment to hide the tremor that was upon it. Almost, there were tears in her eyes.

"Oh," she answered helplessly, "I don't know what to do. But if you send for the reporters, I

think I shall send for Mr. Waller and—and ask him to help us—me.”

Her father sneered perceptibly.

“Do so, by all means,” he advised bitterly; “and a precious lot of good he’ll do.”

“At least,” she said, “he’s fond of *him*.”

The Senator flung himself out of the room.

She hurried upstairs to the telephone on her desk, but could not speak to Waller until her father had finished calling up the Washington newspaper offices with the request that reporters be sent to the house at once.

When that was over and Waller had said he would come to her immediately, she went downstairs again and found Nellie Kane.

“Oh, Nellie,” she said gratefully, “I’m so glad you’re here!”

Mrs. Kane knew the value of cheerfulness.

“My dear,” she bubbled, “you almost persuade me the story isn’t true! Besides, this happens to be another Thursday. Remember the girls—your girls. They’ll all be wanting all sorts of help in a few minutes.”

“Oh,” she breathed, “I had forgotten about them, but I’m glad it’s Thursday, and I hope—oh, Nellie. I do hope I can do lots for them all!”

Nellie patted her shoulder gently.

“My dear,” she said, “you always do.”

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

THE two women were in the Mallon parlour when Cholliewollie arrived.

"Of course," he gave it as his opinion, "it was just a coincidence that this announcement was published the morning following the—er—meeting at my apartment last night."

"You don't think," Mrs. Kane voiced her surprise, "that they're laying their plans to make a scandal out of that!"

"No," he drawled, "I don't."

"Of course not!"

"I don't," he supplemented, "because I'm sure they knew nothing about it. But, if they did, I wouldn't put it past them. They'd do anything now to hit Smith—and they don't care who else gets hurt."

Edith felt the burning desire to clear her mind of the things that puzzled her.

"Tell me, Mr. Waller," she asked, "what possible motive could anybody have had in inspiring the story of my engagement to Mr. Smith?"

"That's as plain as day," he replied. "I don't

think I'm far wrong in guessing that the estimable Albert Mitchell is back of it. He had that story printed."

"Why?" Edith persisted.

"He wants to make mischief."

"But how?"

"It is an old game in Washington," he explained, "this thing of having something pleasant printed about a man so that denial of it will make him look ridiculous."

"Oh," Edith said, greatly grieved, "my father already has telephoned the afternoon newspapers to send reporters up here. He wants to deny the story."

"There you are! The Senator is doing the very thing they counted on."

Edith reflected a moment.

"They think," she suggested, "that anything they can do to make Mr. Smith look ridiculous will hurt what he stands for?"

"Oh, yes; but this is such a little thing, this engagement—I mean, it is too slight, the effect of the denial and all that, to hurt anybody. If it was cumulative, if it followed something else, or if there were something else to follow this——"

He took his turn at reflection.

Edith, tremendously distressed, waited for him to continue.

"Oh," he said, "there's nothing to it—merely a little piece of little spite. That's all there can be to it. They're in desperate plight, Miss Mallon, and they don't hesitate to use you as a means of annoying him and worrying him and making him appear ridiculous before the country. They're grasping at straws. That's all."

"But when my father issues his denial of the engagement—what then?"

"Your father, feeling as he does toward Mr. Smith, will not spare him, naturally. He will make it unpleasant."

"If he only wouldn't!" she said desperately. "If he only wouldn't!"

Mrs. Kane came to the rescue.

"Your father's in the library, isn't he?" She rose quickly. "Well, my dear, leave him to me. All men can be handled, and, particularly, all old men can be handled by young widows." She laughed reassuringly. "I go to change his mind."

"I hope she succeeds," Waller said, when she had left the room.

"You think it so important?"

"Not vitally, but I seem to be 'hipped' about Smith just now. I had rather see nothing come out to bother him in the slightest way. Think of what he's doing. Think of the responsibilities on him this very minute!"

She contemplated that for a few moments in silence.

"That is what has bothered me so," she said at last. "Why should I be thrust forward as an annoyance to him at such a time?"

Like an answer to her question, Wales lifted the hangings at the door and announced:

"Mr. Smith."

There was hurry in his stride as he stepped into the room. It was apparent that he was almost beside himself with anger and concern. The anger, which was vastly different from Senator Mallon's, was still in his face, making his eyes glow. His face was very pale. And his physique, which always, in some strange manner, reflected his moods as surely as did his features, was tensed. Waller, watching him, noticed that his chest seemed deeper, and his arms, held at a sharper angle from his body, appeared more easily and more gracefully swung in their sockets. It was as if his body held itself marvellously ready to carry out the impulses of his mind.

"I beg your pardon!" he said abruptly, halting a few steps inside the room.

"It is too bad!"

Edith said that involuntarily and held out her hand to him.

"What are *you* doing here!"

Waller made that exclamation express the full measure of his astonishment.

Smith came forward and shook hands with Edith. He paid her all his attention.

"I would not have come—would not have intruded, believe me," he said with quick emphasis, the strength in his voice somehow expressing the fact that he felt everything for her, nothing for himself. "I called up the office of the newspaper which printed that report. I heard that Senator Mallon had sent for reporters so that he might deny the engagement. I wished—it is my most earnest desire—to say anything, to do anything, that might relieve you of any shadow of embarrassment."

He wheeled, fiery and alert, to Waller.

"What can I do?" he demanded.

"What on earth do you think of doing?" the newspaper man retorted.

The agitator turned again to Edith.

"I am sure you understand," he went on, his words a torrent of emotion. "I remembered my position—rather, my lack of position—in this house, but I have just read the report. I did not stop to consider. I came because I am horrified, distressed, that such an atrocious embarrassment should be put upon you."

She looked at him; all the lights of morning in her face.

"It doesn't embarrass me at all," she told him.

"But it must!"

"If it does, it is because I do not like to think of anything interfering with your work."

His perception of how thoroughly she had put him before herself checked him. For a second he could not speak.

"My dear fellow," Waller drawled, his voice coloured by the affection he felt for the man, "what could you do, under the circumstances?"

"Tell me just that," Smith demanded. "What can I do?"

"Absolutely nothing."

"Surely there must be something—some way in which I could take it up with the editor, obtain correction."

"As I told you once before," Waller answered, "corrections are not of much value. Once put the little printed words before the readers with their eggs and coffee in the morning, and not all the king's horses nor all the king's men can ever recall them."

Edith reminded him:

"There is no reason to feel concern for me. If it does not trouble you, let's forget it, please. It is by no means a tragedy." She smiled warmly. "Is it?"

He looked at her steadfastly, and Waller saw that he exulted—as a strong man takes pride in his strength.

"But," Smith reminded her, "there is the question of your father's denial of the story."

"Ah-h!"

The three turned toward the music-room. In the doorway stood Senator Mallon.

"Ah-h!" he repeated, addressing Smith. "To what, may I ask, do we owe this—unexpected honour?"

His voice was a triumph in studied insolence.

Cholliewollie stepped to Edith's side.

"If you will leave us, Miss Mallon, for a moment," he said in a low tone.

"Would it be best?" she asked, whispering the question.

"Much," he answered.

She turned and went out through the door leading into the hall.

Mallon came farther into the room, his stare still fixed on Smith.

"Will you tell me," he repeated, "to what we owe this visit from you?"

"It was not a visit to you," Smith answered him coolly.

"I never heard of such insolence!"

The agitator strove to keep his self-control.

"It might seem so—it does seem so," he said quietly, "but this was an affair in which Miss Mallon's peace of mind was threatened. And, since that was true, nothing could have kept me away." He took a step swiftly toward the Senator. "It

seems to me only fair, Senator Mallon," he said, "for you to let me know why you have assumed this attitude toward me, why you are so bitter."

"You, yourself, are the answer to your own question," Mallon replied.

He lit a cigar and tried to look at Smith in real contempt. Somehow, he failed in that.

"Now," he ordered, "get out of my house—and stay out!"

Smith regarded him with an expression like pity.

"You will not tell me why?" he asked again.

"Oh, yes," the older man responded with elaborate carelessness, "if you want to know. I know what you are. I'm on to you—demagogue and faker."

"One moment!"

Cholliewollie stepped between the two men and faced Mallon. His manner was such as it had been the night he had interrogated Simpson in the stuffy hotel room. The drawl had gone from his voice.

"You see, Senator," he said curtly, without a smile, "I'm on to you—you big four-flush!"

"Don't you dare to——" Mallon tried to stop him.

"There's no daring about it," Waller assured him sternly. "I'm on to you. I've got the goods on you. And I'm about to tell you where you get off."

He turned to Smith with the quick query:

"You remember you said one day you'd like to

know why the Senator—this man here—was so bitterly opposed to you, so personally hostile?”

Smith nodded.

“Well, I know now.” He faced the Senator again. “You’re a great big man out in your state, you are!”

Mallon started toward the electric push button. His face was purple, except for the thin line of white across the bridge of his nose. Waller caught him sharply by the arm.

“No, you don’t!” he commanded Mallon. “You sit down there! I’m about to tell you a little story.”

The Senator, completely aghast, sank into the chair toward which Waller’s commanding pressure on his arm guided him. The newspaper man stood over him.

“You’re a great big man out in your state. You were a great big man in business fifteen years ago—a merchant prince. But merchant princes are like other people: they overreach themselves sometimes. It happened that, at the time when you found yourself facing financial ruin and the wiping out of your business, some idiot developed the idea that your gifts and virtues entitled you to be governor of the state.”

Smith, seeing the man’s agitation, felt remorse.

“Is this necessary now and here, Waller?” he asked.

“Very,” Waller replied laconically, and proceeded

with his story: "Who saved you from the business crash? Who, by that act, virtually made you governor and actually owned you in all your official acts?"

He snapped his fingers and laughed harshly. His anger was apparent, a very personal thing.

"Ah, these precious whisky interests look far ahead and invest their money well, don't they, Senator? Who told you to run for the Senate?"

He leaned forward and snapped his fingers again. He seemed to want to drive his questions home to Mallon's mind.

"Who financed your campaign? Who sent you to the Senate? Who owns your senatorship now?" He laughed again. "Who told you to forbid John Smith this house? Who ordered you to do it?"

The Senator moistened his lips with his tongue.

"Young man," he said, attempting the insolent tone, "you're crazy, insane!"

Waller laughed again.

"Don't say that to me," he commanded. "I tell you I've got the goods on you. Whiffen McNearoyd did the work—the great and sublime Whiffen McNearoyd! You and he made the political bargains after you and Whiffen, and Silas Unterby, and Horace Gardon, and Larry Demonet held the conference that saved you from bankruptcy. If you want more, I'll give it to you, the details—Silas Unterby, the distiller; Horace Gardon, the bottler; Larry Demonet,

another distiller, and Whiffen—oh, the sweet-scented Whiffen—their jaek-of-all-trades in cooked work— Whiffen, the man who could buy a vote or steal a legislature as remorselessly and as quickly as he could starve a child or send a widow into the street!”

Mallon protested:

“Nothing but a s’ring of names! It’s all gibberish and stuff!”

Cholliewollie snapped his fingers and drove his right fist into the palm of his left hand with a resounding thwack.

“Oh, you big four-flush!” he said harshly. “You hypocrite—blood-sucker in the dark—sinner in secret places—drinker of vile waters—eater of unclean food! Owned, body and soul, by the whisky trust! People throw up their hands in holy horror and ask how whisky keeps itself entrenched. You’re the answer to that. They do it through men, through things, like you. They go out into the states and buy you, buy you where they please, buy you like eattle on the hoof, and then they pack you up and keep you in cold storage until they need you, until they dress you up in the clownish costume of a would-be statesman and send you to Washington! They buy you and use you, use you until you haven’t a backbone left! Bah! You, you—old man Mallon—are the worst of all of them. You cap them all. You strike against your daughter’s happiness when

they call! A Senator, a statesman! That's enough to make the gods laugh!"

The Senator started to rise, but Waller thrust him back into the chair.

"Now listen to me!" The young man's tone was matter-of-fact, cold as steel. "From now on, your attitude toward the relations—whatever those relations may be—between your daughter and Mr. John Smith undergoes a complete reversal of form."

It was evident that Mallon saw the futility of resistance.

"What do you ask?" he inquired, his voice shaky.

"I'm not asking anything," Waller replied. "I am telling you things. Some day, when I have the time, I may print a list of the members of Congress polluted by this whisky ownership. But, for the present, I merely tell you that you are to cease interfering with John Smith. And to-day you will give out no denial of this reported engagement. Does that go?"

"Oh," Mallon evaded, "I don't want any argument here about——"

"The society reporters, Miss Whiting and Miss Hubbard," announced Wales, holding aside the hangings to admit the two women.

At the same moment Edith and Mrs. Kane entered through the music-room door. Smith turned to speak to them.

"Step into the music-room, Mr. Smith. We can't have a scene here," Mrs. Kane suggested quickly.

Smith, without a moment's hesitation, followed her advice. He made his exit without having been seen by the reporters.

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

MISS WHITING and Miss Hubbard made what might have been termed a breezy entrance—this, in spite of their physiques. Miss Whiting was tall and thin, and she had a restless, mechanical smile. Her manner was one of forced effusiveness, a nervous, ineffective pretence of great energy, which made her seem birdlike in the way in which she moved and darted about. Each of her gestures was a sharp, stabbing motion. Miss Hubbard was a trifle thinner than Miss Whiting, and seemed, with the exception of an expression of complete resignation to an unkind world, a pale likeness of her companion.

“This is Senator Mallon?” Miss Whiting began the conversation with a group of people who, because of the sweeping emotions they were then enduring, thought of nothing to say. “And Miss Mallon?” She bowed to Edith. “How very, very nice! How very nice!”

Mallon murmured something about being glad to see Miss Whiting and Miss Hubbard.

“We came to get the denial of the engagement story.” Miss Whiting’s words flowed from her bird-

like throat. "You see, in a story like this, the young lady, the heroine, becomes the most interesting personage in modern life. She is discussed over the teacups and across the wine-glasses. And details are essential."

"So very essential, Myrtle," Miss Hubbard agreed with her friend.

"Yes. If she likes immortelles better than roses, for instance, or if she had a favourite rag doll when she was a baby, or if she believes onions quiet the nerves—anything of that sort, Senator, is absolutely essential."

"If you will permit me, Miss Whiting," Waller stepped forward, prepared to make a suggestion.

"Just one moment, Mr. Waller, please," she went on, again devoting her attention to the Senator. "It would so improve the story if we knew Miss Mallon's views on marriage. Has she ever read any books on trial marriage, for instance, or does she admire the feminist movement? You know, they say the feminists don't believe in the marriage ceremony. It's quite shocking, I know, but in these days things have to be shocking in order to be interesting. And details are so essential for——"

The two reporters had been standing near the door through which they had entered. Miss Whiting's frantic fishing for details was ended, necessarily, when the hangings were lifted once more by Wales.

"I beg your pardon, Miss Mallon," he said, "but Miss Mary Leslie wishes to see you—one of the Thursday young ladies."

"Oh, I had forgotten," Edith reproached herself. "Tell her to wait a moment in——"

But the visitor evidently had thought she was to follow Wales. She came past him slowly, almost timidly, and, when she saw the group in the room, stood, a fearful, shrinking figure clothed in black, just a step over the threshold. Wales dropped the hangings behind her and disappeared.

"I—I wanted to see Miss Mallon," she said in a colourless, uncertain tone.

"I am Miss Mallon," Edith told her, and started toward her with the intention of asking her to wait in another room.

But the newcomer hurried to meet her and clasped her hand.

"Oh," she said, sobbing a little, "I'm so glad! So glad!"

Edith felt that the girl's hands trembled. Her plain, felt sailor hat was rusty on the edges of the brim, and her black suit was shabby, ill-fitting. But she was not a girl. She was a woman of twenty-seven or, possibly, twenty-eight. That was evident in the pale face, a face which had in it too many lines, as if the years had been far more heavy than happy. Her black hair was done in exaggeration of the pre-

vailing mode. Her eyes, Edith thought afterward, were uncanny. They looked old and very wise, as if they had seen many places and many different kinds of men and women. And yet, for all their wisdom, they looked, also, like depths of sorrow. The wisdom she had gained was not such as to quiet the sobs in her throat or to make her hands cease trembling.

For a moment Edith forgot the others around her.

"Ah," she said kindly, "you are troubled, aren't you? Come with me, won't you?"

As the two women turned toward the door into the hall, the change in positions made Mary Leslie face the music-room.

Her eyes rested on somebody beyond the doorway. The click in her throat was audible to everybody in the room. It sounded as if her leaping heart had crowded the breath from her body. For an instant she stood, her face blank from sheer ineredulity. Even her wise-looking eyes were blank, as if they had been curtained. She slipped both her hands from Edith's grasp and let them fall, limp, at her sides. Her lips shaped to a slow smile, and light came back to her eyes. She leaned toward the music-room and held out her hands. They trembled. Every bit of her trembled.

To the others the thing was big, crushing, grim. All of them—even the society reporters—knew that

they looked on a tremendous scene, something vital, stark. In the dead silence they almost could hear the footfall of tragedy, so entirely did the emotion of the shabby-looking, black-clad woman dominate their minds.

Her thin, white hands trembled oddly before her for a few moments before she let them drop again to her sides. She still leaned toward the music-room.

"Why," she said in an awed, wondering voice hardly above a whisper, "there's Jack!"

The smile stayed on her lips and went up into her eyes.

Mrs. Kane was the first to find voice. Edith's fascinated gaze was, like the strange woman's, toward the music-room.

"What did you say?" Nellie asked, her voice strained.

"There he is—in there," Mary Leslie answered. She did not shift her gaze, but she brought both her hands up to her chest and folded them there. The gesture looked like mute prayer.

Mallon, appreciating at last what the scene meant, took one step toward the doorway through which the woman's steady gaze went.

"Mr. Smith!" he called out loudly.

There was a brief pause, during which the others could see that Mary's and Edith's eyes followed the progress of some one toward the doorway.

The suspense, cruelly heavy, hung on all of them.

Smith appeared in the doorway and came into the room. His expression was one of curiosity. He looked first at Edith, then at Mary Leslie. Evidently, he had not heard what Mary had said about him.

Mallon turned to Miss Leslie.

"Well?" he questioned her a little sharply.

She held out her hands toward the agitator again, supplicating him.

"It *is* Jack!" she said, music in her voice for the first time, like the whisper of happiness. Her eyes had never left him.

He looked at her gravely. It was apparent that he was utterly bewildered.

"My name is John," he answered firmly.

Her hands were still toward him, trembling, white, and thin.

"And I am Mary," she said simply.

He answered her with two slow words.

"Mary who?"

The smile gradually faded from her face. It was as if a brutal, irresistible hand slowly dragged down into the mud a beautiful thing.

"You don't know me?"

She said that in a curious, frightened way. She seemed to view the thing in some strange, detached manner, as if she mechanically calculated the degrees of her own sorrow. There was in her question

so much panic, and at the same time so much flat disappointment, that she might have been a musician testing a few mournful notes on a flute. There was in her tone all the flutes of fear.

"No," Smith replied very quietly; "I don't think I do."

"But you must!"

She made the words a lamentation.

A little pallor came into his face.

"But I don't—really," he contradicted her again.

She let her hands fall again, slowly, making the gesture eloquent of complete surrender, and, ceasing to stare at him, surveyed the others a little blindly.

"He says he doesn't know me!" she mourned, addressing nobody definitely.

Smith, quiet and dignified, looked at her intently.

"That is true," he told her gently; "I do not know you. I do not, I assure you."

She returned his intent gaze, but she seemed to be trying to look within herself, to examine her own processes of reasoning, to assure herself of her own sanity. There was in her glance incredulity, distrust of herself and of him.

"Do you mean to say," she wondered in a low voice, "you don't remember me, don't remember Shanghai—the time we were there six years ago?"

Smith drew himself more erect. Waller thought

he braced himself, like a man facing bravely a great and unexpected torture.

"I do not," he repeated.

Waller stepped forward and addressed Mary Leslie.

"May I suggest, madam," he said firmly, "that this is hardly the place for a discussion of this sort?"

She took no note of him.

"Jack, you *do* remember," she said to Smith, her voice raised. "You must remember!" Entreaty was strong in her words. "If you don't, I'll remind you." She took one short, timid, creeping step toward him. "You remember Charlie's place—and Josie the Spaniard—and the boats down on the river in the moonlight"—her voice broke on that—"You remember the boats down on the river, don't you?"

He stared at her, and paused before he could find words with which to express some of the things that went whirling through his brain. His gaze was enough to explore her very soul.

Waller turned to him.

"Oh, come, old man!" he implored. "This won't do at all. Why listen to such a thing?"

Mallon contradicted the suggestion.

"We'd better listen," he said roughly.

"It won't do at all!" Mary acknowledged Waller finally. "Well, it won't!" Her anger was for Waller,

not for Smith. That was quite evident. "I've found this man again, and you say it won't do!" Scorn and contempt made her words quick, strong. "He ran away from me—ran away!" She struck her thin, white fists together. "Do you know what that means? I tell you I am his wife—I was——"

She turned suddenly to Smith and implored him with outstretched hands.

"Why do you stand there and pretend that what I say is not true?" She sobbed once. "Oh, why?"

To that he made no answer. For the moment his mind was busy with Edith, who stood back of the other woman, her hands clenched in front of her, her face a colourless model for grief.

"You can't deny it, can you?" Mary Leslie challenged him, personal anger against him lively in her voice at last. "Why don't you speak?"

He stared at her fixedly. His nostrils dilated with the rapidity of his breathing. His features twitched as if the gray fingers of the pallor that was upon him twisted them sharply.

"Tell me!" she begged, seeing his suffering. "Don't you know me?"

He answered her with a great effort:

"I don't know," he said, hoarseness in his throat.

He heard the half-audible cry from Edith, and, without looking at her, saw that she winced as if she had been struck. A smile of derision was on

Mallon's face. The two reporters stirred slightly, anticipating even a greater sensation than that which they had just witnessed. Mrs. Kane went close to Edith and put an arm about her waist.

Mary Leslie fell back from Smith a step and wailed: "You don't know?"

They watched him as he stood, drawn to his full height like a man facing execution.

Waller broke in again.

"This is a frame-up!" he declared angrily. "That's what it is—a frame-up! Old man, don't fall for it!"

Smith did not answer him.

"What do you mean?" Mary's thin, wailing voice tried to break Smith's silence. "What do you mean—you don't know?"

Waller grasped his shoulder.

"Don't pay any attention to her!" he begged. "This is a frame-up, I tell you. Come with me!"

"Don't!" the plaintive voice persisted. "Don't! Don't run away from me again!"

Smith put Waller's hand away from him.

"I'm not going to run away," he said, with quiet, unnatural calmness. "I shall tell you the truth. I shall tell Senator Mallon—everybody here—and, through them, the world."

He spoke in a low, tense voice, and managed to convey the impression that he pitied Mary Leslie.

"I don't know you, and yet you may have known

me. There may have been a time when I was all the world to you. But I do not know. I cannot say."

He passed the back of his right hand across his brow slowly.

"I don't even know who I am—from where I came—my own name. My memory is only five years old." He punctuated that with a smile infinitely sad. "So, you see, I couldn't possibly, under any circumstances, know you now. You say you knew me six years ago? Five years ago I lost my memory. Whisky destroyed it—utterly. All the life I had lived, all the places I had seen, my whole personal history, all the thoughts of my brain—everything was wiped from my consciousness absolutely and entirely. I say, all the thoughts. There was one that left its shadow, a ghost, a compelling terror, on my mind: That was the knowledge that whisky had dealt me this terrific blow." He spread out his hands and smiled lightly. "That is why I do not like whisky." He spoke very gently. "I do not believe I ever knew you—ever knew you very well. I don't think I ever did. But I cannot say."

On the end of that there was only Edith's shuddering cry as she sank into the chair beside her. Mrs. Kane bent over her, shielding her from the view of the others.

Edith's grief had a great and immediate effect on Smith. He wheeled upon Mailon, and, as he moved,

there was in his figure and in his face all his customary brilliancy, all his alertness, all his ardent strength.

"What I do believe," he said in ringing tones, "is that the other side instigated this whole scene to discredit me in the eyes of Congress and the country. They think they can defeat the movement for which I stand by branding me as a man with a criminal past. How foolishly they have planned! Even if they could prove me guilty of the most revolting, the most degraded, conduct, they would insure merely their own downfall. I am only one, a unit, an infinitesimal fraction, in the great sum of public opinion against which they fight in vain."

Mallon put up a hand to interrupt him. He disregarded him.

"You will hear me now! Look at me as I am—a miserable man, a makeshift, one who does not know his own identity! Back of me there is hung, from the heavens to my heels, a wall of darkness from behind which nameless horrors may spring upon me in the twinkling of an eye. Instead of memories to soothe my soul, I have the sword of suspense to torture my mind. Instead of the lessons of experience to light my way, I entertain weird creatures of self-suspicion that drag me back. Look at me as I am!—this miserable man, unknowing and unknown! Think of it!"

He paused and stood a moment, his arms outspread, a statue of woe, a man upon whose head the bolts of the world's anguish had fallen. Waller laid his hand on his shoulder, but he shook it off. His spirit was aflame, brave, in rebellion. He was fighting against the other side. He was possessed with the eager desire to throw upon the world's consciousness the exact picture of what he had suffered.

"There is nothing I care to conceal," he said to Waller, and added to Mallon: "Imagine, if you can, some of the degrees of my infinite misery. Picture my yearning to go back through the years and weep beside the grave of one whose startled soul, following folly with me, may have met death unaware. Measure, if you can, the fine torture born of the fear that some time, somewhere, I stilled the laughter of a child or taught a woman to weep anew."

He pointed, with lightning-like gesture, to Mary.

"Right here, in our very presence, is the concrete example of what I mean. If I have known this woman, if I have brought her to her tears, what would I not give if I had tried long ago to undo the wrong?"

His voice rang with scorn.

"And yet, my enemies think to use me as an argument in behalf of whisky! They believe they can say to the country, 'Look at him, think of what he suffers, and then be persuaded that what he preaches

is all wrong!' They jeer at me who, rising from the ashes of my own destruction, dared to lift my voice against the thing that struck me down. I tell you that *they* are all wrong! Tell the people, tell Congress, what I am; describe to them the agony of my appalling repentance; picture me as cut off from the love of woman and the hope of children. Let them advertise the fact that I grope my way through the days and nights with a crippled mind and a trembling and twisted soul. Let them say that I am an exile from love and an alien to peace!"

His scorn possessed the air, like a writhing, lashing, live thing.

"Let them say all that, and let them boast, 'Whisky did these things to this man. Therefore, mothers, give whisky to your sons. Whisky hurt John Smith, who cries out against it. Whisky tore down his ideals and wiped out the dreams of his youth. Therefore, men, give whisky to your women!' There! You have it—their whole argument—the anguish of a man who cannot tell whether in the years that are dead he loved a wretched woman whose shrill voice assails him in the sight of men. Let them make the most of it! Let them blazon it to the world—and spell out of it the certain syllables of their own approaching doom!"

He stood with upflung right hand, his spirit exalted, his whole attitude a brave defiance.

Edith, springing to her feet and indicating Mary Leslie with a gesture, carried the defiance further.

"I know," she said, her voice silver-clear, "you never knew *her!*"

"He did!" Mary shrilled. "He did!"

Suddenly he looked worn, weary.

"I have told you that—already," he said dully.

"I—don't—know."

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

THE terrific tension that had held the group spell-bound snapped at last. The situation had been sucked dry. Its actors and auditors felt that there was nothing more. The thing was done—played out. They began to change their positions, to breathe more freely. Smith, turning without a word to anybody, followed Waller out of the room. As he went he was conscious that the two reporters rushed toward Mary Leslie to ply her with questions; that Mrs. Kane and Edith started toward the music-room door; that Senator Mallon's call to Waller to come back was unanswered.

In the street, Smith moved like a man impelled by a craving for action, speed, hurry.

"I want to go with you." Waller made the first remark since leaving the house. He spoke in a jesting tone, seeking to relieve the emotional strain. "But I can't keep up if you walk like this."

"I wonder," Smith answered him, "if we can get a taxicab anywhere near here."

"Yes; there's a garage around on Nineteenth Street."

"Let's go there."

They walked a little farther in silence.

"Of course," Smith said at last, "I'm wondering what effect it will have."

"And I'm wondering," Waller retorted reproachfully, "why you didn't confide in me long ago."

The agitator smiled slightly, touched by the other's evident devotion to him.

"Oh," he said, "what could have been the use?"

They were conversing jerkily, tersely, as men do when they are greatly moved.

"It must have been pretty tough on you," Choliewollie said. "I never suspected how very tough it was."

Smith was looking straight ahead.

"It has been hell," he agreed simply.

"And yet, you have so much to make you feel at this moment very proud."

"Ah," Smith exclaimed, with a touch of impatience, "how can I feel proud? What can a man boast when he put in more than thirty years of his life doing so little that he left behind him neither sign nor trail? Why, the only way I can guess at my age is to take what the doctors deduct from my general physical condition. And how can I feel at ease? If what that woman has just said is true—if a fractional part of it is true—how can I really know that there isn't murder behind me, that some night

I didn't leave a stark, cold thing lying on the roadside with its sightless eyes turned toward the moon? How can I know that the faces of those whom I should have loved have not been ravaged by grief because of me? Those are the things, the thoughts, the fears, that swoop down on me and blot out at times all the light in my soul."

To Cholliewollie, he seemed too near a breakdown. He had never heard him speak with such bitterness.

"There is this to be remembered," the newspaper man took a new tack: "the Leslie woman's story is a lie. That's certain."

"Why is it certain?"

"Somehow, I know it. I haven't been in my business all this time for nothing. I've felt for weeks that the whisky people had something on you. I've been more afraid of it than you have. But this—why, this is a cheap grandstand play. It's too evident."

"She seemed," Smith commented heavily, "tremendously in earnest, thoroughly sincere."

"But she was lying," Waller persisted, and, when the other made no reply, continued: "If I can only write this thing the way it happened! If I can only get into my story all the things you said! It was wonderful, immense. I believe it will do you more good than harm."

"The way you will write it, yes; but how about all the other stories that will go out of Washington to-day and to-night?"

"Leave that to me," Cholliewollie eheered him. "There'll be a parade like a bread line into my office to-night. Every correspondent in town will want the carbon copy of the story of the man who witnessed the scene. And my story will be the thing that will give them their first impression of what happened. That's 50 per cent. of the whole thing."

"What would you advise me to do to-day?"

"Go back to your office and get to work as usual. I know it'll be hard, but it's the thing to do."

"And the newspaper men?"

"Reeve them this afternoon as usual. Answer their questions."

"That will be easy," Smith smiled. "I don't know anything."

"Exaetly," Waller agreed. "That's what makes it good."

"And what will become of the Leslie woman?"

"Oh, they'll all get statements from her and elaborate her story. You'll have to remember that. Tomorrow will be a field day for her in the papers. Your turn will come later."

"Yes, I understand that."

"But I'm not through with her. I intend to get

the truth from her sooner or later. She was lying. I know she was lying."

They reached the garage and took a taxicab, directing the chauffeur to drive to Smith's offices.

The agitator sat leaning a little forward, looking through the window nearest him. He was confronted by the big menace of his life, as far as he knew his life. Whether true or false, the accusation that had been made against him might break irretrievably the hold he had had on the imagination and hearts of the country. The people who followed him and looked up to him were, necessarily, the best element of the population, men and women to whom the moral and the decent must make a final and strong appeal. And the thing laid at his door was something that could not be explained away.

His personality, however brilliant and however commanding, might not be taken as a complete refutation of what had been charged against him. Indeed, the chances were that he could not refute it. He confessed his ignorance of all that had been said. "I don't know," did not sound like a convincing denial of an offence against the laws of God and man. These things came into his mind compellingly, but, over them all, was his memory of Edith's face, Edith's shuddering cry. The opposition had struck him in the two vital spots: the work and the woman. Un-

consciously, as his thoughts whirled, he put out his hand and laid it on Waller's knee.

Cholliewollic knew what the other had been thinking. He knew, also, that new thoughts must take the place of those if Smith was to continue his efficiency.

"Crawdlor got back to town last night," he informed Smith. "I told him you wanted him to make the motion from the floor to discharge the committee from further consideration of the prohibition resolution and to pass it by a vote of the House."

"What did he say?" Smith inquired absently.

"He said that, next to being President, he'd rather do that than anything else in the world."

"Crawdlor's a good man"—Smith gave a little more of his attention to the conversation—"a good man and a good Congressman."

"I'm going to put out an interview from him tonight," Waller went on. "I wrote it myself and showed it to him. He said it was all right."

"What's it about, specifically?"

"He enumerates the big men who are back of this movement, the strong fighters who are out for prohibition. You know the lobby has been saying you had no powerful following. Mitchell was out yesterday with a statement that you were the leader of a lot of women and cranks."

"Oh, did he say that? You know nearly all of history has been made by women and eranks."

"That's a good line!" Waller exaggerated his enthusiasm. "I'll stiek it into the interview. Anyway, Crawdlor points out that there are twelve men in the House and one in the Senate who had to go to Keeley Institutes to get the liquor out of them before they could realize the possibilities for greatness and usefulness that were in them. The list of your supporters is a dandy. It includes three ex-governors of states, two millionaires, a famous evangelist, and a line of Senators, Cabinet officers, Representatives, and big state offieials that would reach from here to Baltimore."

When they stepped to the pavement, Walier told the chauffeur to wait and drew Smith aside.

"What have you on for to-day?" he asked.

"I want to get through with the last details of the line of march."

"What have you decided?"

"It won't do to bring them all down Pennsylvania Avenue. It would take too long. You see, we estimate a erowd of fifty thousand—some of them old, many of them women and ehildren. Besides, I want to earry out the symbolism of the idea that the whole country is marching to the Capitol to ask for this thing. I want the marchers to approach the Capitol from all four sides—Pennsylvania Avenue,

North Capitol Street, East Capitol Street, and up by Delaware Avenue. I want the whole mass to come to the doors of that building from all directions."

"That's perfect—and perfectly appropriate."

He started to leave Smith, but hesitated.

"Tell me," he urged; "what's bothering you? There's something puzzling you this minute. What is it?"

Smith looked at him seriously.

"I was wondering," he said gravely, "whether I'd better give up the plan of leading the line down the avenue. I mean, on account of what has occurred to-day."

"Give up!" Walter exclaimed. "Not on your life! I'd lead that line in spite of hail, high water, and hiccoughs! That's what I would do. Now, I'm going up and get my story out. The sooner the better. I'll drop back here as soon as possible."

He shook Smith's hand and went back to the cab, directing the chauffeur to go to his newspaper office.

He stepped in, took his seat, lit a cigar, and then, as if on impulse, put his head out the window and drawled to the driver:

"It may be of interest to you to know that the man you brought down here has got more real nerve than you ever saw—enough nerve to stand up against what would cut the hearts out of seventeen million Goliaths in two and a half seconds!"

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

WHEN Waller reached his office the storm had broken in the newspaper world, presaging the hurricane of sensation, blame, acclamation, criticism, and question that would sweep the country that evening and the following day. He tried to start his story, but could not. Telephone calls came to him one after the other. The news had swept through the newspaper and political part of the city as if by magic. Correspondents were already sending their papers bulletins announcing that they were about to put on the wire the "big story." Men talked eagerly about it in the hotel lobbies, at the Capitol, in the office buildings, on the street corners. Waller, sitting in his office, had a mental picture of the excitement, the perturbation among the prohibitionists, the exultation of the whisky people, the doubts of some of the Smith supporters, the quick rallying to his side of his most earnest followers. And he knew that nearly every person was asking another:

"What will people think of it? What will people say?"

He thought, a little grimly, that few people have

any opinions of their own, that most of them merely reflect the thoughts of others, that nearly all are too much like sheep. The great thing was to give the sensation the right twist, the proper slant, to make them say, "He's all right," instead of, "He's all wrong."

The telephone calls multiplied and piled up. To all of them he answered that at four o'clock he would have his story ready. When the representatives of the afternoon papers said they could not wait, he answered that he was sorry but that they would have to satisfy themselves with what everybody was saying about the incident. In his own mind, he knew that the verdict would come from the morning papers, from the finished and complete stories, not from the sketchy and necessarily fragmentary articles slapped on the wire by men who had not time enough to re-read their copy in search of mistakes. Finally, he locked his door, took the receiver off the hook, and sat down at his typewriter to get out the story which, he hoped, would turn the tide in favour of the agitator.

At the end of an hour and a half, a few minutes before four o'clock, he arose from the machine, stretched his tired arms and shoulders, and began to put together the pages of a story which would cover two columns and a half. He had made six carbon copies of it. It was a good story. He "felt" that. It had in it some of Smith's fire and eloquence—and a

great deal of Smith's anguish. Afterward, when other members of his profession had time to comment, they said it was a great piece of dramatic writing.

He called an office boy, gave him one of the copies, and instructed him to take it to a public stenographer's office and have a hundred copies run off at once. He kept the other copies he had made and called up the Press Club and the offices of several correspondents.

"Now," he thought, "let them come! I'm ready for them!"

They did come. In fifteen minutes the room was crowded with little groups of men, their heads bent over the various copies, heads which, as the reading progressed, were shaping up the opening paragraphs and the structure of the stories they would get out, stories which, in a few hours, would do more than any other one thing to determine whether John Smith was to survive or go down in obloquy and blame. Cholliewollie had been right when he had said to Smith that he would do much to give the agitator the best of the news dispatches.

At a quarter to six the writers were still coming in. He had instructed the office boy to deliver copies to every newspaper and correspondent's office in town. Now he led the crowd to the cars on their way to Smith's offices.

The agitator, stepping from the inner office, con-

fronted the semicircle of eager faces and bowed his customary:

“Good afternoon, gentlemen.”

There was nothing unusual in his demeanour. His smile was the same. He did not even look tired. As always before, he impressed them as a man vibrant with energy. He held in his left hand a paper which, some of them observed, was a map of the city of Washington. Evidently he had just left his desk to meet them. Every man facing him sensed to a nicety how near John Smith stood to tragedy and ruin. They were trained to “get” and estimate the force of events, the probable consequences of national affairs, the results of clashing personalities. And all of them, watching him intently, thought that he must be a brave man.

So keen was their appreciation of what the thing meant, so accurate their prevision of the danger threatening him, that for a few seconds nobody put the question they all wanted to ask.

He bowed slightly again and asked pleasantly:

“What is it you want to ask, gentlemen?”

“They’ve got all the essential facts, Mr. Smith,” Waller spoke up. “They’ve seen my story, and that covered everything that happened at Senator Mallon’s house.”

“Perhaps,” Smith suggested, “it might be easier for all of us, might cover everything more promptly,

if I told you in my own words all there is to tell. In fact, what I said this morning in Senator Mallon's house is all I could say now. It is all—that is, it is all I know. Naturally, a man with a memory five years old cannot speak, either accurately or by guess, of things said to have happened six years ago. That seems quite logical, doesn't it? I realize the things you would ask, the things you would like to know. Believe me, gentlemen, your desire to know them cannot be one half so great as mine. Here you are, before me, thrusting your heads against the stone wall of my ignorance of my own past. Well"—he spread out his hands in a hopeless gesture, and smiled—"I have had my head against that same stone wall for exactly five years. Your concern about the facts this evening may give you some idea of what—how shall I say it—of what I have suffered each day and each night. You see, that is all. I told my story this morning."

The sallow-faced young man who, by this time, had built up a reputation for his questioning powers, put the first query:

"Is it true that Mallon forbade you his house?"

"Yes," Smith said quietly; "that is true."

"And are you engaged to be married to Miss Mallon?" the interrogator went further.

"No," the answer came with the same quietness, the same directness; "that is not true."

There was a stir among the men facing him, as if, in spite of their realization that a public man under fire cannot hope to keep his private life out of the publicity glare, they resented his being wounded unnecessarily.

Avery, tall, snappy, on the alert, gave the conversation a new turn.

"Perhaps, Mr. Smith," he suggested, "you might like to hear the Les—the woman's story as she told it to me."

"Yes," he agreed quickly, "I should like to, very much."

Avery produced a copy of his story.

"I'll read you merely what she said, her own words," he explained.

While Avery read, every man in the room watched the agitator. Apparently unconscious of their scrutiny, he was listening, not so much with eagerness as with a concentrated, calculating interest, as if he strove to remember, tried to drive his brain to do a work of which it was incapable. It was plain that he was groping in the dark, beating aimlessly about in the sea of ideas brought forward by what Mary Leslie had said.

Avery read her words:

"I am his wife. My maiden name was Mary Leslie. I was born and brought up in Des Moines, Iowa. His name is Jack Gardner. I don't know where he was born

but it was somewhere in the South, in Virginia, I think. We met in Shanghai. I had gone out there as a trained nurse. He had some money, and he married me a week after he met me. Then he got to hitting the pipe—opium. He had been hitting it before he married me.

“You know, without my telling you, what that meant. Things went to pieces. He got me into the habit. We used to go to a place on the Foochow Road. I guess it’s still there. It was known as the House with the Red-lacquered Balcony, and it was run by a Portuguesc we called Charlie.

“As I said, things got worse and worse. My husband’s money gave out. He didn’t have much, after all. Then I waked up one morning in Charlie’s place to find that I had been deserted. I never saw the man again until to-day when I went to see Miss Edith Mallon. I went to see her because I was down and out. I’ve been down and out a good many times. When Gardner left me in Shanghai, I had to work as a servant. I got back to the States by coming over as a lady’s maid. I came to Washington to try for a position as an army nurse. Those are the facts.”

Avery stopped reading and looked at Smith.

“That’s her story, sir,” the correspondent said.

The agitator addressed himself to Avery:

“It recalls nothing, absolutely nothing, to my mind,” he said.

Those who heard him recognized the regret, the sadness, in his voice. There could be no doubt of the fact that he was sorry he could get nothing from

the story. It was evident that his great desire was to get light on the matter from somewhere.

"Does she explain," Waller asked Avery, "why she is known as Mary Leslie if she is really Mrs. John Gardner?"

"Oh, of course, she explains it," Avery said carelessly. "It's the obvious explanation: She preferred to resume her maiden name."

Smith put one brief question:

"And the proof of this marriage?"

"She has no documentary evidence," Avery replied, "but she claims it was in Shanghai. Several news associations have cabled to Shanghai to get all that end of the story."

Waller explained to Smith:

"Under favourable conditions, we ought to get something from Shanghai in six or seven hours. It's six o'clock here now. It's nine o'clock in the morning there. We ought to hear something to-night."

"That is," Avery modified, "if the men there find anything."

"Look here, Avery," Waller asked; "how did she strike you? Don't you *know* she was lying?"

Avery hesitated.

"You know," he said, "it's hard to tell when a woman like that is lying—or how much. And it struck me—I'm talking frankly now, Mr. Smith—that she must have some facts to go on. And the

way she sticks to her story is immense. Five of us put her through a regular third degree, and she told always the same thing. She's firm—and, if she is lying, there's another Bernhardt thrown away."

Smith bowed, making no comment.

"Is there anything else, gentlemen?" he inquired.

There was much else they wanted to know, but, realizing his helplessness, they filed out of the room. Each one of them was in a hurry. All of them knew that they were about to write the strangest, most fascinating story that had ever come to light in Washington. They were intent on the story as a story, and did not think much then of the probable effect of what they would write. It was their business to tell the news to the country, and they wanted to tell it in the best way possible.

Thanks to Waller and to Smith's own personality, the "best way possible," in their eyes, was to describe the agitator's suffering and to depict the day's events in a way that would create for him sympathy and support.

Waller lingered with him for a few minutes.

"I wish you'd tell me exactly how you feel about this thing," the newspaper man asked him.

"How do you mean?"

"I don't like to rush off and leave you here with all this work and the greater burden of what the day has brought forth. I'd like to know just how you feel."

"I don't think I feel at all yet," Smith answered him, putting a hand on his shoulder. "I've been making a great effort to dissociate myself, personally, from it, to keep at the work. I can't trust myself yet to consider what it may mean to my personal happiness. And I'm afraid—a little afraid of what the country will say to-morrow."

"Let us attend to that," Waller cheered him. "You do the work—and you'll get by."

"At any rate," he concluded, "I would give almost anything in the world to walk this minute into the House with the Red-lacquered Balcony on the Foochow Road."

He dined alone that evening in a quiet little restaurant, where he knew he would not be annoyed by the curious. As he left the place, a man stepped up to him and touched him on the arm. He stopped. His thoughts had been such as to make him welcome anybody he had never seen before. There was in his mind for an instant the hope that this stranger also might know something about him. A second glance showed that the man had been drinking.

"What can I do for you?" Smith responded to the touch on his arm and to the close scrutiny.

The stranger was about forty-five years of age, seedy as to his dress, unkempt as to his linen and cravat. In spite of the onslaughts alcohol had made on his appearance, there was in his face the hint

of a bygone decency, the ghost of a real intellect. He was pudgy and short of stature.

"May I walk a little way with you?" he requested, his voice a little thick. "I can tell you some interesting things."

"By all means," the agitator agreed.

They fell into step together. It was a crisp, clear evening. Overhead the moon, dimming the street lights, hung in a silver sash of fleecy clouds.

"I know who you are," the stranger began, "the prohibition leader. You can take a look at me and know who I am. I'm the Man Who Could Handle It. I belong to that noble army of sports who drink on a system and have whisky under perfect control."

He spoke in a vein of broad sarcasm, in tune with bitterness.

"That is, I used to be the Man Who Could Handle It. I now decorate the ranks of those who have gone down and out. As the Man Who Could Handle It, I was a star performer. My will power was beautiful to behold. My physique was impervious to all ills and pains. I could work and attend to business all the time—could do it just a little better with a few drinks under my belt. The alcohol was what my system needed. The drinks gave me a whole lot of bright ideas, and it made me sociable and popular."

He stopped a moment, full in the moonlight.

"You've heard that talk before, haven't you?" he inquired solemnly.

"Many times," Smith assented, falling into step again.

"I felt a real scorn for the fellows who got drunk. I studied some of them quite closely. They were curiosities to me. The stuff was meant to be enjoyed, not abused. I thought the drunkards were swine. That went on for ten years. For ten years I was the Man Who Could Handle It. Other men admired me for it. One or two told me it would get me some day. I laughed at that. I was a genius. I could see all the others going either to the uncomfortable gutter or to the untimely grave, but I couldn't see how I would ever take either route. I watched the army of wrecks, and knew I had something on them. You see, I could handle it."

His self-contempt grew.

"Then one night I got drunk. A year after that I waked up one morning and had to have a drink before I could eat breakfast. Right there occurred the full extinction of the Man Who Could Handle It; and there was born the Man Whom It Handled. That's a grand metamorphosis, my friend. You see I call you 'my friend.' Dissipation makes us familiar. A grand metamorphosis, I say, from the Man Who Could Handle It to the Man Whom It Handled. And you can take it from me that its handling is rough."

"Always," Smith emphasized. He was keenly interested in what the man had to say.

"I'm a type," the other continued. "You can find me in any of the cheap, dirty saloons or in any of the swell clubs. I belonged to a swell club once. However, we'll let that pass. Yes, you can find me in any of those places. There's a big army of me—an inspiring, lovely line of men with their efficiency gone, their livers hardened, their kidneys ruined, their brains foggy, their waistline too big, their reputations too little. They are the boys who could handle it. They're the fellows who despised the drunkards and the spreers."

They had reached the entrance to Smith's office building, where they paused.

"But I merely wanted to tell you," concluded the Man Who Could Handle It, "that nobody can handle it. It'll get you in the long run or the short. The shorter, the better. It may take a month or it may take ten years, but some fine morning you wake up and find your master right there at the side of the bed, and he reaches out and puts his cold, clammy fingers around your throat and leads you to the bottle. When that happens, my friend, it's all over but the shouting. You belong to the saloons or the club bars, and you wonder when the undertaker will come along and be kind to you and bury you. You hope it will be soon, but it never comes quite soon

enough. The stuff you could handle, handles you quite thoroughly. It introduces you to the death-in-life." He made an elaborate bow. "Remember me. You can't forget me. You'll see me every day, everywhere—the Man Who Could Handle It."

He turned on his heel and went down the street without a backward glance. Smith, looking up to the sky, wondered how long it had been since the Man Who Could Handle It had been able even to realize that there were nights when the moon hung in a silver sash.

That was a hard night for the agitator. His office force, working overtime every night now, went home at eleven. He stayed on until twelve, labouring with his work, fighting desperately against depression, denying himself to all callers and telephone calls.

A few minutes past midnight Waller came in and reported:

"There's nothing from Shanghai to-night."

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

THE agitator's first thought the following morning was of a woman's figure leaning toward him in a doorway and swaying like a reed in the flow of heavy waters. And, immediately upon that, came the picture of her as she had stood the day before, grieved but valiant. He put the image of her out of his mind, his effort in doing so being as direct and palpable as if he had tried to lift a tremendous weight with his right arm.

While he dressed and breakfasted in his rooms, he looked at the headlines in the Washington and New York papers which were brought to him every morning. There it was before him: the story of himself, his confession and defiance, Mary Leslie's story, all topped with the big-lettered headlines that ran anywhere from two columns wide to the breadth of the whole front page. His photograph and Mary Leslie's were reproduced by each paper.

Few people have had the sensation of being tried by the press. It is, in a way, more terrible than being tried by a court. In court there is always the chance of appeal. Against the newspaper court

there is no redress. A man, sitting alone at breakfast, sees his face on the printed page, reads the things he has said and the things others have said about him, realizes at first imperfectly that he is the one on whom the glare is turned, and comes to know, finally, that he must stand up and take it all. Big men have spent years trying to overtake the effects of a newspaper article—and have not succeeded.

Smith read Cholliewollie's article to the end.

"Good boy!" he thought gratefully. "At least, you don't drawl when you write."

He examined the other headlines and stories with what he tried to make a judicial mind. On the whole, he was immensely gratified. He had been given the best of it so far. Several of the writers had intimated that the woman's story and her demeanour could not command belief. Others had built their lead on Smith's contention that, if her story were true, it merely proved the righteousness of his fight against whisky. One of the New York papers ran an editorial on the matter sounding a ringing alarm against anybody weakening in support of him at such a critical time in the movement.

Thinking gratefully that the world was very kind, he was laying down a paper when his eye caught the Shanghai date-line. Evidently, from the small space given to the dispatch, it had come in too late to permit of its being displayed largely.

There was, it said, a House with the Red-lacquered Balcony on the Foochow Road, as Mary Leslie had described it.

There was a Portuguese, Charlie by name, who owned it, and now, since the opium trade had been discontinued, conducted it as a restaurant.

The Portuguese was not rich in details. His memory was vague. But he remembered a wild American named Gardner and a woman who used to be seen with him. He did not know whether they were married.

There had not been time, when the cablegram was written, to make any other investigation, in the official records or elsewhere, regarding the alleged marriage.

He was reading the dispatch for the third time when a bellboy brought him a note. The envelope had not been stamped. It had been left, late the night before, the boy explained, with directions that it should be delivered to him early in the morning.

On a sheet of notepaper was written:

"You are your own to-morrow."

It was signed "Edith Mallon."

His brain reeled. The memory of her standing in the doorway, the fragrance of her hair the day she had stood close to him on the edge of the river, the thought of her brave sweetness—these things

came as a blessed relief from the momentary but deep depression he had felt after reading the cablegram from Shanghai. He got up and raised one of the windows so that he might breathe the fresh air. He drank it into his lungs in great gulps. A group of photographers stood on the pavement below, waiting for snapshots of him as he started to his office on what everybody regarded as the decisive day in his career. He understood some of that.

He thrust Edith's note into his pocket and put on his overcoat and hat.

As he left the room, he was forcing through his brain the triumphant thought:

"This is *the* day! *This is the* fight!"

It was as if he called his own soul to arms.

Once in his office, he became the storm centre of the country's political thought that day. Waller, with both hands full of telegrams, met him in the reception-room. Smith did not know it, but the newspaper man had had only two hours of sleep.

"You don't have to read them," Waller said, the drawl in his voice not hiding his elation. "They're all good—all for us."

"This early!" Smith was surprised.

"Most of these are night letters, sent after the afternoon's hit the street yesterday. But some, sent this morning, have come in already."

They were in the inner office, and Smith was taking off his coat.

"What do they say?" he inquired impatiently.

"They say you're all right. Those few words sum up more different kinds of laudation, assurances of support, and genuine admiration than I ever saw on paper."

Smith gave him a swift, keen look, with the question:

"And no other kind?"

"Oh, of course, some," Waller replied, his enthusiasm unabated, "but, so far, we're sweeping the towns and outlying districts!"

The agitator sat down at his desk and opened the first of the letters that had been placed there for him.

Cholliewollie looked at him a moment in undisguised wonder.

"Say! What is this you're exhibiting, real nerve? Or are you just numb and can't think?"

"Why?"

"Here you are, up against the hottest, bitterest fight in the world, and you sit down to read your mail!"

"What else is there to do?" Smith inquired, eying him seriously.

"Don't you want to read the telegrams?"

"If I did that, I'd put in the whole day at it."

One of the stenographers brought in a new batch of yellow envelopes.

"You see," he added.

"Oh, I know!" Waller admitted. "But can't you show some nervousness, some excitement?"

Smith's smile was one of great affection.

"I can't," he said. "We've got just a week to put this thing over. The days aren't long enough to let us do the work we should do. It is a hot fight, as you say. They think they have a chance to ruin this demonstration. Well, I'm just a little hotter as a fighter than they are. Believe me, I am. And I'm fighting now. I'm going through this mail to see what needs attention. After that, we'll see what else needs attention. Fighting is working."

"By Jove, you're right!" Waller agreed. "But what do you want done with these messages?"

"If you'll do it, keep track of them, read them all, and don't bring any to me unless it deals with some delegation wishing to cancel its engagement to come to Washington. If any others need answering, you answer them. Will you do that?"

"Certainly, you know I'll be on this job until night. But"—he held up several unfolded telegrams—"here's one from a governor, one from the biggest bishop in the West, two from Senators, one from——"

"I know, I know. But they were to be expected, in a way, weren't they? Such men as those stand

for the cause, not for me. That's the thing I hate. I'm afraid of being a dead weight on the movement, not a help to it."

"You might be a weight," Waller drawled, smiling slowly, "but not a dead one. And how about the newspaper men?"

"I'll see them at eleven this morning, as usual, of course—and this afternoon."

As a result of these arrangements, while the agitator, methodical and effective, stayed at his desk, dictating necessary correspondence, conferring with men and women on countless details of the arrangements in town and out, and maintaining his grasp on the whole scheme, Cholliewollie became the buffer against which the waves of the country's sentiment and opinions broke. He answered innumerable telephone calls, local and long-distance, meant to cheer and encourage Smith. With the aid of a stenographer, he opened and read and, after a fashion, tabulated the telegrams. They came from all sections, from everywhere, delivered in batches of fours, eights, and dozens. They were from politicians, ministers of the gospel, wealthy men, prominent men, women, philanthropists, city and state leaders in the prohibition movement, people representing, it appeared, all walks of life, all professions, and all callings.

The vast majority expressed the determination

of the senders to stand by Smith and the demonstration, no matter what was said about him. A few called the story, all of it, including Smith's statement, a fake pure and simple. Others said they knew it was a huge conspiracy hatched by the whisky interests. Some demanded to be told by Smith whether he really had forgotten who he was or was trying to hide disgraceful conduct behind a subterfuge.

From this shade of unbelief others swung to ridicule and abuse, a few to vituperation. These were the natural expressions of men who had been opposed to him all along and now seized on the opportunity to harass him. However, they were not strong enough numerically to dash Waller's spirits.

"We've caught them right, so far," he thought. "Now, can we stay on top for a week?"

A few minutes after the agitator's interview with the correspondents at eleven—which brought out nothing new—Cholliewollie walked into the inner office. His face was solemn.

"Here," he said, handing Smith a telegram, "is the first message regarding one of the delegations to the parade."

It was dated Seattle, Washington, and was directed to the agitator.

Smith read it aloud:

"Seven hundred leaving this state this afternoon for Washington. Seattle delegation escorted to train by

bands and thousands of men and women. We are solid for you out here."

Waller grinned.

"That shows you," he rejoiced, "that there will be no deserters."

The afternoon wore on, Smith at his desk—conferring, arranging, directing, assuring himself by telephone and telegraph that the special trains and railroad fares were being provided as previously stipulated with the railroad companies, the banks, and the county and city managers of the movement—and Waller shouting frantically over the telephone or devouring with his eyes the incessant flood of yellow paper on which were printed the messages of good cheer from almost everywhere.

At the six o'clock meeting with the newspaper men several showed telegrams from their papers saying that the proofs of the marriage in Shanghai had not yet materialized.

When the usual routine of questions and answers ended, Avery moved a step nearer to the agitator. Snappily dressed, alert as ever, and speaking in frank, terse sentences, he made an impressive figure.

"Mr. Smith," he said, "we want to tell you we are with you. We've seen your work. We know you. We know what sort of a man you are. And, from now on, you'll get all the help possible from us. We wanted you to know that."

Smith bowed to Avery and swept the semicircle of faces with a glance that seemed to single out each man and thank him.

"Gentlemen," he said, in a low tone, "I cannot find words to bear the burden of my debt to you. It is you who can win this fight. I thank you all. It is wonderful."

He turned quickly and went into his private office.

Waller, arriving at his own office a few minutes past seven, was told by the managing editor:

"A crowd's gathering in front of the agitator's office. They've got a band. They want to show their confidence in him."

"Yes," he replied, "I knew about that."

"I'll get somebody else to cover that," the other went on. "What I want from you to-night is a blanket story covering all the other events of this kind throughout the country. We've got bulletins from nearly every city, saying there will be massmeetings to-night as expressions of confidence in Smith. It ought to make a big story."

"It'll be a crackerjack," Cholliewollie assented.

All that evening Waller, gathering material for his story, read the dispatches that came in from the press associations and the paper's correspondents. From every city came the news that John Smith's name had lit the fires of enthusiasm. The office boy went in and out, piling up the details of the story.

It seemed to Waller that the spirit of the agitator rushed from city to city through that marvellous winter night. With his actual physical eye he could see the swaying of the singing, cheering crowd as it swept down Market Street in San Francisco. He could hear the singing, catch the gleam of the banners under the electric lights, feel the glow of the people's ardour.

The clicking wires changed the scenes of the drama continuously. It claimed no one city, no one section, for its setting. Washington Street in Indianapolis, Second Avenue in Seattle, and the East Side in New York were merely flashing parts of the wave of feeling that called men to the streets and made them lift their voices to the stars. Fifth Street in Cincinnati, Milk Street in Boston, Michigan Avenue in Chicago, the public squares of smaller cities—all were places where devoted men and women, ignoring the jeers and, at times, the missiles of the other side, congregated to show their scorn of those who fought against the cause and its leader.

And the man whose glowing spirit and unflagging zeal had kindled an enthusiasm which swept from coast to coast stood at his office window, bowing his thanks while a Member of Congress delivered an address from the pavement below, and a band played, and a crowd that flowed far over into the Capitol grounds cheered and sang.

The managing editor had been right: It was a big story.

And the one-time bored and blasé Mr. Waller, having crammed all the details of it into his brain, sat down at his typewriter to make it a "cracker-jack."

CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

THAT same evening Miss Mallon called at Dr. Vetter's house. In response to her ring he admitted her himself.

"I do so need your advice, your help," she explained with a little smile. "That is why you must forgive my coming."

"Dear child," he answered, "I am glad you came—glad."

He led the way into his office.

"He did well—very well," he commented, giving her a chair and taking his accustomed place at his desk. "He was very wise."

"You mean to tell the truth about his—his condition?"

"Yes. It will raise up new friends for him."

"The dear friends," she said gratefully. "He has so many."

Vetter saw that she was unstrung.

"Tell me," he invited, "how can I help?"

Simply and directly she described her meeting with Smith in Waller's apartment, her wish to give him what encouragement she might, and his fanciful



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story illustrating the value of serving others. She repeated the story with great fidelity as to its main points, and gave many of his sentences word for word.

"Ah-h," he said slowly, "he has a wonderful imagination. And yet, what is imagination? Merely the power to adorn the things one remembers."

She drew in her breath sharply.

"That is just it," she said. "I thought the story might give you something to work on—something from which we might deduce—things."

He began to play with the paper-knife deftly, swiftly, moving it in his fingers until it sparkled, a circle of light.

"I see," he half-mused. "The Leslie woman puts him in Shanghai. And there was in his story the passage about the tear jars of China."

"And," she supplemented anxiously, "the part about letting the woman go from him at the fountain. He said it was a mistake."

She was shaken, afraid for him.

Vetter let the paper-knife fall and spread both his hands, palms down, on the blotter before him, while he regarded her steadily.

"Do you think," he asked, "he ever treated a woman so?"

Her glance, for all its sadness, was as steady as his.

"I know he never could have, in his proper senses," she declared, all resolute. "But his condition at that time, the opium, the whisky, might have made him irresponsible."

"Then you think there is something to the woman's story?"

"I thought there might be. I see that it is possible."

"And yet," he said, admiration and sympathy mingled in his voice, "dear child, you love him?"

"Yes," she assented.

"His is a marvellous personality," he observed, his words slow, his eyes downcast while he played with the knife. "We who try to cure men's minds are like explorers walking through great caverns and admiring by the light of flickering torches the wonders they hold. No person ever fully knows another person's soul—the possibilities of the soul are so unlimited. But I went into his with my flickering torch, and I saw beautiful things. He told me all his thoughts, all his ideals. His soul, my child, is a beautiful soul."

She waited, silent, fearful, grateful. She caught his intention to comfort her. He looked at her and smiled.

"Tear jars," he said, "are known to many who have never been to China. And men leave women—in all countries. No special land has a monopoly on that."

"Then you don't believe one word of Mary Leslie's story?" she breathed.

"Not a word about his ever having been married to her or having deserted her. I doubt that he ever was in China."

"You, more than all other people, must know!" she said thankfully.

"No," he qualified; "I do not *know*. It is merely my opinion, such as that is."

She rose.

"It is very comforting," she thanked him. "I felt that I must talk to you." She took a deep breath and squared her shoulders. "I felt that I *must* be doing something!"

"Patience," he smiled gently, "is the greatest of human achievements—at times."

He asked her to stay longer.

"No," she said, "I have one other visit to make."

He escorted her to her runabout, where her maid awaited her. Despite his ungainly hulk, he seemed always the impersonation of tenderness, sympathy, even a certain gracefulness. It occurred to her as she thanked him that he must love all the world, that there must be in his heart always nothing but loving kindness.

"Do not fear," he told her in farewell. "He will win. As for the other, the remembering, hope—hope always. Perhaps he was right. It may be that,

out of this great service he is doing mankind, there will come to him his recompense, the rending of the curtain of darkness of which he spoke."

She paused, her foot on the step, his hand on her elbow.

"Could it be possible?" she asked eagerly.

"It is possible," he answered. "Somebody may tell him the truth, may strike the magic note, may speak the one word that will flood his mind with light. It has happened before."

She drove to the boarding-house in Fifth Street where Mary Leslie was stopping.

Telling her maid to accompany her, she went up the short flight of steps to the front door and rang the bell. Her ring was answered by a tall, thin, unprepossessing looking woman whose patience evidently had been tried sorely by the procession of reporters and photographers during the day. Even that dingy house had been swung into the white light of publicity.

Edith stepped into the narrow hall.

"I came to see Miss Leslie," she announced, adding, when she saw the woman's doubtful expression: "She expects me. Which is her room?"

"If she expects you, it's all right," the landlady said querulously. "It's the second floor front."

Edith, followed by the maid, went upstairs with quick, firm step and knocked on the door of the second floor front.

"Come in," a woman's voice called.

Edith, telling the maid to go back to the machine, opened the door and stepped into the room. Mary Leslie, sitting under a wall gas-jet near the bureau in the far corner, was trimming a hat. When she recognized her visitor, she gave no sign except that her hands became dead still on the hat in her lap. The paleness of her face was uncanny in the gaslight.

Edith closed the door.

"Don't you remember me, Miss Leslie?" she asked pleasantly.

"Yes," replied the other woman, chill resentment in her tone.

Edith, disregarding the hostility, went nearer to her. They eyed each other a moment.

"I was hoping," Edith said, "that we might have a friendly talk together."

"About?" Mary's eyes forbade her.

"About Mr. Smith."

"What Mr. Smith?" The wise-looking eyes were hard.

Edith, who had not been invited to take the other chair in the cheerless room, was resolved to keep her temper.

"The Mr. Smith you saw in my house—you called him Jack Gardner."

Mary lifted the hat from her lap carefully and placed it on the corner of the bureau.

"That's his name—Jack Gardner," she said.

Her voice was cold, dull, colourless. She seemed bereft of energy, dead to emotion.

Edith took the other chair.

"Won't you tell me about him?"

"What?" The monosyllable was heavy with negation.

"Let me explain what I thought." Edith spoke in a warm, personal tone, as if she would drive the other to friendliness. "I thought you and I, two women, might help him. He is engaged in a great work just now. He is about to carry to success a wonderful undertaking. You—surely you wish only to be a help to him. I, too, would like to help him."

There was something of evil in the other woman's smile.

"I don't want to help him," she said flatly.

"But you say you're his wife?"

"I am his wife!"

"And yet you want to see him ruined?"

"He ruined my life—left me to go to the dogs. Now let him go."

They eyed each other again. The good humour, the invitation to confidence, was still in Edith's eyes.

"I'm afraid you distrust me," she said.

"No," the other denied. "Why should I distrust you?"

"That is kind. It is fair. When you came to my

house for help I would have given it to you. Now, I have come to you. I thought that, since you are his wife, you might try to think back to the time in Shanghai and see, in your own mind, whether there hadn't been some good in him, some kindness, enough to excuse what—what you say he did."

She was talking very rapidly in her effort to command the other's attention.

"In such things, you know, there is always some fault on both sides. Neither the husband nor the wife can be wholly to blame. Surely there was some extenuating circumstance, something to keep you from being so very bitter now, something to make you think before you condemn him wholesale before the country!"

Mary Leslie looked at her in astonishment, and then laughed incredulously.

"Look here!" she said. "What do you want me to do?"

"I want you to tell the truth, the whole truth, about all your relations with him."

"Why?"

"Because I am sure that, if you told it all, it could not discredit him—could do nothing but help him. Think, Miss Leslie! He can't even remember having known you—ever!"

Mary took the hat from the bureau and placed it on her lap again.

"You don't expect me to fall for that bunk, do you?" she asked insolently.

She made a show of resuming work on the hat. Her head, bent over, put her face in shadow and somehow made it, with the sneer on her lips, hideous. Suddenly she became repulsive to Edith, an impossible creature. For a moment neither of them spoke. While the country rang with its enthusiasm for the agitator and while the streets of the cities were alight with the glow of torches carried by many marchers shouting his name, the two women who touched his life most nearly sat in a tawdry room, each utterly uncomprehending of the other.

Edith stood up. Mary did not look at her.

"Then you won't talk with me?" Edith put a last question.

"There's nothing to talk about," the other said sullenly.

The distance to the doorway, short as it was, was not long enough. Before she could put her hand on the knob, Edith, outraged and bitterly disappointed, lost her temper, gave way to her righteous indignation.

"You will regret it," she said, in a fierce, low tone. "You! Who are you to arrogate to yourself the right to injure him? The time will come when you will weep—when your heart will break, if you have a heart—for what you have done, or tried to do.

But listen to me! You will not succeed. I don't know whether you have been bribed to tell a lie. I don't care whether you are telling a half-truth! But you cannot profane the nobility of his character, cannot put a degrading touch upon him. There is a God, and there is retribution! And you have committed the supreme sin: You have refused to aid a fellow-being in distress!"

She opened the door and stepped into the hall. Mary Leslie, who had not met her eyes while she talked, did not look up as she went out.

The black-clad figure, the pallid face, the hands busy with the hat, the eyes full of the wrong kind of wisdom, remained, a lively menace to the agitator's work.

Fully thirty minutes after Edith's departure the black-clad figure stood erect, the wise eyes looked at the reflection of the pale face in the bureau mirror, and the hard voice confided to nobody in particular:

"Humph! Everybody's nutty about him."

CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

PROOF of the marriage of John Gardner and Mary Leslie in Shanghai could not be found. Chollie-wollic, obsessed with the idea that the man Simpson was connected with the whole scheme to discredit the agitator, devoted the spare time of himself and his friends among the Washington detectives to a search for some clue to his whereabouts, but made no progress. Mary La lie, keeping to her room in the boarding-house, repeated her story to correspondents with monotonous regularity and with unfailing fidelity to its details as she first had given it out. Edith Mallon, schooling herself to patience, got from the newspapers day by day the story of how the country, undismayed by the charges against Smith, rallied to his support. Mannersley, newly returned to Washington, was not received at the Mallon home.

The week wore away, the agitator in a tremendous drive of labour, his assistants and lieutenants at their desks until the early morning hours, the plans for the demonstration working smoothly. In the afternoon of the 8th of December the special trains began to come into the city. From then until

the morning of the 10th the multitude grew. The Union Station, built to accommodate inauguration crowds, was overtaxed at times, and people coming from the South were disembarked at Seventh Street near the river, while some, coming from the North and West, detrained at Eckington, a suburb.

No such throng of civilians ever had invaded the Capital. Bigger crowds had been present at inaugurations of Presidents, but on those occasions the number had been swelled by the military. It was calculated by the Chamber of Commerce the night of the 9th that forty-nine thousand visitors had arrived. The city was a mass of white ribbons, white bunting, and white banners. The streets were thronged with the laughing, good-natured crowds. Here a band played, there a group sang a marching song or a hymn. The women and children together slightly outnumbered the men. Everywhere was the conviction that the victory already had been won.

Smith, having taken counsel of Waller and several others, including Bishop Rexall, had stuck to his original intention of heading the Pennsylvania Avenue line of march, which formed at the avenue and Eighteenth Street and the surrounding side streets. Indeed, Waller pointed out to him, he could not refuse to take such part in the day's work. It was demanded of him by everybody.

The 10th dawned, a clear day, with a slow breeze from the south that became almost balmy under the bright sun. By nine o'clock the bulk of the people had taken their appointed stations—near the avenue and Eighteenth Street Northwest, near M and North Capitol streets, at Franklin Park and in the streets back of the House of Representatives Office Building. Smith had carried out his plan: that people from all the states of the Union should approach the Capitol from the four points of the compass.

At a few minutes past ten o'clock a double line of mounted police, fourteen abreast, wheeled out of Fifteenth Street, their backs to the Treasury and the White House, their faces to the Capitol. The avenue, clear of all traffic, with the people kept to the sidewalks by the ropes and the militiamen, stretched before them like a long corridor.

They were followed by the agitator, who was on horseback, thirty yards behind them. He wore a frock-coat and was hatless. His riding was superb. His horse, a sorrel, one of the prize mounts of the army, picked his slow way over the asphalt with steps light and delicate enough for a dancing master, swerving to this side or that and dancing backward and forward when he was held in to keep the proper distance from the police. Smith's seat was such that he seemed a part of the horse. Erect, proud, his dominant emotion one of immense gratitude to

those who cheered him, he rode with uplifted head, his brow bare to the sunlight.

He made a fascinating figure to those who watched him. In the people's imagination he was different from all other men. Mystery was upon him. The tragedy of his story secured their pity. The glamour of this day's achievement forced their admiration. The romance of the realization of his ambition caught their fancy.

As he passed, the crowds on the sidewalks became storming, roaring, frantic lines of white. Ribbons and handkerchiefs filled the air. It was as if, at his coming, the sea of humanity on each side rose toward him like the white crest of a wave. As far as he could see the avenue was fringed to right and left with the rising and falling solid lines of white. The tumult of the applause was like the roar of the sea. To his ears the roar of the men's voices dominated, and now and then the shrill bravos of the women cut through the heavier tone.

They cheered him because he had done a great thing. He had called the country to Washington, and it had come. They felt this—felt, even, that he had called each one of them personally, and that, while their great motive had been their hate of whisky, his voice had been the one to unite them. They had secured their places to look at him, and would fall in line as the procession passed them.

Every few yards he bowed to right and to left, his clean-cut, wiry figure bending gracefully from the waist. Now and then, passing a high building whose windows swarmed with humanity, he waved his gauntleted hand. He was smiling, and, somehow, so vibrant was his spirit, so intense his emotion, that the men and women who lined the pavements persuaded themselves that he smiled at each of them in turn. There was about him nothing of the theatric. He rode down that long lane of thundering applause, a strong man, a brilliant personality, doing simply and well the thing he had planned to do, carrying to fruition the great dream that had been his—the dream at which many had sneered at first, the dream which millions now loved.

Twenty yards behind him were the two bishops in a carriage, and behind them five hundred little girls in white. After that came the apparently endless line of marching men and women—the singing clubs, delegations from various states, companies of men, troops of women. And, when the end of the line came, all those who had stood on the sidewalks fell in.

He led them to the right of the Peace Monument and up the roadway on the right-hand side of the Capitol, halting on the east plaza. So nicely had the thing been planned that the marchers from North Capitol Street flowed into the grounds on the west

front as soon as the agitator's division had occupied the east plaza and the surrounding territory. Those from the east joined the agitator, and those from the south went to the west of the grounds.

On the east side a great band played hymns, and the people sang. On the west side a singing club sang "My Country, 'Tis of Thee." Back farther, on the edges of the crowd, other bands played.

The agitator dismounted on the plaza, and, going back to the carriage, escorted the two bishops to the top of the east steps on the House end of the building. There, at the front of the stand, among Senators, Representatives, and men and women who had spent years, some of them a lifetime, in the fight for prohibition, the venerable Bishop Rexall took his seat. Smith, leaving him, went with Bishop Fraydon through the building to the west front.

There were to be no speeches.

"On that day," Smith had said weeks before, "we will pray to God and command Congress."

There was no program, save that the bishops were to offer prayer, and the people were to sing and to stand there, a commanding army enveloping the home of the government, until they saw the sign that what they asked had been granted. The sign was to be the running of a huge white ribbon to the top of the flagpost over the House end of the building.

In the line that followed Smith a fat man had ridden alone in a carriage. It was Vetter.

He was far enough to the front to catch the thunder of applause that greeted Smith and to watch the glow the leader's passing had left in the faces of the thousands on the sidewalks. There was upon his face, also, a glow.

"How they love him!" he thought. "It is worth living to have seen this."

He, like the others, loved him. That was, he reflected, the secret of the agitator's great gift of leadership. The man's spirit had reached out and charmed a nation.

CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE

JOHN SMITH paced to and fro in Crawdlor's committee rooms. After escorting Bishop Fraydon to the west side of the Capitol, he had gone back into the building, and, taking an elevator, had reached the subway that leads from the Capitol proper to the building occupied by the offices and committee rooms of most of the Representatives. Waller, who had been close to him ever since he had arrived at the east plaza, had protested.

"No," the agitator had answered, "this is the proper thing to do. This is a demonstration of the strength of the prohibition sentiment in this country. There are friends of mine in the crowd. In their excitement some of them might be tempted to try to make it a personal triumph of mine. That would not do. You know it wouldn't."

For that reason he had effaced himself from the scene.

The room in which he awaited the result of Crawdlor's motion to have the House pass the national prohibition measure faced the inner court of the big building from the first floor on the south side. He

had opened one of the big windows and, even at that distance, with the other side of the huge structure towering between him and the vast throng, he could hear faintly the bands and the singing. There was upon his face a shadow of the smile he had worn while riding down the avenue. He felt nothing but supreme confidence in the outcome. The weariness he had known for the past few days had fallen from him. He was at his best, brave, brilliant, tuned to the top of all his wonderful energy.

Suddenly the singing and the music of the bands stopped as if the great volume of noise had been cut off by the stroke of a knife. He knew what that meant, the dead silence. Crawdlor had risen at his place in the House and put the motion, and, at a signal, the two bishops, holding their hands aloft, had begun their prayers for its passage.

He stood by the window, silence all about him save for the plashing of the big fountain in the centre of the courtyard. He knew, as well as if he had seen it, the tremendous effectiveness of those prayers—the bared heads of the thousands of men, the bowed heads of the thousands of women, the quiet of the children.

The singing began afresh.

He stood and watched the fountain, a tall column of water moved slowly by the breeze until it looked like a big, new flower hanging in the air. He thought

of the figure of a woman swaying in a doorway like a reed moved by the flow of cold and heavy waters. Where was she at that moment? How had it gone with her? He wondered if there was in her heart one half the fierce hunger for love that he felt. He had not seen her since that day in her home when the Leslie woman had told her story. But he knew that she waited for him, expected to see him that evening. Waller had brought him that message from her.

And yet, there was the immutable fact: he could not claim her, had no right to permit her to come to him. When could he throw off the chains that bound him? Would he ever know his own past? His thoughts went to Vetter. Yes; he would go back to Vetter at once and take up again the weary, heart-breaking work of trying to find something, some light, however faint, to pierce the darkness behind him. If only Vetter could!

He threw back his shoulders with a swift movement and looked up to the blue sky and laughed.

"Vetter can!" he said to himself. "Vetter must! Vetter will! It will come right! It must!"

The corridor door was flung open, and Waller rushed in. Enthusiasm at last had him by the throat. He even had forgotten his cane.

"Old man," he shouted, "it's marvellous, immense! I never saw anything like it. You've got 'em—got 'em sure!"

"Give me the news," Smith demanded swiftly.

"They've just started to call the roll."

"How was Crawdlor? Was he very effective?"

"You bet he was! He stood up, tall, powerful looking, pale with excitement.

"'Mr. Speaker,' he said, 'I rise to offer a privileged motion.'

"'The gentleman will state it,' said the Speaker.

"'Mr. Speaker,' Crawdlor came back amid a stillness throughout the House that was spooky, 'I move that the Committee on Amendments to the Constitution be discharged from further consideration of the resolution providing for an amendment to the Federal Constitution for nation-wide prohibition in the United States, and that the House, without further delay, proceed to vote on my motion to pass the resolution.'

"He said that in a way which foretold victory. He said it in such a way that everybody went raving, stark mad. In the galleries and on the floor you could hear the Rebel yell, the Yankee yell, and every other kind of a yell. Members and spectators had hysteria. Men were pounding each other on the back. You couldn't hear the Speaker's gavel. Some of the women in the galleries were screaming. Men stood up and shrieked without knowing that they were shrieking. It took twenty minutes to quiet the Members and the galleries. The thing

showed, once and for all, whether people hate whisky."

Smith drew a deep breath.

"It must have been very fine," he said, something like reverence in his voice.

"And all those thousands and thousands of people on the outside!" Waller's dramatic description rushed on. "You couldn't see them, and you couldn't hear much more than a whisper from them, there in the chamber of the House. But their spirit was there. And it was a mighty thing. It was as if they reached out and touched Congress with their hands. You were right when you said they would pray to God and command Congress. That's what they did. That's what they're doing now—making the House of Representatives adopt that Crawdlor motion!"

"How long will it take to call the roll, to get the complete vote?"

"About forty or fifty minutes. But it's a foregone conclusion. We've won. We've won, I tell you!"

Waller slapped him on the back.

"I know we have. I knew we would," Smith said quietly.

"Yes," Waller agreed. "That's what got me the first time I talked to you. You *knew* this thing would win. By George, you're a wonder!"

Smith looked at him a moment a little wistfully.

"Am I?" he asked.

Waller knew he referred to the Leslie woman's story, which, although it had not hurt him in the fight for prohibition, remained as an obstruction which he could not put out of the path of his happiness without regaining his memory.

"You'll beat that, too!" the writer assured him. "Why, you can beat anything!" His tone changed. "I wish I could find that blushing rose, that uncaloused conscience, that perfect man, the Simpson individual. He knows about you."

Smith, ignoring that suggestion, asked:

"Have you seen Miss Mallon to-day?"

"Yes," Waller replied a little reluctantly.

Smith noticed the hesitation.

"What is it?" he inquired quickly.

"Well, to tell you the truth, I think she's hiding around somewhere, waiting to be the first to congratulate you when the vote is announced.

"In this building?"

"I believe so."

"What room?"

Waller laughed.

"Say, now," he protested; "don't pump me any more. I refuse to disclose a woman's plans. Besides, what's the use? She's so apt to change them, you know."

The corridor door opened again, this time to admit Senator Mallon.

"May I come in?" he asked, hesitating.

"Certainly," the agitator invited him.

Waller turned to Smith.

"I'm going back to the press gallery. I'll come back with the figures on the vote."

He rushed out, leaving the door open. Smith could hear his footfalls far down the corridor as he ran.

The Senator came farther into the room.

"Mr. Smith, good afternoon," he said, speaking with difficulty, even diffidence.

"How do you do, Senator?" Smith answered him coolly.

"I have come," Mallon went on, "to thank you, if you will permit me."

"To thank me? For what?"

"For your unusual generosity." The Senator was beginning to strike his ordinary, suave conversational pace. "For the past week Washington has been crazy, absolutely crazy, about this whisky business. Several men have had their careers cut short by being identified with the whisky interests. I—I have to thank you for my escape."

"No," Smith corrected him, his voice still cool. "You have your daughter to thank."

"At any rate, I felt that I must come to express my gratitude—to you."

"Was it gratitude, Senator," the agitator asked, his tone tinged by contempt, "or was it fear?"

He made a swift, deprecatory bow, and added: "I should not have said that to Miss Mallon's father."

The Senator bowed.

"Politics is politics," he said smoothly. "The great trouble about whisky is that there isn't anything you can say in favour of it in a stump speech."

"Yes, that's true."

"And I've got political sense enough to know that no man who wants to stay in politics can vote against your prohibition people any longer."

"You mean," Smith asked in surprise, "that you've come over to us?"

"I mean I've been driven over to you," the older man explained. "Every big thing has two kinds of men on its side—those who vote from conviction and those who vote from fear. You were right just now. Mine is one of the 'fear votes'."

"But the country will know the difference."

"The country's too busy to bother much about motives," Mallon gave it as his opinion. "What the country wants is results."

"I wouldn't be too sure about it in a thing of this kind, because——"

"Oh, well," the Senator interrupted, "that will have to take care of itself. After the Senate does what the House is doing now, and the resolution

has passed both bodies, it will have to be ratified by the legislatures of thirty-six states. When the fight is made in my state—if there is any fight—you'll find me with you. That's all there is to that." He hesitated a moment. "There's something else I wanted to speak to you about."

"What is it?"

"Confound it all!" he exploded, "I wish you'd tell me who you are. I wish to thunder I knew what it is you've done."

Smith gave him a long, sharp look.

"Senator," he said earnestly, "I don't know."

"I wish you did. I wish you'd talk. You see—my daughter——"

"Your daughter is still my friend, Senator," Smith cut in quickly. "Please don't attempt to tell me she is not."

Mallon exploded again.

"Your f. a. !! I should say she is. If she ever finds out who you are and untangles this Leslie woman's story, she'll marry you so quick it will make your head swim!" He stepped closer to Smith. "She's in the next room," he confided. "She asked me to come with her. I thought—I hoped I could fix this up. But I can't. You won't talk."

"Senator," the agitator demanded, "why will you persist in disbelieving me? I tell you alcohol can destroy anything in a man. It has destroyed my

memory. I tell you I don't know who I am. I cannot remember what I was."

Mallon looked disappointed.

"Then," he said, "that's all. It's ended. My daughter can't marry a man who already may have been married. That's a dead sure thing."

He put his hand on the knob of the door on the right, leading into Crawdlor's larger office.

"No, it isn't ended," Smith said with great determination, and followed Mallon. "I *must* speak to Miss Mallon!"

While the Senator hesitated, there was the sound of light, flying footsteps racing down the marble corridor, followed by the appearance of Elise Downey in the doorway.

"Oh, Mr. Smith," she cried out breathlessly, "I've seen the Simpson man! I met Mr. Waller out front, and he told me to tell——"

"Excuse me for just a few minutes, I beg," Smith interrupted, not remembering for the moment that he had seen her in the Mannersley offices. He turned back to Mallon. "Senator, permit me to accompany you."

Mallon, realizing the uselessness of delaying the encounter, swung open the door and motioned him to go before. The door shut behind the two men, leaving Elise poised in the other doorway, her momentous news unspoken.

CHAPTER THIRTY

ELISE had been in the room hardly more than five minutes when, above the roar of the crowd at the Capitol, she heard the noise of shuffling feet in the corridor outside. There was in the sound of the footsteps something peculiar, as if an afflicted man dragged his feet or staggered heavily under some burden. She ran to the door and looked down the corridor.

What she saw moved her to instant sympathy.

"Bring her here—in here!" she said urgently to the person outside, and threw the door wide open.

The shuffling feet came nearer.

"Poor thing!" Miss Downey commented, awaiting the approach. "Ah, be gentle with her, can't you?"

The man Simpson appeared in the doorway. He practically carried Mary Leslie. He had been drinking heavily, and, as he stepped into the room, his grasp relaxed. His burden would have slipped to the floor but for the assistance of Elise, who sprang forward to help.

The Leslie woman barely could summon the

strength to put one foot before the other. She could not support her own weight. The whiteness of her face was ghastly. There was in it no trace of colour except that of her carmined lips and the shadow of the blue lids over her closed eyes. Her arms hung limply at her sides, and now and then a dry sob shook her pitifully. She wore a light-blue coat-suit, the skirt of which was edged with fur, and the plume in her light-blue hat was absurdly large. It was as if she had tried to redeem herself with clothes. As Elise caught her, she groaned.

Staggering and half-falling between Elise and Simpson, she got as far as the big table against the left wall of the office and sank into a chair, letting her head fall weakly on her limp arms on the table.

Simpson stepped back from her and looked at her sullenly.

Elise turned upon him.

"Did she get hurt in the crowd?"

"Naw," he answered, his tone thick and surly; "she ain't hurt. She's just acting like a crazy woman. I was trying to find some place to put her. I got her into the building all right."

Elise bent over the thin figure.

"She ain't got good sense," Simpson said contemptuously.

He disgusted Elise.

"You horrid man!" she reproved him sharply.

The frail figure, around which she still had her arm, was shaken by a great tremor. To Elise, it felt as if some outside power had seized the woman and tugged at every fibre of her physical make-up.

Mary lifted her head slowly and stared straight ahead of her. Elise, bending forward, saw the wildness in her eyes, noted her terror-stricken look, and caught the trembling of the painted lips. She stared in that dead, unknowing way for a long time while the dry sobs shook her. Then, raising her clenched hand a little way, she struck one blow on the table.

"Oh-h-h!" The moan was slow, heavy, as if the power, which had caught hold of her from the outside, had dragged it out of her.

The music of a band sounded louder than before. It roused her.

"There it is again!" she said in a tense, hushed manner, her wild eyes still fixed. "It's rolling over the top of this building like water!" She sobbed again. "It's wonderful. It's awful—terrible!"

She turned her head slowly and looked up to Elise as if only half-comprehending her presence. Simon, surly and stupid, was silent.

"The crowd! The crowd—bigger than the ocean—stronger than a storm!"

Tears came into her eyes, and she groaned.

"And I am a bad woman! Oh, I'm a bad woman!"

She wept convulsively and beat on the table in impotent gesture with her thin, gloved hands.

"Ah, don't cry," Elise tried to comfort her, removing the blue-plumed hat. "Just rest."

"Say, Mary," Simpson protested roughly, "what's the use of all this foolishness?"

The Leslie woman did not notice him. She started from her chair and dropped back into it again, spreading out her hands on the table.

"The crowd!" she marvelled. "I never saw a real crowd before. Oh, my God! Why didn't I see a crowd like that when I was a girl, a little bit of a girl? They were everywhere. They came from everywhere! The streets filled with marching feet, with flying feet!"

She spread her arms wide, expressing the futility of her attempt to describe all she had seen.

"They came from everywhere," she repeated, her tone one of still, groping wonder, "from all the world, down every street, down all the avenues! There were oceans of people—men young and old; girls, laughing children—oh, the laughing children!—and women with babies in their arms, and white-haired women. I talked to one white-haired woman. She told me whisky had destroyed her husband and her two boys. No wonder there was a light in her eyes! And the bands and the banners! The music! It was like a battle, a wonderful battle."

She stood suddenly erect, her head to one side, listening to the faint roar of the distant crowd.

"There are enough people out there," she said, still standing, speaking straight ahead toward the window, "to tear this building down stone by stone, enough people to build a thousand buildings, enough people to do anything in the world—anything in the world. And they're singing! Did you hear them sing? A million voices, louder than big guns. They sang 'Draw Me Nearer.' Oh, they sang 'Draw Me Nearer'!"

She shuddered and sank back into the chair, her voice a little shrill. She addressed neither Elise nor Simpson. The words, like the sobs, were being wrung from her, as if she were telling her woe to all the world. She talked because she had to talk, and because she suffered. It frightened Elise into stillness.

"I tell you, they sang 'Draw Me Nearer.' They sang that when I was converted, oh, so long ago! And after that a boy in a white robe standing on the east steps—the boy sang. The sunlight was on him, and he was bareheaded, and he had a voice like a woman. It was a beautiful voice. I think it must have reached right straight up to the throne of God. Oh, God, I know it did! He sang, 'Come Unto Him.' He sang, 'Come unto Him, all ye who mourn, for He can hear.' All ye who mourn! And all

those people, those people from everywhere, sang it after him, sang it until the bands were dumb. It was an earthquake. It was awful! The boy's voice went right up to the Throne, and the people's voices went right up to the angels' ears. I know they did. It lifted me up."

She put both her hands before her face for a moment and moaned.

"It lifted me up and broke me," she wailed through her trembling fingers, "broke me! It was terrible—it was heaven—it was hell! Before I knew it, I was down on my knees, down on the cold, dirty asphalt, gasping, 'Oh, God—oh, God—oh, God'—and I didn't know why I did it. I had to do it! I was afraid at first, and then I wasn't afraid. The awful force of that singing, those people, went through me like fire—burned me up—lifted me up—and broke me."

She wept silently, the tears streaming through her gloved fingers. The crowd's singing swelled in volume.

"It broke me," she resumed in awe, her hands falling to the table, "because I was a bad woman. And I saw him, on his horse, there on the plaza—he always said he could ride, but I never believed him—I saw him on his horse, and up there on the stand with the Bishop, and everybody loved him and cheered him."

She looked up to Elise, while terror triumphed in her eyes.

"Oh," she moaned, "I lied about him—*him*—and he's all right." A sob checked her utterance. "He's fighting against liquor, and he's good—like all those people out there, like the boy who sang, like the Bishop!"

Elise, for the first time, realized who the woman was—the Mary Leslie who had attacked the agitator. And Simpson was there, the man about whom Albert Mitchell had questioned her. She grasped Mary by the arm, and, in her excitement, shook her roughly.

"Who'd you lie about?" she asked sharply. "Tell me! What man?"

Simpson advanced toward the two women.

"Aw, shut up, Mary!" he said threateningly. "What's the use of——"

Elise wheeled upon him furiously.

"Shut your own mouth!" she said angrily, and to Mary: "Who was it?" The sound of the crowd's singing grew while she paused for the reply. "Who was it? Was it Mr. Smith?"

Mary let her head fall on her arms.

"Yes—Smith," she sobbed.

"Come on, Mary," Simpson urged thickly, "let's get out of here."

Mary shook her head in slow refusal.

Elise sprang to the open doorway, banged the door shut, and stood with her back against it. Her blue, doll-like eyes defied Simpson.

She turned toward the door on the right, the door through which the agitator had gone, and, still maintaining her position, began to call:

"Mr. Smith! Mr. Smith!"

She waited a moment and shrieked:

"Mr. Smith! Mr. Smith!"

After what seemed an eternity to the girl, the door swung open, and the agitator, followed by Smith, Mrs. Kane, and Senator Mallon, appeared on the threshold.

Elise, fighting against the agitation that possessed her, pointed a trembling finger toward the sobbing woman at the table with her face hidden in her arms.

"She knows! She'll tell!" Elise almost shrieked.
"Make her tell!"

CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE

MARY slowly raised her tear-stained face. Her attitude was a study in dreariness.

Edith, with quick intuition, was the first to catch the full meaning of the scene.

"It wasn't true!" she voiced the thought that flashed into her mind.

She went swiftly to Mary and bent over her.

"It wasn't true, was it—your story about Mr. Smith?"

There was in her voice an anguish of appeal. She put her hand on the other woman's shoulder.

"Tell me," she said, a catch in her throat, "tell me it wasn't true."

Mary's fingers writhed against each other on the table. She shook her head in slow denial.

"And you know the truth!" Edith persisted. "What is it?"

"She'll tell, Miss Mallon," Elise assured, coming nearer.

The agitator stood in the centre of the room, his chest rising and falling with the deep breaths he took. He looked like a man fighting for air.

"Who am I?" he asked the Leslie woman.

She lifted her glance to Edith's, and, indicating him with a weary gesture of her hands, said in a low tone:

"I lied about him—but I knew him—in Shanghai."

The hand Edith had on her shoulder shook like a leaf before the wind.

"What do you mean? Tell me! What is it?"

"I knew him," Mary said dully, "but I wasn't his wife. He didn't run away from me."

She paused and shook her head slowly from side to side. Bitterness twisted her lips.

"There wasn't ever anything between him and me. Oh, great God, he was too good for me!"

She ended that with a wail.

Edith implored her:

"Just what do you mean?"

Mary, with the weariness that seemed to envelop her and be a part of her, waved her left arm toward Simpson.

"Ask him. He knows."

She dropped her head on her arms and groaned.

Smith turned toward Simpson.

"Speak out!" he said imperiously. "Do you hear what she says? She says you know." He stepped closer to the man. "She says you know who I am."

Simpson, stupefied by the whisky he had drunk, and now terrified by the whole occurrence, admitted it.

"Yes, I know."

"Then, who am I?"

"You're John Garland," the other answered. "I am John Gardner."

"Garland?" Smith said wonderingly. He passed the back of his right hand across his brow. "Garland?" he repeated.

Mrs. Kane was clutching the Senator's arm in a viselike grip, but she did not know it. Mallon did not know it. They, like the others, were caught and held by the volcanic suddenness of the thing.

The agitator asked another question:

"Where am I from?"

"Virginia."

The woman with her head on her arms on the table sobbed audibly.

Smith commanded him again:

"Well! Speak out! What else?"

Simpson answered reluctantly, as if the other's voice and eyes could not be denied.

"You told me you were born in a little place called Wolfstown. It's in the Virginia mountains somewhere, twenty miles from a railroad. You had some idea—when you were sixteen years old—some idea of being a preacher. And you had read a lot of stuff

about it. After that, you got to drinking and left home."

"And then?" Smith's tone showed his utter bewilderment.

"You batted around and just went to the dogs."

Mary lifted her head and shook off Edith's hand from her shoulder. She indicated Simpson.

"He was drunk last night," she said in that dull, dreary tone which seemed now a part of her. "He's drunk now. Let me tell you."

"Please, please, tell us," Edith said gently.

"We were out in Shanghai. Gardner—the man you call Simpson—took me out there. It was a little over six years ago. He took me."

She tried to toss her head in scorn, but succeeded only in a gesture that emphasized her misery.

"Oh, they talk about drink! The only thing that really matters is what it does to women! You see what it's done to me! Anyway, he took me. And we met Jack Garland there. We didn't go to very nice places. That's how we met him." She indicated Smith again. A great sob choked her. "Oh, that awful country! There are ten thousand different kinds of flowers there—and ten million different kinds of sins."

Edith brought her back to the story.

"Oh, tell me! Tell me about Mr. Smith."

"His name's Garland," she said, as if she made a

clumsy effort to keep the record straight. "And one morning, down there in the opium joint, Charlie's place—the House with the Red-lacquered Balcony, on the Foochow Road—he climbed out of his horrid hunk, and he left us. But, before he left, he talked to us. He said anybody who wanted to go to ruin on opium could do it, but he was through with it. He said he would drink whisky. He said he knew what whisky would do to him, but nobody could tell what opium would do! And he begged us to come back to America. He said he was going to work and get enough money to come back. And he did—he did!"

Her voice broke shrilly. Somehow, they all knew that, when she had said that, she had put words on the great tragedy, the poignant grief, of all her life.

"What's the use of putting on all this stuff?" Simpson spoke uneasily. "All three of us were——"

"Be quiet!" Smith silenced him sternly.

The agitator had stood leaning slightly forward, his lips a little parted, his eyes always on the Leslie woman. Little heads of moisture stood out on his forehead. He was making a terrific effort to remember—a conscious, directed, systematic effort into which he threw all his strength. If a real curtain had hung behind him, he could have put out his hand and torn it apart. He wondered in a dizzy, whirling way why he could not make his brain obey him in

the same manner, compel it to go through the curtain of darkness that hid his past from him.

The splash of the fountain in the court and the singing of the thousands came through the open window.

"Go on!" Edith urged Mary again.

"And afterward we came back," the slow, flat voice went on. She indicated Simpson. "He ran against him in some charity house somewhere in the West and recognized him—but Jack Garland, Mr. Smith, couldn't recognize anybody. He'd lost his memory. Then Simpson—you people call him Simpson—lost sight of him until we happened to come to Washington. And they—they offered us money to do—what we did do. I think he—Simpson—fixed it up, and they accepted it."

"Garland—Charlie's place—Virginia," Smith repeated the words, oblivious to the presence of others. They could see how he searched the chambers of his mind, how he tried to overleap the things that shut off the corridors of his memory. His whole body was tensed, like that of a man about to spring forward. His clenched hands were thrust hard against his thighs. He looked always at the Leslie woman. "I don't—I can't remember," he said.

At last she raised her eyes to meet his.

"You used to talk a lot about your home," she said. "You used to say lovely things." Her un-

measured bitterness twisted her lips again. "You told me once that my hair was blacker than a night unshot by a single star. And you used to talk about when your mother died."

"My mother is dead?" he asked, dazed. He was letting each idea that she gave him play with all its possible force on his mentality.

"And about the perfume of the roses—the red roses."

Whether she had winced it or not, she was governed by a desire to help him. The suffering that drew him up to his tiptoes and held him trembling before her was irresistible.

"You were dotty about flowers. You used to tell us about a field you loved. You said you loved it in the spring. You said in the spring it was nothing but green velvet crusted with dandelion gold. You said that the morning you left us in Charlie's place. You said you wanted to go back and walk barefooted through the powdered gold. You said you had done that when you were a barefooted boy."

"Ah!" The agitator made the exclamation a note of anguish that was terrible to hear.

They—the Leslie woman and the others—watched him. He crouched farther forward, his eyes closed. His right arm shot out from his side at right angles to his body, the palm of his hand out and the fingers open as if he tried to lean on something. His left

arm went up slowly, crooked, and hid his face. For a long moment he kept that position. Then, very slowly, he lifted his head, a fraction of an inch at a time, until only his forehead and his eyes, open now, were visible above the forearm that screened his face.

There was in his eyes a look of wonder—wonder which just escaped being fear.

“I think,” he said hoarsely, “I think I shall see.”

He swept the circle of their faces with his glance. Edith’s eyes caught his gaze and held it.

“The barefoot boy!” he whispered, the wonder still in his eyes. “How clean he is—how marvelous!”

He stood erect, his arms dropping to his sides, his ardent gaze still upon Edith. He smiled tenderly. And, suddenly, he stood before them again as they had known him, with all his power, all his strength, all the charm of his brilliant personality full upon him.

Outside there was the sound of a hymn from a thousand throats.

Edith put out both her hands, as if she prayed.

“Ah!” she cried. “You remember! You remember!”

He went to her in one swift step and took her hands. She could feel his tremendous elation vibrant in his fingers. His thought, his concern, was for her alone. She was very pale.

"I do," he said, his voice clear and strong. For him, the others did not exist. "And I am glad I remember. Do—you—understand?"

Her gaze clung to his, and a little colour, like the beginnings of a pink rose, came back to her face.

He let her hands go, and turned to the Leslie woman, who sat staring up to him.

"It's all right, Mary," he said gently. "You have been very kind—very kind."

He turned again to Edith.

"There is," he said, caressing her with the words, "so much I have to tell you."

They walked to the window and looked out at the fountain. The roar from the crowd was louder. There was in it a new note, like exultation.

The others left the room.

"My soul has come back to me," he said, taking both her hands in his.

"And it is a beautiful soul, isn't it?" she whispered.

She leaned closer to him, so that he caught the fragrance of her hair.

"There is nothing," he answered, drawing her closer still, "to keep me from you."

The voice of the crowd could be mistaken no longer. The thousands were exulting!

"And everything——" she began, but did not finish the sentence.

Cholliewollie, jubilant, wild with joy, had flung

open the door and catapulted himself into the room.

"We've won! We've won!" he shouted. "They've run the white ribbon up the flagpole! Two thirds majority—and a lot to spare——!"

He stopped abruptly.

"Say," he concluded a little lamely, "what's up?"

The agitator smiled brilliantly.

"Old fellow," he answered affectionately, "we've won both fights."

Edith held out her hand.

"Congratulate us," she invited. "We're going to take a trip. We want to find a field powdered with dandelion gold."

THE END



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