CIHM
Microfiche
Series
(Monographs)

ICMH
Collection de
microfiches
(monographies)

Technical and Bibliographic Notes / Notes techniques et bibliographiques

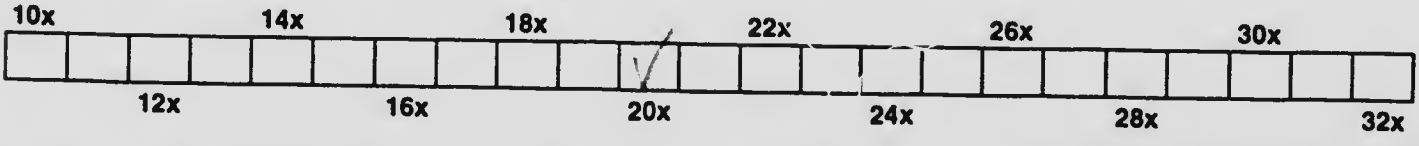
The Institute has attempted to obtain the best original copy available for filming. Features of this copy which may be bibliographically unique, which may alter any of the images in the reproduction, or which may significantly change the usual method of filming are checked below.

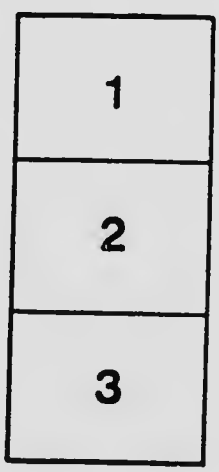
- [x] Coloured covers / Couverture de couleur
- [ ] Covers damaged / Couverture endommagée
- [ ] Covers restored and/or laminated / Couverture restaurée et/ou pelliculée
- [ ] Cover title missing / Le titre de couverture manque
- [ ] Coloured maps / Cartes géographiques en couleur
- [x] Coloured ink (i.e. other than blue or black) / Encre de couleur (i.e. autre que bleue ou noire)
- [ ] Coloured plates and/or illustrations / Planches et/ou illustrations en couleur
- [ ] Bound with other material / Relié avec d'autres documents
- [ ] Only edition available / Seule édition disponible
- [ ] Tight binding may cause shadows or distortion along interior margin / La reliure serrée peut causer de l'ombre ou de la distorsion le long de la marge intérieure.
- [ ] Blank leaves added during restorations may appear within the text. Whenever possible, these have been omitted from filming / Il se peut que certaines pages blanches ajoutées lors d'une restauration apparaissent dans le texte, mais, lorsque cela était possible, ces pages n'ont pas été filmées.
- [ ] Additional comments / Commentaires supplémentaires:

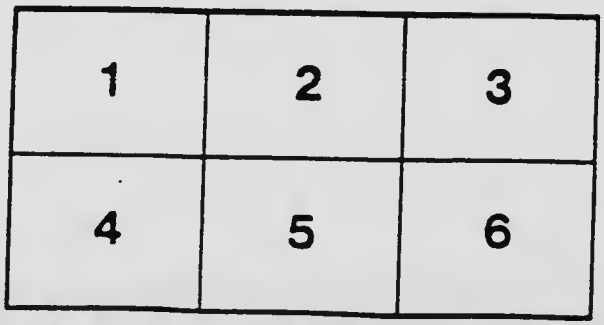
L'Institut a microfilmé le meilleur exemplaire qu'il lui a été possible de se procurer. Les détails de cet exemplaire qui sont peut-être uniques du point de vue bibliographique, qui peuvent modifier une image reproduite, ou qui peuvent exiger une modification dans la méthode normale de filmage sont indiqués ci-dessous.

- [ ] Coloured pages / Pages de couleur
- [ ] Pages damaged / Pages endommagées
- [ ] Pages restored and/or laminated / Pages restaurées et/ou pelliculées
- [x] Pages discoloured, stained or foxed / Pages décolorées, tachetées ou piquées
- [ ] Pages detached / Pages détachées
- [x] Showthrough / Transparence
- [ ] Quality of print varies / Qualité inégale de l'impression
- [ ] Includes supplementary material / Comprend du matériel supplémentaire
- [ ] Pages wholly or partially obscured by errata slips, tissues, etc., have been refilmed to ensure the best possible image / Les pages totalement ou partiellement obscurcies par un feuillet d'errata, une pelure, etc., ont été filmées à nouveau de façon à obtenir la meilleure image possible.
- [ ] Opposing pages with varying colouration or discolourations are filmed twice to ensure the best possible image / Les pages s'opposant ayant des colorations variables ou des décolorations sont filmées deux fois afin d'obtenir la meilleure image possible.

This item is filmed at the reduction ratio checked below / Ce document est filmé au taux de réduction indiqué ci-dessous.







The Apple Of Discord

Henry C. Rowland

THE APPLE OF DISCORD

THEN SHE TURNED AND FACED THE OTHERS. HER FACE WAS PALE AND HER EYES LOOKED DANGEROUS. (*p.* 147)

THE APPLE OF DISCORD

A NOVEL

BY

HENRY C. ROWLAND
Author of "The Magnet," "The Closing Net," etc.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY
WILL FOSTER

TORONTO
WILLIAM BRIGGS
1913

Published, January, 1913

CONTENTS

ILLUSTRATIONS

THE APPLE OF DISCORD

CHAPTER I

THE CHIMNEY CORNER

RAVENEL O'SULLIVAN sat sulkily in his wicker chair on the broad verandah of the Reading Room and stared with moody eyes across the dancing waters of the little bay. Two miles southeast of him stretched the Atlantic, and Ravenel wished that he were on it, travelling at about twenty-three knots straight across. A mile and a half in the opposite direction was a broad river-mouth, just now presenting a wide expanse of mud-flats. Ravenel felt that his second choice might be the large and aggressive hotel beyond, whence came daily in boats many pretty girls who looked with awe upon the sacred precincts of the Reading Room and the colony which flanked it.

Although Ravenel had been but two days in the Chimney Corner, as the community called itself, he was quite ready to leave. His snug little yawl was all equipped for sea and he needed but to provision her, go aboard and lay a course for the Lizard, if need be. The only

obstacle was that he had no money, and such was his unpopularity with his father as the result of certain expenses incurred during his last year at Harvard that Ravenel felt it would be the height of bad diplomacy to express himself as anything but charmed with his present quiet and exclusive surroundings.

The Chimney Corner, that sanctum-sanctorum of a chosen few of the most exclusive descendants of old Colonial families, was a summer resort far up in the corner of the Maine coast. It was pleasantly situated upon a peninsula of rock and moor, almost an island geographically but more than an island socially. The colony was composed of about thirty families and held as a limited stock company some hundreds of acres of dwarf pines girt about by low cliffs which sheltered hidden nooks of sandy beach.

The Chimney Corner resembled Heaven in its difficulty of access and the fact that once in, no more questions were asked. One's mere presence within the carefully guarded domain was a credential of all the virtues. No member or member's guest was supposed to await a formal introduction before entering upon social intercourse with the other inmates. Ravenel

had already been most kindly spoken to by several charming old ladies and two or three elderly gentlemen, but this circumstance had failed to cheer him. He wondered what his father, Major Irwin O'Sullivan, U. S. Army, retired, could possibly find in the place, and decided that the old gentleman must be in his dotage. Of course it was all right for his sister Clare; she was a young person with rather too much red blood in her veins, and needed just this sort of a cold-storage, blue-blooded atmosphere to keep her out of mischief. Major O'Sullivan had a nice bungalow of stone and stucco in which he and his daughter had spent a number of delightful seasons. But Ravenel was a stranger to the Colony. His vacations had been spent either in Europe or on yachting cruises with friends and classmates. An almost ridiculous similarity of character and personality made it impossible for Ravenel and his father to inhabit the same house in peace, although each held the other in highest esteem from a reasonable distance.

Upon this particular afternoon in July, Ravenel was sitting upon the verandah in sulky solitude. He wanted a highball and the steward

had informed him that highballs were against the laws of Mrs. Wilmerding and the State of Maine. Sarcastically, Ravenel had asked the steward, who was elderly and wore a bald head, a smooth muzzle and flowing side whiskers, if he might be graciously permitted to smoke a profane cigarette. "There is no rule against it, sir," replied the steward, "but Mrs. Wilmerding doesn't like tobacco, sir." To this Ravenel had retorted, quite forgetting his station, "Mrs. Wilmerding need not join me, then," and lighted up. He did not enjoy his smoke, however, and started guiltily each time that he heard a step on the verandah. Ravenel had never met Mrs. Wilmerding, but he knew that his sister Clare was very fond of her and Clare had told him that he owed his extrication from his last college scrape to Mrs. Wilmerding's appeal to the choleric Major. This had resulted in Ravenel's deportation from Cambridge to the colony, which, by the way, the members spelled with a large "C."

Ravenel sat and wondered how long his period of probation was likely to last. Several members arrived, for it was nearing the hour for the daily debauch of afternoon tea. All

had paused to speak to him, each imparting an information which Ravenel did not value and which was to the effect that "the most delightful feature of the Chimney Corner lies in its extreme seclusiveness," which fact was from the young man's point of view the principal drawback as there was good boating, fishing, golf and tennis. One might also enjoy the bathing if one had the circulation of a seal.

A large, portly man who impressed Ravenel as liking the sound of his deep, resonant voice, appended to the stock phrase that "we are like one big family here." Ravenel concluded that it must be true as a few minutes later an elderly maiden lady fluttered about him like a woodcock coming to earth, finally alighting to express the same sentiment to which she added with impassioned utterance:—"You are sure to *adore* the Chimney Corner. We are *such* a congenial community. All who are with us are *of* us . . ." and more until she ceded her place to an absent-minded little man who had got quite past where Ravenel was sitting before it occurred to him that he was neglecting a social duty. Then, he paused, blinked, stroked his sandy Vandyke and chirped:—"Good-after-

noon. I hope that you are enjoying the Chimney Corner. It is a delightful spot and grows with acquaintance. The greatest charm lies in its utter seclusiveness. We are like one big family here . . . h'm . . . all who are with us are of us." And with a jerky nod he passed on.

Ravenel's soul squirmed like an angle worm as it slides onto the hook. Said he to himself,—"If I live to get back to the house I am going to take a drink of father's private stock for every time that I am told that rot between now and dinner time. Hope I don't go in to dinner *too* drunk."

Having promised his sister to meet her at the Reading Room for tea he remained where he was and watched the colonists as they assembled. There were scarcely any whom he knew by name, as the day before he had taken Clare for a sail in the *Gull* and the wind failing they had got in late. Much to his surprise, Ravenel had found that this sister, whom he had always looked upon as a mere child, was almost as good a boat-handler as himself. Clare was only eighteen but all of her summers had been spent on the coast and she had

suffered no lack of instruction in affairs nautical. Ravenel had suffered another shock in discovering that she painted and sketched far better than did he, her subjects being landscapes and marines, whereas his were figures. His ambition was to study art, for which pursuit he was admirably fitted, being the only son of a rich parent.

The Chimney Cornerites flocked in, singly or in groups, some with rackets or golf sticks, others carrying books and two or three in wheel chairs propelled by elderly footmen. Ravenel's eyes, watching the arrivals, were presently caught by an extremely pretty woman with a full though willowy figure and an abundance of chestnut hair. She was exquisitely gowned in a suit of hand-woven linen with a tunic of filet lace and a simple though effective hat of the same lace. She was alone and Ravenel found time to admire her walk as she turned into the path leading to the verandah steps. As she came up he observed with deep appreciation that her eyes were of an almost startling blue, dark lashed, and that her face held an expression of sweetness and the hint of authority.

"At last," said Ravenel to himself, "I have found something in the Chimney Corner which I like. What a figure . . . and how well interpreted by the gentleman who cuts her sails. She had better not let Mrs. Wilmerding catch her!"

His bold, admiring eyes fastened on the woman as she came up onto the verandah when, to his vast surprise, she looked straight at him and smiled, then came forward without the slightest hesitation and held out her hand.

"You're Ravenel, aren't you?" she asked, with a smile which brought a dimple to the corner of her mouth.

Ravenel rose hastily, pawing for the hat which lay on the floor beside his chair.

"Eh . . . yes, I think so. You have . . . ah . . . rather made me forget. I'm unused to being treated so kindly."

She laughed. "I thought you must be. You look so like Clare that I was sure you must be her brother. She told me to take care of you until she came."

"I . . . I hope she will not hurry," said Ravenel, beginning to recover himself.

"Now I know you're not an impostor.

Your Irish blarney hasn't deserted you. Clare is bathing with Mrs. Stackpole and some others. Are you enjoying yourself?"

"Yes, thank you," answered Ravenel, "that is, as much as Mrs. Wilmerding and the State of Maine will permit."

The dimple deepened. "I can't answer for the State of Maine," said she, "but I'm sorry that Mrs. Wilmerding should interfere . . . because *I'm* Mrs. Wilmerding."

"I . . . I knew it all the time," said Ravenel.

"Indeed? How?"

"They told me that the Chimney Corner was a principality . . . so I was naturally on the lookout for the Princess."

Mrs. Wilmerding slightly raised her eyebrows and a crooked little smile gave her mouth a most inviting look. Her lips were habitually firm but turned outward in the middle, showing a pretty margin which was rich in hemoglobin. The upper lip was inclined to quiver almost imperceptibly but in a manner which many people had found demoralising.

"The Chimney Corner is not a monarchy," said she. "It is the very essence of Repub-

licanism, so you need not try to introduce court manners, or you are apt to be banished."

"A few minutes ago," said Ravenel, "that was the height of my ambition, but now the idea frightens me. What must I do to make my position secure?"

"For one thing you must not try to blarney the Colony's official chaperone," said Mrs. Wilmerding with decision.

"You do yourself injustice," answered Ravenel. "So you are chaperone? You must have many anxious moments with all these giddy young things . . ." and he glanced at a chattering group of sexagenarians who were harmlessly drinking tea.

"I am no longer surprised," said Mrs. Wilmerding, "that your father wanted to put you to work. I am afraid that I made a mistake in joining my voice to Clare's to persuade him to stick to the original idea of a diplomatic career." She glanced down the verandah. "Here comes Ada Stackpole. Clare tells me you have met her."

Ravenel looked up to see a very handsome blonde of perhaps twenty-five years of age who was chatting with a group which had appar-

ently just come from tennis. Her arms were bare, her shirtwaist loosened at the throat and there was on her creamy skin such a dew as one sees upon that of an overheated child of three or four. She was rather above the average height, beautifully proportioned and of a pure, Saxon type. Her eyes were of a cerulean blue and her hair had the lustre of ripe, yellow corn.

"Ah, yes," said Ravenel, "I had the pleasure of meeting Mrs. Stackpole in Montreal. Divorced, isn't she?"

"No, indeed," answered Mrs. Wilmerding, quickly. "We have no divorced people in our Colony. Mrs. Stackpole and her husband have agreed to live apart. He was quite impossible, I believe."

"How interesting . . . sad, I mean."

"Have you met many of our Colony?" asked Mrs. Wilmerding.

"Quite a number. Everybody stops to say a kind word of welcome. I was beginning to feel quite tiresomely at home until you came along."

"We consider formal introductions quite superfluous," said Mrs. Wilmerding, ignoring

his flippancy. "The same holds true of members' guests. Our members are expected to show the same discrimination in their invitations which they would in proposing persons for membership. You see, Ravenel . . . for I am going to call you that, if you don't mind, the greatest charm of the Chimney Corner is its freedom from all discordant elements."

Thought Ravenel: "Here is where I get my first drink." Aloud, he said: "How delightful."

"You are right, Mr. O'Sullivan," said a bland voice at his elbow, and Ravenel looked up to see a clergyman who had apparently paused in passing for the purpose of saying a word of welcome. "The charm of this sweet haven of repose after the labour of our winter months, lies in its absolute freedom from all uncongenial and worldly elements."

Said Ravenel to himself: "I shan't be swindled out of my second souse, even if he has altered the text of the gospel." Aloud, he answered: "So I have discovered, sir. You impress me as being all one big, loving family, here. I might add that I have also been im-

pressed by the idea that in this charming Colony, all who are with you are of you."

The reverend gentleman rubbed his hands. "I am delighted to see that you have so accurately grasped the spirit of the place," said he, and passed on radiating peace on earth and good will to all such men as Providence and Mrs. Wilmerding admitted to the Chimney Corner.

"Don't you find it nice to have everybody stop and say a word of welcome?" asked Mrs. Wilmerding.

"Delightful. And there is such a charming unanimity of thought. Here comes an elderly gentleman and two ladies. I can see from their faces that they are going to stop and speak to me."

"Dr. Soper and his two sisters, the Misses Soper."

The retired physician paused and gazed benignly over his spectacles while his maiden sisters, who appeared slightly astigmatic, turned their heads at slightly different angles the better to observe the young man.

"This must be Mr. O'Sullivan," said Dr. Soper.

Ravenel admitted his identity, then paused, nervously eyeing a Miss Soper on whose virginal face some great truth seemed struggling for expression. Ravenel, to help her out, remarked on the number of delightful features accruing to the Chimney Corner.

"But the most delightful of all, Mr. O'Sullivan," cried Miss Soper, when her sister cut in with:—"Is our seclusive social atmosphere."

Thought Ravenel: "Two small slugs in separate glasses. I must begin to duck."

"Quite true," admitted Dr. Soper. "We are an undivided clan, here in the Chimney Corner."

"And a soupçon," thought Ravenel. "There won't be much left for the Major, if this keeps up."

"All who are with us are of us . . ." murmured the Misses Soper, and with genial nods and smiles the trio passed on.

"It is really wonderful," said Ravenel, "how you manage to keep this place so socially aseptic. It must require a great deal of finesse, at times."

Mrs. Wilmerding knit her pretty brows. "On one or two occasions we have had narrow

escapes from admitting what might have proved a disturbing factor . . .'' she began, when there came an interruption. A very young and ravishingly pretty nymph of a girl came up the steps in three vigorous bounds and pausing at the top proceeded to do a sort of Highland Fling which was more characterised by a supple strength of limbs and body than by any conspicuous technique. The elderly gentlemen pricked up their ears and cocked their heads. The elderly ladies looked startled.

''Clare . . . behave yourself!'' cried Mrs. Wilmerding's rich voice, half laughing, half chiding. The girl came to a ''first position,'' gave a soldierly salute which finished with a ringing slap on the solid anatomical structure beneath her duck short skirt.

''Can't help it . . . I'm friz!'' she cried. ''I've warmed about fifty gallons of sea water and my blood's all turned to glue. You don't mind if I do a proper little jig, just to warm up . . .'' And the spectacular young person placed both hands on her hips while the twinkling ankles flew in and out. The clergyman adjusted his spectacles and smiled.

There was nothing about the jig to offend the conventionalities, so Mrs. Wilmerding merely laughed. Clare, still jigging, let her deep, violet eyes rove over the tea-drinkers until they rested upon her brother Ravenel.

"Bless me, if there isn't Misther O'Sullivan! . . ." said she, with a subtle mimicry of an Irish brogue. "And how ever did that Mick get past the gate? I suppose that I should speak to our guest, Loretta, now should I not? And what do you think of the Chimbly Cor'rner, Misther O'Sullivan, and does it not remind you of Cambridge, barring only the place and the people in it. I'll tell you a secret, sor, though 'tis like enough someone has let it out. The most delightful fee-chure of the Chimbley Cor'rner lies in its utther see . . . I mean excloo-siveness. We are like one big family here, barrin' only the fights. Now, may I have some tay? I'd rather it were a cocktail but they don't grow here. The climate is that raw . . ." And with a duck of her auburn hair she skipped into the Reading Room. The groups on the verandah drew breath again.

"Clare," said Ravenel to his companion, "is a great cross to father and myself."

"She is a wonder," said Mrs. Wilmerding. "Sometimes she frightens me though. Do you know that she is painting extremely well?"

"She goes at everything with all her arms and legs and carries it through by sheer force of vitality. But sometimes she over carries. It's a wonder you all stand her chaffing . . . that about the exclusiveness."

"We come in for a good deal of chaff," said Mrs. Wilmerding, "and some of that from outside is rather malicious. But we are not infrequently called snobs and Pharisees, and last year we were accused of something far worse; bad faith."

"Impossible! Who was the viper?"

"Calvert Lanier . . . the playwright. Do you know him?"

"Only by reputation. What was the trouble?"

"It is a very disagreeable story. Mr. Lanier came in here last summer, cruising on his schooner yacht. Being a member of the New York Yacht Club, he took it for granted that he might land here at the Reading Room. Mr. Phelps, our President, met him and very tactfully explained that this was all private prop-

erty, whereupon Mr. Lanier apologised very courteously and put to sea again. It appears, however, that he was charmed with the Chimney Corner and on arriving at Marblehead he ran up to Boston and made application to my husband, whom he knew slightly, to be made a member. Mr. Wilmerding is Secretary of the Colony and after making a few enquiries about Calvert Lanier, took him in, quite on his own authority."

"But why not?" asked Ravenel. "Lanier comes from one of the best Virginia families and from all I've ever heard of him is a very high class chap."

"Yes . . . but he is a playwright."

"But isn't that a respectable calling?" asked Ravenel. "There were Aristophanes and Shakespeare and Racine and Victor Hugo and a few others who were well received. His plays and operettas are the cleanest I ever saw. I sat behind a girls' school at the last."

Mrs. Wilmerding looked rather disturbed. "That was all discussed," said she, "and Mr. Lanier might have been admitted but for Mrs. Stackpole. She was most vehemently opposed to him on the grounds of his profession, and

pointed out that we might expect him to entertain players. Of course, I saw the truth of this argument . . . so Lanier was refused."

"After being told by Mr. Wilmerding that it was all right? How did he take that?"

"With a very bad grace. The trouble was, that after being told by Mr. Wilmerding that he might consider himself as a member elect, he picked out his plot on the map in Mr. Wilmerding's office, wrote a check for the amount, then went to an architect's office and made all of the arrangements for his cottage. He then sailed for Europe and was in London when he received Mr. Wilmerding's letter telling him that it would be impossible to make him a member. Fortunately, Mr. Wilmerding had not deposited the check and the Committee offered to defray all expense in regard to the plans for the house, and so forth."

"How nice of them. What did Lanier say?"

The colour deepened in Mrs. Wilmerding's face. "His reply was of a character to make us glad that we had refused to admit him. He said, amongst other things, that since he had been refused admittance to the Chimney Cor-

ner, we might expect to find him on the door step. I am sure I do not know what he meant by that. On his return from Europe, Mr. Lanier came up here and demanded a personal interview with the Committee. He made some very bitter accusations of bad faith and, in fact, quite routed the men, but Mrs. Stackpole and I stood fast and eventually triumphed."

"Did you see him?"

"No. Mr. Wilmerding was really ill over it. You know, my husband is considerably my senior and semi-invalid. Mrs. Stackpole, also, was terribly upset. I was surprised at her insistence but I couldn't help but admire her determination."

Ravenel pursed up his lips and stared pensively out across the water toward the inlet, where a diminutive tug was struggling valiantly to tow a huge, empty barge in against the ebbing tide. The young man was reflecting on the story which had just been told him and his mental comments were not flattering to the Colony. Mrs. Wilmerding, apparently to change a disagreeable subject, presently remarked:

"See that ridiculous little tug out there with that great barge."

The vessels in question had begun to attract the attention of other eyes than theirs. The barge itself looked as if it might be the hulk of an old sailing ship and from the way in which it sat upon the water one could see that it was practically empty. A number of square openings like the gun-ports of an old-fashioned frigate had been cut at intervals and under them the sides were pierced by round port-holes. From the starboard cathead hung a huge, rusty anchor with a wooden stock.

The towering hulk was black and dingy. An accommodation ladder was down amidships and over forecastle and quarterdeck were rigged snugly triced awnings of a greenish blue. Two boats were swinging from the davits and up forward there fluttered from a clothesline the family wash.

As the big hulk drew slowly abreast of the Reading Room it could be seen that there was a hammock swung under the after awning from which presently there descended a man in blue clothes. Up forward, another man in a black derby, shirt-sleeves and side boots stood in a negligent attitude with one foot on the whelp of the old-fashioned windlass.

But that which caught and held the attention of the tea drinkers on the verandah of the Reading Room was a tarpaulin which hung over the port bow, partly hiding what appeared to be the name, which was painted in bold, white letters at least two feet in height. Of these only T H E . . . were visible.

"An odd looking packet," said Mr. Phelps, in his sonorous voice. "A veritable Noah's Ark. And look at the name on her bow. Did you ever see such a sign? 'Theodore Roosevelt,' perhaps . . . ha, ha, ha . . ."

"That windmill in the waist has a Scandinavian look," said Major O'Sullivan, in his brisk, military voice. " 'Thelma,' would be my guess."

"Or 'Theseus,' " ventured Professor Pringle, the Colony's savant.

The panting little tug had hauled up almost abreast of the Reading Room at a distance of two or three hundred yards when suddenly the ears of the watchers were startled by the clanging of the tug's engine-room telegraph bell, and immediately the churning under the stern ceased.

"Upon my word," cried Mr. Phelps. "He

can't have the impudence to anchor here, directly in front of the Reading Room!"

The tug's propeller made several turns astern, thus slackening the tow-line, when a deck-hand who had been sitting on one of the tow-bitts rose to his feet, handled the hawser and looked towards the barge as if awaiting the signal to cast off.

"Bless my soul! . . ." cried Mr. Phelps, "they mean to anchor that thing right in front of our noses! What amazing cheek. I won't have it! Not a bit of it . . ." He stepped to the window. "Steward!" he called, "fetch me the megaphone. Hurry! . . ."

The elderly servitor bustled out with the megaphone which Mr. Phelps snatched from his hands. The Honourable President was a large man with a chest which he had amply developed as the result of its owner's enjoyment in the sound of his resonant voice. The breeze had dropped light and across the still water Mr. Phelps's sonorous tones rolled forth with swelling cadence.

"Aboard the barge! . . ." he thundered.

The hail could certainly have been distinctly heard on the opposite shore, a mile away. But

so far as one could see it failed to be audible to either barge or tug. Aboard the former, the lank individual standing by the windlass did not so much as glance toward the shore, while the man in blue clothes, who was leaning against the high bulwarks, his back to the Reading Room, leisurely crossed the deck, climbed back into his hammock and began to turn the pages of a book.

Mr. Phelps's ruddy colour deepened. He was a man who took vast satisfaction in the exertion of authority and was unaccustomed to lift his fine voice in vain. Again he raised the megaphone, inflated his splendid lungs and sent his voice rolling across the water with a hint of impatience in its note.

"Abooooord the ba-a-a-arge! . . ."

The hail is excellently formed, phonetically, for its carrying power, especially when "aboard" is pronounced "abode." Yet, in spite of the magnificent note which, thus amplified and threatening, sent little shivers through more than one elderly spinster on the verandah of the Reading Room, it might have been the squeak of a bat for all of the effect produced upon the lumbering leviathan. Aboard the tug

the deck-hand was slowly throwing the turns of the hawser off the bitt-heads and even at the distance it could be seen that his unwashed face wore the grin of a Cheshire cat.

Mr. Phelps's hearty colour deepened to a dangerous purple and the veins of his neck became congested. To the ladies on the verandah he suggested omnipotent Jove, about to hurl thunderbolts, and they trembled. But the profane deck-hand had cast off the tow-line, which he of the derby hat was hauling slowly through the port chock of the barge. Once again Mr. Phelps raised his megaphone.

"Abode the ba-a-a-rge!" he thundered, and this time with more success, for a whiskered face and a pair of square shoulders were thrust through the open window of the wheel-house and a harsh, nasal voice answered in the usual conversational tone:

"Wa'al, what d'ye want? No call to holler so; nobody's deef."

"Take that hulk away from here!" commanded Mr. Phelps. "What does that fellow mean by anchoring right out in front of us?"

"Don't know of any law agen it," came the answering drawl. "D'yew?"

Mr. Phelps hesitated, then half lowered the megaphone. For the moment he was unable to think of a suitable reply. He looked at the barge. The tide was running strongly ebb and the huge hulk, having lost its headway began to drift slowly astern. The bearded man caught a turn with his hawser, then stepped to the windlass. For an instant he hesitated, as one who gauges the relative position of two points.

"Don't you dare to anchor here!" roared Mr. Phelps, losing his head at the sight of the man's evident intention. "This is private property!"

Not so much as a grin came from the man on the barge, though all faces aboard the tug were split in the horizontal line. The man with the black derby was seen to give a tug at a small line. Followed a rattle and a great splash as the big anchor struck the water. For a minute the chain cable clattered out through the hawse-pipe, then, judging apparently that he had sufficient scope, the crew of one stoppered his cable and walked to the rail where he began to haul at the tarpaulin which obscured the name of the hulk. The man in the hammock appeared to be immersed in his book.

Exasperated beyond all bounds, Mr. Phelps crushed his thick moustache against the mouthpiece of the megaphone. Those watching trembled and the Misses Soper had recourse to their salts. It was evident to all that Mr. Phelps was on the point of becoming very angry. No such excitement had ever penetrated to the exclusive domains of the Chimney Corner.

"Barge ahoy . . ." bawled Mr. Phelps. "These are private waters. You are forbidden to anchor here under penalty of the law."

The man in the hammock read on, unmoved. The eyes of the watchers turned from him to the disreputable person who was hauling up the tarpaulin. As the lower extremities of the letters which spelled the name appeared, a peculiar hush fell upon the watchers. It was the strained silence of a vague foreboding and in the tension Mr. Wilmerding's fingers fumbled so nervously with his pursing lips that he let fall his marine glasses, the clatter of which evoked an hysterical scream. At the same moment the last scrap of tarpaulin was jerked aside and there, in huge letters of glaring white was painted:

"THE BROKEN WORD."

CHAPTER II

"AMBER BUBBLES DROWN OUR TROUBLES"

COSTUMED as though for a lawn party, Mr. Calvert Lanier reclined against a heap of cushions in a large navy hammock and wrote. Or, to be more accurate, he read, for he was at work on the revising of his new comic opera, "The Pearl of Panama."

For just a fortnight his big hulk had lain off the Reading Room, soaking up the best part of the view and outraging the colonists' dignity by its accusing legend, "The Broken Word." The vessel had been allowed to swing head out to the flood tide when a kedge anchor had been carried from the stern, so that the leviathan lay always broadside to the beach. At night a lantern was swung from the cathead over the name. Along the bulwarks presenting to the Reading Room a pale green awning had been snugly triced and behind this screen Mr. Lanier lived and moved and had his mysterious being. Every morning his employé went ashore in a motor-driven whaleboat, but o. Mr. Lanier no-

body had so much as caught a glimpse. Often, however, the muffled notes of a piano could be heard issuing from the depths of the hulk, these airs catchy or filled with a swinging rhythm which foretold a coming popularity, for Lanier was doing not only the libretto but the music of his piece.

Absorbed in his work, the playwright had scarcely given a thought to his outraged neighbours. There was design in his act but for the moment this had been forgotten in the interest of his work. So that he spent the whole of his time in studying out the details of his operetta either in his hammock or at the piano or in moving manikins about his model stage below.

Swung from the lashing at the head of his hammock was a bunch of ripening bananas and now and then the author reached back to twist off one of the small, yellow fruit which he devoured at a gulp, all but the last two inches, this being offered to a large green parrot perched in a ring at one side. These bounties the parrot received in one extended claw, remarking in a dulcet tone: "Thank you, darling."

Directly under the hammock, which was as

near his master as was possible to get, a small dog of mongrel type and intelligent expression was crouched on the deck, his alert head turning this way and that while at least one bright eye returned with unabated interest to the evolutions of a large and handsome raccoon which was fishing about with one paw in a bucket of water. Forward of the awning, where the sun streamed across the deck a black cat with green eyes was watching the gambols of a family of kittens remarkable for heavy fur and strongly ringed tails. The lambent eyes of the mother went frequently toward the raccoon, continuously fishing in the bucket with the patience lent by its species to such pursuits. At these moments the narrow black slits of the cat's pupils opened wider.

Entirely engrossed in his work, Lanier failed to notice the approach of a rowboat which put off from the landing of the Reading Room. He could not in any case have seen it, but even the swash of oars and the slight jar together with the murmur of voices at the staging of his accommodation ladder amidships failed to capture his preoccupied attention. Or possibly he may have been subconscious though unheeding,

for the story of the "Broken Word" had found its way into the press and not infrequently boatloads of summer visitors from the garish hotel at the river-mouth would gaily round the grim and battered hulk to a chorus of profane laughter directed towards the frozen groups upon the Reading Room verandah.

Intent upon his work of revision, Lanier did not look around until his caretaker, who had approached him in a stealthy and dubious manner, laid his hand on the tense hammock lashing. Roused suddenly by the vibration Lanier squirmed about like a cat which has just received a charge of shot.

"What is it?" he snarled. "How many times have I got to tell you that I'm not to be disturbed when I'm at work?"

"Beg pardon, sir, but there's four parties from the clubhouse yander wants to see you."

"Where are they? . . ." Lanier twisted his lithe, be-flannelled body still farther and his angry eyes fell upon a little group standing in the waist. Pre-eminent in stature was Mr. Phelps, who, catching Lanier's eye swelled out his chest and appeared about to advance toward the break of the quarterdeck when the

curt tones of the playwright forestalled him.

"Show the gentlemen below," said Lanier, to his caretaker, "and say that I will be down directly."

The words were quite audible to the four visitors, respectively Messrs. Phelps and Soper, Major O'Sulliivan and Professor Pringle. Mr. Phelps appeared slightly at a loss, swelled his chest, then slowly exhaled the invigorating sea air through his puffed cheeks. Major O'Sullivan, a slightly built, dapper man with an enormous moustache and a very resonant bass, squared his shoulders, tugged at his moustache and glared in the direction of Lanier, who had returned to his reading and of whom only the top of a black head was visible over the rim of the hammock. Dr. Soper rubbed his hands, hemmed a little and glanced at Professor Pringle who was gazing abstractedly towards the distant horizon.

"Confound his cheek," muttered the major to Mr. Phelps. "Let's go back ashore."

The president looked rather vague. "Now that we are here," he began, but was interrupted by the harsh-featured caretaker who came down into the waist with a curt "This

way, gents," and a manner more suggestive of a Yankee mate showing their billets to a batch of raw hands than one conducting guests to the saloon.

Mr. Phelps filled his lungs afresh, puffed out his cheeks and followed the man. Professor Pringle started, looked slightly dazed . . . for the dancing blue of the inlet had suggested the ancient Ægean and his mind was some twenty or thirty centuries behind the movement. Dr. Soper was trotting in the wake of Mr. Phelps, rubbing his hands and smiling nervously to himself. Major O'Sullivan alone appeared to hesitate about obeying the summons to go below, but the fact that the others had already started made a refusal awkward, wherefore he brought up the rear, scowling savagely and tugging out a bristle or two at every step.

Ushered by the laconic caretaker the visitors went down such a flight of steps as might lead into the attic of a New England farm house and found themselves directly within an apartment somewhat singular for the belly of a ship. To begin with, the gangway first landed on a sort of balcony which ran athwartships and ex-

tended fore-and-aft along the sides, ultimately to disappear in the gloom. Below this was another balcony of the same sort and below this what seemed to be the floor of a spacious and comfortable studio. There were oriental rugs, divans, several big lounging chairs, a handsome Renaissance buffet and a grand piano. Between the galleries the rough pine ceiling was covered by many posters, some of them representing frivolous young women unconventionally clad and bearing such profane inscriptions as Folies Bergères or Bal Tabarin. Others less dangerous to the elderly eyes of the Chimney Corner envoys portrayed pretty young things blowing through pan-pipes or teasing little birds. These bore the name of Calvert Lanier with boastful statements concerning the number of presentations.

The whole place was well lighted by roomy ports cut between the galleries and two big spardeck skylights. Forward and aft galleries and orlop deck, the floor of the studio, faded off into the gloom, though the main studio seemed partitioned off by portières and tapestries hung from the main deck, or what was left of it.

Arrived below after a considerable descent of ladder steps the Chimney Corner Peace Commission looked about in some bewilderment. To the eye of the shipbuilder it would have been at once apparent that Lanier had secured a barge converted from the hulk of an old merchantman and made of the amidships section a practical musical and dramatic studio, and that with very little expenditure, so far as the vessel was concerned. The rough, exposed portions of the skin had been ceiled with pine and the side ports and skylights cut out, and that was about all. Lanier apparently lived in the vast, roomy studio, for there was a bed made up on one of the big divans and a dressing-table in a shadowy recess beside a port. What the rest of the hulk might or might not contain was shrouded in mystery.

It was not until the quartette had reached the foot of their slightly perilous descent that the most striking feature of the place became apparent. Just under the break of the half-decks was a miniature stage, yet not so excessively miniature as the pretty dolls which graced it were constructed to a scale not less than half that of the human and the stage itself

filled in width the whole amidships section the ship. It was in fact a stage upon which a piece might actually have been played and at first glance one would have said that a drama was even at that moment being presented, for the bright sunlight striking down through the amidships skylight illumined the decorations like a limelight and brought out vividly the prettily costumed figures of the waxen players. The *mise en scène* at that moment presented showed a tropical garden overlooking a bay strewn with islands. In the middle distance was a fortification from which flew the American ensign and beyond it a naval squadron lay anchored in the roads.

The scenery was painted in a broad, splashy way but with charming effect. The doll actors were grouped with studied harmony, the different characters designated by costumes sketchily painted on blank paper, then cut out and pinned to the manikins. Looking closer the astonished visitors saw that the stage was perforated with numerous holes about an inch in diameter and perhaps two inches apart. Each manikin was fitted with a peg and could thus be placed at any part of the stage. Those

occupying the scene at the moment represented soldiers, sailors, señoritas and a few tourists. The grouping was exceedingly effective and the whole, surveyed through half-closed eyes gave a perfect illusion of the theatre.

Major O'Sullivan, an enthusiastic devotee of the muses as worshipped across the footlights, uttered a sharp exclamation of surprise and pleasure.

"Upon my word, so that's how it's done. Most interestin' . . . looks like the Philippines." He turned at a slight noise behind him and beheld a white clad Chinaman who had slithered out of the shadows.

"Allee same Panama," said the smiling Oriental. "Mist' Lanee makee opoletta Panama. Plenty sing song dance. You likee dlink?"

Without waiting for a reply the intelligent Celestial glided across to the buffet and carried to the centre table a heavy "tantalus" containing three most inviting cut glass carafes. Four tumblers were produced from thin air and a siphon opaque with the cold rime of the ice box.

Mr. Phelps was pompously protesting that

they desired nothing, but the Chinaman did not appear to understand such language. Major O'Sullivan started to protest, then checked himself and glanced at his watch. He was feeling rather ill at ease, and besides it was half-past four. Dr. Soper was rubbing his hands and examining the little actors and actresses while Professor Pringle, having sighted a long row of closely filled bookshelves was being lured in their direction with fatal persistence but bashful hesitation until, his eye being caught and held by a whole row of Greek plays in the original text, the Œdipus Tyrannus of Sophocles, some tragedies of Æschylus and Euripides and about half a fathom of a beautiful edition of the comedies and satires of Aristophanes, he promptly became oblivious to time, place and the business in hand and retired to a wicker lounging chair beside a port promptly to become absorbed in some dithyrambs by one, Lasos of Hermione.

Meanwhile, the smiling Charlie had laid a box of succulent Habanas beside the "tantalus" and smilingly indicated the contents of the three decanters with the tap of a fingernail which would cause the pupils of a manicure to

dilate. "Ol' lye . . . velly stlong. Lagavullin Scot', no can get Amelica, velly good an' cost plenty dolla'. Ol' Jolden Pendennis Club. Velly, velly good. You tly . . ." And with a positively Celestial smile Charlie had flitted off into the gloom beyond the portières.

Major O'Sullivan's keen, military eye rested with appreciation on the different shades of amber reflected from the carafes. He tugged at his farouche moustache and looked at Mr. Phelps. The President of the Chimney Corner Association filled his chest and looked back. Both gentlemen then looked at the "tantalus." Dr. Soper rubbed his hands, then broke the ice by taking a Turkish cigarette and lighting it in a perfectly natural manner.

"Since the object of our errand is to arrive at an amicable understanding," said he, "I see no reason why we should reject the hospitality offered us. These are excellent cigarettes. I happen to know that they are to be had only in London."

The faces of the other two lightened. Each man felt that he had never, until that moment, quite appreciated Dr. Soper. Between the major and the president there was that bond

sometimes to be found between lawbreakers. Both gentlemen were in the habit of infringing daily, at exactly half-past four, on the laws and statutes of Mrs. Wilmerding and the State of Maine. An accessory before, and several times after the fact was the entirely respectable steward of the Reading Room.

"Soper is quite right," said the major, jerkily.

Mr. Phelps slowly exhaled a large volume of carbon dioxide between his distended cheeks.

"The very last idea which could have entered my head in coming here this afternoon," said he, "was that of accepting any material entertainment from this vindictive individual who has caused us so much annoyance. But as Dr. Soper has very justly observed, the whole object of our visit is an attempt to . . ."

"Precisely," snapped Major O'Connor, "and it is nearly a quarter to five. Mr. Phelps, I believe you prefer the rye. Personally, I happen to know something about this Bourbon. As the mess boy quite truthfully remarked, it is the Pendennis Club stuff and not to be had for love or money. If it is the real thing, I am afraid that we have made a mistake in bar-

ring this man Lanier." He took the decanter from the case, removed the glass stopper and scented the aroma of the contents. "It is. Dr. Soper, this will do you no harm. Permit me to fill your glass. Fancy the chap drinking stuff like this under our very noses . . ."

Dr. Soper rubbed his hands and fell to the suggestion of the major. Nobody thought of Professor Pringle who had already basely deserted the dithyrambs for the Medea of Euripides.

Major O'Sullivan was explaining with a certain amount of warmth to Mr. Phelps that after all the Chimney Corner Association had a certain amount of unpaid obligation to Mr. Lanier, when there came a rather unconventional interruption. A rubber-shod foot padded with a catty lightness on the ladder and before the visiting committee had realised it, a slender, white-clad figure had glided past and seated itself at the piano.

Major O'Sullivan merely stared. Dr. Soper leaned forward, rubbing his hands. But Mr. Phelps, recognising the playwright from a former and not entirely pleasant meeting, rose to his feet and inflated his chest.

"H'm . . ." he cleared his chest. "H'm . . . ah . . ."

A crash of chords from the piano drowned his speech. Another crash, then the opening of a gay, laughing theme which had the same relation to the first melodious outburst as might a shower of blossoms to the ensuing perfume. There was a catchy lilt to the refrain which quickly sent their feet a-tapping. Even Professor Pringle wove his scansion to the metre. Dr. Soper found himself repeating:

" 'The roads should blossom, the roads should bloom,
So fair a bride to leave her home . . .' "

And then, suddenly, the music broke off abruptly and a young man with intent, dilated pupils and a very clear skin swung about on the piano stool and stared at them.

Mr. Phelps observed that the musician was immaculately dressed. Major O'Sullivan was more conscious of the wide forehead, dark eyes and peculiar droop of the head between the shoulders. It was a queer, questioning poise and the words which followed it were even more disturbing.

"Do you think it's got the right swing?"

Quite naturally there was no response. The guests were a bit upset, barring only Professor Pringle who had started "Choephori" and was feeling sad.

"How do you like it? It's quite new, so you probably won't. Damn these reminiscent tunes. Charlie . . ."

The Chinaman flittered out of the shadows like a white moth.

"Have you some champagne on the ice?" snapped Lanier.

"Hab got, sar."

"Then bring it . . . and hurry . . ." Lanier looked with a sort of abstract intentness at Mr. Phelps, who happened to be nearest him.

"I hope you will excuse me for keeping you waiting," he said, with a sort of defensive irritation. "I was going over the lyrics of my new piece when you called and all the while that I was touching up the words of a love song the air was bothering me. Did you ever notice that sometimes when you are intent on doing one thing the idea of another will strike you with more force, even, than if that were the one you were trying to concentrate upon? It's

that way with my work; when I'm writing songs the music often strikes me . . . and the reverse. Once, a tune I caught made its own words . . .'' he turned to the piano and began to play with the keys, staring at something which lurked in the shadows between the decks just over his head. Still staring he began to play, modifying the theme as he proceeded and moulding it into the semblance of a refrain. It was like a sculptor squeezing a mass of wax into the effigy of something which might ultimately be anything, yet unusual of its kind.

Meanwhile, Mr. Phelps appeared to be taking a sort of exercise for the development of the lungs. Major O'Sullivan had started to say something, then thought better of it and was sitting back in his chair, staring at Lanier under his bushy, grizzled eyebrows. Dr. Soper was placidly smoking and waiting for somebody to say something and Professor Pringle, after a rather vacant stare which lingered longest on the Chinaman, as the only person who appeared to have any concrete objective, even though a material one, had returned to his classics and was skimming ''Hippolytus'' with

the rapture sometimes to be found as a combination existing in the kiln-dried scholar who gets as it would seem a dual benefit, first in the academic perfection of the composition and second, a sort of vicarious warmth while basking in the reflected passions of such a lady as Phaedra may have been. Of all the people there, Professor Pringle was undoubtedly the happiest. Mrs. Wilmerding and other vexations were for the moment forgotten.

Lanier was playing with a sort of irritable intensity, a frown on his forehead and his beautifully cut features drawn into an expression of discontent. He was singing softly to himself as he played. Suddenly he swung about on the piano stool.

"The air is all right, isn't it?" said he, "and the words are good enough, but it needs something else . . . some sort of melodious interruption . . ."

Without waiting for an answer he played over the same air, humming the words as before. It had a catchy lilt and Mr. Phelps, whose old rye was beginning pleasantly to disseminate itself throughout his expansive system, found himself unconsciously humming in

company. As already observed, Mr. Phelps was possessed of a fine baritone voice and not without vocal pretensions. It was not infrequently that he regaled his friends with some few choice selections, Tosti's love songs being easily his favourites. Mr. Phelps was also a splendid card for a successful clambake or moonlight sailing party. He could, at a pinch, sing a near second to any of the negro melodies or by arching his neck like a Percheron stallion, blast out a fairly good bass.

Wherefore, it is not surprising that given one adult's dose of a celebrated rye and a tune which was destined to be ground from every hand organ in the country within the next two or three years, Mr. Phelps felt moved to lend a certain amount of courteous support to the effort of Mr. Lanier. Even Major O'Sullivan so far relaxed in his curious scrutiny as to tap the measure with his foot.

Lanier was playing slowly, introducing slight variations at the intervals but evidently dissatisfied. He was apparently on the point of turning from the instrument in disgust when there came from the darkened recesses beyond the loud report of a popping champagne cork.

"Ah! . . ." cried Lanier, sharply, and as if by instinct one quick finger ran up the keys while his tongue clicked in perfect imitation of the gurgle proceeding from the neck of a bottle. So perfect was the imitation, coming just as it did, and so aptly it lent itself to that particular part of the song that the Major leaned forward, clapping his hands.

"Capital . . ." he cried. "There's a finishing touch for your song . . ."

Lanier swung about, his face eager and his eyes alight.

"Isn't it, though? . . ." he cried. "What a chance for orchestration . . . that t'luk . . . t'luk . . . t'luk . . . t'luk . . ." He imitated the sound with tongue and keys, his eyes on the Major and Mr. Phelps. "Wouldn't that make a hit . . . Charlie . . ."

"Light away, Mist' Lanee . . ." The Chinaman bearing a quart of vintage wine in a silver cooler glided between the portières and across the room, setting his burden on the buffet.

"Get another bottle," snapped Lanier.

"S'ppose you dlink one piecy bottle . . ."

"Do as I say, d—— you . . ." cried Lanier, so furiously that his visitors were startled.

"All light . . ." answered Charlie and scuttled out.

"Get a move on you," the playwright shouted after him. "Don't want to cool it. Bring it here."

Another quart was immediately forthcoming. With a sort of feverish impatience, Lanier ripped off the seal and loosened the cork. Major O'Sullivan, observing the label, opened his eyes. The next instant Lanier had stepped to him and placed the bottle in his hands.

"When I come to the interval, let the cork go just as before, will you, please?" said he "Then both of you make that t'luk . . . t'luk . . . t'luk . . . sound. I want to see how it works in. Wouldn't wonder if it would be a corker . . ."

"Or an un-corker . . ." ventured the Major, who was beginning to enter into the spirit of the thing.

"Good . . . might use that too. Now then, here goes. . . ."

This time the song opened with a splendid

swing, Lanier singing the words out in a rich baritone. As he neared the end of the stanza he looked back over his shoulder at the Major

The song was of a farcical character and supposedly sung by the Chief Engineer at the banquet attending the opening of the Panama Canal.

Major O'Sullivan was tightly gripping the sizzling cork, his eyes fixed eagerly on Lanier. Mr. Phelps carried the air and the magnetism of the singer had joined in the refrain, taking the tenor part. Dr. Soper was beating time with his lighted cigarette.

The verse neared its end fortunately for the Major who was getting red in the face through his efforts to control the cork.

"... We dam the waters as we may
We do our little best
Amber bubbles drown our troubles
Here's to East and West . . ."

A nod to the Major. Pop went the cork, then as Lanier tapped the keys: "T'luk, t'luk, t'luk . . ."

The playwright sprang from his stool, his face aglow.

"That'll do it," he cried. "The orchestration can make that great . . . and a few dummy bottles and popguns in the wings. That's what the song wanted . . . just that sort of catchy trick. Thanks awfully. Come, we can't let all this good fizz go to waste. . . ."

He stepped to the buffet and brought over the cold bottle and some cut glass tumblers.

"But, my dear sir . . ." began Mr. Phelps.

Lanier waved his hand. "It can't hurt you. It's very awful extra dry. You mix lots worse stuff in a champagne cup and think nothing of it. Let's have a friendly glass and forget the unpleasant features of our last meeting. I've acted a bit nasty, I'll admit. Well, all you've got to do is to put yourself in my place. It doesn't require great effort of imagination."

Mr. Phelps was beginning to puff himself out preparatory to some sort of peroration when the Major cut in.

"Look here, Mr. Lanier," said he, "what is your game, anyway? We've tried to make what amends we could for Mr. Wilmerding's error."

The Major's voice was exceedingly curt. It had suddenly occurred to him that during the past several minutes his dignity had been in some question. He had not come aboard the hulk to pop champagne corks and cluck like a hen and while the object of the visit might be to appeal to the decency of the playwright Major O'Sullivan had no intention of becoming abject.

Lanier took a swallow of champagne, then regarded thoughtfully the three envoys. Professor Pringle had started to listen but having been interrupted in the midst of a very beautiful and interesting passage, had now returned to his perusal of "Hippolytus."

"Yes," Lanier assented, "it is quite true that you have done what you could. I think that I understand the situation. The trouble seems to be that I am opposed for membership by a very influential feminine contingent. It is rather hard on me, because I honestly feel that I would not prove an objectionable member of the Colony. I learned only to-day the true state of affairs."

"Who was your informant, may I ask?" said Mr. Phelps.

"I learned indirectly, through a letter from a friend who corresponds with one of your colony. This being the case, I do not feel justified in obstructing your view any longer. I will admit that what I did was the result of extreme irritation. However, it would not be decent of me to annoy the whole Colony out of spite at my unfortunate unpopularity with three ladies."

"Then you mean to go away?" asked Dr. Soper.

"From your immediate neighbourhood, yes. But I like the climate and surroundings and am just now too busy with my new piece to go to the trouble of getting towed to some other locality. For the present, I will merely slip my cable, buoy it and drop down with the tide and lie to a kedge anchor near the entrance to the inlet. In this way, I will no longer obstruct your view." He reached for the cold bottle. "Let us wash away past unpleasantness with some of this special vintage. Permit me to fill your glasses. . . ."

Ignoring their protestations he poured out the liquid, sparkling amber. His guests, feeling perhaps that the successful accomplishment

of their delicate mission warranted certain concessions on their parts, allowed themselves to be coerced, after which libation they arose with the extreme dignity which might be expected to result from a combination of old whisky and vintage champagne, and made their courteous adieus. Lanier escorted them to the gangway where they descended the accommodation ladder with studied care.

Half way to the Reading Room Mr. Phelps, who had been humming softly to himself the "Champagne Chorus," looked back. From the barge came the sound of hammering.

"Look," said Mr. Phelps, triumphantly, "his deck-hand is tacking a piece of canvas over the name." He threw back his head and sang, jovially:

> "Amber bubbles drown our troubles . . .
> Here's to East and West . . ."

"T'luk . . . t'luk . . . t'luk . . . t'luk . . ." joined in the Major and Dr. Soper in chorus, at which Professor Pringle looked up in mild surprise from the copy of "Hippolytus" that upon him by his late host.

CHAPTER III

THE GARDEN OF THE HESPERIDES

Mrs. Wilmerding was not content. She sat on the verandah of the Reading Room and watched the big hulk being guided gently down the tide by the motor-whaleboat and as she watched, there reached her ears the vibrant tones of Mr. Phelps as he enthusiastically described one Calvert Lanier, playwright, and his floating home. Mrs. Wilmerding's pretty brows were knit in a frown of displeasure.

There were several features about the affair which annoyed her excessively. To begin with, she had more than once secretly regretted her action in the matter of Lanier and she had felt that he had in a way justified her objections to him by his behaviour in taking a spiteful revenge. Now, in withdrawing his hulk to an inoffensive distance and obliterating the accusing name, he was demonstrating a decency of feeling which was bound to alter the general sentiment of the Colony. Had he withdrawn

himself completely from the Chimney Corner and gone about his business beyond its observation it might have left a certain sentiment of remorse, but in merely hauling off a mile or so he was bound to remain an object of communal interest and speculation while it was very possible that public opinion might take a turn in his favour. Such a state of affairs would not tend to the increased prestige of Mrs. Wilmerding.

Mr. Phelps's amphoric voice reached her, jarringly. "A genius, Lanier," he was saying, largely. "A positive genius! I am not at all sure that we have not made an unfortunate error . . . eh, Major?"

"I like him," said the Major. "I should enjoy seeing more of him."

Mrs. Wilmerding turned abruptly in her chair.

"There is nothing to prevent your doing so," said she, sharply. "No doubt, from a man's point of view it is a convenient thing to have a floating bar about the premises."

There was no immediate answer to this. Mrs. Wilmerding rose suddenly from her chair and stepped into the writing room. Her mind

had taken a quick resolve. The Colony was threatened with schism and internal dissension, and Mrs. Wilmerding decided on a *coup d'état.* The propinquity of a rank outsider who was regarded favourably by certain members while yet barred admittance from the sacred precincts of the Chimney Corner made a situation which was dangerous and embarrassing. Mrs. Wilmerding decided to have it out with the playwright, herself, should this be possible. Seating herself at a desk she wrote as follows:

Mr. Calvert Lanier,
Yacht, *The Broken Word,*
Dear Sir:

Your action in acceding to the request of our President to remove from the immediate vicinity of the Reading Room has put the writer and certain other of our members in a rather difficult position. It is intimated to us that in opposing your membership, we have been actuated unjustly and unwisely and that your expressed desire to cause no more annoyance on learning the source of your opposition proves you to be a person of chivalrous instincts who would have been a distinct acquisition to the community.

Admitting the truth of this view, the writer, who is the chief cause of the late unpleasantness, would

like the opportunity of justifying her recent course. Would you be willing to call upon her to-morrow afternoon at an hour to suit your convenience?

Yours truly,

LORETTA WILMERDING.

Beacon Rocks, Chimney Corner.

Having sealed and addressed her note, Mrs. Wilmerding left the Reading Room and passing around the head of the little cove, took the path along the cliffs which led to her summer home; a long, low house built of stone and stucco, situated on the brow of the cliffs, half hidden by a growth of dwarf pine and about half a mile toward the inlet from the Reading Room. Just before reaching the beginning of the last steep ascent which led to the house, Mrs. Wilmerding took a narrow, winding path which led down to the shore and here, in a cosy bight with a shingly beach she came upon a charming, rustic boat-house in front of which was a lank youth engaged in baiting some lobster pots.

"Caleb," said Mrs. Wilmerding, "I wish you to get in the dory and take this note out aboard the . . . the . . . that hulk which was lying off the Reading Room. . . ."

"The *Broken Word,* ma'am?" asked the young man, looking up in surprise.

"Yes," answered Mrs. Wilmerding, calmly, although she had winced a little at the name. "Please wait for an answer . . . and bring it up to the house before you start out to set your lobster pots."

"All right, ma'am . . ." The youth took the note gingerly by the corners and dropped it into his pocket. Then, a sudden thought striking him he asked:

"He call'atin' to drop his hook off here?"

"He will probably anchor nearer than we care to have him," she answered. "And . . . eh, Caleb? . . ."

"What, ma'am? . . ."

"It is not necessary to say anything about my having sent you with the note."

"No, ma'am," Caleb answered, whereat Mrs. Wilmerding turned and made her way up the steep, winding path to the house. Caleb was the functionary who looked after the Wilmerding boats.

Arrived on her verandah, a little breathless and charmingly flushed, Mrs. Wilmerding stepped to a big telescope on a tripod and

watched the sluggish manœuvres of the hulk which was still drifting slowly down with the tide and rather ridiculously in tow of the motor whaleboat. At the distance of about half a mile from the Wilmerdings' boathouse the anchor splashed over the bow and the hulk came presently to a stop. A few moments later Caleb's dory drew alongside, where it remained for so short a time that Mrs. Wilmerding's face grew rather red, for she did not think that Lanier could possibly have had time to write an answer, and it crossed her mind that he might have glanced through her missive, then told the messenger that there was no answer. This humiliating doubt was soon set aside, however, by the return of Caleb, who handed her an envelope enclosing a correspondence card on which was written in a minute and regular hand:

Mrs. Wilmerding,

Madam,

In reply to your note I have the honor to say that I shall call, as you request, to-morrow afternoon at five.

Very respectfully,

CALVERT LANIER.

If Mrs. Wilmerding could have witnessed the reception of her note it is possible that she might have been vexed. Lanier was engaged with some business correspondence when the cat-footed Charlie dropped the missive on his desk. He frowned, ripped open the envelope, scanned it through, then grinned, wickedly.

"Mrs. Wilmerding," said he to himself. "Why, that's the wife of the Thin Grey Shape who betrayed me. Beautiful, I understand, and domineering." He grinned again. "A splendid chance to get even."

He dashed off his brief reply and gave it to the Chinaman, then returned to his business letters. It is doubtful that he thought three times of his promised call until the near approach of the hour of rendezvous. Lanier had a singular power of concentration. But he was by no means absent-minded and never failed to keep an appointment, so he dressed with his invariable perfect taste and having neglected to ask where the Wilmerding's house might be, had his caretaker set him ashore on a point of land opposite his anchorage, intending to walk toward the settlement, making enquiries of any whom he chanced to meet.

There was a path along the top of the low cliffs and Lanier had proceeded in a leisurely manner for about a hundred yards when he came upon a girl who was standing before a half-painted canvas on an easel. She had located herself directly on the side of the path and as the playwright approached he observed that she was very young and more than uncommonly pretty. Her eyes were so dark that he thought them black, until a second look proved them to be an almost purple violet. Her hair was a rich auburn, very thick and at that moment none too tidy and the loose sailor-suit she wore could not conceal a deliciously lithe and rounded figure with long limbs and exquisite ankles.

At the sound of his step she said, without looking around, and his musical ear was at once attracted by the low-pitched, musical tone:—

"Don't bother me. I'm busy. . . ."

"I don't intend to bother you," answered Lanier, "beyond asking where Mrs. Wilmerding lives."

She spun around quickly and it was after the first glance, when the violet eyes opened wider that he discovered their real quality.

"Oh . . ." said she. "I thought it was Stephen Carew. He's always taggin' me around."

"A man can be a nuisance, yet show great intelligence," Lanier replied, and looked at the picture, which was full of faults. The young girl's gaze followed his.

"Do you know anything about painting?" she asked.

"It is one of my professions," he answered.

"Then tell me what's the matter with my picture. I can't seem to get it right."

Lanier half closed his eyes and in so doing unconsciously accentuated the length and thickness of his long, very black lashes. The girl eyed him, covertly.

"There is something the matter with it," said she, as he did not immediately speak.

"Yes," he admitted, "there is. The distant pines are too green, the sky is too blue, the rocks are too brown . . . and if a ship hit the edge of that horizon she would lose all of her spars" He looked at her and smiled the swift, dazzling smile which seemed to light with a startling suddenness the shadows of his nervous face and to wipe away its cynical expres-

sion, leaving instead an immense kindliness. "What is your name?" he asked.

"Clare O'Sullivan," she answered, staring at him with a fascinated and slightly bewildered expression on her highly vital face.

"Well, then, Clare," said Lanier, smiling thoughtfully at the canvas, "some teacher must have told you to work only in pure colours, which is excellent advice but not to be followed too slavishly. Don't you see the grey tone in everything, to-day? Besides, you've painted everything but the air, and that you've left a vacuum. Put your grey tone all through and those colors will come down into their places."

She handed him her brushes and palette. "Show me," said she.

Lanier smiled again as he took the things from her hands, then with a few rapid touches began to pull color and values into their true proportions. It was a simple scheme, and he had done many like it in Brittany, before the pen claimed him and he picked up the brush only to work out scenic effects. But to the girl it was amazing, a piece of magic, for she was practically self-taught.

Presently he turned and held out to her the

palette and brushes. Clare stepped back, holding up both hands, and noticed what pretty hands they were.

"No . . . No!" she cried, "finish it . . . please! And who are you and where are you visiting?"

Lanier resumed painting and had laid in several broad strokes before he answered. Then he said, talking as he worked and speaking half absently, for colors and brushes were of the best, the composition charming and under the inspiration of the girl and the moment he was doing an exquisite though simple thing.

"In the Chimney Corner, Clare, such a question does not require an answer. All of those who are with you are . . . or ought to be . . . of you."

"I told you mine," she pouted.

"You shall know mine . . . bye and bye."

"But I want to know it now."

"Then watch. 'By their works ye shall know them.'"

He had been working rapidly to cover the canvas with the soft, grey haze of a rather cloudy afternoon in July with the delicate misti-

ness which precedes a "smoky sou-wester." Much of Clare's most painstaking drawing had been painted out, with the result that one could almost hear the hiss of the brown, glistening kelp as the tide fell. There was no particular note to the study; it was rather impressionistic and vague and the girl had ignored the big bulk of the quondam "The Broken Word," moored in the immediate foreground. Lanier began to paint it in, swiftly but deftly and with broad but subtle strokes. Under his handling the hulk became a thing of picturesque beauty; an old sea-farer hauled apart to die; a tired candidate for the Port of Missing Ships, ready for its last resting place, whether to bleach its tired bones on a forgotten beach or to let them sink gently to the ocean's soft bed. The brave old hull was shrouded in mist and mystery.

Clare watched the swift strokes of the brush half troubled, half fascinated. She failed, utterly, to grasp the significance of Lanier's last words and the painting in of the hulk, which followed them. It was the man rather than the picture which claimed the girl's interest. Lanier, intent now on his sketch, seemed oblivious to her close examination of himself.

"You see, Clare," said he, presently and without looking at her, "you must think of colours from the viewpoint of their relative values. That bit of water off the end of those rocks is really very high, but by giving it that violet note you made it about the lowest value in the foreground. . .."

"Why do you call me Clare?" asked the girl.

"Because you told me that it was your name. Now, if you had said that your name was Miss O'Sullivan, I would have called you that . . . which would have been a pity."

"Why would it have been a pity?"

"Because I would not have stopped to paint you a picture . . . and kept Mrs. Wilmerding waiting. I fancy that Mrs. Wilmerding is not accustomed to being kept waiting and therefore it will do her good."

"Indeed . . ." The curiosity in her violet eyes was growing deeper. So was their colour. "Then you think that what is unaccustomed is good for one?"

"Very. It scrapes the barnacles off the mind."

Clare watched him in silence.

"You know your work," said she, presently. "Where did you learn to paint?"

"At Julien's and in Brittany. Where are you studying, Clare?"

"I am not studying . . . and you mustn't call me Clare. I am not a child."

He turned from his canvas to look at her and as his eyes, which were of an indescribable colour, met hers, Clare was conscious of a sudden and peculiar warmth which seemed to come out of the ground and travelled glowingly up through her vigorous young body to find its outlet in her piquant face which flamed suddenly in a crimson flush.

"Oh, aren't you?" asked Lanier, and smiled.

"I put away my dolls, long ago," said she, and shoved out her pretty chin.

"Really? Then I must be the child, for I still play with mine. I have two or three dozen and scarcely a day goes by that I don't take them out and change their clothes."

Clare's face showed puzzled anger. The friendly informality of the Chimney Corner was one thing but to be chaffed by a strange young man was quite another. Her supple, girlish figure straightened haughtily.

"Thank you for helping me with my picture," said she. "I am going to paint it out, now, and start another. And it's not very nice of you to keep Mrs. Wilmerding waiting."

Lanier said nothing. Turning quietly he picked up a broad brush from the colour box. Clare stepped forward and held out her hand, instinctively.

"I'll paint it out," said Lanier. "The general grey tone will make an excellent background for the next. Let it dry and start on a fresh panel. . . ."

He stepped to the easel, but Clare reached forward quickly and seized the brush.

"I think I won't paint it out, after all," said she. "I . . . I like it. You may call me Clare, if you like. But I wish you'd sign it."

Lanier's quick smile sent another thrill through her. The instant before his face had been almost severe, glacial, but the smile was for all its charm the least bit cynical. He saw through the little feminine ruse to learn his name. He took a small brush and deftly traced in the corner of the panel,

"Painted for Clare
By Calvert Lanier."

CLARE WAS . . . LOOKING AT THE PICTURE THROUGH NARROWED LIDS

He turned and looked at her, a gleam of amusement between his dark lashes. Clare was standing perfectly still, looking at the picture through narrowed lids. Lanier could see the girlish bosom rising and falling under the loose blouse. Suddenly she stooped and picked up a brush, then stepped to the easel where she hesitated for an instant.

"What are you going to do?" he asked.

She turned and looked at him and he saw that her face was rather pale.

"Paint out your name," she answered, falteringly.

"Is it detested to that degree in the Colony?" he asked.

"It isn't that," she answered.

"Don't you want one of my signed studies?"

"I'm . . . I'm crazy to have it," she confessed. "But you see, Mr. Lanier, I haven't come by it honestly. I wanted only to find out who you were, and now, by signing it, you have given me a really valuable present. I oughtn't to accept it."

Again the smile sent Clare's blood racing up to crimson her face. He reached out and took the brush from her hand.

"It is a free gift," he answered. "There is no reason why you shouldn't keep it. Between artists there is no talk of intrinsic values. Give me a sketch of your own."

"Oh . . . but I've nothing good enough," she faltered. "If I only had something else to give you. . . ."

"You have," answered Lanier, still smiling.

Their eyes met and Clare read his meaning. She drew back with a startled look. Lanier held out his hand.

"Good-bye, Clare," said he, gently.

Clare took the offered hand and a sudden youthful madness seized her. She swayed forward.

"It's not much to give for such a lovely sketch," said she, rather breathlessly, and raised her face to his. The flame in her eyes was reflected in Lanier's. He had not meant to coerce her, but she seemed to him scarcely more than a child, if a very lovely and well-grown child. He had spoken more in a spirit of boyish mischief combined with a curiosity to see what she would do and say. But as the tempting face was lifted and the violet eyes looked straight into his a very real and very

tender emotion swept over him. Nevertheless, it was with a sense of guilt that he reached out, drew her to him and touched the fresh, parted lips with his. Then he stepped back, with the vague sense of having kissed the heart of a rose.

"I am a thousand times repaid for my little sketch, Clare . . ." he began, gently, then paused at the expression of her face. Clare's colour had fled and she was staring over his shoulder. Her wide-open eyes were positively black.

Lanier turned sharply. A few paces behind him there had emerged from a turn in the path a very pretty woman who was standing stock still, her graceful figure held very rigid and an expression of indescribable shock upon her face.

"Mrs. . . . Wilmerding . . ." faltered Clare, under her breath.

CHAPTER IV

THE DRAGON

The tableau lasted only for an instant. Mrs. Wilmerding turned slowly and disappeared behind the clump of dwarf pines, whence she had so inopportunely emerged. Lanier swung about and looked at Clare.

"Mrs. Wilmerding, eh?" said he. "I am afraid, Clare, that you may have had to pay an even higher price for my wretched little sketch than I had supposed . . . and you may be sure that my most successful work, whether artistic or dramatic was never so over compensated. Will the good lady tattle?"

Clare shook her head. She had been going white and red by turns.

"No," she answered, with a rather frightened smile. "Mrs. Wilmerding isn't that kind."

"She looks very nice," Lanier assented. "I suppose I'd better go after her and keep my appointment."

They looked at each other and laughed. The

discovery of the innocent sin appeared to have formed a closer tie.

"What are you going to say to her?" asked Clare.

"About my painting fee? Nothing, of course, unless she introduces the topic. Then I'll tell her the truth."

Clare began to push a pebble about with the toe of her little shoe.

"And what is that?" she asked, without looking up.

"An idyll."

"Is that all?" She glanced up with a smile on her mouth and a curious mistiness in her eyes.

"Idylls are the garments of the gods, cut down to fit us mortals, Clare. I can say no more than that."

Clare looked dissatisfied.

"I'm not keen about hand-me-downs . . . even from the high gods," she answered, a little shortly. "Besides, it wasn't an idyll, anyhow. It was simply that I didn't want to be . . . to be under obligation to a stranger. That's what *I* shall tell her. So you'd better say the same thing."

Lanier laughed. "You are right, Clare. It wasn't an idyll at all. It was a purely commercial transaction . . . on your part. When I spoke of it as an idyll I was thinking of myself."

"Then you think," said Clare, giving the pebble a spiteful little kick, "that I am willing to trade a kiss for a picture worth several hundred dollars? Is that your idea?"

"No. I think that you inherit the princely instinct to return gift for gift with no thought of cost. I give you of my little best. You are graciously pleased to accept but pride will not permit of your not reciprocating. You give me of your best . . . and Mrs. Wilmerding buts in. Now I must go, and Mrs. Wilmerding will no doubt give me of her best . . . and I fancy, from the look of her face, that it will be well worth not having. Good-bye, Clare . . ." and he held out his hand.

Clare swung about impetuously and her firm little hand nestled for a moment in his.

"Au revoir," she said, "and thank you for the sketch," and she turned suddenly away and began to gather up her painting things.

With a very warm feeling in his heart, Lanier

took the path by which Mrs. Wilmerding had preceded him and which wound along the edge of the cliffs, occasionally to dip back into the dwarfed pines. Another man might have felt a certain amount of diffidence in calling upon the official duenna of an exclusive colony immediately after being taken red-lipped, as one might say, in an act of gallantry to the said colony's youngest and prettiest débutante, but Lanier was conscious of no embarrassment. As a matter of fact, he was not thinking of Mrs. Lanier at all, but of Clare. The playwright was amazed to find himself so stirred at the touch of a girl's fresh lips, not because such contact was habitual but because he thought that he had long since passed out of the sentimental stage and into the analytic, which is very apt to be the cynical.

Lanier had passed through an early and violent love affair which had ended unhappily and left him, as he thought, safely inoculated against poisoned darts. This episode had aroused first a furious resentment, then a thoughtful curiosity. He had taken to studying women as another scientist or philosopher might study the composition of a flame, the Law

of Storms or the combustion point of high explosives. It was not an idle pursuit, for the result of his observations went to the creation of first his art, then his books, then his drama, and the exposition was invariably free of bitterness and full of sweetness and tenderness which was characteristic of all his work. Lanier had come utterly to deny the existence of Abstract Bad, least of all in women, and the sex, as though instinctively recognizing its champion had never failed in due acknowledgment. Of this tribute the artist, true to his ideals, had availed himself only of that which lent itself to a higher conception of art and beauty. He could not help but know his power over women but he was no more flattered by it than might be an electrical expert by his control of this subtle potentiality. Lanier was a feministe in the higher sense of the word, a clean-hearted student of womankind.

Wherefore, he was startled and surprised at the rush of emotion which Clare had given him as might be the electrical inventor who in his investigation of what he thinks a harmless form of current gets a shock that twists him out of shape. Lanier was pondering deeply on this

new discovery when a turn in the path brought him in sight of a residence which he rightly guessed to be the Wilmerdings', and with some effort he turned the focus of his thought from Clare and directed it upon the interesting business of the moment.

Glancing at his watch he was surprised to see that he was only about fifteen minutes late, which led him to think that Mrs. Wilmerding must have seen his boat put off from the hulk and after waiting a reasonable time for him to appear had decided that he had missed the path up the cliffs and had strolled down the path to look for him. He had given himself plenty of time, not knowing how far away the Wilmerding place might be.

An elderly butler opened the door and ushered him into a drawing room which overlooked the sea. As Lanier entered, Mrs. Wilmerding, who had been standing by a window, came forward to greet him. Lanier bowed, almost in the Continental manner and Mrs. Wilmerding slightly inclined her head. She did not offer him her hand but indicated a chair facing the window and asked him to be seated, she herself sinking into a Louis XVI bergère

opposite him. Lanier's appreciative eye observed that she was far prettier than he had thought, certainly not more than thirty-eight with a charming figure and exceedingly graceful wrists and hands.

"I must apologise for being a quarter of an hour late," said he. "Not knowing where you lived I allowed myself too much time."

Mrs. Wilmerding raised her eyebrows.

"That seems a peculiar reason to offer for being late," said she drily.

"It is really an excellent one," said Lanier. "Too much of anything tends to extravagance. I was extravagant with my time."

"I observed your extravagance," said Mrs. Wilmerding, coldly. "I am very sorry; it is the last thing which I would have wished."

Lanier was surprised at her directness, and admired it.

"Please let me say how sorry I am to have put you in such a position," said he.

Mrs. Wilmerding frowned. "Perhaps it was for the best," she replied. "I sent for you, Mr. Lanier, because I felt that I might have made a mistake in using my influence to keep you

from becoming a member of our Colony, and I wanted to explain my position. But now, I cannot help but feel that I was quite justified. It was to prevent just such incidents as occurred a few minutes ago that I objected to your membership."

"If you expect to prevent such incidents as that, anywhere," observed Lanier, "I must say that I admire your ambition."

Mrs. Wilmerding looked exceedingly annoyed.

"I expect to prevent them in the Chimney Corner," said she, "and I fail to see any reason why I should not. Do you?" And she shot him a challenging look from her very blue eyes, now dark with anger.

Lanier shrugged. "According to Biblical history Jehovah was unable to keep them out of the Garden of Eden," he answered, "and that being so I am inclined to doubt that Mrs. Wilmerding will be able to keep them out of the Chimney Corner. Also, I beg to say that if Miss O'Sullivan never receives a less respectful salute than mine, she will be an exceedingly lucky girl."

The colour came into Mrs. Wilmerding's face.

Like many full-natured women to whom the married relation has become a name rather than a condition, her viewpoint on amorous affairs had become confused, alternating between that of the captious spinster and periods of fierce resentment at the emptiness of her own life. It agitated her to listen to the discussion of lax conventionalities and because it agitated her she had waged a relentless war against any sort of sentiment which was not under due censorship. No girl of the Colony dared walk or row or sail or ride unchaperoned with even the most harmless of the Colony's young men. Woe to them if it came to the pink ears of Mrs. Wilmerding!

Lanier's keen insight discovered this immediately, and where a less discerning person might have shrugged in contempt at such ethics, he felt sorry for this charming, vital woman whose strong personality could find no more worthy interest than a war on the rosy little god. He appreciated that she was very much upset by the scene which she had just witnessed and so entered into an explanation which he had entertained no thought of doing.

"Let me tell you how it came about," he be-

gan, but Mrs. Wilmerding made an impetuous, negative gesture.

"Such things are better not discussed," said she. "I do not wish to hear. . . ."

Lanier leaned forward and fastened his compelling gaze on the angry blue eyes, opposite.

"You have got to hear!" said he, decisively. "Your attitude is unkind and unjust. Since you saw what you were not intended to see, you are in honour bound to let me explain it. I came upon Miss O'Sullivan painting and asked the way to your house. She took me for a member of the Colony and asked me if I knew anything about painting. As you may know, I am an artist of some ability, so I put her [illegible] right for her, then at her request I [illegible] it. When she saw my name she refused to accept the sketch. I intimated that it hurt me to think that my name should be regarded with such undeserved censure, whereupon being scarcely more than an impetuous child, she had a sudden wave of remorse and gave me a kiss for the picture. That was all."

Mrs. Wilmerding's face was aflame, her eyes very bright and her breath coming rather quickly.

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself for permitting an inexperienced young girl to so cheapen herself!" she cried, hotly. "Then it was Clare who . . . who offered you . . . her lips?"

"I signified that it would be a fitting recompense," said Lanier, suppressing an inclination to smile, yet angry with himself for having told the truth of the affair.

"It is shameful . . .!" cried Mrs. Wilmerding, and looked as if she wanted to cry. "Absolutely shameful! Clare has disgraced us! And as for yourself, I had been told that you were a gentleman, or I would not have asked you to come here. . . ."

"Stop, Mrs. Wilmerding," said Lanier, sternly. "You do not realise what you are saying. It is not Clare who has disgraced the Colony, but yourself!"

"What? *I?* What *are* you talking about?"

"It is true. You are the one who has brought discredit on the Chimney Corner." Lanier leaned forward, raised his beautifully shaped hand and shook his finger at her as he went on: "A random kiss bestowed in a warm-hearted and impulsive manner is not a very

serious affair, Mrs. Wilmerding. But one's given word is a very sacred thing. Your husband passed me his word that I should have my building site, and as his wife you were in honour bound to uphold his promise, made in all good faith. Had there been any doubt in my mind I would have asked for a signed agreement, but as one gentleman to another I did no such thing. You induced your husband to break his faith, which should also have been your faith, and what was the result? I was furiously angry and descended to an act of spite which, I am willing to admit, a gentleman should not have done. This made the story public property and the Chimney Corner was advertised as a not too honest organisation. So in all justice, Mrs. Wilmerding, leave this poor little girl alone and think of your own not altogether honourable act!''

Lanier had not raised his voice above its usual pleasant and modulated key, but there was something in the inflection, and even more in the strong and virile personality which projected his words which gave Mrs. Wilmerding the impression of having been transfixed by a very cold, thin blade. It is probable that she

had never been so spoken to in all her pampered life, and the contrast between Lanier's keen-edged presentation of the case and the doddering and finger-mumbled protests of Mr. Wilmerding was so violent as to seriously interfere with her heart's action. She had leaned back in her chair while the playwright was speaking, and when he finished and looked directly into her eyes with his thoughtful, penetrating gaze, Mrs. Lanier could only sit and stare at him, pale of face and her hands tightly gripping the carved acanthus leaves.

Lanier's incisive manner changed with startling abruptness. He leaned forward still farther and his intent gaze fairly swam in her ultramarine eyes.

"And in spite of all that," said he, "I know perfectly well that you acted from the very best of motives and never dreamed of being unjust and unkind. I didn't know it at the time, but I know it now . . . since I have had the honour of meeting you. It is all clear enough, and the only wonder of it is that I didn't see it in that light before. And yet, I doubt if you could ever guess why it was that you did what any reasonable person would call a dishonour-

able thing, and never saw it, yourself, in that light." His sudden smile flashed out at her.

"Why . . ." she began, rather dry-lipped, when he interrupted.

"I don't intend to tell you. I don't know you well enough. But I do know, even in this short time, that it would be quite impossible for you to do anything that wasn't based on a good sound, conscientious motive. Since I walked through that door I've come to realise that I made a very unfortunate mistake in trying to revenge myself on the Chimney Corner. Oh," he made an impatient gesture, "why couldn't you have set your dignity aside for a few minutes and sent for me in the first place. You'd have found me sympathetic, just as I find you, underneath your over sense of obligation to effect the impossible, and a few minutes' talk with you would have been enough to have cleared me out of the place. And I'm so glad you didn't."

Mrs. Wilmerding roused herself with some obvious effort. Her face was flushed and her general expression slightly dazed. But a certain insistent idea had fastened itself in her head and she obstinately refused to go on

with the argument until this had been made clear.

"Before we say any more," said she, with an attempt at her habitual self-possession, "will you please be so kind as to tell me why . . . how . . . that is, what you said a few minutes ago . . ." the poise crumbled a bit around the edges, ". . . . about knowing me well enough to be sure that my act was not . . . was . . . justified . . .?" She paused, helplessly.

"No," said Lanier, curtly, "I won't. I'd have to have your friendship and your confidence to tell you that. Let me say this, however; I believe you to have acted from the very best of motives and I am sincerely sorry for the annoyance I made you in anchoring off the Reading Room with my old barge."

Mrs. Wilmerding passed her hand across her forehead.

"Are . . . are you going to stay where you are now?" she asked.

"Yes."

"What if . . . if I asked you now to go away? You say that you would have done so at first; why not now?"

Lanier made a gesture of troubled impatience.

"It's different, now. I can't see how I'm bothering anybody where I am. At first, two weeks ago, I could have gone without interfering with my work. Just at present I'm in the thick of it; right at the most crucial stage. To change my location would mean a serious break; getting a tug and hunting a good surrounding . . . and all that. It might be fatal to the piece."

Mrs. Wilmerding drew a deep breath.

"You have been very generous," said she. "Don't think me inappreciative. But I have the interests of the Chimney Corner very deeply at heart, and I can't help but feel that you are a . . . a very disturbing factor . . ."

"But how?" he demanded. "I'll not come ashore, here . . . unless you ask me to. What harm can I do? Why drive me away? You are a literary woman; why not be friends and sympathetic? You might come out aboard some day and see my stage set and hear the music and the libretto and give me a bit of criticism. It's all for art and beauty . . .

and the things which make life worth while. Must I go?" He rose from his chair and took a few short, impatient steps. "Because I will, if you absolutely request it . . ." And he turned on his heel and looked at her, keenly.

Mrs. Wilmerding turned to him a very troubled face. It had occurred to her within the last few minutes that through her particular efforts the Colony was driving away, or trying to drive away, the most interesting personality which it might hope to have. In fact, it flashed across Mrs. Wilmerding's mind that perhaps she was in a position to drive away the only interesting personality which the Colony might ever hope to have. And the worst of it was that this personality had suddenly become extremely interesting to Mrs. Wilmerding herself. She doubted in that instant that Lanier would have a keener appreciator than herself.

With a slight effort she recovered her composure. It was only when the playwright was actually speaking that Mrs. Wilmerding felt curiously stupid and confused.

"There is no doubt that we owe you something," she said. "Stay by all means, if you like. And . . . and perhaps you will come

and dine with us . . .'' she finished a little feebly.

Lanier smiled. ''Thank you,'' said he. ''But I wouldn't think of abusing my privileges. Besides, just now my work is absorbing all of my time. As soon as it is finished I'll clear out. Meanwhile, I mean to confine my shore exercise to the other side of the inlet. And if you, or any others of my late enemies can find time to come out aboard my old hulk I will take great delight in showing you how comic opera is made and I will hope to get a valuable criticism. You see, I'm not doing these things for money. I've always had enough of that for my modest needs. I'm trying to contribute to the joyousness of life . . . and it's beauty. And now, if you will excuse me, I'll go. Thank you so much for your kindness and your tolerance . . .'' And he looked at her with his wonderful, winning smile.

Mrs. Wilmerding rose and stood for a moment facing him. Her soft cheeks had a high flush, just beneath the eyes; one of those flushes which go with a certain mistiness of the eyes themselves and are sometimes to be seen on the faces of young girls at the opera. Lanier's

last words had stirred Mrs. Wilmerding's protective instinct; one might almost say, her maternal instinct. After all, it occurred to her, he was still very young; a vast six years her junior, and she felt that he must lead a very lonely and friendless life. It is doubtful if there was a person within a radius of a thousand miles who was less lonely and friendless than Lanier. But the idea pleased Mrs. Wilmerding, and seemed to present the situation from an entirely different point of view. The extreme unkindness received by Lanier at the hands of the Colony occurred to her as quite a new idea. She was a naturally warm-hearted woman, militant but not cruel. Shame and regret for her own attitude swept over her.

Stepping toward him she held out impulsively both hands, looking at him with her pretty head tilted slightly backward.

"Through my fault the Colony has made a great mistake," said she. "I am sincerely sorry. Will you forgive me?"

Lanier was touched and surprised. Without answering he took the two proffered hands in his, bowed over them and then, meeting impulse with impulse, brought them together and

touched the back of the uppermost with his lips. An early European education had given a semi-Continental flavor to Lanier's manners and there was probably but a single person in the Colony who would have criticised the graceful act. Unfortunately, however, this one person was at that very moment passing the open French windows which gave on the verandah. The next instant his shadow fell across the tableau. Mrs. Wilmerding snatched away her hands and Lanier looked up to see a tall young man with very black hair and an angry face standing on the threshold.

"I beg your pardon," said the newcomer, and glared at Lanier.

The colour flooded Mrs. Wilmerding's face. "I must say, Ravenel, you are rather inconsiderate to startle one so."

"Sorry," he answered, still staring at Lanier. "I was on my way to the Reading Room and I stopped to see if you were comin' down for tea."

"Very well," said Mrs. Wilmerding, impatiently. "Go on slowly and I will overtake you."

Ravenel hesitated for a second, then with a

rather sulky, "Sorry to have interrupted you. Thought you were alone . . ." ducked his glossy head and withdrew. Mrs. Wilmerding turned to Lanier. Her face was flushed with annoyance.

"That is Ravenel O'Sullivan," said she. "I did not present him because I was displeased with his behaviour. I'm afraid they don't teach very good manners at Harvard. Informality is sometimes carried a little too far in the Chimney Corner."

"That is apt to happen where everybody is so well acquainted," said Lanier, casually. "Good-bye, Mrs. Wilmerding."

He left the house and started to walk slowly back to where he had left his boat.

"H'm . . ." he said to himself, as he strolled along. "Jealous cub, young Ravenel . . . H'm . . ."

CHAPTER V

HALF PAST KISSING TIME.

After Lanier had left her, Clare O'Sullivan slowly gathered together her painting things and dropped them listlessly into the box. Then, stepping back, she stood for a full two minutes staring at the sketch on the easel. It seemed to the girl as if the artist had painted a portrait of himself. In the sweet, strong harmony, the perfect values, the minor tones and a certain hint of melancholy which was soothing rather than depressing she seemed to see Lanier's calm, thoughtful expression, the clear, direct gaze of the elusively coloured eyes between their sweeping black lashes, while the accent of the waves splashing against the curved beach of the little cove below suggested his vibrant, soothing voice. A band of sunlight struggling through the low, pigeon-grey clouds to strike the sea near the horizon, suggested the smile that so lightened his face. But above all it was the atmosphere of absolute sureness which characterised the whole sketch which vaguely

impressed Clare as most suggestive of the artist. She wondered if he were ever in doubt. Could she have seen his face when at the piano, working out some elusive scheme; seen the expressions of uncertainty, pleasure, impatience and disgust which were constantly sweeping over it she would have realised that her sketch represented but one of many facets and that Lanier would have been more truthfully depicted by what the Italians painters call *chiaroscuro*.

Clare, having finished her contemplation of the sketch placed it carefully in a holder and loading herself with her equipment started slowly for the house. The O'Sullivan's summer place consisted of an attractive looking bungalow, modest in size with a stable in the rear and a boathouse at the foot of the cliffs in one of the numerous little coves which eroded the sea-front. In the loft of the stable Clare had fitted up a small but practical studio where she was wont to work on rainy days or when at odds with a monotonous world. Lanier had been a little severe in his criticism of the girl's sketch. Her work was really full of promise, for she scorned all tricks of technique, had an excellent sense of colour and composition and

drew far better than many who had "arrived."

On the way to the studio she came upon her brother who was sitting bareheaded in the sun, stitching a split sail.

"Let's see your sketch," said he, laying down palm and needle and scrambling to his feet. Ravenel painted rather better than Clare, but confined himself to figures and portraits . . . principally Mrs. Wilmerding's.

Clare threw him a malicious look. "Come on up," said she.

Ravenel followed her to the studio. Clare took out Lanier's sketch and placed it on the easel. Lanier's inscription was scarcely more than visible but to hide it altogether, Clare placed in front of the panel a frame a size too small.

"Oh, I *say* . . .!" cried Ravenel. "That *is* good! Why, Sis, it's a corker! How did you do it? By George, if you can get that on a big canvas you'll make the Academy sit up!"

He took his pipe out of his mouth, stared at his sister, then stepped closer. Clare laughed.

"See how you like it without the frame," said she, and removed the frame, which she had been steadying with her hand.

"Even better . . . hullo, what's this . . . what . . . is . . . this?" He leaned over and read, slowly: "Painted for Clare . . . by *Calvert Lanier.*"

Ravenel stepped back and stared at his sister with his mouth open. He was a lithe, handsome fellow, purely Celtic of type and might have posed for a young blade in one of Charles Lever's romances.

"What's the meaning of this?" he asked, curtly. "Do you know Lanier?"

"He came along the cliffs when I was making a mud-pie and finished the sketch for me. I asked him to sign it."

"Along the cliffs? Our cliffs . . . well of all the cheek. What was he doing up there?"

"He was going to see Loretta Wilmerding."

"Going to see Loretta? Why, confound him, what business has he going to see Loretta?" Ravenel's handsome face darkened.

"Why shouldn't he?" demanded Clare, impatiently. "This place isn't *entirely* a penal colony. A man doesn't have to get permission from the warden to call on an inmate."

"H'mph . . ." Ravenel shoved his pipe

back into his mouth and drew at it violently, regarding his sister with suspicion. Clare's cheeks were red and her tell-tale eyes beginning to darken, as they always did when she was under excitement. "Well, then, supposing that he *did* have the nerve to call on Mrs. Wilmerding, what license had he to stop and give you a paint lesson? Did you know who he was?"

"Of course not. If I had, I wouldn't have been so cheeky as to ask him to sign the sketch. I'm not in the habit of accepting handsome presents from strange young men. You know, we saw in the 'Studio' the other day that some of his sketches went for five hundred apiece, in a public sale."

Ravenel pulled at his pipe and scowled.

"You mustn't take it," said he.

"Indeed I will."

"No, you won't. I'm not going to have my sister under obligation to a nervy playwright . . . especially after the way he's made bums of our crowd, here. You send it back."

"I'll do nothing of the sort," cried Clare, defiantly.

"Then paint out his beastly name."

"That *would* be a nice, honourable thing to do . . . after asking him to sign it!"

"Just the same, you paint it out," said Ravenel, stubbornly. "I'm not going to have my sister . . . and look here, 'Painted for Clare . . .' Why, d—— his impudence, what business has he got to call you 'Clare'?"

"Oh, shut up, Ravenel," said Clare, disgustedly. "A stray artist you meet on the cliffs doesn't have to observe Chesterfieldian etiquette. I told him my name was Clare. . . ."

"The deuce you did!" snapped Ravenel. "My word, but you seem to have been going some, Sis. I don't like it. I've got no use for it! I hate it. . . ."

"Of course you do," said Clare, coolly. "And if I hadn't told you that he was bound for Loretta's you'd never have said a word. You're the one that had better keep an eye out for squalls, Ravel, my boy. . . ."

"Nonsense . . ." Ravenel's dark face darkened even more. "Don't start on that . . ."

"Then leave me and my picture alone. I'm sorry I showed it to you."

"Paint out the name and I'll say nothing more," said Ravenel, doggedly.

"Ravel, don't be silly!" cried Clare, and added, most injudiciously, "or if you must be silly, save your silliness for Loretta."

Ravenel's quick temper flamed up. He stepped forward, picked up a brush and turned to the easel. Clare, seeing his evident intention, flung herself between. Ravenel swept her aside with a backward motion of his long arm.

"Ravel . . . stop! Stop!" cried Clare, furiously. "The picture is mine! Don't you dare touch that dedication. It's mine! I . . . I *paid* for it!"

Ravenel turned and stared.

"How did you pay for it?" he demanded, sullenly doubtful.

Clare, suddenly realising her mistake, bit her red lip.

"Never mind," she answered, in a low voice. "I paid for it . . . and it's mine . . ." And the crimson colour surged into her angry face.

Ravenel's cold grey eyes grew hard as flint. With the brush in his right hand he turned and seized Clare's arm with his left.

"What *do* you mean?" he demanded, so savagely that Clare shrank back. "*How* did you pay for it?"

Clare's eyes were all black now. But the high colour had left her face and all that remained of it were a pair of very red lips and a crimson spot in either cheek.

"Let go my arm . . ." she said, in a very low voice. "You hurt me. If you must know, you brute, I gave him a kiss. . . ."

Ravenel loosed his grip.

"Ho . . ." said he scornfully, "you gave him a kiss, did you? So that was what paid for the picture. You're a lot too free with your kisses, Clare. Now, let this be a lesson to you. I was only going to paint out the name, but now . . ."

Holding the struggling girl parried with one strong arm he deliberately began to daub out, first the name, then the whole charming sketch. A single stroke made the damage irreparable, and after this Clare drew back and watched him, dark-eyed and silent. When the whole thing was an inconglomerate mass of pigeon-grey, she said, quietly:—

"You had no right to do that, Ravel. If I

choose to give a kiss for a picture, it's my own affair, and if Calvert Lanier sees fit to let his pictures go so cheap, it's his affair, and no harm done anybody. I'm not a married woman. Now, please go out of my studio . . . and please go at once . . ." Clare's low-pitched voice began to come a little breathlessly. She had been holding her wild temper with a tremendous effort, and she could feel it squirming in her grip. Things were getting red, and as she looked at her ruined sketch, the blood began to burn the backs of her eyes. Ravenel was watching her with a sort of sulky nervousness. It was a long time since he had seen his sister in one of her tempests, but he remembered the premonitory symptoms and moved toward the door. On the threshold, the knob in his hand, he turned.

"If you'd heard some of the things about this Lanier person . . ." he began, when Clare whirled furiously about.

"Be still!" she cried. "Get out of my studio, you domineering brute . . ."

Her flaming eyes fell on her painting stool. She whipped it up by one leg and hurled it at her brother. Ravenel shut the door barely in

time, and ran down the stairs. At the foot he paused and listened and could hear his sister's low, passionate sobbing. The coachman, an old family servant, heard it too. He looked at Ravenel and shook his grizzled head.

"There, Masther Ravel," said he, "yez are at it agen. Will ye nivir grow to be a man and lave poor Miss Clare alone . . ."

"Oh, dry up," growled Ravenel, and lounged off toward the cliffs.

His conscience troubled him as he strolled along and the more he thought of it the less pleased he became with his performance. He had only succeeded in making his sister desperately angry and unhappy and he had destroyed a very charming work of art. Even the consolation of throwing the blame of the whole business on Lanier was denied him. Ravenel reflected that he himself had kissed more than one pretty girl on a very brief acquaintance, and not given a five hundred dollar painting for the favour. From all that he had ever heard of Lanier the playwright was a gentleman and not the person to kiss and tell. Of course, it was very wrong of Clare, but . . . and Ravenel began to wonder what he could do to make his

peace. He loved his sister very dearly and when they had occasionally quarrelled he had usually spent all the money he had for some peace offering.

So that it was in rather a humble and contrite mood that he arrived at the Wilmerding's, where, with the familiarity of a privileged character he strode across the lawn and up on the verandah, meaning to rap on the window and ask Mrs. Wilmerding to go with him to the Reading Room for tea. It never occurred to him that Lanier might still be there. His rubber-soled shoes made no noise nor did he hear the murmur of voices within and the first knowledge that he had of his intrusion was when there was presented to his astonished eyes the tableau of the Colony's ivory-towered Minerva having her hands kissed by the very individual who had been making such a lot of trouble for everybody in general and himself in particular.

Amazed and furious, Ravenel might have forgotten himself and made a scene had not Mrs. Wilmerding sent him about his business as though he had been a meddlesome child. As it was, he strode off muttering strong words under his breath, presently to halt on the path

where he waited, hot of heart but mystified. There had been a certain expression to the pose of Mrs. Wilmerding's head as she had stood facing Lanier that disquieted Ravenel, who fancied himself in love with her. To be sure, he had never received any more encouragement than a sort of maternal indulgence admixed with playful banter, but he was a sanguine young man and his success with the ladies had been considerable.

Ravenel had not long to wait and presently Mrs. Wilmerding turned a bend in the path and came upon him, sitting sulkily on a large stone. Her blue eyes were very bright and there was a red spot in either cheek. Ravenel got up with a frown on his dark, handsome face. His greeting was neither agreeable nor elegant.

"Why was that pup lickin' your hand?" he growled. "Thought you disliked the breed."

"Don't be coarse, Ravel," said she, sharply, "or you can go on alone."

"Lanier, wasn't it?"

"Yes."

"Cheeky brute. I've just had an awful row with Clare over him."

Mrs. Wilmerding raised her eyebrows. "About what?" she asked.

"This is in confidence." And Ravenel told of his scene with his sister. Mrs. Wilmerding listened with a frown.

"You acted very badly," said she. "So Clare thinks that you are seeing too much of me? I quite agree with her."

"Oh, come, Loretta . . ."

"Mrs. Wilmerding," she corrected, austerely.

"Loretta," said Ravenel, stubbornly, and added, with a savage cut to his voice, "see here, why do you persist in treating me as if I were ten years old? I'm a man and you're a woman . . ."

"A *married* woman. And you are a gentleman, Ravel, although I must say that there are times when one would not think it. Now stop this nonsense, immediately!"

Her voice was positive. Ravenel looked at her gloomily.

"Would you let me kiss your hands . . . ?" he began.

"No. I wouldn't. So you destroyed Clare's picture? A kind, brotherly act! I suppose she was terribly broken up . . ."

"She broke up a painting stool against the door of the studio," said Ravenel, sullenly.

"Oh, you children! And you complain that I treat you like a boy of ten! You ought to be ashamed of yourself, Ravel."

"I am. So ought you. Letting this play-writin' person . . ."

"That will do!" Mrs. Wilmerding's colour heightened. She stopped short. "See here, Ravel, you are in no mood to go to the Reading Room, nor do I feel much like it, myself. Let's walk down to the end of the Point and on the way back I'll stop and speak to Clare."

Ravenel's face brightened. "Good," said he. "I *am* rather fed up on the Reading Room."

They turned and began to retrace their steps. Presently, Mrs. Wilmerding said:—

"My interview with Calvert Lanier rather upset me . . ."

"Should think it might . . ."

"Oh, hush! Lanier is a fine fellow and has been very badly treated. I want you to help me induce the Committee to admit him to the Colony."

"What . . . ?" Ravenel stared at her and his lean jaw dropped.

"Precisely. We were really not justified in barring him out. He is not at all the sort of person that I had expected to find him."

"But . . . good Lord, Loretta, after he's made fools of us with his old barge and got fresh with Clare and even had the nerve to make goo-goo eyes at the Pallas Athene of this sterilised Olympus . . ."

"Don't be a goose! He's harmless enough if a little Continental in his manners."

"Decidedly Parisian, I should say," Ravenel answered, with a grin. He was beginning to recover his usual good humour. "Did he kiss both paddies . . . ?"

"Oh, drop it, child! You are getting positively wearisome! After all, genius is entitled to certain mannerisms, and there is no denying Lanier's genius. It does seem rather dull to banish the brightest mind we have ever had here, and now that he has apologised for making us a laughing stock and offered to go away . . ."

"I hope you called his bluff."

"Don't be common, Ravel. I told him to stay on, if he wished. My plan now is to offer

him the privileges of the Colony for this season and let him have his building site for next year. There will not be much opposition, I fancy."

"He will have an enthusiastic sponsor in Dad," said Ravenel. "Since the 'King's Peg' episode, followed by the Champagne Chorus, the governor has been cocking his eye at the hulk and showing strong inclinations to swim out aboard. Then Papa Phelps goes about clucking like a hen with a brood of young ducks and Prof. Pringle asked me if in sailing aimlessly about I might not run alongside and exchange his copy of Hippolytus for the Kafusalum of Bezeenorious. This Lanier person has certainly got a strong draught in the Chimney Corner. Tanks the First Row constituents and makes 'em sing, then comes weaving ashore and catches and kisses the pretty ones. Oh, what's the use! Let's make him an honorary member and get a few dead-head boxes for the Colony!" He looked at his pretty companion and grinned.

"Sometimes, Ravel," said Mrs. Wilmerding, pensively, "you make me think that the O'Sullivans came to America in the steerage. But I suppose that it is no more than the cream

of Ireland curdled by a course at Harvard. Your father is not like that."

"Father drinks," said Ravenel, "and that always makes an Irishman polite, even to the corpse. Clare, it appears, likes to kiss . . ."

"Shame! What do you like to do?"

"I'm ashamed to tell you," said Ravenel, and gave her a laughing look from his bold eyes. Mrs. Wilmerding bit her lip, trying not to smile. Her feeling toward Ravenel was that which one might have to a naughty but rather lovable little boy. Perhaps it was the consciousness of his utter inability ever to move her which had led to an intimacy which would have provoked criticism in any other colonist than Mrs. Wilmerding. There were times when she wanted to spank Ravenel and shut him up in a dark closet.

"Then you'll help me to make Lanier a member?" she asked, presently.

"Oh, yes," he answered, indifferently. "I'd help you to make Lucifer a member, if you really wanted it. And it wouldn't surprise me if you did."

"What do you mean, Impudence?"

"I mean," said Ravenel, recklessly, "that

nothing you might ever do would surprise me in the least. You understand other people pretty well, but you don't know any more about yourself than a new aeroplane. You might soar to Heaven . . . or you might kill the aviator. You've never found yourself, and . . ."

"Thank you . . . that will do. Was there ever any insanity in your family, Ravel? But of course, there's insanity in every member of every generation of every Irish family!"

"Mine is a monomania . . ." He turned and looked at her. But Mrs. Wilmerding did not catch the look. Her eyes were fastened on a strip of beach at the foot of the cliffs. Ravenel's eyes followed hers.

There, in the shelter of a heap of boulders was an interesting tableau which might have been entitled;—"Orpheus and Eurydice." The rôle of Orpheus was being admirably rendered by Calvert Lanier, and his arms, full to overflowing with Eurydice, the latter charmingly posed by that lavishly beautiful young widow, Mrs. Ada Stackpole.

CHAPTER VI

BACK TO THE ARK

On leaving Mrs. Wilmerding's, Lanier had set out briskly to return to the cove where he had left his boat. He walked rapidly and just before arriving at the path which led down the side of the cliff, caught sight of several people approaching from the other direction. There was no sense of intrusion on Lanier's part but he wanted to get back to his work with all due haste and fearing that one of the party mighty be of the quartet which had visited him, he turned off to the cliffs and started to pick his way down. The descent was not difficult until almost to the beach when there was a six-foot jump down into the deep sand. Lanier was as light on his feet as a cat and sprang down without bothering himself so much as to lay his hand on the rim of the ledge, with the result that he barely missed landing in the lap of Mrs. Stackpole who was tucked under the shelter of the rock with a magazine in her hand and a box of chocolates against her knee.

Mrs. Stackpole did not scream. Her nerves

were not of the hair-trigger sort and consequently she was considered phlegmatic by her women friends. Men saw her differently, not only on account of her splendid beauty, which was of the heroic, Northern type, but also because of a certain strong, sweet, reposeful quality she seemed to diffuse, and which was very far from being apathy. Neither was there any hint of coldness and one felt instinctively that her fires once lighted would not prove any brushwood blaze.

As Lanier dropped lightly into the sand, almost brushing her skirt, Mrs. Stackpole drew back instinctively, less startled than surprised, for it was a secluded nook of the beach where she had gone to avoid being disturbed, and it was annoying to have a man bounce down from above, landing almost in her lap. But as Lanier, recovering his balance turned quickly with an apology, she gave a gasp that was almost a scream.

"Calvert . . .!" said she, breathlessly.

Lanier had frozen into a light, well-balanced poise which lasted for a second, when he drew back, his eyes narrowed and his face rather pale.

"How do you do, Ada," said he, quietly. "I'm sorry to have disturbed you. I didn't know that you were within a thousand miles of this place."

"And didn't care," she answered, as one stating an accepted fact.

"No," he answered, gently. "I really didn't care. My disease has been quite cured by Father Time and Mr. Stackpole. I understand that my frantic prophecies of some years ago have come to be fulfilled." He eyed her keenly, "Permit me to congratulate you. I knew that old rip, your husband. You did well to separate."

Mrs. Stackpole looked at him, steadily. Her breath was coming in long, deep inspirations, her pretty mouth looked like that of a child who is just about to cry.

"Yes, Calvert, you were right," she answered. "I brought it all on myself."

"And on me," he answered, drily.

"And you *were* so bitter! Oh, Calvert, how could you have said such things to me in that letter . . ." Her voice choked and she stopped abruptly while her blue eyes filled.

"It *was* rough, I'll admit. But you see, Ada,

I was rather young and full of ideals . . . or, let us say, illusions."

"You are bitter still." She looked at him with a sort of eagerness and a sudden rush of colour came into her face.

"No . . . I'm no longer bitter. Perhaps it is all for the best. A writer shouldn't marry. If you hadn't jilted me for that old brute I might have made us both more unhappy than we are now. My character is full of kinks."

"We would have been happy, I think," she answered, and looked dreamily out at the sea. But . . . oh, well, I was pretty young, too, and you were too long away and I got unhappy and resentful and thought that you must have stopped caring or you wouldn't have stayed on in Paris."

"I was learning my trade."

"I didn't appreciate that. Then Howard Stackpole came along and dazzled me and . . . and I married him. That's about all."

"Yes," Lanier agreed and gave her a keen look. "I fancy that was about all."

Mrs. Stackpole's colour deepened. "He made me very unhappy," said she. "I wanted

to divorce him, but the family wouldn't hear of it, so we merely separated."

"And now," said Lanier, "your life is over and you have died and gone to Heaven. You are a member of this saintly colony."

"Yes. You've given us a lot of trouble, Calvert. Perhaps it might interest you to know that I was the one most responsible for having you barred out. It was I who induced Mrs. Wilmerding to repudiate her husband's agreement, and she induced the others."

"Indeed. And why did you do that?"

Mrs. Stackpole had risen to her feet and was facing him. They were about of a height and her blue eyes looked straight into his dark ones as she answered:

"I thought it wiser, Calvert. I couldn't realise that you might have ceased utterly to care for me."

Lanier looked at her, thoughtfully; then a bleak, cheerless smile played around the corners of his fine mouth.

"I should have thought my letter might have made that point clear," he answered. Suddenly the smile, such as it was, faded, and his face darkened. "You need not have been

afraid, my once dear Ada; your jilting me as you did not only cured my love for you but also inoculated me very effectively against love, as a disease. If it has been a little rough on my heart it's been at least profitable to my head. There is no such thing as love to hamper a career and I feel that I owe you a lot. I'm sorry for the trouble I made you, here. Of course, if I'd known that you were behind it all I'd never have come. As it is, I will clear out just as soon as I've finished my work, and in the meantime I'll fight shy of these exclusive precincts. Good-bye, Ada, and *bonne chance.*"

He raised his hat, holding out one hand. Mrs. Stackpole's hand met the outstretched one and she stood for an instant, looking into his eyes with an intentness that gave her face a strained, almost suffering look. The colour had all gone now except for a little spot in either cheek.

"Calvert . . ." she said, "you mustn't leave me like this . . ." the words came thinly, fading entirely away as her eyes searched his face for some sign of softening. Lanier's clear, cleanly cut features were as hard as though chiselled from onyx.

"I'm sorry," he said, evenly, "but we really have nothing more to say to each other. Besides, you are still married . . ." He smiled, slightly, "Good-bye, Ada."

The hint of gentleness in the last three words proved fatal. The tears gushed into the blue eyes and she stepped closer.

"You are right, Calvert. Good-bye . . . good-bye. Kiss me good-bye my dear and tell me again that you forgive me. Then go . . . and go quickly, Calvert . . ."

She held up her lovely, tear-stained face. Touched and half contrite, Lanier drew her to him and kissed her on either cheek. He had but just completed this chivalrous act and was about to turn away when there came a rustle from the top of the cliff. Lanier, glancing up quickly, looked straight into the horrified eyes of Mrs. Wilmerding while staring over her shoulder was the dark, handsome face of Ravenel O'Sullivan.

The tableau lasted only for a second, the two at the top of the low cliff withdrawing immediately from the brink. Lanier glanced at Mrs. Stackpole who had stepped back and was staring sombrely out across the water. She had

not observed Lanier's upward glance and the expression which must have followed it.

"Good-bye," he said, again. "Good-bye, Ada."

"Good-bye, Calvert," she answered, lifelessly.

Lanier raised his hat and turned away. The tide was out and he was able to pick his way along the beach to where he had left his boat. A few minutes later he was pulling off to the hulk while Mrs. Wilmerding and Ravenel watched his progress from a little farther along the cliffs than where he had embarked. Mrs. Wilmerding's forehead was gathered in a frown and her combative chin was firmly set. Ravenel watched her with a faintly sardonic smile.

"Now if only he'd fallen in with Willa Davenporte," said he, "this Lothario would have kissed and comforted the four beauties of the Colony in less than two hours. Not a bad record, that, considering how popular he was."

"He only kissed my hands," snapped Mrs. Wilmerding.

"One hand is all right, but two are equal to one cheek. You got off the easiest, but then, you see, I butted in . . ."

"Ravenel . . ."

"I must say, though, he pays for 'em. Clare got a sketch, you got an apology . . . and I wonder what Ada got? Too bad I spoiled Clare's sketch; if I'd known he'd come ashore on a kissing expedition I'd have let it alone. But think of Ada! Ada of the serene eyes and steady pulse! I'm beginning to admire this man Lanier. Hanged if he hasn't gone and kissed three pretty women in two hours . . . and I've lived a kissless life for a month . . . and am nearly starved to death!" He looked at his companion and grinned. It was not often that one got a chance to chaff Mrs. Wilmerding.

Rather to Ravenel's surprise she seemed not to have heard his banter. The little frown still rested on her forehead but the expression about her eyes was thoughtful, rather than annoyed.

"Ravel," she said, presently, "we got no more than a glimpse of that tableau down there, but, all joking aside, did nothing about it strike you as peculiar?"

"Yes," he answered, promptly. "On the breakaway after the clinch it struck me that Ada was forcing the fighting. Didn't stop to

make sure; I was that shocked at the spectacle."

Mrs. Wilmerding did not smile. She was staring pensively at the hulk, alongside which Lanier's boat was just arriving.

"Those two have met before," said she, slowly.

This time it was Ravenel who got the spur.

"What?" he cried, sharply. "Met before? Here? You mean that he's been hangin' around Ada . . . by George . . . I believe you're right! So that was what made him so sore when the Committee turned him down! *That's* the reason he came here in his old tub and anchored off the Reading Room! And . . ." his words came more slowly, "that's the reason that Ada spends so much of her time wandering about alone . . . down on the end of the point . . . and taking solitary walks after dinner . . ." He stopped and looked at Mrs. Wilmerding with a scowl. "Look here, Loretta, after all, it's none of our business. We stumbled on this affair by accident. Let's stick a knife through what we know and let it expire right here. After all, Ada's had a pretty rough time of it with that old rounder, Stackpole, and she wants . . ."

"Hush, Ravel," Mrs. Wilmerding interrupted. "You are talking like a vicious, modern play! This man Lanier must go! He must go at once! There are plenty of places for such unfortunate affairs, but the Chimney Corner is not one of them! Lanier must go! Of course, nobody must ever know what we have witnessed."

"Well, rather not! But don't you think that perhaps you may be jumping to a conclusion. . . ."

"No, Ravel. The whole thing is as clear as the lenses of that lighthouse, yonder. It needed only this to explain a deal of what has puzzled me. In the first place, there was Ada's unexpected separation which she tried so hard to make an absolute divorce. Then, her coming here to live with her aunt and uncle all summer and at the same time, Lanier's application for membership. Why should such a person wish to join a quiet, old-fashioned Colony like ours? Then his fierce resentment at being refused . . ."

"But you told me that it was Ada herself who started that opposition."

"Yes, it was. That is the most suggestive

fact of all. At the last moment she saw the folly of it all. . . ."

"Lost her nerve . . .?"

"Came to her senses," said Mrs. Wilmerding, austerely. "Perhaps the kindly and soothing influences about her may have had something to do with it."

Ravenel smothered a grin. Fortunately, Mrs. Wilmerding was not looking at him. Her face had assumed the expression of Diana, sitting in judgment of the offending nymph.

"I do not wish to make any uncharitable accusations," said she, "but the situation as it now stands is quite impossible. Even in the brief glimpse which I caught of those two on the beach I could see, if only from the expression of the two figures that it was Ada who was trying to detain Lanier. He's a clever *intrigant* and knows better than to enact a love scene under such circumstances, especially, now that he feels that he has the situation in hand. The other day he got around the men and to-day he quite hoodwinked me. I might as well be frank; I was actually very sorry for him. Otherwise, I would never have permitted the familiarity."

Mrs. Wilmerding's righteous wrath was mounting rapidly. The thought of how she had compassionated Lanier's sad and lonely existence was, under the circumstances, quite maddening. Worse than that was the recollection of his salutation at parting. She bit her red under lip and her blue eyes flashed.

"Come," said she, "let's go back. I want to stop and speak to Clare."

"You're not going to tell her what you've just seen," said Ravenel.

"Of course not."

"How about Ada?"

"I shall say nothing to Ada. All of my efforts shall be centred in getting rid of Lanier. I shall send him a note to-night which will probably result in his leaving our vicinity without any further delay, if he has any sense of decency, whatever."

Ravenel scratched his chin, then turned and gave his companion a rather quizzical look.

"Well . . .?" said Mrs. Wilmerding, sharply.

"Strikes me you're forcin' things a bit, Loretta. After all, your evidence is purely circumstantial. You haven't any proof that he

and Ada have seen each other, here. Besides, it's strictly her affair. Doesn't strike me as quite the thing to act on information that comes from overseein' something by accident. What are you going to say to him?"

"I shall say that his further presence in this neighbourhood may result in compromising a woman who has suffered quite enough, and that I have decided to hold him to his statement that he would leave at my request. I shall also apologise for having intruded a second time upon his personal affairs. The main thing is to get rid of the man. We have had quite enough of him!"

"All right," said Ravenel, indifferently. "You're the A1 at Lloyd's, sea-goin' chaperone. Personally, I've no reason to love the scoundrel for poachin' on my preserves."

"Don't be vulgar," snapped Mrs. Wilmerding, and turned to retrace her steps, Ravenel lounging at her side. Arrived at the O'Sullivan's, Mrs. Wilmerding said:—

"I want to see Clare alone. Run along, Ravel."

He grunted and continued on his way down the path. Mrs. Wilmerding went to the stable

and up the stairs to the studio, where she rapped on the door.

"Who's there?" came a low-pitched, throaty voice.

"It is I, Loretta. May I come in, my dear?"

"Yes, if you like," was the not too polite reply. Mrs. Wilmerding opened the door and entered. Clare, in her paint blouse, brush and palette in hand was standing before her easel on which was a half-finished sketch. Her face was flushed, slightly puffed about the eyes and her heavy auburn hair was tumbled about her ears. She glanced half sulkily, half defiantly at Mrs. Wilmerding.

"If you've come to scold," said she, "I had better tell you that it's a bad time for it."

"I have not come to scold," said Mrs. Wilmerding, gently, "but to apologise. I hope you're not angry with me, Clare, for what I couldn't help."

"Oh, no . . ." Clare answered. "It wasn't your fault. But I've had a fight with Ravel and it's upset me. Did he tell you?"

"Yes. He acted very badly and he's sorry for what he did."

Clare laid down her brush and palette and

sank into a big ch ·r. Mrs. Wilmerding had seated herself on the divan. Clare looked at her inquiringly.

"Did you say anything about me to Calvert Lanier?" she asked, abruptly.

"Yes. I told him that I was sorry for having unconsciously intruded and went on to say, quite frankly, that I thought that he had not acted nicely."

"What did he say?"

"He questioned my right to criticise. But that is not what I came to talk about, Clare. I came to apologise to you and to beg of you not to see this man Lanier, again."

"Why not? He is a gentleman and a genius and I like him. What happened this morning was entirely my fault."

"It is not on account of what happened this morning that I ask you to see no more of him," said Mrs. Wilmerding, "but for quite another reason. Calvert Lanier is less the gentleman than you think, my dear. I have good reason to believe that his sense of honour is not of a sort to pass m··ster with people of our class. Please don't ask me to tell you how I know this because it would not be right for me to tell you.

Will you not be willing to take my word for it and agree to have nothing more to do with him?"

Clare made an impatient gesture. "You needn't be afraid," she answered. "I have no intention of trying to see him. The sanctity of the Chimney Corner is safe enough, so far as I am concerned. And there is no possibility of his trying to see me. Calvert Lanier is too busy with his own affairs to bother about ours, anyway. And so far as his moral character is concerned, I'm really not interested, my dear." Her violet eyes rested a little maliciously on those of her guest. "It's no worse than Ravenel's, I fancy, and Ravenel is a bit of a brute, besides." She slipped from her chair, stepped to a corner of the studio and picked up a panel which was covered with an excellent background of fresh paint. "That's Ravenel's work," said she. "Calvert Lanier's was a lot more attractive. As he himself said: 'By their works shall ye know them.'" She placed the panel aside and flung herself back into her chair, then stared defiantly at Mrs. Wilmerding. "Sometimes I positively hate Ravenel," said she.

Mrs. Wilmerding rose. She saw that there was positively nothing to be accomplished with Clare while the girl was in her present mood.

"I'm sorry, Clare," said she. "You must remember that Ravenel is only a boy, and all boys are savages, more or less. But you are not angry with me, are you? Because I really love you. I'm not thinking about the Chimney Corner, Clare, but of you, dear, and I couldn't bear to think of you here alone, hurt and unhappy. That was my principal reason for coming."

Clare's hot, Celtic nature responded to this touch of sympathy as gun-powder to a match. She sprang from her chair.

"And I love you, Loretta, dear," she answered, warmly. "I know that you are sweet and dear. And I'll never forget how you stood by Ravel when everybody was giving him the cold shoulder . . . and I wanted to kill them for it." The tears gushed into her eyes.

Mrs. Wilmerding kissed her and went out. She was a clever woman and warm hearted, yet as she walked pensively back to her house and happened to glance in the direction of the summer studio of Calvert Lanier the expression that crossed her vital face belied these softer

qualities. The emotions which inspired this expression took concrete form in a note which she despatched within the half hour and which read as follows:—

My dear Mr. Lanier,

Please be good enough to accept for the second time in the same day my sincere apology for the same offence, namely that of intruding quite unintentionally on your own private affairs.

You will remember having told me that you would leave this vicinity immediately at my distinct request. I did not make the request at the time but on more deliberate thought I have decided to hold you to your agreement and therefore ask you to leave our vicinity at the earliest opportunity.

Yours very truly,

LORETTA WILMERDING.

This brief but succinct note she despatched at once by her boatman, who accomplished his errand in what seemed a remarkably short time and returned to be met at the boat-house by Mrs. Wilmerding, who wore an air of impatience.

"He says there wa'ant no answer, ma'am, and that you would understand," was the report of the messenger, who added, laconically, "seemed sort of put out when he said it, tew."

CHAPTER VII

CAT'S PAWS

For three days Clare scarcely left her studio, except to eat and sleep. She had taken up a new and fascinating line of work which had never previously interested her, although it had been for some time her brother's specialty. This engrossing branch of art was portrait painting, and the work upon which Clare was engaged was a memory sketch of Calvert Lanier.

Rummaging through some magazines she had come upon a very excellent half-tone portrait of the playwright, and taking this for what it was worth as a model, Clare had worked out not only a very excellent likeness but also an extremely attractive and creditable bit of painting from a technical point of view. She had a strong faculty for visualisation, and the face which she was trying to depict had been strongly photographed in her optic thalami, which is the brain centre to which our visual snap shots are sent to be developed and the films placed on record.

To her intimates in the Colony, Clare's non-appearance at tennis, golf and the Reading Room meant simply that the girl had one of her periodical spells of retirement from social life. Ravenel explained it as "sulks," and shrugged his broad shoulders. He and his sister had made up their difference, but Clare had seemed to avoid him.

Mrs. Wilmerding was worried. The official chaperone had a good deal on her mind, what with Ravenel, Clare, Ada Stackpole and the continued presence of Calvert Lanier and his floating home. As for Lanier himself, no one so much as caught a glimpse of him, but sailing and fishing parties coming in from "outside" never failed to hear his piano as they glided past the hulk.

Upon the morning of the fourth day of her seclusion, Clare decided suddenly that she needed action and change of scene. She locked the door of her studio and in a crimson sweater, crimson cap and golf skirt went down to the boat-house and after throwing her easel and paint-box into her Swampscott dory, stepped in, hoisted her leg-o'-mutton sail and headed across for the opposite point of land. Most

of the younger women of the Chimney Corner were good boat handlers, the honours of the Ladies' Regattas being divided between Clare and Mrs. Wilmerding. The long, narrow bay and broad river mouth made an excellent and safe ground for small-boat sailing.

Clare's spirits rose as the little boat danced across the bright, sparkling waters. The weather had turned warm with a rich quality of sunlight, almost tropically intense. Clare's eyes brightened as she drew the strong air from the sea deeply into her lungs. She was very glad to be alive.

Her course to the promontory across the inlet took her within a quarter of a mile of the big hulk which was lying head in to the ebb tide. Clare examined it curiously. No sign of life was in evidence aboard the old seafarer and it struck Clare, who had always interested herself in nautical affairs, that Lanier was imprudent in mooring so near the inlet with a small kedge anchor and a manila hawser which looked like pack-thread compared to the bulk which it held. In changing his berth he had lacked the hands to heave in his big anchor and so had merely buoyed the heavy chain cable, then

knocked out the shackle and let it go, intending to recover it when the tug came to tow him away.

Clare was still thinking of Lanier when she reached the strip of beach where she wished to land. She furled her sail, then sculled in until her dory grounded, when she stepped out and carried her grapnel well up the pitch of the beach, for the tide had already turned outside and would be running flood inside within an hour. Loading herself with easel and colour box she started across the narrow strip of moor for the ocean side, where she meant to paint. The coast was rugged at this point with masses of rock and broken reefs off shore. Picking her way along the foot of a ragged ledge which girt the land she presently rounded a big boulder and almost stumbled over a man who was sitting with his hands clasped around his knees, his back against the rocks, staring at the sea. He looked up sharply and Clare saw that it was Calvert Lanier.

"Oh . . . !" gasped Clare, startled and confused and letting fall her easel, which fell across Lanier's ankle. "It's you!"

"Ouch!" The playwright grabbed his ankle,

then looked up at her with a smile of amusement. "Yes, it is I."

"I'm so . . . sorry . . ." stammered Clare.

"Then I'll go away . . ."

"I mean that I dropped that thing on your foot."

"I'm glad you did. I needed to be roused. You see, Clare, I came over here to make mental notes for a stage setting and then sat down here in the sun and thought of something else." He arose.

"Something nice?"

"Awfully. I was thinking about you."

Clare's colour brightened.

"What were you thinking about me?"

"A lot of things. One was that perhaps I should not have painted you that picture. What did your parents say?"

"I have only my father," said Clare, "and he hadn't a chance to see it. My brother Ravenel saw it and painted it out."

"The whole picture?" asked Lanier, quickly.

"Yes. I told him that I gave you a kiss for it. We had an awful row and I've been 'sulking,' as he says, for three days. This

"I MUST SAY, RAVENEL, YOU ARE RATHER INCONSIDERATE TO STARTLE ONE SO." (*p.* 91)

is the first time I've been off the place since."

Lanier looked at her thoughtfully. Clare wondered how a pair of eyes could make one feel so queer when their gaze was so quiet.

"Were you most upset by your brother's act or at losing the sketch?" asked Lanier.

"At losing the sketch. I'm used to Ravel's making a mess of things."

"I'll do you another. It will be quite different and probably not as good, but it will be interesting and characteristic of the way my business is done. You needn't pay for this one, so they ought to let you keep it."

Clare gave him a demure smile. "If I decide to take the picture I'll pay for it," said she, with her low, rich-toned laugh. "But I think I'd better not do either, Mr. Calvert Lanier. They tell me you are a bad, dangerous man."

"Who tells you that?"

"Mrs. Wilmerding, for one. What did you say to her the other day?"

"I gave her a bit of curry without the rice. Have you heard anything else about me?" He gave her a keen look.

"No, except that you were a bit wild in Paris. Oh, well, what else is Paris for?"

"Lots of things," Lanier answered gravely. "I wasn't wild there, or anywhere else. There is a popular theory that artistic people must be wild. It isn't true. One has to go about, but one doesn't have to misbehave. If I am seen talking earnestly to a chorus girl in a restaurant after the theatre, my women acquaintances raise their eyebrows. The chances are that I am taking advantage of my only bit of spare time to try to explain to her just how she is in danger of spoiling the spectacle. Now give me a panel and I will make you a sketch of Panama Bay."

"Of what?"

"Panama Bay. I am not satisfied with my present setting for 'The Pearl of Panama,' and I haven't time to go to Panama after it. Besides, it's not necessary. I came over here this morning expressly to study the light effects. I usually design scenery from memory as that helps to harmonise with the imagery of the whole impression. But a sketch of this will fix it in my mind."

He set up the light easel, fixed the panel which Clare handed him and began to paint, rapidly and with scarcely a glance at his subject. Clare, watching over his shoulder was aston

ished at the difference in the style of the present work and that of the other day. Then, the brush work had been broad and sweeping, whereas now Lanier began to pick out his different notes with no background and a curious almost mincing detail. In a wonderfully short time the canvas was covered with a charming scene which seemed to Clare to be anything but the one before them. The whole colour scheme was raised in tone, brighter, richer, mellower and yet more intense. The grey stretch of sand became a glittering beach with saffron shadows under the palm trees which were not here. Purple cloud shadows rested on the azure bay, whereas the Maine atmosphere was clear as a bell and the water though bright looked cold. Boats picked out here and there and the suggestion of white-clad figures on the beach gave an added impression of warmth and brightness and puzzled the eye which sought to reconcile the scene with that which actually presented. But as Lanier began to cover the bare spots and pull the whole study harmoniously together, Clare began to understand. He had made use of the topic as one might employ a crude lay figure whose propor-

tions were anatomically correct for the delineation of a ravishing nymph. The sketch upon the easel was charming in every way; a big, illustrative picture in miniature, curiously crowded with detail for so tiny a thing but masterly in colour and composition.

"That's all," said Lanier, stepping back to look at his work. "Amusing, isn't it? Do you like it?"

"Yes," Clare answered, "but I don't quite approve it. Are you sure it's honest?"

"Oh, yes. You should paint what you feel, not what you see. I once did an excellent portrait of one of my friends from the head of a goat that looked just like him. This is not fake. *Chic* if you like, but there's a big difference. Do you want it?"

"Of course I do. I must say, I liked the other better, but this is like a portrait of a other side of your genius."

Lanier gave her one of his swift, thoughtful looks.

"There is no such thing as genius, Clare. It is merely memory. The memory of something we've learned before in previous existences. It doesn't all come out in the wash . . ."

He laid down his brush and dropping onto the fine, warm sand, gazed contemplatively at his sketch.

Clare seated herself nearby and stared at it also. She was not thinking of the sketch but of his last word.

"I like to think of genius as a Divine gift," she said, "like love." She gave him a swift, sidelong look. "Do you believe in it?"

Gilbert picked up a handful of sand and let it trickle in a fine stream from the edge of his hand.

"Yes," he answered. "One has to believe in love. Not to do so would be to acknowledge oneself an infidel, and all infidels are damned. That was discovered long ago."

"That doesn't sound as if your faith was very robust," said Clare.

"It's not a blind faith," he admitted. "Odd, I was thinking of that very thing when you came along, just now."

"Indeed. You told me at the time that you were thinking of me."

"I was," he answered, quietly.

Clare threw him a startled look. Their eyes

met and suddenly Clare's heart raced off tumultuously.

"Yes," said Lanier, I was thinking of both. The truth is, I believe that I am falling in love with you, Clare."

He picked up another handful of sand and watched it sieve through his fingers. Clare felt as though she were about to choke. With an instinctive gesture she raised both hands to her throat. She could not speak; seemed unable so much as to turn her head to look at him. Her lips grew dry and she moistened them with a deep, tremulous indrawn breath.

"It hardly seems right for me to tell you this," he began, very gently. "You are scarcely more than a child, my dear, and I am past thirty . . ."

"Is . . . is that all . . . ?" asked Clare, in scarcely more than a whisper. Lanier looked at her with kindling eyes and his swift, radiant smile.

"You darling . . ." he cried. "Isn't that quite enough? Don't I seem to you as old as Methusaleh?"

"Not for what you have done. And I'm not a child! I'm a grown woman! Why don't you

treat me like one?" She looked at him with hot cheeks and burning eyes.

"Because it would not be fair. And as for what I've done, it isn't much for a man who began as young as I did and with my opportunities. You see, I never wasted any time at college. I began seriously to study music and painting when I left school."

Clare moved uneasily. The past interested her less than the throbbing present. Vaguely, she resented being told that he was beginning to care for her, then his leaving the subject to talk of a career. She turned and looked at him with an unsteady smile on her parted lips and trouble in her violet eyes. Her direct, impetuous nature was unable to support the suspense.

"What makes you think that you are beginning to fall in love with me?" she asked, trying to make her smile more natural.

"You do. But don't let's talk about it . . ." he rose lightly to his feet. "I must be getting back to my work," said he curtly.

Tears of anger and mortification rushed into Clare's eyes but she blinked them back, then sprang up, herself.

"You are right," she said, with a short laugh. "I'm only a child, of course, and you are a celebrity whose work everybody is howling for, and I mustn't keep you from it. Good-bye . . ."

She took the panel from the easel and laid it against a stone. Lanier watched her through slightly narrowed lids.

"Don't you want it?" he asked, gently.

"No, thanks."

"Clare, you are not offended at what I've said?"

"Not in the least. I suppose that you are in the habit of saying such things to the girls you meet."

Lanier stepped quickly to her side and took both of the unwilling little hands in his. She drew back impetuously but he tightened his grip and she let them lie, staring at him defiantly.

"Let me tell you something, Clare," said he, and his voice was gentle to the point of tenderness. "I told you only a little morsel of the truth a few minutes ago. My heart is full of you, and if I thought that it would be honourable I would try my hardest to win yours, dear. But it wouldn't do. Just now, I inter-

est you, and I hope that you like me, but when one stops to think, you scarcely know me. Besides that, I am under a cloud here, and if I were to urge you it would be to put a weapon in the hands of people who think and say the worst of me. This is not the time. I shall come to you later, months later, perhaps, and then if I think that I can make you happy I shall tell you things that it would not be right to tell you now. Will you believe me, dear?"

"Yes . . ." answered Clare, almost inaudibly and with swimming eyes.

"Then, au revoir. Will you take the study, now?"

"Yes . . ." Clare's voice was stronger and she smiled through her tears. "Au revoir . . . Calvert . . . but . . . but I want to pay for it. I *want* to! . . ."

She loosed her hands and her arms went up and around his neck. For an instant their lips clung together. Then Clare flung herself away and without looking at him began to gather up her painting things. Her eyes were full of tears and she could scarcely see to slip the fresh panel into its place. When finally she looked up and around she found herself alone.

Back she went to her dory which she found high and dry, for the tide had fallen and was now flowing but had not yet reached the boat. But she was a strong girl and the effort of running the boat down into the water did much to restore her to herself. She stowed her effects, then loosed the sail and drifted back across the inlet under the pressure of a faint, southerly breeze.

Once she roused herself enough to notice the weather conditions, which seemed pregnant with possibility. The air was uncommonly hot and oppressive for that latitude and up the river valley to the north a thin outline of billowy thunderheads was traced against a sultry sky. The shore loomed very high and the boats of the harbour seemed balanced on their keels. Clare looked at Lanier's old hulk, which towered in the mirage like a drab-sided summer hotel. It crossed her mind once more that he was running a risk to lie almost opposite the harbour mouth to one small anchor.

Arrived at her landing she went up the path and directly to the studio. Half way up the stairs the sound of voices reached her and as she crossed the threshold she discovered Mrs.

Wilmerding and Mrs. Stackpole, to whom Ravenel was showing some of his recent studies. As Clare entered the others looked up in surprise.

"You weren't very long," said her brother, when Clare had greeted the others. "Thought you'd be daubin' all the afternoon with this bully light."

"I didn't feel like painting," said Clare, shortly, and flung her equipment into a corner. Mrs. Wilmerding and Mrs. Stackpole glanced at each other. There was an expression in the girl's eyes which had caught the attention of both. Ravenel, who was always interested and the least bit jealous of his sister's work, picked up the colour-box.

"Let's see what you did," said he, and unhooked the clasps. Clare turned upon him quickly.

"Leave it alone," said she. "I'd rather you shouldn't see it."

"Don't be so touchy, Sis," said Ravenel, blandly, "we all make mud-pies, sometimes."

Clare's pliant body stiffened.

"Put it down . . ." said she. "It's mine, isn't it? I'd rather not show it, I tell you."

But Ravenel was in an aggravating mood. With a grunt he lifted the cover and stared for a second at the fresh panel held in the clips of the cover. His jaw dropped.

"Why . . . what the deuce . . ." he stared up at his sister with an expression of utter imbecility, "have you gone, batty, Sis? Palms . . . so help me . . . and natives, and a hot beach with dugouts . . . and I'm hanged if it doesn't look familiar somehow! Nonsense, Clare, it's really not half bad, though fussy. Look! . . ." And he held up the sketch for the inspection of the others.

Clare drew back, then turned and walked to a far corner of the studio where she drew some water into a bowl for her brushes. The other two women were examining the sketch, curiously.

"Why, Clare," said Mrs. Stackpole, "did you do this?"

"No," answered Clare, shortly. "Calvert Lanier did it." Her voice was hotly defiant.

There was an instant's silence which was broken by a sharp clatter; Mrs. Stackpole had dropped a little framed sketch by Ravenel, which she had been holding in her hand.

"Calvert Lanier!" said Ravenel, harshly, "where did you see him?"

"Over on Otter Point," answered Cla . . She crossed the studio, picked up her wet brushes, then walked back and put them in the bowl of water which she had just drawn. Then she turned and faced the others. Her face was pale and her eyes looked dangerous.

"I told him how you had destroyed the other," said she, to Ravenel, "so he painted this for me. It's a study for a stage setting in his new piece, 'The Pearl of Panama.' You'd better not touch this one, Ravel. Put it away, at once. Hereafter, you can have this studio to yourself." She looked at Mrs. Stackpole who had sunk back into a chair and was staring at her with a curious intentness in her usually unruffled eyes. "Calvert Lanier painted me a sketch the other day and because I paid for it with a kiss . . ."

"Clare! . . ." cried Mrs. Wilmerding.

"Paid for it with a kiss," Clare continued doggedly, "Ravel went and painted it out, although anybody could see that it was a little masterpiece. That's the sort of brother I've got . . . well, what's the matter?" She

glanced curiously from one face to the next. "You all look as if I'd confessed to having poisoned my lover!" She gave a low, gurgling laugh, "Ada, you're as white as a sheet!"

For a second no one spoke; then, said Mrs. Stackpole, faintly:—

"I . . . I . . . it is awfully hot up here . . . if you don't mind . . ." she leaned back, fluttering her handkerchief in front of her face.

"It *is* hot," said Mrs. Wilmerding, evenly. "Ravel, take Ada out into the air."

Ravenel scowled, hesitated, then closed the colour-box and turned to Mrs. Stackpole.

"Come on, Ada," said he. "Let's get out in the breeze . . . if there is any. I'm gettin' fed up on this Lanier person! Unutterable bounder . . . what the deuce does he want here, anyway . . ."

Clare turned upon him with flaming eyes. Discretion was thrown to the winds at hearing the man she loved ill spoken of.

"If you were as much of a gentleman as Calvert Lanier, I'd be proud of you as a brother, Ravel," she cried, "which I certainly never have been, up to this time."

Ravenel shrugged, then turned to Mrs. Stackpole.

"Come on, Ada," said he, "let's get out. Clare's going to have another tantrum. She's got the habit. We'll leave Loretta to smooth her down."

Mrs. Stackpole rose and walked a bit unsteadily toward the door. Ravenel followed her, leaving Mrs. Wilmerding with Clare, who walked to the arm chair quitted by Mrs. Stackpole and flung herself into it.

Mrs. Wilmerding dropped onto a high-backed painting chair and sat for several instants, tapping the toe of her shoe on the floor. Presently, she said:—

"Clare, may I talk to you, dear?"

"Of course. I'm not going to bite."

"Are you going to see Lanier again?"

"I hope so."

"Then in that case, I feel it my duty to tell you something which I otherwise would never have mentioned to a living soul. Calvert Lanier, as I happen to know, is not free to seek to interest you. He has been carrying on a clandestine love affair with a certain married woman in this Colony."

Clare leaned forward in her chair, her eyes blazing, the even white teeth showing between her full red lips.

"I don't believe it!" she cried. "Who is the woman?"

Mrs. Wilmerding rose with a slow and graceful dignity.

"I would not have told you that, my dear," said she, "even if you had not prefaced the question with an insult. I feel that I have done my duty. Good afternoon, my dear . . ." She moved toward the door and on the threshold paused and looked back with a sad smile. "When you feel like it, Clare, come to me. I cherish no anger for what you have just said."

She passed out, closing the door gently behind her. Clare sprang from the chair, flung herself face downward on the divan and buried her face in the pillows.

"It's a lie . . . it's a lie . . . it's a lie . . .!" She sobbed, frenziedly.

CHAPTER VIII

CROSS CURRENTS

On leaving the studio, Mrs. Wilmerding looked around for Ada Stackpole and Ravenel but seeing nothing of them and as it was nearly luncheon time, she walked slowly and thoughtfully home.

Throughout the rest of the day Clare was constantly in her mind. Mr. Wilmerding had been obliged to run down to Boston for a day and although she was quite alone Mrs. Wilmerding did not leave the house, hoping that possibly Clare might come to her. She was exceedingly anxious for a long and quiet talk with the girl, but she felt that the result of such an interview would be more profitable were it of Clare's seeking. Mrs. Wilmerding was not only sincerely attached to Clare, but she felt also a strong sense of obligation to protect her from any possible danger which might threaten her happiness. Mrs. O'Sullivan had been a loyal and devoted friend to Loretta Parker, a girl of excellent family but no fortune and

who before her marriage to the rich but dec
iccated Eliphalet Wilmerding had eked out
rather precarious support for herself and he
aged mother in writing special articles for va
rious periodical publications. Mrs. Wilmerding
was actuated by a double motive; her real affec
tion for Clare and the discharge of a sacred
duty to the friend who had passed on before.

It was very evident to Mrs. Wilmerding that
Clare was the victim of a sudden and violent
infatuation, always a serious condition in
a young and inexperienced girl and doubly
so to one of Clare's intense nature and strong
self-will. Mrs. Wilmerding doubted that there
was much to be accomplished at present with
Clare. As for Lanier, she believed that he had
ignored her communication through anger at
the discovery of his relations with Ada Stack-
pole.

For a few minutes, Mrs. Wilmerding seri-
ously considered the possibility of going di-
rectly to Ada Stackpole, telling her what she
had unintentionally witnessed, and asking her
to use her influence with Lanier for the sake of
Clare and the social atmosphere of the Chimney
Corner. But this undertaking was one of such

extreme delicacy that even the subtly diplomatic Mrs. Wilmerding shrank from it. She would have been rather surprised could she have known that Ada had already told the whole story to Ravenel, who had been loitering around the Reading Room impatiently waiting for the opportunity to put Mrs. Wilmerding in possession of the true facts of the case. She had told him that he was not to come to her house in the absence of Mr. Wilmerding.

So far as the charming chaperone of the Colony could discover, her best chance of protecting Clare lay with Lanier himself. Lanier might be a Don Juan, but Mrs. Wilmerding was obliged to admit that he had every trait of the gentleman and her instinct told her that a direct appeal to his chivalry would not be in vain. The difficult part was to bring about an interview. Mrs. Wilmerding knew that the playwright was very busy, undoubtedly piqued with herself, disinclined to further communication and quite capable of treating a request for a few minutes' conversation as he had her appeal to him to leave the neighbourhood.

It was not until she went out upon the verandah after an unexciting and solitary dinner

that Mrs. Wilmerding came to any definite plan of action. The moon suggested it and the moon, as everybody knows is not always a wise counsellor, her suggestions being often brilliant and frequently successful but not invariably discreet. Mrs. Wilmerding, observing that a large, full moon was hanging like a great celestial lamp directly over the mouth of the inlet, thought how simple it would be to get in her little boat and sail straight down that silvered highway to where Lanier's big hulk was anchored. The night was so very close that he was almost certain to be on deck, when she might summon him to the gangway and possibly induce him to call upon her the following day.

Mrs. Wilmerding stepped into the house, slipped on a sweater, hurried down to the landing and a few minutes later was gliding out into the brilliant lane of light. There was a soft, warm air from the sea and the tide was approaching the flood. The thunderheads of the morning had mounted, spreading into huge dark billows which obscured the sky to the north, but no lightning sprang from them. Mrs. Wilmerding decided that there would be a change of weather before morning.

Two tacks brought her alongside the hulk and as Mrs. Wilmerding looked up she saw the head and shoulders of a man above the high bulwarks and the dull red glow of a cigarette. In the bright moonlight she recognised Lanier.

"Mr. Lanier . . .?" she called, softly.

"Good evening, Mrs. Wilmerding," said a quiet voice.

"May I speak with you a moment at the gangway?" she asked.

"With pleasure."

He came hastily down the accommodation ladder, a boathook in hand and as Mrs. Wilmerding rounded gently up, caught her painter with the hook and took a turn on the rail.

"Mr. Lanier," said Mrs. Wilmerding, a little breathlessly, "I am very anxious to have a few minutes' conversation with you."

"Will you do me the honour to come aboard?" he answered. "I am quite alone."

"Oh . . . that would scarcely do. Could you not call at my house to-morrow?"

"Impossible, I'm sorry to say. But I am free for the next hour.

Mrs. Wilmerding took her resolution in both hands.

"Very well," said she, and stepped out upon the staging. Lanier bowed, then led the way up the ladder to the deck.

"This is horribly presumptuous of me, Mr. Lanier," began Mrs. Wilmerding, a little breathlessly.

"Less that than indiscreet, I'm afraid," he answered, and she saw his smile flash in the moonlight. "I really think that we had better go below. The wind has almost dropped and voices carry a long way over the water. A number of people are sailing about, or will be shortly, and I notice that they usually make this hulk an objective point. My people do not return until the midnight train."

Mrs. Wilmerding hesitated for an instant. But there was perfect truth in what he said and she thought with a shudder of the possibility of her clear, well-know voice being possibly wafted to some member or members of the Colony who might be paddling about, for the Chimney Corner folk were aquatic and the night was tempting.

"Very well," she said, half wishing that she had never undertaken her errand.

There was a standing light in the companion-

way. Lanier went first to show the way and Mrs. Wilmerding followed, half frightened at the huge, dark emptiness and the galleries which seemed to stretch interminably, to lose themselves in the gloom.

"Not over cheerful," said Lanier, with a pleasant laugh, "but the acoustics are splendid and precisely those of the theatre. This way . . . another lot of steps . . . excuse me, I'll light up."

He struck a match and proceeded to light two enormous lamps which only succeeded in illuminating the central area of space. Mrs. Wilmerding, at the foot of the second flight of steps saw a spectral stage crowded with ghostly pigmies. She suppressed a little scream. A furry animal glided from beneath a portière and the scream escaped. Lanier laughed, reassuringly.

"Don't be afraid," said he, "it's only Benjamin, my tame raccoon."

"How do you dare remain here alone?" she murmured.

"A good conscience has nothing to fear. Please take that big chair. May I offer you some coffee . . . or a liqueur?"

"Oh, no thanks. I suppose you must wonder at my being here?"

"My surprise is eclipsed by my pleasure. Besides, I can guess. You have come to ask me not to tamper with the affections of Miss O'Sullivan."

"Yes. And to go away. Will you?"

"But you told me the other day that I might remain, and that you would try to have me made a member of the Colony. Really, Mrs. Wilmerding, you must pardon me for saying that Chimney Corner promises are not articles to which one should tie one's faith!"

"Please don't be unkind. I know that I did as you say . . . but when, through no fault of mine, I came to understand . . ."

"But you don't understand. That's just what I protest against."

"Mr. Lanier, don't let us quibble. I could not help seeing you with Ada Stackpole in your arms. Nor, after having seen that tableau could I very well help understanding the whole situation."

"It appears that you have, though . . . failed, I mean." Lanier's voice was dry as dust. "And having failed, I certainly have no

intention of enlightening you, if you will pardon me for saying so."

Mrs. Wilmerding's pretty chin set firmly and the combative look came into her face.

"I am in no need of being enlightened, Mr. Lanier. The tableau which I witnessed the other day explains a good many things that had puzzled me; your determination to join the Colony and anger at being refused; your act of spite in anchoring off the Reading Room with a big hulk named "The Broken Word"; Mrs. Stackpole's desire to come here and then her almost violent opposition when it was learned that you were up for membership. It surprised me at the time, although I agreed with the principles she offered, which were that theatrical folk were not of our sort. And then, after you had been here a little while in this vessel, she suddenly relented and told me that she thought that we had made a mistake and that she wished not only to withdraw her own opposition but to beg the rest of us to do the same. The conclusion is very obvious, Mr. Lanier, don't you think?"

"Yes . . . to a certain quality of mind," Lanier assented.

"That is to say, I hope, to the intelligent mind."

"Up to a certain limit . . . let us say, about thirty cents. But I hate to admit that it would be obvious to a mind of any intelligence. Let us say, instead, to the uncharitable mind."

Mrs. Wilmerding stiffened.

"You are not very polite, Mr. Lanier . . . especially to a guest!"

"The poor host ought to be allowed a little decent treatment, my dear Mrs. Wilmerding. I merely said that I thought you were uncharitable; you say that you know me to be a profligate and a seducer."

"Knowledge excuses a great deal, Mr. Lanier."

"So does Thought. After all, Thought is the legitimate father of Knowledge. I am very much afraid that your Knowledge is an illegitimate child, never having been fathered by Thought. I am surprised at its origin in the Chimney Corner, of all places." He smiled sweetly at her.

Mrs. Wilmerding repressed a powerful impulse to box his ears. Her face by this time

was crimson and one small foot tapped the floor, nervously.

"I did not come here to bandy epigrams, Mr. Lanier . . . especially those of a questionable decency. One additional fact which I discovered as the result of a letter which was answered by a wire received to-day was that Ada Stackpole was at one time supposed to be engaged to you. Would you care to deny that?"

"On the contrary, she *was* engaged to me. We met in London at a dinner given to her cousin, the Premier of Canada. I fell madly in love with her and within three weeks' time she had promised to be my wife. I went back to France and got to work to earn a name to offer her and a few months later she jilted me in cold blood to marry Howard Stackpole . . . and his millions. I wrote and told her what I thought of it, then doubled my working hours. The next I heard or thought of her was the other day when I jumped down off a ledge and landed almost in her lap. It gave me the same warm emotion as if I'd landed up to my waist in Maine sea-water. I must have gained in comparison with Stackpole, because she didn't want to let me go but after a short struggle I kissed

her good-bye and went. That was the amorous passage which you interrupted." His voice grew listless and held the slightest drawl;—"Really, Mrs. Wilmerding, I wouldn't bother to tell you this if I didn't think it a bit rough on Mrs. Stackpole to get the name without the game. You don't deserve to be told anything."

Mrs. Wilmerding's blue eyes were fixed intently on his face. She was silent for a full minute, then said:

"Would you swear to the truth of all this?"

Lanier's face hardened.

"No," he answered, haughtily, "I wouldn't. A Virginia gentleman only swears to his word in court and at the altar."

"I . . . I beg your pardon, Mr. Lanier . . ." Mrs. Wilmerding's voice was rather faint. "Of course I believe you. My . . . mind is rather confused . . ." Her head went back against the chair. Lanier, glancing at her quickly saw that she was very pale.

"Have you told Clare anything of this?" he asked, sternly.

"I . . . yes. Oh . . . I'm so sorry . . . so sorry . . ." Her voice was tremulous.

"You ought to be!" There was a cut to Lanier's voice and his intense though suppressed anger was projected by the whole weight of his powerfully intense nature. It pierced Mrs. Wilmerding like a cold blade. Her pallor increased and her eyelids fluttered. Lanier went on, too angry to notice the condition of his guest.

"It is through people like yourself that tragedies occur, Mrs. Wilmerding . . . what's the matter . . . are you ill?"

For one of Mrs. Wilmerding's arms had dropped limply to her side. Lanier sprang up from his chair, glanced sharply at her face, then stepped quickly to the buffet where he dashed a little cognac into a tumbler and went quickly to her side. Dropping on his knees he slipped one arm behind her neck, for her head was swaying to the side, and raised the tumbler to her blanched lips. "There, there . . . I'm sorry . . . it's not as bad as all that . . . come now . . ."

All the harshness had gone out of his voice. Mrs. Wilmerding's head swayed toward him until her mass of chestnut hair rested against his cheek. She had not fainted, but the sudden

realisation of her blunder and Lanier's cutting censure had for the moment overcome her, seriously interfering with the action of her heart.

"Don't take it so much to heart," Lanier went on, his voice soothing, almost caressing. "After all, there's no great harm done. Come . . . taste this . . ."

She raised her arm, resting her hand on his shoulder, then swallowed a little of the cognac, shuddering as the strong spirit for an instant stifled her breath.

"I'm so sorry," said Lanier, in the same low, comforting voice. "I wouldn't really hurt you for anything . . . what's that?"

He turned sharply at a peculiar gasping sound from behind him. His eyes fell on the tame raccoon which was fishing about with one paw in the water pitcher. Lanier gave a nervous little laugh. Mrs. Wilmerding raised her head, dropped her arm from his shoulder and moved slightly in her chair.

"How silly of me," said she, with a faint smile. "I'm all right now. Oh, Mr. Lanier . . . I've been such a fool . . . such a fool . . . such a fool. Will you forgive me?"

"Of course. I lost my temper. I'm very nasty, sometimes . . ."

"I must go back now," said Mrs. Wilmerding, "and try to straighten out the mess I've made."

"Wait until you're feeling a bit more yourself. A little more cognac . . ."

"No, thanks." She settled herself more comfortably in her chair. Lanier resumed his former seat on the piano bench. Mrs. Lanier looked at him thoughtfully. "Tell me," said she, presently, "though I know I don't deserve to be told; do you care for Clare?"

Lanier smiled. "A week ago," said he, with a sort of boyish frankness, "I never could have believed it possible that I could care for any woman enough to want to marry her. But the miracle has happened. I am crazy about Clare and I want to marry her."

"Then why shouldn't you?"

"I hope to, one day. But she is very young and I don't want to take advantage of a sudden attraction on her part. I told her so, to-day."

"Did you ask her to marry you?"

"No. It didn't seem quite right. It was like

this . . .'' and Lanier told of their accidental meeting on the sea beach.

''Then you expect to leave to-morrow?'' asked Mrs. Wilmerding.

''If my man has been able to get the tug.''

''Oh, I'm so glad Clare didn't tell me that. If she had, I would not have seen you to-night . . . and would have gone blundering along in the same horrid error. Really, I'm an awful fool, Mr. Lanier! But I *did* mean it all for the best. Is your piece finished?''

''Practically. Would you like to see the *decor* of the first act?''

''I ought to be going . . . but I would like to see it . . . and to hear that 'Champagne Chorus' that the men were all so enthusiastic about. What time is it?''

''Only ten.''

''This is horribly indiscreet . . .''

''My people will not return until after midnight and I never have callers. See, here's my stage . . .''

Lanier lighted the candle foot-lights and the charming first scene was presented almost as vividly as in a theatre. Seating himself at the

piano he played the opening chorus. Mrs. Wilmerding, herself a musician of no poor ability was charmed. Her curious adventure, coming so unexpectedly in a life monotonous for a woman of her active mind, got into her blood and it was not until a little ship's clock rang sharply six bells that she suddenly realised the extreme unconventionality of her situation. Lanier had been playing one of his songs and as the music stopped there reached the ears of the two a curious humming, swashing sound and a gust of air striking sharply through the open porthole made the lamps flicker. Lanier started up from his bench.

"My word . . ." he cried, "I believe it's starting in to blow. Listen to that!"

They looked at each other, startled and alarmed and in the pause the big hulk took a slow heave to starboard.

"Good heavens . . ." cried Lanier, "it must be blowing a gale. I've never felt any such motion in here!"

He started for the companionway, Mrs. Wilmerding at his heels. Up they went and as Lanier thrust his head through the hatch a fierce gust of wind almost drove his breath back

into his lungs. He stepped out onto the deck, Mrs. Wilmerding following.

They looked around. On all sides was white, seething water. Overhead the sky was obscured by a huge black mass. The wind was roaring down from the black void, cold as an October blast and as the two gazed helplessly about them the hulk took a heavy roll that sent them staggering across the deck. Gripping the bulwarks they stared out into the murk. Far in the distance a few scattered lights sparked out; then suddenly a broad beam swept across the foaming waters and was gone again.

Lanier turned and gripped Mrs. Wilmerding's arm.

"Do you see that?" he cried hoarsely. "It's the light on Otter Point. *We're out at sea!*"

Had he said, "We are sinking!" the shock could have been no greater. Mrs. Wilmerding's knees tottered under her. For a moment or two she could not find her speech.

"Wait here a second," cried Lanier, and darted away forward. A moment later she saw the flash of a lantern far up in the bow. Two or three minutes passed, then finding the loneliness intolerable she made her way forward,

clinging to the rail, for the hulk was rolling with a long, rhythmic swing. She found Lanier hauling in a dripping cable and finding considerable difficulty in doing so. Mrs. Wilmerding watched him, her heart in her mouth and in time the end of the hawser flopped in on deck. Lanier picked up his lantern and bent over it, then looked up at her, silently. The glare of the light was on his dripping face and its expression was for the instant almost demoniacal.

"Look at that!" he snarled. "Somebody has cut us adrift!"

For a moment or two they could only stare at each other in dismay. Lanier was the first to recover himself.

"Somebody has played me a scurvy trick," said he, quietly. "However, we're in no great danger. This northwesterly squall is driving us straight out to sea and to-morrow we'll be sighted and picked up. Nothing can possibly hurt us."

But Mrs. Wilmerding saw it differently. The dangers of the sea were the very least of her cares. It was the shipwreck of her reputation which struck through her with an icy chill. Mrs. Wilmerding, the duenna of that exclusive

colony, the Chimney Corner, to be found floating around the Atlantic with Calvert Lanier, the playwright . . . and nobody else!

"But what about me?" she cried. "Oh, Mr. Lanier, you must take me back. Can't you anchor and sail me back?"

Lanier shook his head. "My other anchor is in the mud of the Reading Room," said he. "There's a spare kedge in the lazarette, but we haven't the strength to get it up. I'd put off in a boat but for two things; in the first place, I don't believe we could beat back against this wind and in this water. We'd be driven out to sea. Another thing to consider is that this hulk, drifting about alone is a great danger to navigation. I must stop aboard and tend the lights until she's picked up."

Mrs. Wilmerding wrung her hands. "But what can I ever say?" she wailed. "How can I ever explain my position?"

"We will say that you got caught in the squall while sailing on the bay and were forced to take refuge on the hulk," said Lanier. "In the height of the squall my cable parted and we went adrift. I'll frazzle out the strands. Come, Mrs. Wilmerding, it's not so bad. We

are sure to be picked up to-morrow. There's nothing to do but to wait. Come, we've had excitement enough for a little while. Let's go below and get a bite to eat. Who do you suppose cut that cable, anyway . . . ?" He leaned down and studied her face, "Our jealous friend, young Ravenel?"

"Don't!" groaned Mrs. Wilmerding, and covered her face with her hands.

CHAPTER IX

AN ILL WIND

After Mrs. Wilmerding had left, Clare sat for a long time in her studio, her chin in her hands, staring straight at the blank wall.

She did not believe what had been told her about Lanier. The problem with which her mind wrestled was what had led Mrs. Wilmerding to believe such a thing, for Clare was sure that Mrs. Wilmerding must believe it to have said it. Clare reviewed mentally all of the matrons of the Colony in an effort to pick out the possible object of such a slander. In order of their general attractiveness, Ada Stackpole came first, instantly to be dismissed. Ada, with her calm, unruffled nature, serene eyes and utter indifference to men . . . Clare almost smiled at the idea.

Who, then? Clare wrinkled her broad forehead and pondered until her mind grew confused. Mrs. Wilmerding had been so sure. Clare thought of the expression of Mrs. Wilmerding's face as she had given her the in-

formation. It had been pale, more than usually intense, with a sort of fierce ruthlessness as if filled with a determination to accomplish her object at any cost . . . and suddenly Clare's eyes opened wide and she sat up quickly and with a gasp.

Could it be possible that Mrs. Wilmerding was herself in love with Calvert Lanier? The idea was amazing, preposterous, absurd . . . and yet . . . Clare's heart beat as though to suffocate her.

There were several significant things. Mrs. Wilmerding had fought so bitterly against Lanier's admittance to membership, then, after his call upon her had completely changed her attitude. Ravenel had told Clare the night before that Mrs. Wilmerding had asked for his voice in favour of Lanier. Clare knew her friend for a full natured woman, tremendously attractive to men. She thought of Mr. Wilmerding, and again she almost smiled. Mrs. Wilmerding herself was both literary and musical and knew many people in literary and musical circles. It seemed extremely probable that Mrs. Wilmerding must have met Lanier and might have been strongly attracted to him.

Clare recalled the peculiar demeanour of Mrs. Wilmerding when *The Broken Word* had dropped anchor off the Reading Room. She had looked positively ill. But then, Clare knew that Loretta was addicted to spells of faintness. Full-blooded women frequently are.

Nevertheless, there were other significant things. Clare knew that Ravenel had appointed himself Loretta's cavalier and she began to wonder if his violent treatment of Lanier's sketch might not have been less brotherly resentment than a cubbish jealousy. Did Ravenel know or suspect anything? Clare wondered.

She left the studio and went into the house. Her father had not yet returned and she found Ravenel reading the papers, a glass of whiskey and soda on the table at his elbow. He looked up as Clare entered, studying her face in a swift glance as if trying to assay her state of mind.

"Ravel," said Clare, abruptly, "why has Loretta turned so bitter against Calvert Lanier? The other day she was all for having him made a member of the Colony."

"Is she bitter?" asked Ravenel, evasively.

"You must know how she feels about it."

"*H'mph,*" grunted Ravenel, wondering what Mrs. Wilmerding could have said to Clare. "Maybe she's jealous."

Ravenel had meant to imply that possibly Mrs. Wilmerding might be jealous of Lanier and Clare's attraction to him but Clare was not in a frame of mind to grasp this point of view.

"Then Loretta really likes him, underneath it all," said she.

Ravenel grinned. He rather liked to tease Clare and was quick to grasp the opportunity thus offered.

"She wasn't acting as if she altogether hated him when I butted in the other day," he said.

"What do you mean?" asked Clare.

Ravenel did not miss the quick hardening of Clare's features.

"He was slobberin' over her hands and she was beaming at him as if he was a brand new pup just presented by her best beau. 'His Continental manners' she called it when I kicked. Continental rot! Don't know what might have happened if I hadn't broken it up. First time I ever saw Loretta really fussed.

You'd better put a muzzle on your Calvy, Sis. He's apt to bite the wrong person."

Clare turned rather white. Ravenel noticed it and his heart smote him. He was really fond of his sister, though no outsider would have guessed it.

"There, Sis, I'm only joshing you," said he. "There was nothing in it. Loretta has actually about as much use for him as I have for a performing poodle. But don't you bank too much on Calvy; he's a mighty uncertain quantity. I happen to know."

"What do you know?"

"Never mind. I know . . ." and Ravenel returned to his Scotch and his paper, nor could Clare get another word out of him.

She did not try very hard. She was wondering vaguely if her brother could possibly be cad enough to have given Mrs. Wilmerding some slander about Lanier, through jealousy, and that it was this which Mrs. Wilmerding had given to herself. Whatever it might be, Clare could not believe any wrong of Lanier. Her whole instinct was opposed to it. She had fallen in love with the playwright and she believed in him and would continue to believe in

him until she had some positive proof that he was unworthy of it. At any rate, he was to leave the next day and he had promised to come to her again and as the day wore on the black cloud passed over and Clare found herself dreaming of what might be, bye and bye.

After dinner, Major O'Sullivan and Ravenel went off to play bridge and Clare found herself alone. For awhile she watched the riding light of the old hulk, and the faint speck from one of the portholes. Higher and higher climbed the moon and as the big, mellow globe went up, Clare's spirits went down. She wanted Lanier, and she wanted him very much and suddenly it occurred to her that it would be very easy to get into her dory and slip down to where the old hulk was lying and maybe catch sight of Lanier on deck, and possibly call a last word of farewell. She knew that he would not ask her to go aboard, but it would be something to catch a glimpse of him and to hear his voice.

So down she went to the landing and hoisted her little sail and started off, noticing as she did so that the tide was running strongly into the harbour. The hulk was less than a mile away and it was not long before Clare was gliding

alongside. She was opposite the open porthole when suddenly she heard the sound of Lanier's voice. Clare's heart gave a sudden leap. He was down below . . . and why could she not slip up to the porthole and call to him?

Quickly dropping her little sail, Clare got out an oar and sculled noiselessly alongside. The open porthole came opposite her face, for the instant blinding her with its stream of light. She was just about to call when she heard Lanier's voice say in a tender, caressing tone:

"After all, there's no great harm done. . ."

Clare's vision cleared. There, directly in front of her but with her back turned toward Clare sat Mrs. Wilmerding. Clare recognised in an instant the luxuriant chestnut hair and her heart seemed to freeze as she saw that Lanier was on his knees beside the chair, his arm around the woman's neck and her head resting against his shoulder so that the heavy chevelure brushed his cheek. Almost as this tableau was photographed upon Clare's vision, she heard Lanier say, in that same, soothing voice:

"I wouldn't really hurt you. . . ."

Clare gasped and dropped down onto a

thwart. The dory drifted clear. Clare took her face in her hands and rocked her body slowly back and forth.

"Liars! Liars! Liars. . . .!" she moaned. "There are no honest people in the world. *Ugh* . . . the beasts . . .!"

Her boat, caught in some sort of an eddy as the big, light hulk swung slowly on her cable, rubbed forward alongside. Clare did not notice it until something cold and rough and wet rubbed across her neck. She looked up, startled, and saw that the slack cable was directly across her dory. Although the girl did not realise it the tide had stopped flowing and it was slack water.

In her nervous condition the shock of the wet cable threw Clare into a perfect fury of rage. Quick as a flash she whipped up a heavy fish-knife from under her thwart.

"I'll cut the beastly thing and let them drift in with the tide and ground on the mud-flats beyond the Reading Room," she said to herself, half aloud and between her teeth, and started to saw away at the hawser. The knife was keen and it did not take long. With a sob, Clare watched the slack ends drop into the

water. In her state of mind it did not strike her as peculiar that there should have been no strain on the cable.

She shoved her boat clear, hoisted the little sail and was wafted away, not once looking back. It was not until she had climbed up the path to the house that she began to realise the thing that she had done. But she was still too wretched to be repentant and the shock to her faith in all she held most dear had a numbing effect on her mind. Dry-eyed and feverish she went into the house and flung herself on a divan where she lay with her face in her hands, her breath coming almost in sobs. The shame of it! The infamy of it. Mrs. Wilmerding, her dearest friend, her mentor, whom she regarded as a woman quite apart from all others. And Lanier, whose sweet, strong nature and wonderful talents had made him seem to her a sort of demigod.

Presently the tears came and Clare sobbed as if her heart would break. This relieved the tension and after a little she sat up, pushing the hair back from her face and began to think of what she had done. A flush of shame swept over her and at this moment she suddenly dis-

covered that the wind was blowing hard. Clare, assuming that it was still off the sea, as it had been when she came into the house, felt relieved. It occurred to her that when she had cut the hawser of the hulk it had been almost slack, and this would mean that it was nearing the full of the flood tide. Even then, she thought, there would still be current enough for an hour to float the old vessel onto the wide stretch of mud-flats across the river mouth. The channel into the river was narrow and tortuous and Clare could not see how any actual harm could result from her act.

A window blew open at the end of the house and a cold draught of air swept in. Clare got up to go and close it and suddenly realised that it was one of the long French windows which opened from the dining room onto the verandah at the north end of the house. A sudden wave of fear swept through her. Could the wind have sprung up suddenly out of the north? She rushed to the door and went out. A chill blast smote her and sent her loosened hair flying about her face. There was no doubt of it; the wind was shrieking down from the head of the harbour in strong, squally gusts.

Clare's knees swayed beneath her. A squall from the north . . . and the hulk lying almost opposite the harbour mouth! She felt suddenly sick and faint.

The gravel of the path crunched under a rapid step and the next instant Ravenel came into the zone of light from the open door.

"Ravel," cried Clare, "how long has it been blowing like this?"

"Oh, about half or three quarters of an hour. What's the matter? Leave the dory on the wrong side of the jetty?"

"Oh, Ravel . . . I've done the most terrible thing . . .!"

"What?" Ravenel ran up the steps. "You look like a Furie, Sis. What have you done that's so terrible?"

"I cut Lanier's hulk adrift. She must have been driven out to sea . . .!"

"Good Lord!" gasped Ravenel. "Why in the name . . ."

"I thought that she would drift in and ground on the flats. The tide was coming in . . . or I thought it was, and the breeze was onshore. I never thought of a burst out of the north."

"But . . . Lord o' Love . . . why did you want to cut him adrift?"

"Oh, Ravel . . . he . . . he told me that he was going away to-morrow . . . and after dinner I thought I'd sail past and . . . and call good-bye to him . . ."

"Little idiot . . . yes?"

"I went alongside and there was a porthole there and I looked in and . . . and there was a woman with him . . ."

Ravenel laughed, harshly. "So you got jealous and cut him adrift? My word, but you're a savage!"

"Ravel . . ."

"What?"

"The woman was . . . Loretta . . ."

"*Loretta* . . .!"

"Yes. That was too much. I went mad, I think. She had told me this morning that I must see no more of Lanier, because . . . because he was having a love affair with a married woman, here in the Chimney Corner . . ."

"And so you thought it was Loretta?" Ravenel's voice raised in pitch. "Why, you little silly . . ."

"But you told me yourself that you found him kissing her hands . . ."

Ravenel groaned. "Oh . . . was there ever such a mess! Listen, Clare; it's not Loretta; it's Ada Stackpole. And there isn't any love affair. Ada told me all about it this morning. She was engaged to Lanier and jilted him to marry Howard Stackpole. Loretta and I saw Ada and Lanier on the beach together the other day and misunderstood. Loretta does not know the truth and there's not the slightest doubt that she went out aboard the hulk to try to persuade Lanier to leave you alone."

Clare was silent. She could not tell her brother what she had seen and heard. Indeed, there was no chance, for Ravenel went on, swiftly:

"Loretta must not be found on the hulk with Lanier. Her reputation would be ruined. How long ago did you do this crazy thing?"

"About two hours."

"There's only one thing to do. I must chase them with the *Gull* and take Loretta off."

"Oh, Ravel, could you?"

"I think so. The hulk will drift smack off before the wind. Say she makes three knots

and hour; in two hours and a half she'll be about seven and a half knots off shore. I can do ten knots before this gale, so I ought to be able to overhaul her easily in an hour and a half. It's dark and clear and I could see her ridin' light four or five miles off. Let's see, who will I take with me?"

"Take me!" cried Clare.

"Not much! It's too rough a job! Feel that wind?"

"It's not going to last! Ravel, if you won't take me I'll go crazy! We've been out in worse than this."

Ravenel looked down at the bay, then to windward. A lighter zone of sky had appeared in the north and the heavy black clouds were almost overhead. The night was not absolutely dark and it looked as though the squall might soon blow over.

"All right," he growled, "come on, then. We've no time to lose."

Clare grabbed up her sweater and struggled into it, then roughly tied up her loosened hair. They hurried down to the landing and tumbled into the yawl's dinghy, an able little tub and built for heavy water, like all the boats of that

part of the coast. The *Gull's* moorings were not far off the landing, nevertheless it took all of Ravenel's elastic strength to keep from being swept away to leeward, which might indeed have happened had it not been for the partial protection of the cliffs. Once safely alongside, they swarmed aboard the staunch little craft, hoisting in the dinghy after them and lashing it down securely on deck.

The *Gull* was an able little boat, about 35 feet on the waterline, of good beam with a high freeboard, medium draught, a self-bailing cockpit and flush decks. She had been built for cruising but was a smart sailer and very comfortable, having a long cabin house and being very roomy below. Her rig was something between a ketch and a yawl, the mizzensail being larger in proportion to the mainsail than is common on the latter rig. Ravenel had owned her for two years and was thoroughly acquainted with her. He was an excellent boat-handler and had that primitive instinct for location which is often worth more to the mariner than are his instruments of navigation.

Clare went below and slipped into an oilskin

overcoat, then came up to lend her brother a hand.

"We'll run out under jib and jigger," said Ravenel. "Light up, Sis. Let's see where the wind is, just . . ." he clambered aft and held a wind-match before the binnacle. "Nor'-west b' nothe . . . so we must steer south-east b' south. We can't miss 'em. The tide sets pretty straight out for a few miles and that old tub is too light to feel it much, anyway."

"How about getting the boat over and alongside?" Clare asked. The girl was no bad boat-handler herself.

"Easy enough. The hulk will probably be drifting several points off the wind and makin' a good lee. Besides, there's not much sea so close under the land. I'll get as close as I can and let you go alongside. If it should be too rough we'll hang on until it moderates a bit. This won't last long."

He hoisted the mizzensail, then went forward and cleared the jib halliards. "Let her go off on the port tack, Sis," he called, then, throwing the mooring-line off the bitts he ran up the jib. The staunch little *Gull* heeled slightly as the sails were sheeted home, then started to forge

ahead. Ravenel clambered aft and took the tiller.

"Southeast 'n' b' south," said he. "Go down and fry some coffee, Sis."

CHAPTER X

A FAIR EXCHANGE

LANIER went on deck in the grey dawn to find that the wind had backed around and was blowing hard from the west. The sky was overcast, the clouds low and heavy and the sea short and angry.

The masts had been taken out of the hulk so Lanier unshipped the awning ridgepole, tacked an ensign reversed to one end and with some difficulty managed to get the pole erected and lashed to one of the awning stanchions. He was just finishing this bit of work when he heard his name called and looked back over his shoulder to see Mrs. Wilmerding standing at the head of the companionway.

"Good morning," said Lanier, with a smile. "Did you manage to get some sleep?"

"A little. I see you've been busy." She glanced at the distress signal with a little shiver. "That looks rather terrifying, does it not?"

"It's very necessary, as otherwise a passing

vessel might think that some little tug had anchored her tow and gone in after help to haul her in against this breeze. Look . . . there's the land."

The light was getting stronger and away to the northeast loomed a thin, blue, broken line.

"That must be Grand Manan," said Lanier, and threw an anxious look to windward, then over the side. The hulk was drifting fast and it occurred to Lanier that if the wind kept on backing around it would not be long before they found the rock-bound island uncomfortably close under their lee. With their present drift they should clear it easily but there was no telling how long this might hold.

"There seems to be no vessel in sight," said Lanier, "we might as well go down and get breakfast."

They went below and Lanier set about to build a fire in the stove of the little kitchen while Mrs. Wilmerding prepared the coffee and sliced the bacon. Once she looked at Lanier and laughed.

"The situation has its ridiculous as well as its serious side," said she. "If we get out of this scrape unscathed, there will be a vacancy

for the position of chaperone to the Chimney Corner."

Lanier smiled and his eyes kindled as they rested on his companion.

"You are an awfully good sport, if you don't mind my saying so," said he. "As a matter of fact, we are in no danger. There's lots of traffic through here and we're bound to be sighted before noon. What bothers me the most is who cut that hawser. I have a disagreeable suspicion that it may have been my man. I had to get after him pretty sharply the other day, and yesterday he got his wages. I wonder if he could have been hound enough to have done the trick?"

Mrs. Wilmerding nodded. "Very possibly," said she. "You spoke last night of Ravenel. He would never have done such a thing. He is hot tempered, but has nothing of that sort in his nature. If Ravenel had felt that he had a quarrel with you, he would have come aboard and had it out."

"That is what I think. I was too angry to be reasonable when I mentioned him." He glanced into the stove. "You can start the coffee, now. I'll get some bacon and eggs."

Between them they prepared an appetizing breakfast to which both did justice, after which they went on deck. As Lanier had feared, the wind was still edging around the wrong way and the weather seemed to be thickening. Several times they sighted sails and several steamer smokes were to be seen far in the distance. As the morning wore on, the wind worked gradually into the southwest and suddenly Lanier, who had been leaning on the rail, pipe in mouth, chatting with his guest, straightened up with a gasp of dismay.

"What is it?" asked Mrs. Wilmerding.

"Fog," he answered, quietly. "I've been afraid of that."

Seaward, the horizon had contracted and as they watched they could tell from the irregular horizon that a big fog bank was moving in upon them. Sky and water presently merged in a dull, grey monotone and presently a fine drizzle began to drive in with the hard, southwesterly wind. Soon, the colourless wreaths of vapour were swirling about the hulk, blotting out the bows which reappeared to be again obscured as the long wisps and wreaths of fog were whipped about by the driving wind like

smoke, lashed through with the cold, fine rain.

"There's no good in this," said Lanier, knocking the ashes out of his pipe.

Mrs. Wilmerding glanced at him inquiringly. Her face was rather pale but her eyes were bright and fearless. The stray tendrils of hair which had escaped from under her little woollen cap were curling under the dampness.

"It lessens our chances of being picked up, of course," said Lanier, "but something ought to pass us before long." He glanced at his watch. "Half past twelve. Suppose you go down and get some lunch together, then have a bite to eat and come up afterwards to relieve me at the bell. Wait a minute . . ."

He went below, presently to reappear with a shot gun and a canvas sack filled with cartridges.

"I'll fire the gun at intervals," said he. "We may raise somebody out of the fog."

Mrs. Wilmerding nodded and went below. As she was ransacking the pantry she could hear at intervals the *dong, dong, dong, dong* of the ship's bell with now and then the faint report of the fowling piece. She made a hasty meal, then went on deck to find Lanier standing

by the bell, swathed in oilers, his dark eyes shining like jewels from his fog-rimed face.

"All right," said he, cheerfully. "Just keep the bell going every minute or so. I won't be long."

Mrs. Wilmerding took the lanyard and was about to strike the bell when Lanier held up his hand.

"Listen!" said he.

From somewhere in the fog came a faint, sad, wailing note, lifeless, echoless, evasive. It died into nothingness. Lanier picked up the shotgun and fired both barrels in quick succession. They listened intently. Again came the sighing sound. Lanier seized the lanyard and threw all of his strength into the clamour of the bell. There was no response.

The hulk was drifting almost broadside to the wind, her stern to the weather angle. Under the lee thus offered was an area where the sea was comparatively still. Suddenly, from somewhere in the fog beyond this sheltered zone came the muffled blast of a fog horn. Lanier struck the bell. Then, from to leeward came a hoarse voice, amphoric through a megaphone.

"Ship aho-o-oy! What ship is that?"

Lanier raised his cupped hands to his mouth. "Barge . . . struck . . . adrift . . . and . . . in . . . need . . . of . . . assistance!" he called, with all the force of his lungs. Hardly had the sound died away when there came the muffled answer:

"That you, Lanier?"

"Yes . . . who are you . . .?"

"O'Sullivan . . ." followed by the swift command: "Hard down, Clare . . . we're right onto her!"

There was a splashing which rose above the hiss of the waves and the two aboard the barge caught sight of a grey, ghostly shape which glided past and was swallowed up. Next came the sound of flapping canvas and the sudden clatter of the sheet blocks on the travellers. Then silence.

"Thank God!" said Lanier, and looked at Mrs. Wilmerding with a white, pinched face.

"Were we in such danger?" she asked, startled at his expression.

"Yes. Four hours more would have taken us onto the rocks of Grand Manan!"

"And you never told me?"

"What was the use? Listen, here they come back . . ."

A voice from the fog: "Hello . . . Lanier . . ."

"Hello . . ."

"Is your ladder down on the lee side?"

"Yes . . ."

"Then stand by for a boat. Keep your bell going . . ."

"All right . . ."

Lanier turned to Mrs. Wilmerding. "Go to the ladder," said he. "Watch your chance to get into the boat. Be careful . . . it's going to be a ticklish job."

"And you?"

"I'll follow."

Mrs. Wilmerding obeyed. Lanier, standing by the bell kept his eyes glued on the vague outline of the fog, to leeward. Minutes passed; then suddenly a skiff swam out of the swirling mist, a single figure in a red sweater at the oars.

"Clare . . .!" cried Lanier, his heart in his mouth, for he could hear the threshing of the staging at the foot of the accommodation ladder as the hulk wallowed sluggishly in the beam sea. Leaving the bell he ran to the rail,

took a boathook from its slings and hurried to the ladder.

"Go down," said he to Mrs. Wilmerding. "Watch your chance to jump aboard. I'll fend off."

Under the lee of the hulk the boat came on stubbornly. It swashed alongside, abaft the staging. Clare, shipping her oars, scrambled to her feet and caught at the gunnels. Lanier got a grip with his hook, then drew the boat as near the staging as he dared.

"Watch your chance and jump for it," said he to Mrs. Wilmerding. "Go aft, Clare . . ."

Profiting by a moment's lull he drew the boat ahead and abreast the ladder.

"Now . . ." he said, and Mrs. Wilmerding half leaped, half tumbled into the staunch little craft. Scarcely was she aboard when Clare scrambled past her and flung herself face downward on the staging, where the next sluggish roll of the hulk sent the water swashing about her.

"What are you doing?" cried Lanier.

"Get in the boat," answered Clare. "Get in and steer. I'll row."

"I'm not going. Get back in the boat. I've got to stop here!"

"Calvert, you must come! Ravel says your drifting on Grand Manan."

"Can't help it. I've got to stop here and ring the bell. What if a passenger steamer hit this thing? Drown the whole crowd!"

Clare turned swiftly. "Take the oars, Loretta!" she cried.

"But Clare . . ."

"Take the oars!" screamed Clare. Out of the murk to leeward came the muffled voice of Ravenel.

"Ring that bell!"

Lanier rushed up the ladder, fled forward and hammered on the bell. It was answered from the fog by such a clatter as might come from beating a tin bucket with a marline spike. An impatient voice clove its way through the wind and fog and rain.

"Hurry up! Can't hang on here forever!"

Lanier, staring into the void, gave a cry of dismay. Spinning away to leeward went the boat with Mrs. Wilmerding at the oars. Lanier turned, aghast, and saw Clare running toward him up the deck.

"I cast her off . . ." Clare half sobbed.

"But why . . . good God, why?"

"Because . . . I . . . I cut you adrift!"

"You what . . .?"

But Clare had turned and was staring after the boat. There came the rattle of canvas and they saw the dim shape of the yawl forging into the range of vision. The next instant, boat and yawl had collided. Mrs. Wilmerding grabbed for the shrouds. A shriek came through the fog and Clare and Lanier saw Ravenel rush forward, seized the woman's arms and swing her bodily onto the yawl's deck. The small boat, half filled, was borne away on the crest of a wave and disappeared in the mist. Then, a puff of air striking the yawl's forestay-sail, her bows swung off and the fog swallowed her.

Clare looked up at Lanier, who was staring at her with a bewildered, pallid face.

"I can't go, now," said she, with a bitter smile.

Lanier smote the bell, but no answer came. He struck it several times, rapidly, then paused to listen. There was only the hiss of the waves and the swish of the rain across the deck.

"Ravel's got his hands full with the boat," said Clare. "Besides Loretta has probably told him what's happened. The chances are he's borne away for Seal Cove to get help . . . a tug, or something."

Lanier did not appear to have heard. He was staring at Clare.

"What did you mean by saying that you had cut me adrift, and how did you find us?" he asked.

Clare's face hardened. Lanier, studying it intently noticed the haggard look about the eyes and that the lids were red and swollen.

"I went out to call good-bye to you," said Clare, in her characteristic, direct way. "I ran alongside and looked in a porthole and saw you making love to Loretta . . ."

"What *are* you talking about, Clare? *I* making love to Mrs. Wilmerding?"

"Yes. You had your arm around her neck and her head was on your shoulder. It made me wild and . . . I cut your hawser." She looked down at the deck. "I . . . I thought that of course the hulk would drift in and ground on the mud-flats beyond the Reading Room." She looked up at him from under the

brim of her dripping sou'-wester, "I had no idea the wind would shift and blow you out to sea."

Lanier was staring at her, with a curious intentness.

"And after that?" he asked, gently.

Clare's heavy eyes turned to him, defiantly.

"When I saw what had happened, I told Ravel. He called me a few names and said that we must get Loretta before it was known where she was, so we went out aboard the *Gull* and followed you. I don't see how we missed the hulk as it was only about two hours later, but it was blowing hard and the spray was flying and it was hard to see anything. After running four hours, Ravel said we must have missed you, so we put about and stood back. Not finding you, then, we kept beating back and forth. Then the fog came in and we had about given up hope when we heard your gun."

"You've been at it all night . . . with no sleep?" cried Lanier.

"Of course."

Lanier stepped forward and took her gently by the arm. Clare flung herself away.

"Don't touch me," said she, in her deep,

throaty voice. Lanier loosed his hold of her.

"Come with me, Clare," he said, firmly. "You are wet to the skin and all tired out. Come below."

"I'll stay here," said Clare.

Lanier's dark eyebrows drew a straight line across his forehead.

"Come," said he, "you've made trouble enough, already. Now do as I tell you. Come below and get dry and rested and something to eat. It will be dark when we strike, and we may need all of our strength to save our lives!"

His voice was stern, harsh, authoritative. Clare stared at him, wide-eyed. She had never thought of his being able to speak like that. Her eyes were still defiant but her lips began to quiver.

"Come with me," said Lanier, and moved toward the companionway. Clare hesitated for an instant, then followed. They had almost reached the hatchway when both stopped to listen. A peculiar sound was coming up from the sea. It was such a noise as water makes when tormented by a variety of obstructions to its course; a short, angry splashing and murmuring as of countless voices talking

confusedly together. The force of the wind seemed suddenly to increase.

Lanier threw a startled look over the side. All about the waves were leaping up and down almost vertically and the face of the sea was churned into suds and spume. Harder and harder blew the wind. Clare turned to Lanier.

"It's the last of the Fundy ebb," she said, in a dull voice. We must be over a shoal. The tide will have turned in another hour and then we'll go on, fast. Look . . . it's driving off the fog!"

Something was certainly driving back the fog, for as they looked they could see that it was thinning on all sides, blown along the water in smoky streaks, whirled away in wisps and eddies. It was a curious effect: the spouting waves which mounted higher and higher but never advanced, their crests breaking both ways, bubbling, leaping, while here and there green, sudsy masses boiled up from beneath, spreading in smooth patches which formed little whirlpools as they dissolved. One might have thought the sea a great, seething cauldron of water and the dissipating fog the steam given off.

Then down came the rain in torrents, blotting out all that lay beyond the distance of half a mile. Lanier looked at Clare.

"The fog will clear with the turn of the tide," said he. "There's no danger of collision, now. Come, there's nothing for us to do up here in this deluge."

He led the way below, Clare following in silence. The girl was too tired to look more than apathetically at the curious spectacle of the model stage where the little actors and actresses were bowing and swaying with a marvellously lifelike effect to the slight staggering motion of the hulk. Lanier led her aft and threw back the portières in the door of a large and comfortable room which had about it little to suggest a ship's apartment.

"Come in," said he, curtly, and Clare entered. Lanier hauled open a series of drawers.

"Rig yourself out in dry underclothes and put on one of these white flannel suits," said he. "There's no use in standing on ceremony, now. Chuck your wet skirt out the door and I'll dry it before the stove. I'm going to get you something to eat and drink. Wait a

minute; you'd better have a little stimulant . . ."

Clare sank on a locker, too exhausted to answer. She heard a cork pop from somewhere and a moment later Lanier appeared with a bottle of champagne and a glass.

"Take a little of this," said he, in the same dry tone, and set the bottle on the dressing table, then went out, flinging together the portières after him.

CHAPTER XI

LOVE DERELICT

LANIER was at the piano, playing softly, when the portières rustled slightly. He glanced back over his shoulder and saw Clare standing against the heavy, crimson hangings. Her face was flushed and her eyes downcast. A heavy, white sweater enveloped the upper part of her body and was pulled down snugly over her hips. She wore a pair of tweed golf trousers and heavy, woollen stockings. Her hair was twisted snugly about her head, held by a neckerchief of dark, navy blue.

"The flannels were too loose," said she, "so I put on these."

"They are better," said Lanier, and turned to his music again. "Easier to get about in," he added, in a casual tone. "There are some hot soup and some eggs and bacon and sandwiches and things on the table. You'd better eat something and then rest up a bit. The weather has cleared, but it's raining cats and dogs." And he went on playing a weird,

splashing, rippling improvisation which had been suggested by the sound which the sea had made over the shoal.

Clare hesitated and her colour deepened. She glanced uncertainly at Lanier, then seated herself at the table, for she was very hungry. There had been nothing but hardtack and some tinned meat aboard the *Gull*.

Suddenly she looked up from her meal.

"Are you insured?" she asked.

"No," Lanier answered, without ceasing to play. "I never expected to cruise in this ark and considered that a landlocked harbour, a chain cable and a two-ton anchor was the cheapest form of policy." He swung about on the stool, "Does your luncheon taste good?"

Clare choked a little. "It . . . would," she answered, unsteadily, "if . . . if . . ."

"If your conscience did not trouble you?" asked Lanier, mercilessly. "So far as I am concerned, you are forgiven."

"I . . . I shall make good your loss," said Clare. "I have some money of my own . . . from my mother." She blinked back

the tears that insisted on filling her eyes so that she could scarcely see her food. "But all these lovely things . . ." she choked again.

Lanier did not answer. He was playing a dreamy sort of fugue the theme of which belonged to the voices in wind and waves and the drumming of the rain.

"How are you off for boats?" Clare asked presently, trying to steady her voice.

"One small dinghy," answered Lanier, indifferently. "My man took the motor whaleboat, the big sailing dory is ashore getting a new strake in place of one I smashed the other day against a rock, and Mrs. Wilmerding's boat got crushed under the staging before we discovered that we had been cut adrift. I rigged a tackle and hoisted it aboard so that it might not wash ashore and scare everybody to death. I fancy that the Chimney Corner is in a pretty awful state as it is."

Clare got up suddenly from her seat.

"Don't . . . !" she cried, sharply. Lanier stopped playing and turned on his piano bench.

"Sit down in that big chair and rest," said he. "There's nothing for us to do."

"Haven't you any sort of anchor?" cried Clare, desperately.

"There's an anchor in the lazarette, but even if we were able to get it out and on the bow it would be of no use to us. You haven't left me cable enough to moor by."

"Then why not try to steer the hulk?" cried Clare. "With this wind you ought to be able to do something!"

Lanier shook his head. "I tried that," he said, "but it was no good. She's too light. Doesn't answer the helm. She has to be jerked along by a tug to get steerage way. Besides, I wouldn't know which way to steer if I could. We've been drifting all over the shop."

"Then you think that she will be lost?"

Lanier shrugged. "Your brother may get into Seal Cove in time to catch the local steamer," said he. "But it will get dark early to-night and with this wind and rain they may have trouble finding us. Still, there's always the chance of being sighted by something passing. It looks to me, though, as if this gale was backing around into the southeast and might settle down to serious business. All the sailing craft have probably run for shelter by this

time. No, I'm afraid that by morning the old *Broken Word* will be lying somewhere with a broken back."

The colour faded from Clare's face. She sank into the big chair, the same which had been so fatefully occupied by Mrs. Wilmerding. Lanier turned to the piano again.

"Don't!" cried Clare, nervously. "How *can* you sit there and play when in a few hours that piano may be rolling round amongst the reefs?"

"All the more reason for getting all the good I can out of it," Lanier retorted. "However, if it upsets you I'll discontinue." He got up from the bench, went to a table, and picked up his pipe which he proceeded to fill.

A sudden faintness overcame Clare. Her eyes passed from one to another of the handsome articles which furnished the place. The big, mahogany centre table, the Renaissance buffet, the magnificent Jacobean chairs, the handsome rugs and the paintings which decorated the ceiled sides of the apartment; then to the stage with its charmingly painted scenery and the pretty little dolls which were bobbing and ducking and bowing. It seemed incredible that

OUTSIDE, THE WAVES SEETHED AND BOILED AGAINST THE SIDE AND THE RAIN DRUMMED AGAINST THE DECKS. (*p.* 216)

all of this beauty and luxury, all these costly objects were destined, in a few short hours, to be torn and shattered and demolished on the cruel rock-bound coast of Grand Manan. Yet, Ravenel had told her that four hours after the turn of the tide would see the end of the barge. Even now the island must loom very close.

Clare scarcely gave a thought to the danger to their lives. At the least, Ravenel would have put the coast guard on the alert and there was little doubt of their being taken off before ever the vessel struck. The reflection which smothered Clare's pulses was that of the irreparable loss which her mad act would bring to the man to whom she had given her heart almost at sight; the man whom she had so loved the day before . . . and whom she loved still, despite his infidelity. She leaned back in her chair, sick, faint and all but nerveless.

Lanier studied her covertly and through narrowed lids. He read what was passing in her mind.

"It seems a bit odd to think that by to-morrow morning a lobster may be playing the harp on the strings of that piano," said he, "and that the first scenic production of 'The Pearl of

Panama' will be attended by an audience of skates and sea-robins."

Clare whitened a little but did not answer.

"This furniture," said Lanier, pitilessly, "is old family stuff. I loaded most of it aboard from the wharf of our ancestral plantation on the 'East'n Sho'.' This Jacobean stuff was brought over by one Colonel Lanier in the good ship *Golden Promise.* To-morrow morning a mermaid may be combing her hair in that chair you are sitting in at this moment."

Clare's pallor grew more intense. Her long lashes fluttered down on her cheek.

"And all of this," said Lanier, "because of the mad, unrestrained impulse of a spoiled girl!" His voice, which had been carelessly mocking changed its key with startling suddenness. He paused in front of Clare and stared down at her, stonily.

"What right had you to cut me adrift?" he demanded, savagely. "Had I ever asked anything of you? Did I owe you anything? Hadn't I done my best to protect you from both of us? I told you that when you knew me better you would like me less! I told you to wait . . . and you come out in your boat, just ripe

for some sort of trouble, and cut me adrift as if I really had belonged to you and had done you some wrong!"

Clare shrank back as if she had been struck. Her breathing grew shallow. She felt as if an icy hand had been laid upon her forehead and a black mist swam and eddied before her eyes.

The darkness deepened. Her head lolled to one side against the back of the high, upholstered chair. One arm fell inert. She seemed to be floating . . . floating . . . and then, through a rift in the darkness which obscured her senses she felt that Lanier was close to her. She felt her head on his shoulder, his arm about her neck. A flavor, hot and pungent, was on her lips.

"Drink this," said a quiet voice. A goblet was thrust against her lips. She gulped a little of the fiery fluid, then turned her head.

"Clare," said the same quiet voice, "will you forgive me?"

She stared at him, her vision still blurred.

"I have been talking to you as I talked to Mrs. Wilmerding," said Lanier. "You are sitting where she was sitting. She grew faint, just as you grew faint and I came to her side

and offered her some cognac, just as I am offering it to you. Now do you understand?"

"I . . . what . . . you . . . you say she was faint?" Clare murmured.

"Yes. She accused me of something of which I was quite innocent. I talked to her roughly . . . and she saw her mistake and was overcome. This is what you saw, Clare."

The blood rushed back to Clare's heart.

"Then you . . . you weren't . . . weren't . . ."

"Making love to her? Absurd! I had never seen her but once before in my life. She jumped to a wrong conclusion and came out here to beg me to go away; to leave you in peace. She loves you, Clare . . . more than anybody in the world loves you, except myself. My sweetheart, I adore you!"

"Calvert . . . then why . . . why did you speak to me so?"

"So that you might understand. Clare, put yourself for a moment in the place of Mrs. Wilmerding. Don't you see . . .? If you had looked in from the other side, the tableau would have been a different one. You would have seen that she was white and faint and that

I was holding the tumbler to her lips. It was a shock to her to learn what a mess she had made of things. She told me that she had said things about me to you which were unkind and untrue, and when I expressed myself on the matter she was overcome. Then, as soon as she learned that I loved you dearly and was only waiting for you to be sure of your own state of heart to ask for you, she was ready to throw her arms around my neck and bless us both. She was wishing us all happiness together . . . when you cut the cable."

A great sob suffocated Clare. She twisted about in the big chair. Her arms went up and encircled Lanier's neck. Her head turned, her lips brushing his cheek. She drew him down to her, his face so close to hers that he could see her eyes only as two dark, swimming pools of fathomless indigo.

"Calvert . . . and you can still love me in spite of all?" she whispered, her lips almost touching his. "Because, my darling, if I've lost your love I don't want to live! I want to go down, down, down . . . to the very depths. I love you so! There is nobody like you and yesterday, when I thought that some

day you were to be all mine and I all yours, my heart was ready to burst. I wasn't quite sane, Calvert. My mind did not seem to work. Then, there were other things; doubts that nearly broke my heart only to face. But I believed in you, Calvert, and I said over and over to myself that they were lies, lies, lies. So I came out in my boat only to call good-bye to you . . . and I was starved for a kiss and to hear you say that you loved only me. Do you think I'm shameless, Calvert? I can't help it if you do . . . because my dear, I love you, love you, love you . . ." She burst into tears.

A gust of such emotion as he had never hoped to feel, had never felt before in all his life, swept through Lanier. It was less of passion than an infinite tenderness. He gathered her in his arms and kissed the hot, moist lips and streaming eyes. He heard himself vaguely saying wild, rapturous words and felt her heart hammering against his own as she swayed over the arm of the chair and clung to him. His lips were salty with her tears and his senses half drunk with the fragrance of her face which was like a crushed flower against his own.

Outside, the waves seethed and boiled against the side and the rain drummed against the decks. The sea was lengthening out with the turn of the tide and the ancient hulk swayed onward to the doom not far beyond in the storm-flung mist. A gathering gloom pervaded the studio. Clare released herself and with her hands on Lanier's shoulders, pushed him gently from her, the better to see his face. It was splashed with her tears and his eyes were like deep wells of tenderness.

"Calvert, darling . . ."

"Yes, my heart . . ."

"It is getting dark. I'd forgot that we . . . we were driving on the rocks . . ." She smiled happily.

"Somebody will come."

"It does not matter. Do you love me . . . really?"

He gathered her close again. "Can you doubt it, my darling? I adore you, Clare."

She struggled for her breath. "No . . . there shall never be any more doubts. But I want to hear it, over and over and over. Please say: 'I love you, I love you, I love you . . .' as many times as you can, without drawing

breath. And when your breath is gone, kiss me."

"I love you, I love you, I . . ."

"Listen, Calvert . . ."

A new vibration seemed to strike through the ancient timbers of the hulk. It died, then was born again and there followed a series of staccato bellowings, muffled yet resonant. Lanier sprang to his feet.

"There's a steamer," he cried.

CHAPTER XII

SAFE IN PORT

AGAIN came the hoarse, peremptory summons. This time they clove the diapason of storm sounds to smite the ears with gruff insistence. Lanier looked at Clare.

"Somebody has sighted our signal," he said. "Go into my room and wait until I come. There's no use in your being seen aboard. I'll be right back."

"Very well. Hurry, Calvert . . ."

"I won't be long . . ." and he was off and up the companionway in a series of bounds. As he struck the deck he saw, close abeam on the weather side, a sturdy, ocean-going tug. Amidships, a knot of men were in the act of getting a boat over the side. Lanier immediately recognized the lank figure of his caretaker, one Lem Billings of Bath. He was himself discovered at the same moment, for the hands looked up and Billings gave a flourish of his arm.

Down splashed the boat on the lee side of the tug. Billings and two other men tumbled into

her when a deck hand flung into the stern-sheets a coil of light line. The men handled their oars, Billings shoved clear and a moment later the boat was swinging off to pass under the stern of the hulk, a hand aboard the tug paying out the line as she spun away. Up came the boat, swashed alongside the staging and with no more difficulty than the ordinary citizen might find in boarding a trolley car, Billings leaped out, the coil of rope on his arm. The tug had dropped down to leeward. The boat shoved clear and pulled off to round up on her lee side.

As Lem Billings toiled up the accommodation ladder with the heavy coil of line his feelings found vent in strident speech.

"Tha'ar, naow, Mr. Lanyeer," quoth he. "Next time you'll take the advice of a man that knows, mebbe. I told you that a'ar graound taykle was tew light t' trust tew. Drug aout in that bust f'm the nothe, didn't ye, and cut the cable on the reef . . . hey? Just what I allus said. *I* knowed it . . ." he passed his coil around an awning stanchion. "Sez I when that a'ar squall struck the train, 'Here's wha'ar Mr. Lanyeer goes a-cruisin' fer a spell. Lucky 'twas I ketched a tugbaout come fer some

empty coal barges. Made a bargain afore I started so ye needn't worry none abaout salvage claims . . . huh . . ."

"All right," said Lanier, briefly. "Tell them to jerk us in. If you'd got that spare anchor on the bow as I told you to, it would never have happened . . ." and he went below. Clare was kneeling on a transom, looking out through a porthole. At the sound of Lanier's step, she jumped up and flung her arms around his neck.

"The mermaids get cheated out of their spoils," said he, kissing her. "We're all right, now. My man has got a tug out there that could snake in half a dozen roly-poly tubs like this. Now I must go up and lend him a hand with the towline. Try to get some sleep, Clare, darling . . ." And he kissed her again and went on deck.

. . . . . .

It seemed to Clare that she had barely closed her eyes when she awoke with the consciousness that her name was being softly spoken. Her lids fluttered up and she stared vacantly at the miniature stage, which happened to be directly in her line of vision. A crimson band of late sunshine striking through a porthole struck di-

rectly on a curtseying little figure with the effect of a limelight. So real and living was the effect produced that Clare laughed softly to herself. The laugh was echoed from directly behind her to be followed by a swish of garments, a soft rustle, and as Clare twisted about on the divan a figure slipped from the gloom, dropped beside her and with a half sob, half laugh, flung a pair of arms about her neck.

"Clare . . . my dear, dear child. Thank God . . ."

"Loretta . . .!" cried Clare, dazedly.

"Well, Sis," said a gruff, though rather unsteady voice, "a nice scare you gave us!"

"Ravel . . . where did you come from? How did you get here . . .?" Clare felt as if her senses were failing and that she was hearing and seeing things which were not.

"We fell in with a tug sent out by our friends in the Chimney Corner. She's gone back with the glad news and the *Gull* is in tow of the hulk with one of the tug hands aboard her. It's clearing and the wind is going down."

"Where's Calvert . . .?"

"Ho! Still worrying about your Calvy, are

you? However, my dear, I quite approve your choice. Lanier is all right. Besides, the Chimney Corner owes him something and you are the prize . . ." And he stooped down and kissed her, the tears in his eyes.

Lanier came in from the galley at this moment. He looked enviously at Ravenel.

"Here are your skirt and shoes, Clare," said he. " 'Fraid the skirt is scorched a little."

"How terrible," said Clare, with an unsteady little laugh.

"Look here, Sis," said Ravenel, seating himself astride a chair and hauling out his cigarette case, "I told the tug people that you and Loretta were taking a moonlight sail together when the squall struck you and that you took refuge on the hulk. Shortly after, the hulk dragged out and cut her cable. See? Then I went after you in the *Gull,* but only managed to get Loretta off, on account of the swash. That's a good yarn for all hands. Loretta doesn't approve, but it's said now, so you've all got to stick to it." He turned to Lanier. "Calvert, what is that yellow coloured liquid in that cut glass decanter? Whiskey? Ah, yes . . . I never can recall the name . . ."

And he poured himself out a liberal libation.

. . . . . .

The ancient hulk was back at her old moorings off the Reading Room. It was the sacred hour of afternoon tea, yet, strange to say, the only occupant of the broad verandah was the Reading Room cat, an abnormally large and fluffy animal with a ringed tail and a penchant for catching minnows along the beach. Maine cats are apt to have these habits.

But the Colonists were not far away. They were assisting, en masse, at the first unofficial scenic and musical presentation of that afterwards famous operetta, "The Pearl of Panama." This festivity was given an especial eclat by the announcement of the betrothal of the Colony's fairest daughter to the talented author of the piece, one Calvert Lanier.

It was a perfect August afternoon. The spacious decks of the hulk were spread with Oriental rugs, set with tables and the awning ridge-ropes hung with gaily coloured paper lanterns. The performance was over and the guests beginning to cluster on deck for the collation which was staidly superintended by the steward from the Reading Room. Down below

the smiling Charlie was ministering to the spiritual wants of such hardy souls as were inclined to bid defiance to the laws of Mrs. Wilmerding and the State of Maine.

"Ah, well . . ." sighed Mr. Phelps, sonorously, "thus it is our daughters leave us . . . but all is well that ends well . . ." and he drained his glass of a strong solution of Pendennis rye.