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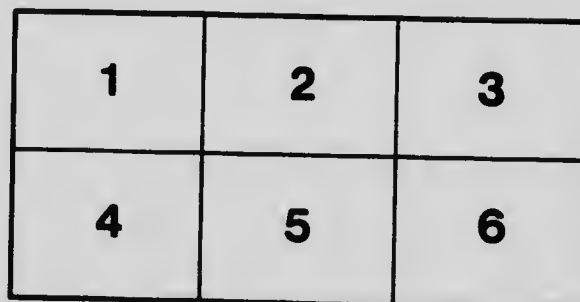
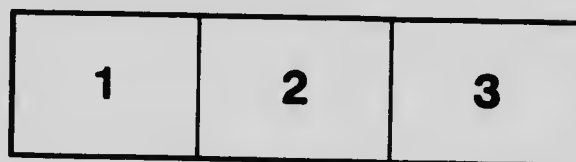
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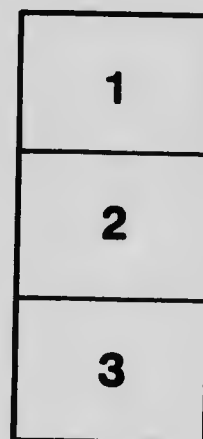
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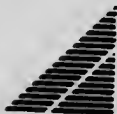
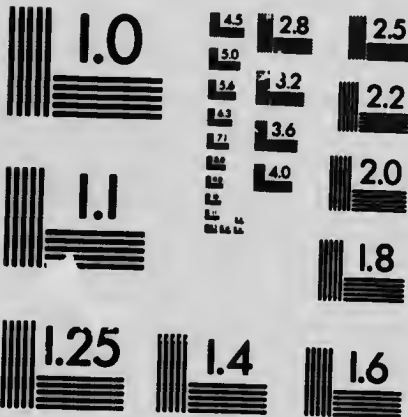
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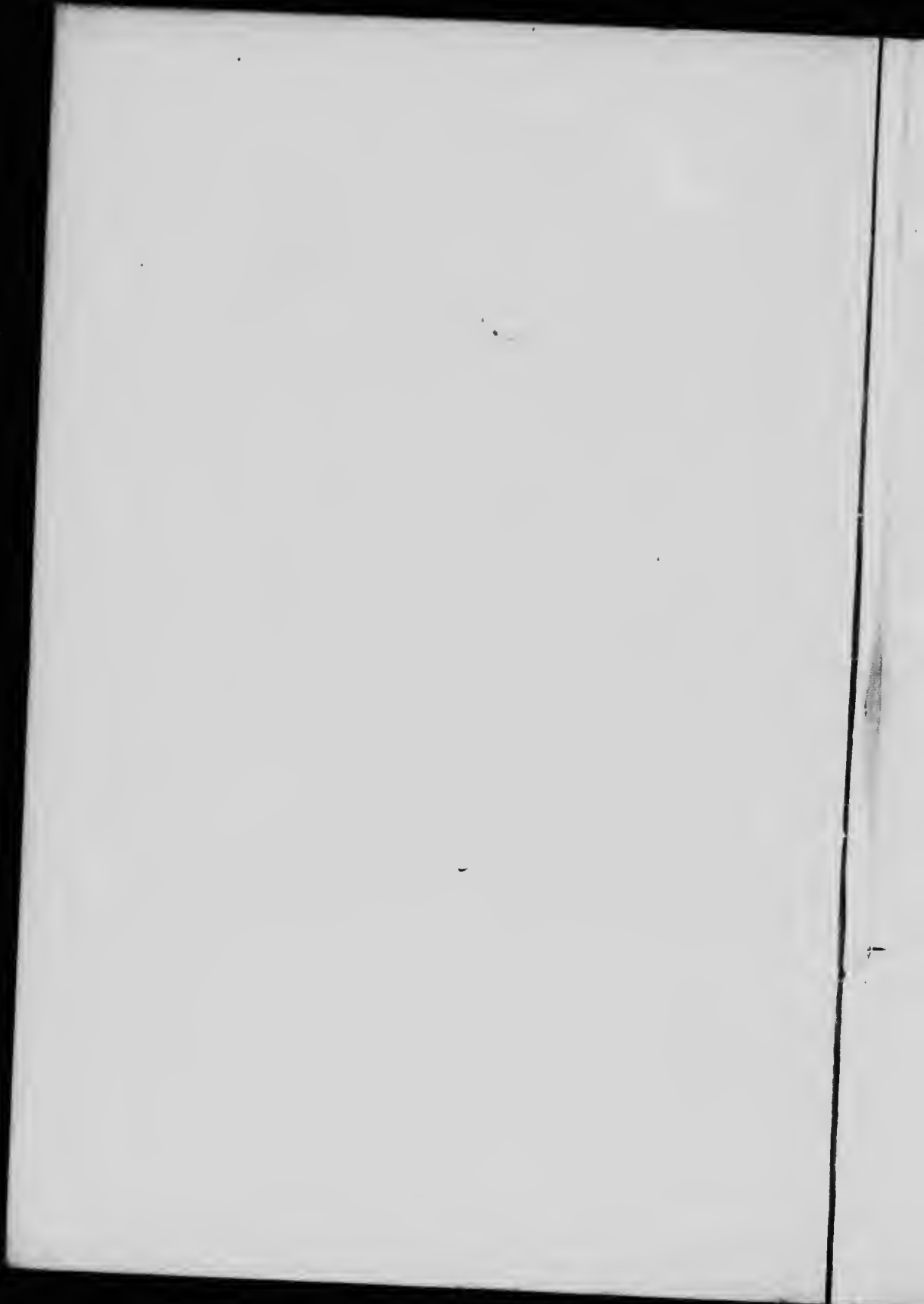
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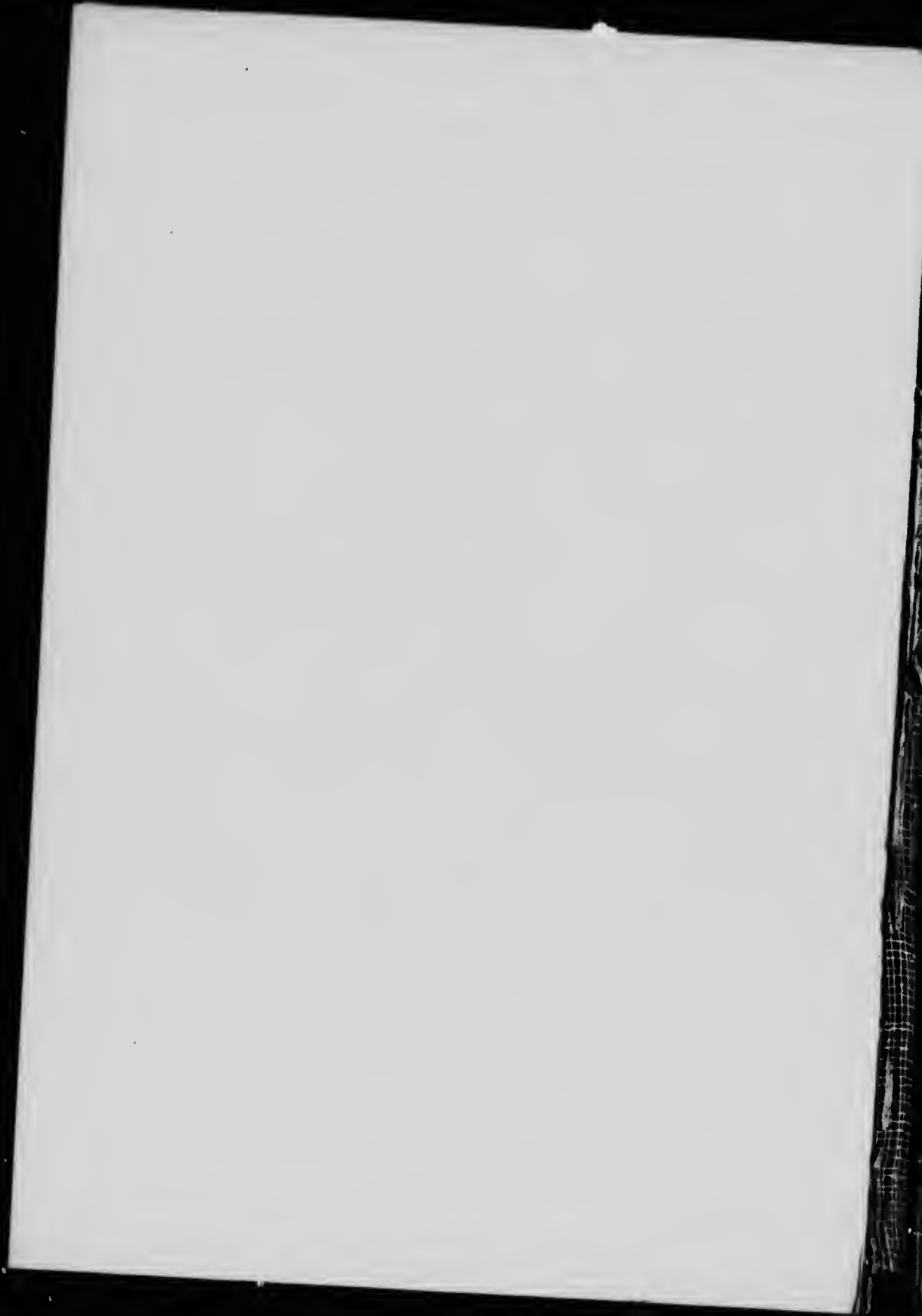
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THE OTHER SIDE OF THE WALL

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"You girls live . . . just the other side of the wall from each other, and ought to be friends," blurted Tom

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE WALL

BY
HENRY JUSTIN SMITH

Illustrated by Clinton Pettie

TORONTO . . . S. B. GUNDY
Publisher in Canada for Humphrey Milford

l from
Tom

PRINTED IN GARDEN CITY, N. Y., U. S. A.

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To
KATHERINE



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of the wall from each other, and ought to be
friends,” blurted Tom *Frontispiece*
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THE OTHER SIDE OF THE WALL

PART I



CHAPTER I

THE beginning happens to be about Ann Stone, who went North to find a job.

She alighted from the passenger end of a rickety ranch wagon one scorching day in the summer of 1916, and regarded without savour the dust-covered town of Los Adios, Texas, where she was to catch the north-bound express. John Blunt had driven her over, and as this was in Texas she did not give John anything, but said good-bye to him heartily and sat down on the station platform to wait.

There appeared presently, from the wrong side of the horizon, a cloud of dust that grew into a train. It was an odd-looking train whose passengers kept their heads out of the windows and yelled at random. Further, as speedily appeared, they were all men, dressed just alike in khaki. In short, this was a troop train.

The wheels creaked, and the train stopped. From a forward platform leaped a long and lithe young man with stripes on his sleeve. He gave one disgusted look at Los Adios, peered in at the deserted window of the station office, and approached Ann uncertainly. He was always uncertain how to address ladies; and further, Ann did not seem to belong in this landscape. He thought it probable that she

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was a school teacher, just from the East. Hence it was with more than military ceremony he took off his hat and asked if she knew where there was any water.

"You see, we've been riding for hours in day coaches, and we're just about—well, we're dry."

Ann glanced up at the heads, which were trying hard not to stare at her, and saw that the soldiers were suffering. But though they were haggard and dust-covered, they were merry. These soldiers were the forerunners of those who, two years later, laughed at the horrors of the French front.

"I think—I don't live here, but I think there's a well over back of that livery stable," said Ann, indicating one of the five buildings of Los Adios.

"Thank you," said Sergeant Tom Fanning. He and a squad dispensed water. Then the train moved on, amid cheers for Los Adios, and more stares for Ann. She sat the rest of the morning, awaiting the delinquent north-bound express, and glad she had been of even so small a service to those hard-traveling soldiers. As for Sergeant Tom Fanning, she promptly forgot him.

There was trouble with Mexico, and that was indirectly the reason why she was going North. Her father, a professor of history in the little college back on the prairies, had made some foolish remarks about Texas in its relation to Mexico. So he had been advised to try some other college the next year, and Ann, foreseeing he might have trouble finding another one, decided to be independent. This meant leaving

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her father alone, for his wife was dead, and there were no other children. Nor were there any jobs for women in that part of Texas. Ann's father was now in El Paso, whence he wrote that he might accept a clerkship in a book store. It was time for her to "strike out," and she had determined on the North because it was rich, and because it was cool. Besides, she had friends in the city whither she was bound; the City of Deadly Ambitions, as it was sometimes romantically called. Friends? Perhaps better say "a friend," for she did not yet know how Mr. Bragg, of the famous advertising firm (to whom she had a letter of introduction from the college president), would turn out. But she was sure of Sally Crowe, who had passed six unedifying months at the college, and then had gone north to marry one Dick Crowe, whom Ann had never seen. There was a warm-hearted letter in Ann's pocket from Sally. It gave an address on Westmont Avenue, which certainly "sounded like something."

One way or another, Ann felt sure of "getting on." She had forty dollars, and a good deal of unobtrusive pluck. And she was only twenty-one years old.

As for the city—why, even in Texas it was spoken of as glorious. It was also spoken of as over-populated and grasping. It was richer than ever since the war, and the impression reaching Texas was that its people, two million of them, lived in a sort of primeval conflict to become richer still. It was, Ann had read, a desert of smoke-covered buildings; a riot of hideous noises; a bedlam of foreign languages. She had also

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read that its business was mainly done within a few square miles, confined within a transportation "loop" and a sullied river. Nevertheless, she had heard that all this was glorious, and believed it.

When at last what was left of the north-bound express groaningly stopped in the Union Station, and Ann emerged into the City, she was half-stunned by the clamour. It was evening. The "rush-hour" was on. People homeward bound overflowed the sidewalks into the gutters; dodged street cars and taxicabs; tramped, heads down, across a bridge that must have been built a half century before; plunged along in two solid cross-currents that clashed and never apologized. And overhead and all about there was an uproar like battle, an uproar of bells, shouts, thundering hoofs, shrieking machinery, policemen's whistles. And a red sun, in a veil of smoke, lit up the scene like the flare of a stage battle.

And oh, the people! The people, too desperate, in search of home and rest to think about anything like trouble in Mexico, or even about the war in Europe; too headlong for courtesy, or pleasure, or hope. More people than Ann had ever seen; more than she thought lived in the whole world. This city was not like the one she had pictured; it was greater and more frenzied than any of the reports reaching Texas could picture it. People, people, people! Why, where did they live? Where could they find places enough to live?

This thought was still in Ann's mind, in fact it grew upon her, as she discovered, by aid of a police-

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man, her elevated station, and by nobody's aid at all, the right train. The train was besieged; mobbed. She found herself roughly pushed inside, while a hoarse guard yelled "Step up there," and the platform was full and the passengers were stepping on each other's feet, and still more people got on.

Where did they all live?

It seemed impossible that there could be enough roofs to shelter so many. Not until the train had swayed cautiously around a dozen curves, and had got across the river with its fringe of factories, and past the huddled houses of the "near north side," did Ann begin to understand. Then she perceived that every lot that could be bought, leased, or grabbed was built up with flats. There were whole cities of flats, with stores and theatres serving them; and as the train rattled north, and its human burden became a little lightened, there were simply more flats. Panoramas of streets bordered by pile after pile of grandiose masonry; mile upon mile of community dwellings; vista after vista of façades, cornices, porticos, and towers.

They were Romanesque, Florentine, Colonial—everything. They flung out toward the street the sturdy elbows of stone porches, or they retired from the street into palm-bordered courts and quadrangles. They were brown, yellow, some even purple, in front, and uniformly a dull brown in the rear, with labyrinthine stairways. And some sprawled the length of a block, while others rose slimly into the air, with

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signs atop saying "Four and five room apartments. Café."

They stood in a silence that was remarkable, considering that after all they must be clamorous, fecund places. They had an air of propriety, of seclusion. About them there were no people at all, no sign of human occupancy, except that occasionally there was a glimpse of a table set for dinner, or clothes hanging out to dry, or a woman's face at a window. A few vague figures strolled in the streets, but they immediately vanished. The passengers disembarking from the elevated rushed down flimsy stairways, separated in the streets below, entered these apartment buildings, and vanished. For the most part, they did not speak to each other. They had reached home.

Ann was much interested in all this. She was as much interested as she would have been in Constantinople, or in East London. She wondered if these people ever spoke to each other, and what they did after they got home. And she wondered if they were happy.

As the train went on, jerking to a stop at stations with names as diverse and mysterious as "Grace," "Sheridan," and "Buena," she amused herself by peering into second-story windows. Perhaps it was rude to do this, but if people did not expect it, why did they live within view of the elevated, and why leave their window-shades up? They had evidently said good-bye to privacy, except in regard to speaking to each other. But they seemed to attempt a sort

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of privacy, after all, contriving things like window-boxes, and complex lace curtains, and goldfish bowls, to shut them in. Unless these articles were intended to improve the view from within. Or to make the public side of their lives more glittering.

Ann felt increasingly drawn to these curious folks. Their evident struggles to be "homy" and self-expressive in "three, four, and five rooms" struck her as both gallant and quaint. Coming from the wide reaches of Texas, where there was room for everybody to have at least a "verandah" and a flower garden, she sympathized with this cluttered and difficult effort to live joyously. And behold, there was a young woman watering a flower box, high up on the fifth floor of a flat building. Ann felt like calling across to her, just as she would have done at home, "Good evening. How are the nasturtiums?"

But she did not do this. She was saved from what would have been a sad social error, in the flat building world, by hearing the guard call her station.

"Lakeside! Lakeside! Argonaut Park next!"

Where was the lake? Ah, Ann saw it twinkling at the end of the little street as she got off.

Lakeside! The name brought visions of summer resort cottages, and ravines, and all that. But there was nothing here but flat buildings, larger and more ornamental than those farther south.

It proved to be only a few minutes to the Fanning-ton Annex, where, after a little trouble with speaking-tubes and the like, Ann found Sally Crowe awaiting her at the top of the third flight of stairs; Sally Crowe

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in the most violent yellow skirt Ann had ever seen, and hair that beat all! And Sally gathered her into her arms, and cried:

"Ann! Why, you're so little! And you have no colour at all. Is that what they do to you in Texas?"

The flat, inevitably nicknamed "The Crowes' Nest," consisted of five rooms, and every one was full. Not that they were all occupied, except by Dick and Sally (who had no children), but they were full of inanimate objects. Tables, chairs, sofas, bookcases, a phonograph, a bowl of goldfish, an imitation mahogany cabinet full of imitation porcelain, and a general clutter of framed photographs, piles of magazines, paperweights, ash trays, and pipes, decorated the living room. In the spare bedroom, to which Sally conducted the visitor, there was nothing much; but in passing Sally's own room, Ann had a glimpse of a dresser whose mirror was half-covered with dance programmes and photographs; also of a bed with stray lengths of ribbon dangling from the head and footboards, and clothes piled upon it. There were more clothes on the chairs, and shoes everywhere.

After laying off her hat and "tidying up," Ann was conducted to the kitchenette, which was cosy and fascinating, but showed little sign of use; and thence to inspect the court, where two strips of grass, assisted by a few priggish looking ferns in pots, bordered an asphalt driveway. There was a forlorn-looking little garden down there, made by taking up

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the sod and sticking in seeds—radishes and lettuce, Ann thought.

"Whose garden is that?" she inquired.

"It's Dick's. Isn't he the limit?" And Sally laughed with good-natured scorn.

"He'll soon be home," she added, glancing at her bracelet watch. "Or I suppose he will."

"Don't you want me to help you with dinner?" said Ann.

"Bless you, I'm not going to get any. I never cook in summer."

"Then what——"

"With a million cafés handy, why should I cook?" protested the housewife. "I suppose you just love to make omelettes and things. You look domestic. There, I don't mean anything by that. You have distinction," she continued, surveying Ann more critically. "Your hair looks nifty, waved that way; it's so dark. But just a little more—there, now come in and peek at yourself in the glass, and I'll give you a ribbon for your hair. Oh, I'll love to go out with you."

They went in, but Ann did not accept the ribbon, despite suggestions that she "lacked colour." While this argument was still on, Dick arrived. He came in whistling, with his straw hat on the back of his head, stopped short when he saw Ann, and furtively tossed a cigarette stump into the fireplace.

"This is Ann Stone, who's going to visit us for—oh, ever so long," was Sally's introduction.

Dick shook hands with Ann gravely, and muttered

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something about pleasure. This over, Sally turned on him with the question, "Well, did you land it?"

Dick shook his head.

"Well," she said, indignantly, "I'd like to know where the upkeep of this flat is to come from, then?"

"You should worry about that," he replied, looking sideways at Ann. "I was never out of a job more than a month, was I?" +

"No, and you never were in one more than a month, either," retorted Sally. But she dropped the subject there, and gave all her attention to Ann, who was somewhat dazed at having personal matters aired in this way.

Ann found out, however, during dinner at the Magnificent Café—a low-ceilinged dining room around the block, with tiny glass-topped tables and steins on shelves—that Dick and Sally conducted all their affairs in the open: Their reckonings, their quarrels, and their reconciliations. They were very plainspoken both with each other and with her.

"You see there's no sham about us," Sally in fact remarked, after a warm discussion relating to the purchase of a new davenport. "We don't pretend to be richer or sweller than we are; and that's more'n you can say about most people in Lakeside."

"What is Lakeside?" Ann sought to know, hoping the question would lead away from the subject of money.

"It isn't really anything," Dick replied. "That is, it isn't a place by itself; a suburb, or anything like that. It used to be a village, they say, with a—with

a church steeple, and everything. But now it's just a part of the city. You don't know where it begins or ends."

"Why, Dick," objected Sally. "It ends at the elevated."

"I know that's the way some look at it. The swells over here think people west of the elevated don't live in Lakeside; but that's all bunk. Fact is, I don't know when I'm in Lakeside and when I ain't."

He absorbed a forkful of food.

"And I don't care," he grinned, looking at Sally.

"The dickens you don't," she jeered. "Wasn't it you who insisted on coming up here?"

"It was not. It was you who said you couldn't stand the noise down at Fullerton Avenue. And now this is too quiet for you."

To an accompaniment like this, varied by bursts of half-hysterical merriment, dinner was finished, and they made off to a vaudeville show a few blocks south. Ann did not especially care to go to this show. She was tired. It was apparent that if she remained more than a day or two they would have to leave her out of their "evenings." They seemed to be continually on the move, and planned ahead for days, so that there should not be a moment unfilled. This, she judged, was a characteristic of Lakeside. Both going to and coming from the theatre they passed building after building whose apartments showed only the dim light of non-occupancy. Some of the people were in the streets; a

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great many more in the "movie" shows; others were still nibbling at pink and yellow viands in the innumerable restaurants. There may have been, for them, no place like home—no place like home to get away from.

Three days brought more discoveries; also a few developments.

Of the discoveries, one was that the Fannington Annex, as its name implied, was a subordinate part of another building known as the Fannington. This supreme achievement in the making of "homes" was just around the corner, on Thoreau Place (generally pronounced "Thorough"), where its silk-curtained sun parlours gave a view of the lake. It had towers like Windsor Castle, and its entrances were reminiscent of French châteaux. On the towers were big brass medallions with fancy "Fs" on them. Clearly Sally would have been made happy for life by an invitation to play cards in the Fannington; as for living there, she had given up hope, in view of Dick's failings.

Here came discovery number two: That people in the Fannington did not visit with those of the Annex, did not invite them out, or know them at all. There was an imaginary wall between the two buildings, as well as a fire-wall.

"The truth is," said Sally, "the other building is filled with old Fanning's friends, or people he lets live there for advertising reasons, while we are sure enough tenants, who have to pay or get out."

"And who is old Fanning?"

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"He's the main mogul of Lakeside; owns two banks, four or five of the best buildings, bosses the Little Stone Church, and just about keeps people's souls around here locked up in his safety deposit vaults, what with chattel mortgages and all that."

"Has he any of your mortgages?"

Sally laughed.

"Well, now, child, nobody hands out more than two or three, unless they're poly—poly—some kind of crat. No, we don't owe old Fanning a cent, except the rent, and that's hard enough to scrape together, heaven knows."

It was at this point that the rest of the truth about Dick came out. He was, Ann learned, what some people call an "in and outer." That is, he never held a business place—as Sally had said—for more than a month, and the salaries he drew varied greatly. More, he appeared to be steadily on the down grade as to income. He could, if he chose, said Sally, make good anywhere. He was a successful salesman, a fair accountant—could turn his hand to almost anything. But there was something vital the matter. And whereas he had once made as much as seventy-five dollars a week, he now could scarcely command forty-five. It seemed that whenever a fifty-dollar job "soured on him," as Sally put it, he became sure he could "drag down" sixty dollars somewhere else. But he generally sank below even the fifty.

"Honest," said Sally, "he's worked so many places I wonder they don't just run and hide, everywhere, when they see him coming."

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"What do you suppose is the matter with him?" inquired Ann, with her look of innocent concern.

"Maybe you don't think I'd like to find out." And Sally frowned for a moment. But the next breath she was playing with the goldfish, and screaming with laughter.

During these researches into Lakeside and its ways, Ann became a permanent resident. She was advised by Sally against boarding, and accepted gratefully the offer of the spare bedroom at a moderate rate. Sally's only stipulation was that Dick be not told about the arrangement. "He'd only throw the money away." He was to be permitted to think Ann was still a visitor.

"And maybe it'll stir him up to get a good job," said Sally, "having a, so-to-speak, permanent guest."

Ann was not sure of the soundness of this strategy, but she concluded it was not her affair. She was too busy, just now, to worry about the Crowe household, for she had "accepted a position" with Bragg & Co., a position mostly having to do with the filing of newspaper clippings, and she was anxious to make good. Here, too, she yielded to her passion for finding out about people, and especially about how and where they lived. Being only a "filer," she was not in the inner secrets of the office. She had the vaguest notions what it was all about, and she had little idea that the chunky and baldish Bragg, who generally worked with his hat on, was a genius in his way. Yet, through bits of talk at the lunch hour, through

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things overheard, innocently enough, and through quiet observation, she learned a great deal.

She came to know the luminaries of the office: the "ad-writers" who sat in little private offices—or, more often, did not sit in them; the "art department," from whose room came the loudest argument and the densest tobacco smoke; the bookkeeping department, presided over by Mr. Fleming, who was said to be a Baptist and to have six children; and so on.

The stream of life flowing in and out of Bragg's own cubby-hole was all wonderful, amusing. She made the acquaintance of Teddy, Bragg's confidential office boy, and found him a cynic, a believer in the theory that "anybody will fall for publicity." In bursts of confidence he talked about his boss, and revealed the belief that the boss would "do him if he could." He went further, and whispered that he thought sometimes "the boss would do anybody."

"D'ye see that sheeny in here the other day?" scoffed Teddy. "He'd invented some new kind of drip-pan. Thought he'd invest ten dollars or so in advertising. I don't know what was said, but before he's been in with the boss a half hour, the boss calls in the experts; then he gets in Happerth to frame up a line of ads; and hang me if they didn't get that Jew for a \$5,000 contract; all about a drip-pan."

Womanlike, Ann seized on a minor point.

"Who is Mr. Happerth?" she wanted to know.

Teddy laughed in a jeering way.

"Ain't you wise to him yet? Haven't you seen the

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boy with the ice-cream pants, and the—the chocolate sundae hair? Haven't you noticed anybody swattin' flies with a ivory-handled paper knife?"

"I'll look out for such a person," Ann laughed. "But you haven't told me yet who he is."

"He's the finishing-touch man, that's who he is. He's the fellow Bragg calls in when they want an ad to have just the out-and-out pep that gets the money. 'Let somebody else collect the facts,' says the boss. 'Then turn it over to Happerth.' And he's on the payroll for——"

"I don't care to know about his salary."

"But here; he's a fat thing on the payroll. Comes to the office in a car some days. An' he lives in the Fannington, that gimcrack flat building up north what gets a quarter-page in the *Tribune* Sundays."

Teddy had impressed her at last. He went on to paint the Fannington, which he had never seen, in dimensions and colours like those of an Atlantic City hotel. Ann did not listen. She was thinking that it was only in large cities such coincidences could happen as her proximity, in two different places, to Mr. and Mrs. Happerth—for of course there was a Mrs. Happerth. And she had an undefinable feeling that this proximity would lead to something some time.

She would have been more than human had she not looked out for Happerth's arrival at the office next morning. He came in late, as office hours went. He had on the white trousers scorned by Teddy, but the office boy's description of his hair was unjust. It was brown hair with a tight little wave in it, and it

fell gracefully across a brow much wider and whiter than the brows of some ad-writers. He had a soft, alert step, and seemed very good-natured, although the satirical twist of his mouth promised trouble if he were crossed.

He flitted into a private office, and did not come out again. Perhaps he was swatting flies.

It was several days before Ann mentioned at home that a great star of Bragg & Co. lived in the Fannington. And when she did speak of it the effect was merely to bring out afresh the Crowes' old quarrel about social prominence.

"Look at him," railed Sally, referring to her recreant husband. "He sits there, pegging pins into a war map. Oh, he's a peach at figuring out battlefronts, but he never does me any good. And if it ain't the war map, then he's studying some old railroad timetable, or reading up on Alaska. Just as if we ever went anywhere! And it wouldn't be Alaska if we did go, you bet you."

Dick whistled softly to himself. He was acutely happy with his war map, constructed at great pains by piecing together half-pages of the Sunday supplements.

Very soon he put on his coat, and without answering Sally's taunts, swaggered out of the flat. Ann watched him go with a kind of compassion. He was an athletic young fellow with a straight mouth, and gray eyes that twinkled easily. It seemed strange, incredible, that he made so little of himself.

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"There he goes," said Sally. "The selfish mut. He has his fun, and leaves me, kicking my heels."

"How did you come to marry him?" asked the inquisitive Ann.

"I wanted a home!" cried Sally.

Ann almost laughed. "Is that what Dick wanted?" she asked.

"I suppose so," Sally pouted.

Ann glanced around at the flat, started to speak, and checked herself. The outcome of that marriage "for a home" was comic. But also pathetic.

Sally suddenly jumped up, and flounced into her room, apparently to cry. She emerged presently, however, arrayed in a costume of light blue, with a smart hat tipped over one eye.

"Come on!" she cried. "I'm going to hire a car, and drive around. I'm going to roll along Sheridan Road, just like anybody, and maybe stop at the Beach Hotel."

"But the car will cost——"

"What do I care? I've got the money you paid me for the next two weeks. I'm going to spend every copper cent, right now, to-night."

"I can't go with you, Sally."

"All right, then. I'll get the Reekers."

She flung herself out of the room.

Ann had met the Reekers, and thought little good of them. They appeared to be excessively fond of Sally, but Ann was sure that the day they learned how unstable was the foundation of the "Crowes' Nest," would be the last day the Reekers would be

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seen therein. Mr. Reeker, a slender and cool person with a habit of biting his fingernails, was an authority on real estate values, also social values; while his wife, clad in all the hues and textures available on State Street, discussed plays and refreshments. They were always available for a "bust" such as Sally had planned; but Ann thought there must be something wrong with people who were always available.

She stayed up reading as late as she could, and then went to bed. Just what time it was when the party returned she did not know, but she had a confused impression, between two waves of sleep, that people were laughing, and later quarrelling, in the living room. There was a clink of glasses, too. The bang of a door. Silence.

In the morning a cloud hung over the breakfast table. Sally poured the coffee with an abused air, while Dick, who gazed sullenly upon his wife, returned fragments of speech to Ann's carefully neutral remarks. The row of the night before—for there must have been a row when Dick discovered where Sally had been—seemed likely to break out afresh.

And yet, after Ann had been in the kitchen with her hands full of dishes, she returned to find these extraordinary children laughing together over the comic supplement of the Sunday paper. And Sally had her arm around Dick's neck.

They both smiled at her. They rallied her upon being "solemn."

"I'll bet she's homesick," said Sally.

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"Perhaps I am," smiled Ann. But she was really only dazed. Life and its humours went too fast for her in the Fannington Annex.

She might well have been homesick. Such a Sunday morning as this, penned up in five rooms still reeking of the Reekers, and with the sun already beating up waves of heat from the court, was not much like those dry, sweet-scented Sunday mornings she had known. She went to one of the front windows, and gazed down into the branches of a meagre Lakeside tree. A couple of sparrows were brawling there, and below a red-eyed poodle, towing a lady in green, with a white lace hat, was barking maliciously at them. These little touches of nature but emphasized the unrealness of Lakeside. The buildings, the sleek lawns, all seemed to Ann like stage scenery; the life that went on there, like a comedy "from the French." It seemed as though all this paste-board existence must presently fold itself up and vanish. The buildings might remain, for they were solid brick and stone. But what would become of the people? What could become of people whose affections apparently endured only while there was money in the house, and whose very quarrels scarcely lasted overnight?

Just as this thought came to her, she heard a renewed outbreak in the dining room. Dick was saying,

"I tell you we can't take supper at the Beach coffee room. I haven't got the price, that's all."

"You had it last night," said Sally.

"Well, I haven't got it now."

"Lost it in that billiard-game, I suppose."

"Yes; while you were blowing in the rent money."

"I told you, Dick Crowe, that money was my own."

Dick came stamping out of the dining room in his shirt sleeves, striking a match on the mantel as he passed. His eyes were snapping with rage.

"A fine business; a fine business," he growled, as though to himself. "Every cent I was figuring on for next month's rent gone to blazes; blown in on a pair of grafters."

He turned to the dining-room door, and cried:

"Maybe you don't know that if we don't come across by the fifteenth old Fanning will bounce us, bag and baggage, chafing-dish and goldfish. Maybe you'll like that."

There was no response from Sally.

Ann, seeking a diversion, called out, as though she had not overheard the argument:

"Please, who are these people just starting out in a motor? Look—below here."

Dick hurried to the window, and peered down at an automobile party of four rounding the corner into Westmont Avenue. The car contained, besides the chauffeur, an elderly man with rubicund cheeks and a gray moustache, a stout lady with a pronounced jaw, and two younger people, one of them evidently the daughter of the stout lady; the other—Lance Happerth.

"That?" said Dick, with bitterness and utter col-

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lapse of grammar. "That's him—old Fanning. That's the Grand Mogul; the precious old pirate who I owe two months' rent to. Damn him. And that's his wife, and his daughter, and his sweet little son-in-law. God bless 'em all."

Ann gazed down at the magnificent party with vivid interest. She looked mostly at the serene and luxurious Mrs. Happerth, and at her husband. He did not seem happy.

CHAPTER II

WHETHER Lance Happerth was happy at that time, after about a year of married life, is not of immense importance now, after all that has happened to him. Then, however, in the comparatively uneventful summer of 1916, it was almost painfully important to Lance. It was of more consequence than success—success of a kind understandable in the City of Deadly Ambitions—for this came so easily to Bragg's "finishing-touch man" that he regarded it as a detail. Happiness, however, was obtainable only by a lot of adjustment and sacrifice. It had to be fought for through a maze of human barbed wire; it had to be groped for through the marsh of Lakes' prejudices, likes and dislikes, stupidities. It is probable that Lance never attained, at this time, a solid grip upon happiness. It may have been that he was not born to be happy at all. Perhaps he was even born for something better.

The best source of information about Lance as he was before he married a Fanning is Freddy Westcott. Freddy used to room with him when they both worked on the *Press* as reporters. It is to Fred we owe our special insight into the reasons why Lance was what he was, and became what he became.

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There was only one main reason, after all: "Too good-natured."

It was excessive good-nature, according to Freddy, that "got Lance into it," meaning his engagement, his marriage, and the Fannington. Although he was attracted to Pauline Fanning from the first, it is doubtful whether he would have married her had he not gone farther than he intended, and then been too amiable to desert. And it is certain he would not have chosen the Fannington to live in. But the inclinations of Pauline, and the steady pressure of the family, created a situation in which he must either live in the Fannington or hurt someone's feelings. And this last he abhorred.

The fate of such a person, of course, is to have his own feelings hurt every few weeks. This happened to Lance, even as far back as when he first came on the staff of the *Press*. He was then a shy youth of twenty-two, whose father, it was understood, had died suddenly, and whose mother had moved "back east," leaving Lance to the mercy of a large and not over-generous city. He existed in odd ways for some months, and then a series of coincidences that need not be recounted took him into newspaper work. Here, as has been mentioned, he had his feelings hurt; almost daily, to speak truth. He had a graceful touch in writing, and this part of him was regularly expunged from his "stuff." There were also brutal remarks when he failed to "pick up all his facts." This situation lasted until the winter before the war, when it became a fashion to write certain

news stories gracefully, and Lance, from being the office doormat, developed into its ornament. He had an ironic tendency that gave point to his descriptive stories. He read quantities of modern writers, and interlarded in his "stuff" allusions to, and quotations from, these writers. He began to get a reputation outside of the office; had verse published in one or two magazines scarcely anybody read; and wrote a one-act play that was almost accepted. He was a literary rocket. Soon he began to take himself seriously. His ironic remarks were much quoted. He easily drew about him a circle delighting in hearing him "roast" Arnold Bennett, or others of the "boarding-house school" of novelists. And he was especially piquant in his attitude toward the war, which broke out about the time Lance was most celebrated. He said the war was a stupid contrivance of bankers and military persons for earning their salaries. It existed for savages and sentimentalists. It made fools cheer, and slaves give up their lives. And the less said about it in a sane paper like the *Press*, the better.

He would walk up to the city editor and drawl, "You don't think much of good stuff now, do you? Let a lot of rot about the future of Europe crowd it off the first page any old time. Well, here's that story about the melting-pot of the west side. Print it on page 20, and then fire me. That's what you'd better do."

You see, Lance had got past the stage of being walked on by everybody, and actually walked on city

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editors himself. But he was so amiable they did not care. They all loved him, and prophesied great things for him; and when he got out a new poem they passed it around, and pretended they understood it. He was earning forty dollars a week and spending forty-five, mainly because of widely scattered good-nature.

About this time he met Pauline.

A party of Lakeside girls, including Pauline, were going to hold a pacifist meeting, and Lance was assigned to make fun of it. This should have been "his kind of job," for Lance had little use for women save as objects of satire. But on this occasion he was so pleasantly received, and what was said so far coincided with his own opinion, that he felt no temptation to make fun of the meeting. He returned to the office and reported "no story." Accordingly, no story appeared. Next day Pauline telephoned him to inquire why there was no notice in the *Press*, and in order to explain properly he called upon her at the Wiltshire, where she and her parents lived in eight rooms, with three baths.

This was the first time Lance had seen the interior of a "high-class" Lakeside apartment.

He described it to Freddy with grins and animated eyebrows. He pictured also Mr. Fanning—who was not then known as the Grand Mogul—and Mrs. Fanning, and a pale minister and his wife, who appeared to be relatives.

"We all sat around on near-Sheraton chairs," said Lance, "and we talked about the war. That is,

they talked about the war, and what a shame it was, and what great changes it had made. And they said all the nice people were moving out, and people they did not know were moving in. And I listened, and agreed. It's easy to agree, Freddy, when you're all surrounded by works of art, and you're enjoying one of papa's mild cigars. Mrs. Fanning—the other one, I mean, the minister's wife—kept her mournful eye on an engraving of Rheims cathedral, and sighed. And Papa Fanning rapped the Germans, and talked about the Perils of Banking. And then I came away."

"Without having spoken to Miss Pauline alone?" asked Freddy.

"Oh, we had a few minutes together in the study," yawned Lance. "Looking at all the riff-raff she'd brought from Europe."

He did not express any opinion of Pauline, according to Freddy; nor was this necessary. His actions spoke for him. He called upon Pauline more than once; many times. He ceased wearing a flowing silk tie, and took up four-in-hands, which he fought tigerishly before his looking-glass. His jeers at the Fanning tribe, whom at first he had described as "a lot of fried eggs," and "a bunch of vegetable products reared in hot-houses," became fainter. He spent much money, judging by the fact that he usually was borrowing from Freddy, and his work at the office, like his promptness of arrival, was fitful and unenergetic.

It came out incidentally that his poetical efforts were appreciated by Mrs. Fanning and her friends.

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"A rare old card, Mrs. Fanning," he said. "A truly dreadful termagant when crossed, but a nice, plump old Angora when stroked. Wants me to read some things before the arts and literature division of her woman's club."

"Going to?" asked Freddy, through clouds of pipe smoke.

"What do you think?" returned Lance, with a hair brush suspended over his wavy locks.

"Well, that kind of fame won't sell anything to the *Atlantic*," ventured the chum.

As it fell out, Lance did not read to the woman's club. About that time he produced, in a small publication called *Scrapings*, a discourse on certain comic aspects of apartment buildings and their tenants. He sketched in, with a light touch, a few types similar to the Fannings, father, mother, uncles, and aunts. Mrs. Fanning, reading this unwise article, and recognizing her portrait, not only called off the reading, but forbade Lance the house. Freddy believes he met Pauline at other places, such as the Country Club, and the Imperial Cinema Palace, but the narrator is not sure. At all events, Lance's ostracism was brief, and it had only served to "drive the young people into each other's arms." Before spring arrived, Freddy was given to understand that "everything was as good as settled."

"The don't like me any too well," said Lance. "That is, ~~the~~ old folks don't. They can't make up their mind ~~whether~~ I'm merely a reporter or a coming sensation. Dad, I suspect, thinks I write editorials,

and Mother credits me with the jokes on the back page. And Uncle Augustine, who preaches delicate nothings in the Little Stone Church, insists on reading Tennyson to me for my good. Mrs. Augustine puts me down as a flippant young person with horribly crude ideas about the war, and Aunt Pringle, who exists on chocolate creams and steam heat, doesn't like my neckties; so there are difficulties. But I'm going to promise to be good, old chap. I'm going to be their little tame bear, and dance to their music. I'm going to quit liking Strindberg and Dostoieffsky, and learn to like Harold Bell Wright and—yes, even Tennyson. And so——”

“You think that much of Pauline, do you?”

“Yes, my boy; I've never met any girl but her.”

Freddy relit his pipe, and made an enormous smudge, behind which he regretfully shook his head.

It would have been plain enough, even to a less sharp-sighted chum than Westcott, that the idea of marriage did not fascinate Lance. He spoke of it at times with the deepest contempt.

Marriage, the state of deference, of obligation, of petty worries! Marriage, a farewell to one's untrammelled individuality!

These were reminiscences of the Russian writers. Freddy thought, and openly asserted, that Lance would take to marriage as his true state.

“But,” said Freddy, “I can't quite see you married to a flat building and a couple of banks.”

(By this time, you see, Barton Fanning had ac-

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quired two banks, was becoming a landlord, and was beginning to be known as the Grand Mogul.)

"What difference whether you live in a flat or a cottage?" demanded Lance.

"None, my lad; only, remembering your article in the——"

"Just forget that, will you," returned Lance with a frown.

"Well, I simply meant, it didn't seem to me you would exactly hitch with that crowd. Your writing will simply go to pot. You won't be able to work surrounded by sofa-pillows, and with damask curtains tickling your neck. You need a busted typewriter desk, and a chair without a seat, like me."

This sort of talk, however, did no good. What Freddy did not know, and did not find out until later, was that there was another young man of whom the Fannings thought pretty well. He was Bob Sweetling, better known as "Butterfly Bob," Fanning's rising young assistant in the "old bank." Bob was not merely the Fanning sort; he was a good sort any way he was looked at. He could do anything, could Bob: manage a dance, superintend a club dinner, act as banker in a poker game, swear at a contractor, or play tennis until after dark. He came to the Wiltshire frequently, and was far more comfortable in the near-Sheraton chairs than Lance was.

But there was one thing Lance could do that Bob never so much as attempted; that is, write a play for Mrs. Fanning and the dramatic department of the

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woman's club. He wrote a play that gave "fat" parts to Mrs. Fanning and Pauline. And then he became producing manager of it. During its run Bob was lost to sight; Lance had the Wiltshire to himself.

It was about this time, to the best of Freddy's belief, that Lance found himself "in" deeper than he had intended, and was ensnared. Freddy cannot believe he seriously intended to become the son-in-law of a "blithering old soapy Philistine" like Barton Fanning; or that he expected his position as private dramatist to the Lakeside woman's club to make him so precious they could not bear to lose him. Freddy does not think Lance even felt that his life would be empty without Pauline. That he liked her very much; that he felt expansive and pleasantly stirred in her society; that he thought her the ultimate thing in feminine ornaments—he whose knowledge of women was confined to his mother and to the stenographers in offices he visited as a reporter—of all this there was no doubt. But an engagement! A complete merging of one's life with that of people who half the time did not understand what one was talking about. Impossible for Lance!

Some time or other there must have been a headlong move on his part; a fatal speech; a "balcony scene" (there were plenty of balconies even on the Wiltshire) perhaps ironically conceived, but ended in dead earnest. There must have been.

For in May, shortly after the *Lusitania* was sunk, the engagement was announced. In October, while

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the world was ringing with indignation over Edith Cavell, came the wedding. And a month later, in the same week when the liner *Ancona* went down under horrible circumstances, Lance and Pauline Happerth went to live in the Fannington, just completed.

These references to the war, as fixing the dates of three great events in Lance's life, are given exactly as Freddy Westcott gave them. Freddy couldn't keep the war out of anything.

Sitting alone in the rooms they had shared together Freddy pondered a great deal the destiny of his friend. This marriage could not possibly develop him in the same way he had begun to develop. It could not make him more skilful in the use of rhetoric; it would be unlikely to deepen his thought, or enrich his fancy. It was probably the end of Lance as a writer. What would come next?

Freddy never thought it would be a "star advertiser" that would emerge. But that some huge bluff would be the inevitable next phase became plain to Westcott upon his first visit to the flat. It was too gorgeous to be maintained by a reporter.

Freddy came away unable to describe anything, but with impressions of furniture as majestic and dazzling as that in the haughty show-windows of Michigan Avenue, of cedar-wood chests, of a dining room having hand-painted walls, and of twin beds built mainly of shining brass. You see, they took him around the flat. Pauline herself was "gotten up"——

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Well, as Freddy said to Lance at the office next day:

"It's great, old man; it's great, but——"

"Sing it!"

"You'll have to get into some branch of endeavour other than journalism."

Lance derided this idea, but feebly. He knew perfectly well that one winter of this kind; nay, two months more of it, would break him. Already he had to do bits of advertising writing "on the side" to make things go. And even at that, he did not make things go. He was behind in his payments on the phonograph, and he had still a lot to pay on the davenport. And in the meantime Pauline was pressing him for a grand piano. Nothing less than that——

Pauline saw no earthly reason why she should not have a grand piano. She had not the slightest idea—none of the Fannings had—how much, or rather how little, was Lance's income. She had the vaguest of ideas about money, anyhow. She was a little shocked when she found a grand piano would cost at least \$1,000, but not enough shocked to give up the idea. Lance conveyed this much information to Freddy, when he told him that, by George, he was going to buy her that piano if it busted him. And the *Press* needn't be surprised if they lost him, unless they were willing to double his salary.

"Which," said Freddy, "is as likely as that I'll be made London correspondent."

The *Press* played to form. It regretted, etc. An

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hour later Lance was in the employ of Bragg & Co. Two hours later he was at Pauline's side on the davenport, and thinking how deuced attractive she was, with her hair waved something like that of the girls who frequent the Beach Hotel tea room, and her delicate feet encased in bronze slippers; thinking likewise how fond he was of her, although her conversation was not brilliant—and he was telling her to skip right down town and get her piano.

"For," said he, "I'm on the road to riches. Fame, especially literary fame, can go to the devil. I'm now on the staff of the great Bragg, the biggest publicity bunk artist since Barnum. Aren't you glad?"

"Bragg!" exclaimed Pauline. "That horrid little fat man we played cards with over at the Winchell's? Oh, Lance, why don't you stay in the newspaper business and write poems? Mother will be so disappointed."

He smiled a little crooked smile at this.

"Oh, I shall be much happier out of the newspaper business," he replied.

So we shall have to assume that on that Sunday morning in 1916, when Ann Stone saw him apparently sulking in the back seat, Lance really was happy. He was out of the newspaper business, at all events; had been out of it for more than six months; had become, as you are aware, a specialist, and a highly paid specialist—in a very lucrative and sometimes exciting business. Still, there were things

in life that plagued him. One of them was riding in an automobile "just for the sake of buzzing around," and another was talking business with Father Fanning.

Fortunately this motor trip did not promise to be long. It was almost time for church, and Father Fanning would not miss church. He had decided to "run around" and look at the Exeter Arms, an especially old-English type of flat building a half mile south. He was thinking of buying it, and, seeing Lance and Pauline loafing in their sun parlour, he had insisted on taking them along.

"You," he said to Pauline, "can tell me if the dining room friezes are O. K.; and you," to Lance, "can advise me about the validity of the title."

"I was always good at titles," replied Lance, gravely.

As well be doing this as anything, he reflected. Sunday morning must be got through somehow. Sunday afternoon they would have their walk along the beach, in all the clothes they had; in the evening probably the Roy Merediths or some others of the "crowd" would tumble in. And then they would talk about the war or something until bedtime. Oh, Lord!

As they started down Westmont Avenue, and the chauffeur threw on second speed, Lance glanced up at the building that he seldom observed with the naked eye, the building he understood his father-in-law owned, but did not talk about—the "Annex." And there in a third-story window he perceived two

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young women and a young man, the latter being in shirt sleeves, peering down at him with interest.

They looked cosy and serene up there, he thought. Probably, he reflected, they had few worries—indeed, why should they?—and lots of fun.

Barton Fanning, following Lance's line of vision, gave the young people in the window the benefit of one of his severest looks.

"That building," he said, "is the very deuce. I wish I had never built it. Do you know, there are people in there—those very ones, for all I know—who owe me as much as two months' rent."

CHAPTER III

THE war," said Roy Meredith, the "fashion artist," "is two years old and still lively."

He reached for another sandwich, from a pile tastefully disposed on a flat stone. The stone stood on the sand, and beside it were other stones with other edibles, such as cake, olives, almonds, and candies in silver paper. Around the beach supper reclined the beach party, in bathing-suits but entirely dry, full to repletion but still eating. There were only eight in all, composing the main units of the "Fannington crowd": Roy and his wife, who was an oppressive blonde; Mr. and Mrs. Alfred Harrold, the former being a concert pianist of some renown; the Winchells, who were a little older than the others but did not look it, and finally Lance and Pauline. The "star ad-writer" and the pianist were not in bathing-suits, the former because he hated cold water, the latter because he was too lazy.

No one answered Roy's remark. He waved a fragment of sandwich, and continued lugubriously:

"Millions dead. Millions wounded. Whole nations starving——"

"Kill him, somebody," cried Winchell, throwing a piece of sandwich at Roy's head. It landed in the ripples of the darkening water; and the ripples went

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gleaming out into the waves and were lost. The beach party lazily watched this event, and they all gazed for a few minutes upon the dull blue of the lake over whose horizon the moon was rising, like a naked bather.

Lance, who reclined in the warm sand beside a log, occasionally tracing absurd sketches with a stick, shivered.

"I'll be catching cold here," he grumbled to Pauline.

"It's about time we went home," said Mrs. Harold. "How quiet it is!"

"Yes; the mob from west of the 'L' must be somewhere else to-night," shrilled Mrs. Winchell. "There hasn't been hardly room to wade here all summer."

It was quiet in this particular spot. Close at hand loomed the enormous bulk of the Beach Hotel, with its hundreds of windows, like a huge honeycomb. The "mob" was farther north, around a bend. From that point came screams of joy, and the twang of a ukulele.

Roy stretched out his bare legs, which were of a slimness out of proportion to the rest of him.

"But listen," he insisted. "We don't take life seriously enough. Gosh almighty, there are chaps getting killed over there all the time. Once in a while I think of it. And it all comes over me, what's it all about? And why should I be sittin' here, full of sandwich, and those chaps be starving and dead? It don't seem fair. Somebody please pass the chocolates."

Mrs. Meredith glanced at her husband respectfully. He was so deep! She would bet nobody else around here ever thought such things.

"What's the use of bothering about it?" yawned Harrold. "You can't do anything about it."

"Well, I'll bet they'll be making peace pretty soon," spoke up Mrs. Winchell, snatching a chocolate as the box passed her.

"They'll have to," returned Roy, wagging his head solemnly. "They'll have to. The world can't stand it. Look how it's knocked business already. Look what it's done to mine. No more Paris fashions at all. Gee!"

"Oh, but you draw so beautifully, you don't need Paris," murmured Mrs. Winchell, feeling of her earrings to see if they were still there. "And you have a model right at home when you want one." She smiled sweetly upon Mrs. Meredith.

That lady tossed her head, and replied, "I'm not in the business now, thank you."

"As I was saying," broke in Roy, hurriedly, "it seems like we're all too easy-going 'round here. Don't you think so, Lance?"

"Well, hardly," answered the sand artist. "I think we're having an awful struggle to make ends meet."

"Yes, yes; a whole lot!" and "That sounds fine from you, Happerth!" they cried.

"The prices are terrible," murmured Mrs. Harrold to Pauline. "Only yesterday I priced a——" the rest of the sentence, which had to do with clothes, became indistinct.

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"But suppose," said Roy, sitting up, excitedly, "suppose we—I mean the United States—got in. Don't you think that would make a difference, Lance? What are your views on that?"

"Haven't any views. I don't think about it."

"And if Hughes should be elected——"

"I say," boomed Winchell, "this party is degenerating into a political meeting. I move we call it off—eh, Mrs. Happerth? There's no way to stop that fellow but to get him home, and have his wife attend to him."

Pauline rose. She was, in a way, the hostess, and she was tired of the party, too. As for Lance, he was plainly bored. The "crowd" was too much for him at times, especially when they asked his opinions in that owlsh way. He had no opinions, God wot.

"Come to our house and dissipate a while," said Pauline. "It's fairly cool there when the lights are down. And we'll sit in the twilight——"

"And Mr. Harrold must play us some nocturnes," begged Mrs. Winchell.

"Ah, no," protested the pianist, raising a jewelled hand.

"Please," coaxed Pauline.

He looked up at her from under his dark, arched eyebrows.

"If you ask," said he. "And on your magnificent piano. Is it in tune?"

Lance, who was watching the pianist satirically, interjected, "We had it tuned after you played on it last."



Pauline rose. She was . . .
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Their eyes met without great liking, but Harrold only shrugged, and said, "It is a fine instrument. It was a good thing you asked my advice, Mrs. Hap-
perth, before purchasing."

A suspicion that had long dwelt in Lance's mind—namely, that Harrold had incited Pauline to buy the piano, and had "swung the deal" to a certain piano house—was thus partly confirmed. But he said nothing. He brushed the sand from his flannel trousers, and led the way up the beach, the others following, in cloaks and bathrobes, like a flock of many-hued birds.

Assembled at the flat and entering the darkened "library," they discovered a long, lazy form reclining in a deep chair.

"Turn on the light, somebody," cried Mrs. Winchell. "Here's a burglar."

But it was only Bob Sweetling. He unwound his legs, stretched, and rose to greet them with a laugh.

"I suspected you'd come here," he yawned. "So I——"

"Why didn't you join us at the beach?" demanded Pauline.

"Too hot. I knew you'd come back here, so I let myself in with my little pass-key——"

"Ain't it great to be an agent," interposed Winchell.

"—and fell asleep over a copy of 'Mr. Britling.' Say, what'd that fellow write that book for?"

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"It's a great social study," remarked Roy, wagging his head. "What war does, and all that. I read it——"

"Oh, for heavens' sake, don't let's talk about books," wailed Mrs. Winchell. "I want to hear Mr. Harrold play."

"Alfred, play," commanded Pauline.

Thereupon they adjourned to the sun parlour through whose curtains the moon did the best it could. And Harrold played. They listened for a while in silence, then Bob began talking to Lance in a low tone. Mrs. Meredith yawned.

"What's he playing?" she whispered uneasily to Pauline.

"Something by Chaminade, I think," returned the hostess.

"Oh," exclaimed Mrs. Meredith faintly.

At the end there was scattered applause. And immediately Bob's voice became louder, saying:

"Not that I like the job at all. In fact, I'd just as soon your esteemed father-in-law would hire somebody else for that racket. It was painful, positively painful."

"What was painful?" inquired Pauline. Harrold appeared, and two or three voices cried politely, "Oh, play something more."

"Not to-night," said the pianist, gloomily. He sat down in a corner, and helped himself from an open cigar box.

"I was telling Lance," said Bob, "how I had to go over to the Annex just now and tell some tenants

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to vacate. It was a mean job. I always hate to do that."

"Have they got small-pox, or something?" queried May Harrold, with interest.

"No, they're just broke. Oh, it's a common case. No special features about it. Except that a girl there—seemed like a lodger, or something—offered to square everything up herself if given time. Had half a mind to take her up, but didn't."

"Why not, Bob?" asked Lance.

Sweetling glanced at Pauline.

"Well, you see—Mr. Fanning—what I mean is, there'd be no end to that sort of thing. Those people owe for two months. Fellow had the usual story—sickness and everything. Got behind. Times hard. H. C. L. Oh, the devil!"

"Lance, do turn on some lights," said Pauline after a moment. "And don't tell us any more of that depressing story, Bob. I don't intend to have my party spoiled."

There was light, and the talk bore for a while upon a new skating rink in process of erection. Then Bob was heard again:

"It beats me how some of these folks around here keep up the bluff. Now I suppose that chap earns perhaps a hundred a month, and he's been paying fifty rent, and they've got rubbish enough in their flat to furnish two of 'em. And his wife had on as much clothes as any of you——"

A general laugh.

"—I mean, she was dressed as well as most of you

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generally are. Now where's the sense of that? As Mr. Fanning says, that's what makes a landlord's life a nightmare."

"And paying for their furniture on instalments, of course," interjected Winchell.

"And her clothes were things sent out on approval," supplied May Harrold.

"But the Annex!" cried Mrs. Winchell in a descending note. "You wouldn't think the stores would give that ranch credit to people in the Annex!"

"What's the odds?" grinned Roy. "You girls all do it."

"We do not!" they chorused.

Lance, who was passing around the cigars—Harrold took a fresh one—smiled his twisted smile.

He winked encouragingly at Roy. The latter, excited, continued:

"We're all the same breed out here," he insisted. "I owe my tailor; I admit it. I don't owe my rent. Don't dare to. But other things; gee——"

"That's enough, Roy," protested his wife.

"Now, say; we're all friends here. Why not admit it? We're a bunch of slickers. All except Lance. He pays on the nail."

"Thank you," smiled Lance. He wondered if Roy really thought that!

"I say!" shouted Meredith, as a bright thought struck him. "I'll bet every man here, except Lance, has been through bankruptcy. All who have hold up their hands."

He held up his hand, but no one else did. Bob

glanced at Winchell, who, as generally known, had "discharged his obligations" only a few months before. The broker only laughed, though his wife was crimson.

"Enough of that," protested Bob. "There's plenty of people to knock without knocking ourselves. I must go home and see how Fanny's toothache is."

He rose, and the others shortly followed. Their partings lacked something of hilarity.

After they had gone Pauline clad herself silkily, and disposed herself in comfort with the remains of the candy and a novel of which 100,000 copies had already been sold. Lance filled one of his numerous pipes, eyed the bookcase un zestfully, and finally sat down to think.

He should have been thinking about a page advertisement of "glorious California" which had to be written before Saturday, but he found it impossible to fix his mind upon this task. Instead, the conversation just ended, and especially Roy Meredith's part of it, kept coming back to him. He was an absurd creature, was Roy, and yet what he had said was true; he had been groping for a big idea, and had almost found it. "Millions dying over there, and here we sit in comfort," or something like that. A big idea! If it could be twisted around to advertise anything, Bragg would jump at it. But it did not serve to advertise anything except the fact that the world was growing lop-sided. One half suffering untold agonies, the other half prospering on that woe.

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And Lakeside expressed so perfectly the prosperous half. Lance knew, from the business talk he indifferently absorbed from a dozen sources, that much of the money used to furnish these "superior apartments" and to clothe the dwellers therein came from "war babies" or else from food speculation. He knew that Barton Fanning had been a winner in munitions' stocks, and he had heard of a round half dozen of lesser lights in Lakeside who had profited by the war, and were now rolling around in new automobiles, or entertaining lavishly at the Beach Hotel, the Von Moltke Gardens, and other places. He himself—Lance himself—and Pauline were more luxurious, more pleasurably occupied, than they would be without the war. This was not a delightful thought. For although Lance, like most people, had come to take the war as a remote spectacle, a reiteration of old stuff and seldom interesting, there were times when its sheer brutality, its stupid scorn of decency, its ghastly waste of human essence, stood out in vivid colours in his sensitive mind. And he wondered what would happen.

The Rev. Augustine, who sometimes said things to Lance that he would not have said to other members of the family, had a theory that the lop-sidedness of the world could not last. He predicted darkly that Lakeside would "pay for its fun." These were things that the minister did not dare suggest in his sermons. And he said them to Lance because Lance was good-natured enough to listen.

In this thoughtful mood Lance half credited the

dark predictions. It must have been something like that that Roy was groping for. And if so light-some a person as Roy held such ideas, it behooved others to think.

However, Lance was unable to continue this, or any other train of thought, very long at a time. Concentration never was his strong point, and lately he had been too busy, or too bothered, to concentrate at all. Even now——

"Have you written those place-cards for the Sweetlings' dinner party?" Pauline called to him.

"No; I'll get right at them," he replied; saying which he settled deeper in his chair, and refilled his pipe. The mention of the Sweetlings recalled Bob's story of the defaulting tenants over in the Annex. He sympathized with the tenants, not with Bob, or with Mr. Fanning. Lance had a feeling for people who were reckless, or unconventional, or headstrong. He would have liked to be so himself; and one of the reasons he cared for Pauline was because she was reckless. Too bad she wasn't unconventional, too.

He considered those Annex people lucky. They could "blow up," and be evicted, and start somewhere else, without retribution in the form of shocked relatives and horrible visions of conventions shattered. They could just stuff their spare clothes into a suitcase, leave the unpaid-for furniture to moulder, and rent a flat a few blocks away, where life would go on as merrily as ever.

The fact is, Lance was born a bohemian, and not a

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Fanning. At this moment he would have liked to run away, with nothing but the clothes on his back, and "bunk" for a while with his artist friend Pinowsky, who lived over a restaurant on the west side, and made impossible pieces of sculpture, and threw things at the door when people from the Art Institute came around. He and Lance used to sit about—this was before Lance's marriage—and talk about the Absolute, and eat sardines. That was life. This was——

Pauline stood at his shoulder, trailing her blue lounging-robe, and with her finger in her book.

"Why don't you wake up and do something, instead of just yawning?" she inquired not unamiably.

"I am doing something. I'm thinking how to make our life all different. All different, Polly," he cried, jumping up and tweaking her braids teasingly. "I think we'll move into a suburban cottage, with chickens and currant bushes, and do our own washing."

"What do you mean?" she responded, with wonder and vexation in her blue eyes. "You're so crazy at times. I don't want my life any different. And I wish you'd let go my hair."

At that moment, however, the mood in the "Crowes' Nest" was not exactly as Lance fancied it.

It was not a mood of care-free readiness to leave the Annex, with a mocking grimace for landlords, but a will to stay right on and weather the crisis, somehow. This was Sally's determination, and Ann

approved her purpose more than she did Dick's, which appeared to be all for surrender.

Sally raged up and down the small uncluttered space in the living room, and cried:

"I just knew this would happen. I just knew it."

"So did I," said Dick, from his place at the table, where he sat stolidly eyeing his war map.

"Then why didn't you *do* something? Why didn't you borrow some money—or something? Where are we going to put all this truck, if we have to go to boarding? Oh, I never would have taken the trouble, if I'd thought I'd have to leave my home."

At this last Dick raised his head; then, after a couple of attempts to speak, "Call this a home?"

"It's the only kind I've ever known," cried Sally, with a bright shower of tears.

"Stop that, Sally; stop it," commanded Dick, rising. "Look here, old girl, I'll get the money. I'll—I'll make good with old Fanning. Damn him, I'll give him a surprise."

"Its all very well to swear," sobbed Sally. "But it doesn't get us anything but to shock Ann. Look—look at her."

Ann did show signs of shock. She was sitting by the table, with her slender hands folded, and her face turned earnestly from one to the other of the disputants. To her all this was deeply tragic; she thought it more tragic than it was. She did not know that scenes like this were commonplace in the helter-skelter life of the City of Deadly Ambitions; that somewhere in the city a family was "bounced every

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minute." She thought her friends were victims of some unique and deadly blow of fate. And she longed to fling herself into the situation somehow, and remedy it.

"How much is the rent?" she inquired.

"Fifty a month; we owe a hundred," replied Dick, indifferently.

Ann calculated. If she put all her salary into the pot, it would take her ten weeks to pay the amount. It was hopeless.

And Dick looked hopeless, as he stood with his hands on his hips, and a cigarette half-smoked in his fingers, and blurted at intervals of a few minutes that he would "find the money." She was very, very sorry for Dick. His outburst of scorn over calling this a home was the truest thing she had ever heard him say. Whatever was wrong with his mainspring, no doubt the chief trouble was that he had no real "nest"; nothing but a place to sleep, and eat, and smoke. He was the kind of fellow who needed a yard to keep in order, and screens to repair, and chickens to feed. He had to be busy with his hands. The little garden he had started, and now neglected entirely, was a symptom. And all Sally gave him was restaurant dinners and phonograph music.

"I'll find the money," he kept saying.

"Well, go and find it," Sally finally shouted. "Don't stand around here."

He put on his coat and moved toward the door. His face was downcast. But instead of going out he walked down the hall to the telephone, and they heard

him calling a number. He spoke for a few minutes in a low tone, and then returned to the room.

"There," he announced to the girls, without looking at them. "I've got a job."

They stared.

"Well," said Sally, "if you can get them as easy as all that I should think you'd have done it long ago."

"What kind of job is it?" asked Ann, encouragingly.

"Oh, it's—it's a kind of outdoor work. It may take me out of town a bit. All I've got to do now is scare up that hundred, and we're fixed. But that's no snap."

Sally leaned across the table toward him, her face affectionate and forgiving.

"I know you can do it, old fellow," she said. "And now I'm going to ask the Reekers over to supper for to-morrow night; do you mind?"

She danced around the table, and kissed Dick on the cheek. He bore the salute unconcernedly, and presently was deep in study of his war map.

CHAPTER IV

PAULINE'S brother Tom had not lived with the family for years. One of the first things Lance learned to avoid, when in conversation with Barton Fanning or his wife, was any mention of Tom. The impression was conveyed to him that Tom was a lout and a drunkard. The truth was that the wilful young man hated the Wiltshire and Lakeside generally; that he preferred the society of people who could sail yachts and hunt big game; and that as regards liquor, his own assertion that he "never got drunk; not on ordinary stuff, anyhow" was quite accurate. He was well known as a chap who would dare anything—unless it was a Lakeside bridge party—and he managed a taxicab company, an occupation he made exciting through his personal interest in strike disturbances and fights between drivers.

Tom had met Lance only once, shortly before the wedding, and had conceived a dislike for him. He regarded Lance as a languid, half-feminine male doll, told Pauline he washed his hands of her; and had not been heard from since. Occasionally, however, he wrote to Aunt Pringle, who openly took his part. And whenever this happened she always "sprung" the letter as sensationally as possible, quite often at a Fanning dinner, when the whole crowd was there.

About two weeks after the accident to the "Crowes' Nest," just related, there was one of these dinners at the Wiltshire, and Aunt Pringle took pleasure in announcing she had heard from Tom. She withheld the announcement until after dinner was over, and they were all sitting about the living room. Barton Fanning was smoking with zest a large and highly decorative cigar, and Lance was labouring at one. The minister was turning over a magazine, and the ladies, except Aunt Pringle, were discussing suffrage. No one ever knew why these Fanning "roundups" were allowed to happen.

"I have a letter from Tom," said Aunt Pringle.

The conversation stopped dead; then flowed on again.

"Want to hear it?" she inquired, wickedly. Her earrings shook with her mirth, and she winked at Lance. They had always understood each other.

"I will read it," and Aunt Pringle cleared her throat.

There being nothing else to do, they listened. The letter was unusually mild, except in its comments upon Texas weather. It described Tom's duties as sergeant of his artillery battery, touched lightly upon the number of greasers he would have killed if there had been opportunity, and berated Washington for keeping the men idle on the border. Continuing, the letter expressed the hope that Pauline was not overworking; sent, most impertinently, the writer's love for his father and mother, and then, in a sort of postscript:

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"We have a peculiar case here. Young fellow named Crowe; used to live in Lakeside. He blew in here suddenly the other day at headquarters, with enlistment papers. He's in my company. What do you know about him, or what can you find out?"

Barton Fanning sat upright, and his cigar ash fell on the rug.

"By George," said he.

The women looked at him in amazement. There seemed little or nothing in that postscript to excite a prosperous banker after dinner.

His bright blue eyes, fixed upon the nodding ferns in the "conservatory," became reflective, then shrewd. But he did not explain what had roused him. Barton Fanning was the most private of private bankers.

Lance, however, lingering after the others, pumped him while Pauline and her mother were examining some new dress goods. And this was all that had happened: Dick Crowe had persuaded Sweetling to accept a check in payment of the \$100, and the check, when presented at the bank, had proved to be bogus. Bob, informed by his employer he was "about as good as no agent at all," had been adjured to find Dick or the money, and had been unable to find either. Of course the fellow had skipped as soon as he realized his crime was discovered. Hadn't been seen at the flat for ten days.

"I was about to put it up to Bob to make good on the hundred," said Fanning, "for of course he had no business to take a check. But now I guess it

won't be necessary. Take it out of the chap's hide." Puff, puff. "Guess I'll stop that little check game right here. And the army'll have one man less to feed."

Lance felt vaguely distressed. In the presence of the aggrieved landlord he could, of course, do nothing but pronounce Dick's conduct revolting, but after he had gone home with Pauline the incident pictured itself to him in other colours. He could understand Dick's desperation—he who had been close to that himself while maintaining a Fannington flat on a reporter's salary—and he could understand how miserable Dick must have felt when contriving that check. Somehow he could not conceive of the youngster as a professional swindler, though he sneered at himself for taking this charitable view of a stranger. No, Dick must be just a fool, and fools were pitiable.

And all this had been happening the last few days just the other side of the wall, while he, Lance, and his establishment, had been spending almost as much as Dick had sold his soul for! A life turned upside down, and a man headed for the penitentiary, while they played bridge.

There was this sober streak in Lance, this capacity for remorse, which no amount of life in a careless world would take out of him. That was what made him different from the Fannings.

And yet he did nothing. He did not suggest to Father Fanning that clemency would be only human, nor did he propose anything else that would save the

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poor fool whose nest on the other side of the wall was about to be swept away. There was this streak in Lance, too, that he seldom acted upon his generous thoughts, except when Pauline wanted something. He disliked to be positive or assertive. He hated a row, and in a case like this, with a stern landlord trying to get back \$100, there could be no protest without a row.

So he kept silent, while he had glimpses of Father Fanning going here and there, and evidently contriving means of getting Dick Crowe out of a uniform and into stripes. The banker did not make any more revelations. He could be seen walking down the street with his well-dressed agent and discussing, no doubt, this affair as well as others. The agent, too, was reticent. Lance tackled "Butterfly Bob" one day, and received only the reply:

"Look here, old chap, the less said about that the better."

And Bob had a distressed frown.

But the days went on, and there was nothing in the papers about a young man living in the Fannington Annex being arrested on the Texas border. The days went on, and Lance pursued his serene way to and from the office, thinking every time he saw a young man with a carefully pressed last summer's suit board the elevated that this might be another of the same type as Dick Crowe. And all the time he was unaware that at the office, glancing furtively at the star "ad-writer" from her infinitely lower level, was a young woman who had more than a

passing interest in Dick Crowe, and who wondered whether Lance would help her—if it came to that.

In the meantime, the evening of the Sweetlings' dinner party arrived. It was given at the Beach Hotel, of course, and the hotel press agent saw that the newspapers learned about it. Everybody heard about it in Lakeside, for that matter, because it was on that occasion that Alfred Harrold became intoxicated and threw a plate of ice-cream at Lance. A most mysterious affair, this; Alfred did not get drunk or throw things, his wife assured everybody, unless he had "a serious feud on," and no one was aware he had it in for Lance. He was eventually quieted, and Lance took the thing so good-naturedly—the ice-cream did not hit him—that nothing much happened at the time, and we can afford to forget it.

In the interval between the dinner and the dancing Bob came to Lance and said:

"I have to go over to the Wiltshire a minute to see your father-in-law. Wish you'd come along. I feel jumpy."

The target of the plate of ice-cream was glad to accept. The clatter of the "crowd" had wearied him. He and Bob strolled arm in arm through the cañon-like streets, listening to the squeal of phonographs and the laughter that issued from lighted rooms, and aware, too, of the pallid stars that presided overhead.

"There are some queer things in this world," said Bob, pensively. "There are all kinds of people."

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Lance made no reply. He was too fond of Bob to twit him because of banality.

"You're going to see a rum bit of drama," continued Bob. "I asked you to come along because, you being a student of life, and all that, it may interest you. That is, if she's there. I'll just about bet two bits she won't be there."

"Who?"

"You'll see. Ah, here looms the Wiltshire. No other building just like it in Lakeside, 'spite of all the new ones."

The Wiltshire was reposeful compared with its neighbours. The fountain, in its snow-white court, plashed calmly on.

They went up to the second floor, and were admitted to the wide, low living room. Barton Fanning sat there alone, busy with some papers. He greeted Bob with a nod, and looked at Lance with surprise.

"I brought him along as another witness," said Bob. "Gad, I hope she'll hurry, for I've got to get back and be host."

"We don't need Lance, but let him stay now he's here. I told you," he said to his son-in-law, "about that bad check affair. Here you'll see another development of it. Maybe you can advise us," he concluded with a twinkle.

The banker had not looked at his watch more than twice when the door-bell rang, and the maid brought in—not a young man in a last summer's suit, not a brace of detectives, as Lance had rather expected,

but a young woman of something less than medium height, clad in a severe dark suit, and with dark hair waved over a white forehead.

"The wife," thought Lance.

She accepted a chair without so much as saying "Good evening," and surveyed the three men calmly.

"Well, now, just what is your proposition?" inquired Fanning, leaning back in his chair. Bob Sweetling's shirt-front crackled as he awaited the answer.

"It's just this," said the girl, glancing a bit timidly at the elaborate evening dress of the two younger men. "I'm no relation of Mr. Crowe's, Mr. Fanning. I ought to explain that. But I think a good deal of him and his wife. I don't—I don't want to see him go to jail. It would be—too awful."

Lance glanced at Bob, and conveyed a silent, but intelligible, curse for having brought him.

The young woman went on:

"I want my motives clearly understood, because I am told a misunderstanding of one's motives, in Lakeside, is apt to be embarrassing. And this is all: I like Dick Crowe and Sally, and I want to help them out of trouble. Is that clear?"

"Quite clear," Fanning ruled, like a judge. And, "Oh, quite," murmured Bob Sweetling.

Ann Stone's long-lashed vision swept Lance for an instant, then returned to the man who had Dick in his power.

"What I should like," she said, "is to work in your bank, evenings, and make up the shortage. Give me

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just any little thing to do; I'm not a stenographer or anything clever. At Bragg & Co.'s"—she avoided looking at Lance this time—"I'm just a filer. But you must have to have unskilled clerks in the bank, Mr. Fanning; and sometimes there must be more than they can get through in the day-time."

"H'm," muttered Fanning, rubbing his nose. He looked at Bob, who said: "There is, of course, er—occasional checking."

There was a silence, during which Lance, who was astounded by this young woman, who was not Dick Crowe's wife, nor any relation, but just a friend, took out a cigarette and put it back again. What a friend she was, to be sure! So that was the sort of people on the other side of the wall!

The banker spoke, with a sharp and steady gaze upon Ann Stone:

"In return for such work, what would you expect?"

She unfolded her hands, and refolded them, but in no other way betrayed agitation.

"I would ask you not to prosecute," she returned in a low voice. "I would ask you to let Dick Crowe be entirely free; just as though he had done nothing wrong. And, too, that nothing more be said to anybody than—than has to. He's not a bad fellow, Mr. Fanning. Its just that he's never been—he's never had——"

"We needn't go into that," said Mr. Fanning, hastily. "I don't doubt he's a nice chap, though I

think he really needs a brief term in a cell. But—well—what do you think, Sweetling?”

He looked at Bob, and Bob looked at Lance. Ann also looked at Lance, as much as to say, “I know you’re a good-hearted man; won’t you please help?”

Lance didn’t say a word. But in a moment Bob turned back to Fanning, and said,

“Oh, I can find some work for Miss Stone, if you want.”

And the barker, who had probably thought it all out, very promptly replied to her questioning gaze:

“I think I’ll take up your proposition. I will—h’m—pay you three dollars and fifty cents a week, if Mr. Sweetling finds that much work for you. Is that satisfactory?”

“I’ll be grateful for anything at all,” she replied.

Lance kicked Bob savagely in the shin, and muttered, not to Bob, but to himself, “Great God! Is he going to jew her down like that? The old Shylock!”

“That is,” continued Mr. Fanning, blandly, “each week we shall consider that amount deducted from the total sum. There will be no cash transaction.”

“Ouch!” said Bob, without apparent relevancy.

Ann Stone rose. “I’ll begin whenever you say,” she said to Sweetling.

Bob struggled to his feet, blinking, and with one of his most courteous bows, answered vaguely to the effect that he would talk it over with her later. He looked at his watch, said “That all?” to Barton Fanning, who, like Lance, had risen also, and made

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for the door. He opened it for Ann Stone, and watched her to the head of the stairs, where she nodded to him with a grateful smile before she disappeared.

"There, Lance," Barton Fanning was saying. "Don't let anybody ever say I'm a brutal and hard-hearted landlord. I'm letting the young crook go scot-free, and I'll never see a cent of the money I lost. But I'm not a church trustee for nothing. Am I, Lance?"

"No, I shouldn't say you were anything for nothing," was the swift reply.

Out on the street, as he and Bob walked rapidly toward the hotel, Lance broke out:

"By heavens, Bob! By the great brown-toed Buddha! Did you ever see anything like that? Did you ever see a pious old rip soak it to a helpless little feminine God's creature like that? By Methusalem, I don't care if he is my father-in-law, Bob; it was awful! She's going to work for him evenings, to pay back what another woman's husband tried to steal. She's going to slave all winter—for it'll take all winter—for that old curmudgeon's hundred dollars. Bob, how in the hell did you sit there and let it happen?"

"Why did you sit there?" retorted Bob, much hurt. "You're his son-in-law."

"I couldn't do anything," frowned Lance. "I'll take it out of him some way—by thunder. I feel like never speaking to him again."

"That would be darned awkward," said Bob.

They walked on, and the tall, luminous towers of the hotel came in view.

"No," said Lance, "I don't suppose I can do a thing. I suppose that's business. But anyhow, I'm going to have Pauline invite that girl over—invite the whole caboodle, whoever they are—give 'em a big dinner. And I'll borrow the money for it from Father Fanning, and never pay him back."

"My guess is you won't even do that," replied Bob, calmly. And then they entered the hotel lobby, where half Lakeside was sitting around pretending it had an "appointment"; and they rejoined their friends in the ball-room amid cheers and reproaches.

CHAPTER V

NOTHING, of course, was precisely what Lance did. He told Pauline all about the infamous bargain, and she heard him with that childish, politely interested expression she always wore when he mentioned business. Then he depicted the dignified yet modest demeanour of Miss Stone, thinking—as fools sometimes do think—to interest her in the girl's personality. But Pauline merely opened her eyes, and said: "You seem awfully engrossed in this affair."

And Lance wilted. The proposal for a dinner never issued from his lips.

What Pauline was concerned about was the trouble with Alfred Harrold. She maintained he never would have picked Lance as the object of his ice-cream-throwing frenzy without a reason.

"What have you done to him? You must have done something."

"Not the least little thing," Lance insisted.

"Not even tried one of your silly jokes on him?"

"My dear Polly, I haven't tried a joke—not a real joke—on any of your friends since we were married."

"Well, you have made yourself unpopular somehow. You must have done something like you did

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over at the Braggs' that night, when he sang that song he composed himself, and you insisted you had heard it in the 'Follies.'"

"That was sober earnest. I didn't believe Bragg could have composed it himself. And I don't think so now. I'll bet he hired——"

"And you went around pretending you were an old man, and limping."

"I had to do something. All those stiff old parties in velvet gowns, and suede shoes——"

"Well, anyway, we're not likely to be asked to the Braggs' again."

"Oh, yes, we are; we're going to have to dinner-dance with them, and tea-dance with them, and beach supper with them, unless there's an early fall."

He made a little boat of paper, and blew it out of the window.

"Well," said Pauline in a tone of finality, "I wish you would apologize to Alfred Harrold, and have it over."

"Apolo——" he started to shout; and then gave it up. Perhaps it was his fault somehow, though he could not imagine what he had done. How could he know that, as recently as last July, he had wounded the "modern Rubinstein" (as his circulars had it) by falling asleep during the rendition of a Rachmaninoff prelude, then by waking up and asking if "that was the Tannhauser march." This was at a little recital given by Pauline in Harrold's honour.

And how could Lance know that Harrold had received a commission of something like 5 per cent.

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because Pauline bought a Stunway and not a **Marlin** and **Hanspik**; also that Harrold supposed Lance had learned about this, and was looking for revenge?

What Lance might have perceived, if he had not been inexcusably good-natured and lazy, was that Harrold considered all women below a certain age to be his pals, and when any of them had husbands they admired, these husbands were practically rivals of his glorious self.

Such subtleties were quite beyond Lance at his present age and his present state of education. He endured Harrold, and was rather proud of enduring him; and never until the violent episode at the hotel did he imagine that Harrold was his enemy. He was now convinced of it, thanks to Pauline, and he did not like it. He hated a row, and there was no telling how far this row might go.

The thought persisted as he worked that evening on some democratic campaign publicity, and remained with him after he went to bed, when he was doing what he called his "dog-watch." The dog-watch was that hour or two, every night, after he struck the pillow, when he failed to sleep, and his imagination went galloping on ahead of him. In those hours his mind, awakening from the torpor that oppressed it by day, would invent dramas, mostly bloodthirsty ones; whole pages of dialogue, full of the wildest revolt and the most sardonic humour. It was not uncommon for him to kill a person during his "dog-watch."

And this night, while Pauline slumbered, and he

lay with clenched fists seeing things on the blank ceiling, he fancied his row with Harrold growing from day to day, expanding from ice-cream throwing to something less absurd and more fatal. He conceived a scene in which the pianist, having insulted Pauline, as well as Lance himself, would have to be pummeled, perhaps killed. Yes, Lance might accidentally kill him in his rage. The picture became ghastly. "Take that, and that!" Harrold lying with dark blood on his forehead, and Lance bending over him, horrified. They would come to arrest him. He would cry out——

"What on earth ails you?" came Pauline's drowsy voice.

"Have to get a drink," he replied, the tragedy foolishly ending. He pattered out to the bathroom in his slippers, lit the light in that white-walled retreat of luxury, filled a glass, and drank slowly, eyeing himself in the mirror.

"Getting seedy," he thought, remarking his pallid, wrinkled brow. And he fancied his hair was thinning. He finished the water, and returned to the bedroom.

It was all nonsense. He could not kill anybody. He could not even punch anybody. All that sort of thing, he reflected, had been educated out of his father, and his father's father, before he, Lance, was born. He had no kinship with those Vermont ancestors of his, who had fought Indians and tamed wildernesses. He could not fight, would not fight, and never would have to fight.

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He would "fix it up" with Harrold.
He fell asleep.

Weeks went by, and he met the pianist several times, and they neither fixed it up nor came to blows. Nothing else happened. There was nothing happening except the national campaign. Roy Meredith had something new to talk about. The weather grew too cold for beach parties, so they had card parties, and talked politics.

Lance kept out of these endless, futile arguments as much as he could, and even dodged a few games of bridge. He had something at last to do that interested him. Bragg had captured a big contract relating to the democratic campaign, and the office was in a whirl. This work engrossed Lance; it was almost like newspaper work. He threw himself into it body and brain; his "dog-watches" were filled with captions and slogans instead of duels. For once he was doing something for Bragg that was genuine; he believed what he wrote. As the campaign progressed he passionately approved, and assisted, the argument that Wilson had prevented war, and that he was a great man. He searched his extensive vocabulary for epithets with which to sneer at that "mere knocker," Hughes. And he even went around to the *Press* office and abused the managing editor, before whom he had once trembled, because the *Press* was republican.

He jeered at himself afterward when he thought of this piece of folly. But he went on working for

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Wilson, and writing screaming full-page "ads." Meantime, in the heat of things, he stirred up another feud.

There was no good reason why Bill Ellsworth, Bragg's other "crack man," should be jealous of Lance, but he was. Ellsworth deemed himself hard-worked, and Lance pampered. Most of the time, now, Ellsworth sulked. Bragg, who foresaw trouble, hinted at making him vice-president and treasurer, but Ellsworth did not take these hints kindly. As treasurer he would have to work afternoons, and he did not want to work afternoons. He wanted to play golf.

A day or two before the election this ill feeling came to the surface in the ridiculous way such things do, over an umbrella. It was a rainy afternoon, and Ellsworth was in that savage frame of mind that be-sets golfers with the approach of winter. About four o'clock he started to leave the office, and perceiving an umbrella standing in a corner near Teddy's desk, started off with it.

Lance, who was idling at a window, turned just in time.

"Here, man, that's mine," said he.

Ellsworth unrolled the umbrella calmly, and replied: "I left it here."

Lance walked up and remarked, "I'll be glad to loan it to you, but I don't quite know what I'll do myself. If you take my umbrella I'll get wet."

"Too bad," came the sneer. "Might get pneumonia and die."

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"Well, Bragg could spare you as well as he could me."

"Think so?" snapped Ellsworth. The gibe had fallen upon a sore spot. "Maybe he'd as soon keep a man who works eight hours a day as one who pretends to work three."

He spoke loud enough to be heard in the general office, where the consciousness of a squabble now began to awaken. The clerks and filers in the larger room craned their necks. Teddy, at his post, bounced in his chair with delight.

Lance gazed curiously at Ellsworth a moment, and then looked wicked.

"Look here," he said, "I don't know what's wrong with you, but I'll bet it's pastry. Eat less pastry, Ellsworth, and improve your liver. Now, at your age——"

The elder man seized the umbrella handle threateningly, and bit his graying moustache.

"Happerth," he croaked, "I'd enjoy mussing that snowy collar of yours. And I think one jolt would just about crumple you up. But a man picks a man to fight with; and you're not that. You're neither man nor woman—a sort of zero in sex. You're a hothouse plant that would wither at a touch. One of these days you'll get yours, for the world is getting more and more uncomfortable for such as you. Now take the damned umbrella—I'll make you a present of it, but don't you dare address me in this office again."

He thrust the inoffensive object—there is nothing

that looks quite so sheepish as an umbrella—into Lance's arms, and plunged out of the door. Lance, in a boyish passion, flung the object of discord after him. It struck the wall and fell, dismembered.

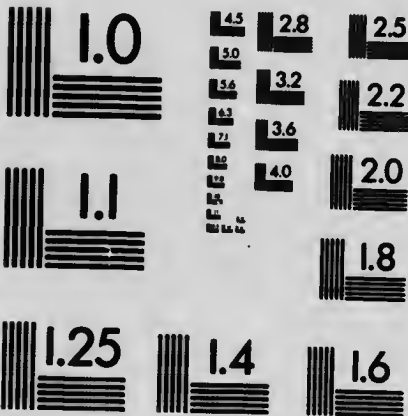
This over, Bragg's "star" stood there, with a feeling he could not account for, that his limbs were trembling under him. Was this fear, or what was it? He could not believe it was fear. His heart was fluttering, too, was that fear? He was furious over this weakness, the more when he turned and discovered heads protruding through two or three doors. These heads were instantly withdrawn, but their owners must have seen him as he stood there, white and trembling. It was awful! Ellsworth had insulted him before the whole office, and Lance had let him "get away with it." It was not the end, either. There was something underlying this. There must be office politics of which he had been unaware. He took a step toward the door, with the idea of catching Ellsworth, and finding out what was really wrong. Then he abandoned this, and walked back toward his cubby-hole, winking at Teddy as he went. Teddy winked, but calculatingly and deprecatingly, like an expert at the ringside who marks the weaker man.

That evening, after a long and very smoky conference over the last advertising broadsides of the campaign, Lance came home late, with his eyes smarting and one foot dragging after the other. The soft lights in the flat glowed gratefully, the heat,



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after the wet and cold home-coming, was blessed. He looked for a sympathetic and comforting Pauline, who would give him hot drinks and put him to bed. Instead he encountered an icicle in clinging robes, who stared at him inimically, and seemed unaware of his forlorn condition.

Lance sank upon the davenport and unbuttoned his damp overcoat.

"I had no umbrella," he muttered, disgustedly.

"I know," said Pauline, without sympathy. "A young lady who, I suppose, was Miss Stone, the martyr, brought yours home about dinner time, and said she found it at the office, and thought you might want it."

With this her chin went up very high.

"What? Where is it?" He struggled to his feet, and took up the umbrella, which stood in a corner. "By Jove, it's got silver on the handle. Then it wasn't mine that——"

He had been entirely in the wrong that afternoon.

"Plague take the thing," he said, much vexed. "I had an awful row over another one, and all the time——"

"But let me ask, does Miss Stone—if that is her name—look after your umbrella, rubbers, and so on? Or what is the idea?"

He looked at her blinkingly.

"I don't know. No, of course not." It became apparent that Pauline was angry. "Say," he went on in a more intelligent tone, "I suppose she thought she was doing me a favour. I suppose she thought

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of it as a little neighbourly action; the kind of thing they do in Pleasant City, or Peaceful Village, or wherever she comes from. And why not?"

Pauline turned abruptly.

"Neighbourly!" she exclaimed, with scorn. "We don't have neighbours, do we?"

And she added, "I'll thank this—this unofficial Sister of Mercy to stay away—that's all."

Lance stared at her in astonishment; and not only because of her unreasonable rage. Pauline had invented a phrase!

CHAPTER VI

DESPITE his absorption in the election, and his feverish uncertainty during the deadlock, Lance found opportunity to thank Ann Stone for being so awkwardly thoughtful. He did not hint she had been awkward, of course; indeed the unpleasantness at home had quite blown over. It was with unimpeachable courtesy that he sought her out and told her he was grateful. He would have liked to add that he was interested to find a resident of Lakeside capable of an unconventionality, but he thought she would not understand this.

She responded to him with the right degree of warmth. It was clear she was not a simpering filer, like the others.

"And are you," he inquired, "are you, as reported, an unofficial Sister of Mercy?"

Her smile was uncomprehending.

"I mean, besides looking after people's umbrellas, are you doing overtime work in the bank?"

She merely gave him a flitting little smile, said, "I'm on my thirteenth week," and went away.

She thought as she went that he looked jaded, indeed almost ill. There was an unhealthy whiteness about his face, and his eyes looked "screwed up." It was work because of the election, of course. She

thought he appeared out of place in this company of burly and thick-skinned "ad. men." Naturally she had no means of knowing that during this election week there had been three dinners and a dance to which Lance had felt bound to go. The pace in Lakeside grew more feverish as the cold weather settled down.

Yes, Lakeside was "speeding up." That last fall and winter of peace it was as though a premonition of some blight pervaded the dance halls and the cafés, the theatres and the clubs. Every place of that sort was overflowing. A multitude of "new people" had swarmed into the locality. Their money flowed into the pot; their costumes blended with the already impressive array. Every flat building echoed to their player-pianos, or rang with their laughter. And the lights streamed from these tiers of homes until long after midnight. Wilson Avenue, a "show street" of the district, blazed with lights both from shop windows and from graceful white pillars along the pavement. Hat shops and confectionery stores, musical instrument showrooms and tobacco dispensaries, shone into the night. And the sidewalks were full of idlers or purchasers or groups of hurrying folk, "out for a stroll," and drawn to Wilson Avenue as to a bazaar. There is nothing like Wilson Avenue except Broadway, New York.

And through this dazzling, powdered, fur-clad crowd Ann Stone threaded her way each evening, bound for the bank to check lists of depositors. She was aware that these lists grew with each week. She

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was astounded that an "outlying bank" could do such a business; but these conclusions she kept to herself. She was altogether occupied with doing her checking right, and with thinking about Sally's welfare, and wondering whether Sally would hold on to her job of selling 50-cent fiction to customers of the Largest Department Store. Also with Dick, and when he would be heard from.

Those were lonely evenings. Except for the shuffling step of the Scandinavian night watchman, and the occasional appearance of Bob Sweetling, who would rush in with a mere nod to Ann, rummage in a drawer, and run out again, she saw no one in the rooms where she worked. Under the single electric light she checked and checked until her fingers stiffened. In the street outside came passersby whose laughter was borne faintly through the heavy windows. And across the street, as if to mock her at her sacrificial task, revolved endlessly the shining doors of the billiard hall where Dick had lost the rent money.

Sometimes she watched those doors for quarter hours at a time, fancying that Dick might be seen among the crowd. But this, of course, was foolish. Dick must be far away. He had never telephoned nor written. No doubt he cowered somewhere, expecting the worst—and eating it. His whereabouts, and the possible state of his mind, cost Ann many hours' sleep. Sally, on the other hand, betrayed no worry.

"The silly ape can come back when he's good and ready," said Sally.

It was in the sixteenth week of Ann's servitude that, as she sat there with only the silent bank furniture for company, there came a most unusual interruption. It was not from the street, not from the side door, where Sweetling generally entered, but from the front door, which was kept locked and barred. A rattling of the knob, then a head at the window; a head in a big slouch hat. She looked closer, and perceived that the man wore a soldier's overcoat, and that the hat was a soldier's. Then she made out a face under the hat; a face full of good humour and intelligence. Surely she had seen it before. Where?

It was only a moment he peered in the window; then he returned to the door and shook it thoroughly. Ann called into the unexplored shadows of the bank for the watchman, who eventually slouched into the room, stared awhile, then took down the bars, and admitted the soldier.

He took off his stained headgear, bobbed his yellow head with brief politeness, and inquired: "Mr. Fanning here?"

His quick blue eyes glanced from Ann to the blinking watchman, and his even white teeth were revealed in a smile.

"Is this the night force? Say, I didn't mean to startle anybody."

"You haven't," replied Ann stoutly. She wished she could think what made his face so familiar.

"Well, it must seem a little weird, my breaking in like a man insisting on depositing a million dollars. But I haven't brought anything, nor am I going to

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take anything. I'm on the hunt for my father, that's all; and as he wasn't anywhere else, I thought he might be here."

"He doesn't come here in the evenings," said Ann. "Sometimes he goes over to the other bank."

There was a silence. The watchman had departed.

Tom walked over to the radiator in the little lobby, and stood warming his hands, and applying the heels of his long brown boots to the coils. Ann returned to her checking.

Presently his voice was heard behind her:

"I know now where I've seen you before. It was down in Texas, the day we went South. You were sitting on a suitcase, and looking lonely."

"And along came a troop train, and there was plenty of company. I remember," said Ann, smiling over her shoulder.

"How did you get to Lakeside?" he inquired, coming up to the mahogany rail.

"By the Alton and the elevated."

She felt unaccountably cheerful in Tom's society. He had a sort of unadorned courtesy and a twinkling but respectful gaze.

"How is it you're all alone here?" he demanded presently.

She paused while she stabbed a check-mark opposite a name, then replied,

"I'm an extra worker. This is a—a side line."

"Looks like a soft one. Do you mean you work in the daytime, too?"

Ann swung about in her chair.

"Now, Mr. Fanning, I've told you all I need to about my jobs, haven't I?"

Delighted, instead of disturbed, by this remark, he said:

"Well, I never knew man nor woman either who tried to grab two salaries who wasn't sorry for it. And the idea of dragging your side money out of father! It will ruin his health, if not yours."

After a pause:

"Is he still getting rich quick?"

"I couldn't tell you," she laughed; but the laugh only covered her wonder at this singular Fanning. Was he really ignorant of his father's affairs, or only making conversation? She returned to her work.

After a time, "Look here," said Tom, "do you mind if I come in there and telephone?"

She rose and unlatched the gate, which had a special catch to it, and he swung his long form within the enclosure, where he planted himself, vast overcoat and all, on a high chair before the instrument. He seemed to have forgotten how to use one, and it was only after much trouble with Central that he obtained a number. He talked low, but intensely, with his blue eyes rolled upward.

"I tell you, this won't wait . . . Now, mother, for heaven's sake don't fly off that way . . . No, I won't come to dinner . . . Oh, well . . . Do you suppose he's at the country club? . . . I'll be hanged if I will . . . Oh, damn!"

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The last two words were uttered simultaneously with the click of the receiver. He turned toward Ann to apologize for these words, but her oblivious back was toward him. It was a business-like little back, too, and it had its charms. She worked, yet she spoke like a lady. He wondered again how she got here; how she came to Lakeside. Tom did not know much about girls who worked.

He got up and stood swinging the toe of his boot against the gate. He was deep in thought; how deep, Ann could not have guessed without knowing that he had advice for the family, and hated nothing worse than advising the family. Yes, there was one thing worse: being advised by it.

After what seemed a long time Ann breathed a relieved sigh, put up her papers in a drawer, locked it, and rose. It was nine o'clock, and she was very tired. As she turned from her desk her eyes met Tom's, and they both smiled, for no traceable reason. Perhaps she wanted to show she was not afraid of him; and he—well, there is no telling why he smiled. But the next instant he found himself boldly proposing that he see her safely through the wild region "west of the elevated," and she accepted as casually as though she had known him for many years.

He walked with long strides, and with his hands thrust into his huge pockets. Ann flitted beside him, her head scarcely at his shoulder. He felt enormous and very, very cheerful. And a fragment of an old

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money out of fa-
ther! It will ruin his
health, if not yours”

verse—there was no telling where he had heard it—came into his head:

“Her feet, like little mice,
Stole in and out.”

The wind shrieked under the elevated structure, and hard flakes of snow spun along the walk; but the pair were not discommoded. An elation without reason or excuse kept them oblivious to the cold. And they talked.

Of the war, of course, and how it seemed one day close at hand, the next remote, unbelievable. It was Ann who said this, and who expressed all the gratitude to President Wilson for having kept the great shadow far away, and who hoped Germany's latest peace offer would be accepted.

“Surely you don't hope that!” exclaimed Tom, almost stopping in his tracks.

“Of course I do. Doesn't everybody want the awful thing stopped?”

He became graver than she had yet seen him.

“I belong to the Pioneers of Hate,” said he. “I was in New York when those butchers sank the *Lusitania*, and a lot of us swore we would get even some day. I had a friend on that ship.”

She murmured something, but the wind blew it away.

“His name was Billy Todd,” continued Tom, “and he was the livest guy that ever lived. He and I went on many a hunting trip away up in the north

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woods, and once we sailed pretty near to Alaska on his yacht, and we had a beautiful wreck on a pinnacle rock. He and I were like brothers. He was a square chap, was Billy; and he never did anything but the sporting thing by anybody. And there he was, drowned like a rat, by a bunch of pirates engaged in a game as far from sporting as anything you ever——”

He stopped suddenly, and turned to her with a different look.

“By the way, what’s your name?”

He was comically naïve, but he was harmless. Ann answered his question in full. And then she would have liked to ask him all about his regiment, and his ambitions. But just then they entered the glare of Wilson Avenue, and the carnival crowd shut off more than fragmentary talk. A moving picture theatre was just disgorging one audience and swallowing another. The sidewalk was a whirl of faces, radiant and vivid, and scores of voices were chattering about the melodrama within. Tom led his companion to the curb, and shouldered a path through lanes of young fellows with fur-collared overcoats and slim feet. These stared fixedly, like Chinamen, at Ann. And they eyed Tom’s uniform, and mumbled sarcastic remarks from the corners of their mouths.

Tom wrenched himself out of this press, rescued Ann, and walked on with her past the rainbow lights of the music shops, the jewellery shops, and the beauty shops.

“What I always think about these people,” said

Ann, "is, they're so gay. They laugh so much. People don't do that where I came from. These folks act as if they were always on vacation."

"They are," he said, grimly. "They don't care who gets torpedoed."

"Oh, I don't feel that. I don't mean they're heartless but—they're children. All they need, or want, is fun."

"I know," replied Tom. "This part of town is a little like Paris; or Paris as it used to be. You ought to see it now. Or have you been there?"

"My, no!" laughed Ann. Paris! It seemed to her as far away as heaven.

But Tom had been to Paris; since the war, too. He had driven an ambulance for a while. Then he had returned, thinking the United States was going to war. And he had been badly disappointed.

He became more wonderful every minute. He had been at Dunkirk when the great shells first fell. He had been on a liner whose stern evaded a torpedo by rods only. And he had been on the Texas border, and had tramped miles in the angry sun, while comrades fell fainting by the roadside. And here he was, this figure of romance, clumping along beside her in Lakeside, and seeming to like it.

They turned into Westmont Avenue, with its array of high façades and deserted porches; its warm lights glowing into the night; its mysteriously gliding motor cars. Somehow it seemed less forbidding to the lonely girl from Texas, less formidable. She faced it now with Tom's strength beside

her; with some of his sturdy indifference supporting her poise.

"I've a sister living around here somewhere," he remarked, gazing up at the buildings vaguely.

"I know where she lives. In the Fannington, just ahead there."

"You mean that brownstone——"

"No, that's the Annex, where I live. The Fannington is—— But I thought you were brought up in Lakeside."

"I was," he answered, drily, "but the place couldn't hold me."

Another half block, and he remarked, "I'll have to run up and see sis. We've always been good friends, in spite of—I've got to see her, since I can't find father. Oh, are these your diggings?"

Just as they came to the entrance, a tallish man with black, curling hair and an astrackan-lined overcoat issued from the door and walked rapidly away, head down against the wind. And Ann, glancing into the tiled hall, saw a flash of what she was sure was Sally's skirt mounting the stairway. The sight held her tense for a moment. The man had looked like Lance Happerth—but it could not be! She turned to Tom with a face suddenly grown thoughtful and wan.

Her thanks were very faint. She seemed in a dreadful hurry to get inside.

He decided she regretted having come with him. And it was in no pleasant frame of mind that he addressed himself to the Fannington.

CHAPTER VII

THE fellow in the fancy overcoat entered the Fannington just ahead of Tom, and while the latter was seeking, and eventually finding, the very elegant card that read "Mr. Lancelot Hap-perth," framed in bronze over a glittering speaking-tube, the man was being shot upward in the elevator. Tom thought nothing of him. He was concerned with the smooth marble floors and walls of the entrance hall, and the marble settee that ornamented it, and the subdued richness of the whole place.

Scorning to announce himself by the speaking-tube, he mounted the stairs, and rang the bell at the right door.

There was a rustling behind it, and Pauline opened to him, with a stare and an exclamation.

"Yes, I'm here," said Tom. "How are you, Polly?"

"But how in the world——"

"Why in the world is what you mean?" he retorted, entering. A wave of warm air, and odours of clothing, plants, and coffee assailed his senses. He glanced with a scowl into the living room, where he heard voices.

"There are people in there," he complained.

"They won't hurt you," she laughed. "I'm aw-

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fully glad to see you, Tom, but I suppose I looked queer, because I thought it was Lance——”

“Look here, where can we talk? I don’t want to get into that crowd. And for heavens’ sake, let me take off this coat. It must be ninety here.”

Pauline eyed with surprise, and some distaste, his desert-stained uniform. He, on the other hand, had a flicker of genuine admiration in his eye. Pauline had taste, all right, if she was giddy.

By this time “the crowd,” never dreaming that a stranger stood outside, had come to the door in a body, and introductions could not be avoided. Neither could Tom escape being led into the living room and planted in a chair that creaked under him. He was addressed immediately by a fashion-plate whose name seemed to be Meredith, and who desired the number of his regiment.

“Forty-fourth bottle-washers,” growled Tom. They were going to ask him now if it was hot down there, and if he saw any Mexicans—he knew they were.

“Do be civil, Tom,” said Pauline. “My brother,” she explained to the company, “was brought up in a Christian family, though you wouldn’t think it.”

Murmurs of “Oh, I’m sure——” and the like.

“It’s so interesting to see a real military person,” said Mrs. Sweetling from her place on the davenport. “Did you get that scar at the front?”

He held up his wrist, and replied, “That came from having a door shut on me—a Lakeside door.”

"I have a friend in the artillery," persisted Roy. "Name of Clavering."

"I know him," said Tom. "He fell out on the first hike."

He was certainly a tough customer, they decided. So strange that Pauline should have a brother like this! Yet they had heard—what had they not heard? He was a drunkard, was he not, and a ne'er-do-well. Probably he had come for a loan. They decided to let him get it, and they began to talk among themselves, to give Pauline a chance to take him away. Winchell and Mrs. Sweetling moved toward the piano. Mrs. Meredith, whose pale blue eyes had rested upon Tom as steadily and insolently as those of a child, yawned, and took up a book.

Tom thrust out one booted leg, and examined the apartment, with its new-looking furniture, and its inevitable pictures, statuettes, and books. He felt smothered.

"We were rehearsing a play when you came in," said Pauline. "It's one that Lance wrote, and we all are going to act. That's why I was so anxious to have Lance get home. I can't think where he is."

"Say!" exclaimed Tom, rising. "Suppose your friends go right on rehearsing, while you and I go into the other room a minute. I've really got to tell you something."

She looked doubtfully at the "crowd," Sweetling said:

"We can go through with part of the second act, Pauline—the part where you're off stage."

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("That red-haired yap calls her Pauline," Tom registered privately.)

"Well, go ahead," she answered. "And help yourself to the eats."

She took Tom into the dining room, where she sat with the pink table light full upon her costume. He wondered whether it was the sort of thing she wore habitually, or whether it was "in the play." And he wondered whether all the lights in the flat were continually burning, as now, and whether it was always so infernally hot.

"Well, Polly," he said, "so here you are, queening it over a lot of swoozies and hand-painted dolls. I suppose you're perfectly happy. And how is the little husband?"

"If you've come to say things like that," Pauline snapped, "you can go right back to camp, or wherever you came from. As for Lance, he can give you fifty points in intelligence, and beat you."

"Oh, intelligence!" jeered Tom. "It's brute force that's going to count in this world for some years. And though I had only one glimpse of the little husband, I seem to remember he wasn't ferocious in the way of brawn."

Pauline controlled herself, allowed time enough to pass to show that he might as well drop Lance, and then inquired: "What did you want to talk to me about?"

A burst of laughter from the living room drowned everything for a moment. Tom gazed at a French

landscape on the wall, and wondered which was grass and which was lake. Then he said:

"I'm going East early in the morning. My taxicab business is busted. Before I left I wanted to find father and tell him his latest real-estate scheme is likely to be a holy show. I can't find him, mother won't listen to me, so I fall back on you."

"But I don't know a blessed thing about real estate."

"Of course not. But maybe you can get this straight: Father's gone in with a chap named Ulrich—the same who used to be county commissioner, and now calls himself an investment man. He's a big slob with none too good a name, I can tell you. He wrecked a building and loan association four or five years ago, and somebody else went to the penitentiary. But never mind that. The trouble is, he's been bragging about having a beautiful new angel source of supply, that is—and he's talking his head off at the Real Estate Club every day about father and their schemes."

"And you expect me to tell father all that?"

"Somebody's got to tell him."

"Well, Bob Sweetling, his agent, is in the other room."

"He probably knows it already, and is afraid to tell father. Or else—more likely—father doesn't confide in him about outside ventures."

"Then wait until Lance gets home, and tell him."

"Ho, ho, ho! Lance!" Tom jeered.

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Pauline kept her temper, and sat examining her rings. Suddenly Tom exploded:

"Won't any of you take any responsibility? Are you all a bunch of slackers, and face-feeders, and sure-thing people? There's father blowing financial soap-bubbles, and mother sliding around to tea parties in her electric, and you sitting on a gilt chair, refusing to lift a finger because you—because you—— That's Lakeside! Say, if the rest of the country was like it there wouldn't be any nation, or anything. There'd be nothing but a lot of goldfish playing in a pond. And pretty soon there wouldn't be any pond, nor any goldfish."

A significant silence had fallen in the other room.

"For goodness sake," whispered Pauline. "Don't shout that way."

"Do 'em good to hear," he grumbled. But he moderated his tone, and it became more persuasive.

"Polly," he said, "chuck it all. Break away from these titmice and twaddlers, and be something in the world."

"I suppose you'd like me to live on a farm, have nine children, and do my own washing. Or else be like those women in Europe who wear trousers and run street cars."

"No; just be what you started out to be. I remember when your hair was in braids, and you could run like a gazelle. And we used to wade in the lake, and go chestnutting. And I taught you to sail a boat. That was before every tallow-faced head book-keeper in the world came to live in Lakeside, and

before the flats spoiled everything. It's too bad, Polly, it's too bad."

He looked at her with fondness and wistfulness in his scratched and sunburnt face; striving to see what remained of the sister and companion he had known, looking for the soul underneath the Fanning veneer. But it eluded him. He sighed, and rose.

"Well," said Pauline, "you've done what you usually do: been disagreeable, and upset me, and accomplished nothing. Oh, Tom," she cried, suddenly, "why do you always do that?"

"I can't cuddle down in a steam-heated museum and live on sugar-plums, so I can't be happy with you people. That's all. Never mind, Polly, be happy with your Lance and keep a flannel on his chest, or he might get sick and die."

"Lance is not——" Pauline began, angrily. But Tom failed to learn what Lance was not. The bell rang; the maid got there first; and there was a commotion in the hall.

The commotion was Lance being helped in by two strangers, who asked for Mrs. Happerth, and eased their burden down upon a chair in the hall. They were well-dressed persons, and cheerful.

Pauline had sped into the hall, and Tom with her. The theatrical troupe was gathered at the door. Sweetling whispered something to Meredith, and snickered.

Between them, the maid assisting, Tom and Pauline got Lance into the bedroom—for the two men had already vanished—and laid him on the bed.

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His stupor became complete. There was perspiration on his brow, and his hair clung to it in ringlets.

"Who were those fellows who brought him?"

"How do I know? Oh, Tom, what do you think ails him? Please telephone for a doctor—and tell those people to go home. Oh, do you think it's anything serious?"

"No," answered Tom, gruffly.

He went into the hall, and found the visitors escaping unobtrusively. Then he turned to the telephone, disentangled the receiver from the doll's dress that camouflaged it, and sought in the directory for a doctor. Meantime he philosophized, "It gets 'em all. Lakeside gets 'em all."

CHAPTER VIII

ANN went straight to Sally, whom she found burrowing in an overflowing dresser drawer, and asked quietly:

"Who was the gentleman who brought you home? The one who just left you at the door?"

Sally turned. Disquietude and anger contended in her face. Anger prevailed.

"You don't need to look after me, Ann Stone. I won't have it."

"If I didn't look after things we shouldn't be living in this flat," Ann retorted, for she had a tart way with her when roused. "I think it's perfectly all right I should ask you; and you know it is."

"Well," said Sally, "we won't quarrel. That gentleman, if you must know, is a pretty famous musician. Besides that, he is of age, a white man, and an American citizen. And he thinks I have a good singing voice. Anything else?"

There was more said, but it need not concern us now. The point of Sally's explanation is that it was not Lance who was with her—if you ever thought it was. Lakeside had not "got him" in that way.

Lance's trouble was not the kind that is explained by winks or jesting remarks such as Bob made to Roy. It was not at all what Tom thought it was;

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so Tom need not have been so gruff. There was indeed a suspicious aroma about him when he was carried in, but that was a secondary symptom. He had one of his bronchial attacks, made acute by a dinner with Bragg, Ellsworth, and one or two others. And besides this, as it developed after the doctor had called daily for a week, there was a sort of breakdown. The doctor murmured "overwork." He was a canny Lakeside doctor.

The sufferer was in bed two weeks. At Christmas time he was able to sit up and to smile wearily at his new silk dressing gown. He smiled, too, at the doctor's diagnosis, and said to Pauline:

"If I've been overworking, then my normal pace must be about like that of private secretary to a lady novelist. I used to work twice that hard on the *Press* and never feel it."

"I wonder just what is wrong with you," his devoted wife said, thoughtfully. Her nursing had been spasmodic, for the play had to be put through, author or no author.

The Fanning cabinet finally considered the case, and decided he should go South. The Fannings did not, however, select the place. Bragg did that. He had a scheme just then for booming Southern resorts, and though the scheme brought Bragg nothing, it fitted Lance's needs. Soon after Christmas he and Pauline, with two trunkloads of winter resort clothes, departed for Gulf ports. The "crowd," or most of it, saw them off at the station. It was an early morning train, but Bob Sweetling, Roy, and

Winchell were in Tuxedos, a fact which made the departure all but too conspicuous. The fact was, a bachelor party of the previous night had lasted until daylight, and the three men had thought it would be a lark to go to the train as they were.

So it was with many grins from porters, and stares from other travellers, that the Happerths departed. Lance was delighted; Pauline annoyed. She refused to put her head out of the window until Lance made her.

The "crowd" stood a few feet away, yelling things above the roar of the station.

"You must write often."

"Yes, and you must write, too."

"Oh, we'll all write."

"Bring me an alligator, Lance; a nice little alligator that'll keep sober—hic."

"May, please take care of my fern for me."

"And don't forget Voltaire."

(Voltaire was the canary, acquired since Lance's illness.)

"And say," were Lance's last words, "if peace is declared, send me a wire, so I can put my one war baby to bed."

The Southern Limited, despite everything, managed to get away on time, and in a section jammed with bunches of flowers, boxes of candy, besides magazines and minor baggage, they journeyed southward.

Whenever, from the altitude of later years, Lance looked back upon that winter sojourn, he knew that

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it was then his life curve dipped the lowest. It was then he came nearest to the despair, the sense of futility, that besets middle age but rarely disturbs the twenties.

Cut off even from such adventure as he found in office work, clear away from the stimulating slam-bang of the city, living languorously in a climate that offered no bracing cold winds or piquant changes in temperature, Lance sank back on himself.

And himself was nothing.

During his newspaper life, and even later, when he was striving to "make good" under Bragg, he had felt vibrant with personality. He was a good deal of a fellow; that was what everybody said, and they made him believe it. But it was all untrue. Down at the bottom he was zero. Everything he had done came from outer impulse. He—the essential he—was a pose, a gesture, a simulation.

He lay under orange trees, amid the unnaturally beautiful scenery, and watched the futile gulf shift from one to another of its moods. He gazed upon the unchanging luxuriousness of flower and tree, and thought how horrible it was to be like them: a creature that existed merely to grow fat and die. A creature like the moneyed spinsters and widows of Lakeside, whom he had seen waddling out of tea rooms, or sitting on their porches, watching the motors and buses go by.

Ugh! And they all wanted him to "rest." He did not need to rest. He needed to be worked into a dripping sweat; to be driven until he ached; to make

something with his brain or hand, half kill himself making it, and then, if you like, rest. He was not so much ashamed of this idleness as madly in revolt against it. He had no schemes for humanity that had to be worked out. He knew only that somewhere deep down a devil of energy was in him that had never yet found outlet; that had been gentled, and soothed, and drugged by imitation work, and now, when he did not work at all, was writhing in his soul.

The day of its deliverance was not so far away, but Lance could not see it coming. Nothing ever happened; nay, there was scarcely a breath from the world of action, in this winter paradise. Life had stopped.

He could not tell Pauline these things. He could not tell Pauline very much anyhow. In this collapse of all the illusion that hung about Lakeside and himself he saw even Pauline in a cold fog that made confession impossible. She was a Fanning; a creature of that world that flowered only to perish.

So his fantastic thoughts ran on. Three weeks, a month, he nursed them, while Pauline tripped about from this pleasure to that. Then he sat down, with knit brow and a flaming cigarette in his mouth, and wrote a telegram to Bragg:

Cannot write anything about Southern resorts. The idea is banal.

L. HAPPERTH.

He smiled after he had written it. Bragg would be furious, and he would have to look up "banal" in

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the dictionary. And he would discharge Lance, and everything would be at an end.

While in this mood, he wrote a long letter to Freddy Westcott. This letter, as you will see, was not sent. It would not have reached Freddy, who was in France as a correspondent for the *Press*. But it did Lance lots of good to write it.

"Freddy, you were right. You told me it was a mistake to marry a flat building, and it was.

"I haven't a word to say against Pauline. She doesn't neglect me, nor bankrupt me, any more than any other woman would. I can forgive her even the grand piano. I would have bought it if she hadn't. The only thing she, or rather the whole lot of them, did was to place temptation in my way. They showed me all sorts of things to buy, and I bought them. They got me into the Fannington, where every mortal minute there's something to pay for, and so I had to go to work for Bragg, who is the smoothest con man unjailed, and I have to bully him into giving me more money every six months.

"But look here, Freddy, this isn't a bankruptcy schedule, this letter. It's a confession that life in Lakeside is a failure. And I can't stand it. I don't know what I'm going to do, but don't be surprised if you hear that I've disappeared. I may become one of those fellows who leave a peaceful home, and just drop out of sight; and maybe come back after twenty years, with whiskers, and claim they had aphasia.

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"Who made Lakeside, Freddy? I can't believe it was God. Maybe it was Father Fanning. He is at once its pride and its support, and its juggernaut. I wonder if he can save it when the inevitable crash of that glass house on stilts is brought about."

The letter went on in this vein for a half page, and continued,

"Would they take me back on the *Press*, do you think? I fancy I hear you say no, they wouldn't. And they would be right. As I write this, I am aware that I would be no good to the *Press*. And I take back that part about disappearing. I haven't the courage. I shall live on in Lakeside, having a devilish fondness for sofa-pillows and steam heat. And I shall become one of those old boys who smoke on the porches of family hotels, and play solitaire in the evenings, and they will carry my coffin down three flights of stairs, while a strange minister says a Lakeside prayer.

"I get the *Press* regularly. Is the world at a standstill? Seems like they must be cooking up peace over there.

"Write me if you——"

At this point in the writing Pauline came around the corner of the hotel into the angle where Lance was scribbling. He was startled, and pretended that the swish of her skirts had blown his papers to the floor.

"Letters, Lance, letters," she cried, waving a handful of mail. "What were you writing?"

"Some stuff about summer resorts—and winter resorts," he prevaricated; and he crumpled up the

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letter and jammed it into the pocket of his white coat. The telegram to Bragg he saved, and later in the day he sent it.

Pauline, who looked remarkably well and amiable, asked no more questions. She was deep in a communication from Aunt Pringle, always the champion letter writer of the family. From it she sorted out bits of information for Lance, who sat with his dark eyes narrowed, partly listening, and partly wondering why he was born.

Most of the items Pauline prefixed with "Fancy!" She had acquired this exclamation since coming South.

"Fancy! Father's still at work on that big real-estate deal. The one Tom tried to worry me about. 'A two hundred-acre subdivision'—oh, I can't read all this stuff. Aunt Pringle says, 'Everything your father touches seems to turn to money.' That's perfectly true. What did you say?"

Receiving no answer, she read on:

"'Mother's been elected regent of the D. A. R. chapter. That makes three things she's head of. Think what a glorious mother we have.'"

Opening another envelope, in Fanny Sweetling's bold hand, she read, stared, and ejaculated:

"'Lance. Just fanc—Lance! May Harrold is going to sue for divorce.'"

Lance sat up.

"I hope she gets it, with a hundred a month alimony."

"But I don't suppose that's any more than Alfred Harrold makes, is it?"

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"Good Lord, I don't know what he makes, but it's too much."

Pauline sat tapping her white shoe upon the floor.

"How strange it seems that a thing like that should happen in the Fannington."

"Does it?" he began, ironically; then changed his tone, and said merely, "I've seen it coming for some time."

"Well, I haven't. I think May must be crazy." She turned over the mail again. "Of all things, he's sent me a picture postcard."

"What's it say?"

"Great ovation in Battle Creek. Sending clippings."

"Why should he send us clippings?" grumbled Lance. "I'm not a newspaper editor. Perhaps he thinks I'll write him a page ad. What I hope to write is his obituary."

"How grouchy you're getting, Lance. Here's a card from—but I haven't read the rest of Fanny's letter." A pause. "Fancy, Lance. It's Bob's birthday next week, and she's going to give a surprise dinner for him. Wishes we were going to be there."

"Happy to say we're not."

Pauline looked up from the letter.

"You like it here, don't you?"

"Immensely."

"As well as home?"

"No; not so well."

"It's a place to do that writing you've always wanted to do, isn't it?"

"Ideal place."

"Then what's the matter?"

"Is that the *Press*?" he demanded, in self-defense.

"Let's see what the old thing says."

She held it out to him vaguely. She was again tasting the coloured postcards. There was a whole table d'hôte of them.

Lance spread out the paper, and instantly picked out "the" headline from all the array of subordinate news. He read slowly and with absorption the half column or more under a Washington date.

The actual news had evidently been told the day before. They had not received that copy of the *Press* but this one told enough. It said that the insolent establishment of a new submarine zone, and the declaration of unlimited warfare, had shocked the country, and Washington was "aroused." There appeared to be only one thing for the President to do, and he was expected to do it. "It was learned from high authority," etc. Something about "extreme measures."

"Big news," said Lance, carelessly tossing the paper to his wife, and sinking back in his chair.

She read, with her face distorted with the effort.

"I don't understand it," she complained.

"It looks like more trouble, that's all," he drawled.

"More diplomatic squallings and babblings. Don't let it worry you, Polly," he added half ironically.

And she replied, as he had expected, "Why should it worry me?"

Still with a slightly sardonic smile—a smile that

might have meant tolerant contempt for Pauline's vegetable composure, or disdain for the futile disputes of diplomats, or deprecation of his own idleness—Lance lay back and scanned the placid sweep of lawn, the luscious foliage, the bright blue gulf. All this whispered to him, too: "Why worry?" The sources of that news he had just read, the wires and railroad trains that brought it, the snows and storms through which it had come, were dim and dreamlike.

"By George," he said, "it's February. It's February third. It doesn't seem like February at all."

A remark Pauline might have made. No reason to say anything about February.

And yet that February was one that deserved millions of words—and got them.

It was February third, yet there was nothing happening except a ukulele party on the east porch.

Lance lay, a delicate slim shape in white, on the lawn near the porch, and listened to the soft syncopations, and watched the stars, and marvelled that the breeze could be so moistly mild while the Northern world was freezing.

Presently, despite the singing, he heard from the direction of the village, distant half a mile or more, a gust of cheers. Then a steamer whistle blew. A medley of little sounds, oddly thrilling, were borne across the meadows. The singing stopped.

Another moment, and nineteen-year-old Harry Steere, wild son of the famous steel man Steere, came

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galloping along the porch, yelling: "We're at war. Hooray, we're at war, and I'm goin'."

Lance rose on his elbow. He heard laughter, cries of protest, "Impossible!" "So soon!"

He climbed the steps, took Harry by the throat, and demanded:

"Young man, why these shouts? Who's at war?"

"We and Germany. Let go, Happerth, or I'll break your wrist."

"You've been meddling with fire-water," said another skeptic.

"Just see if I have. The village paper has got it. We've broken off relations."

"Ob, only broken off relations," said Lance, witheringly. And the murmur passed along the porch, and down the steps: "They've only broken off relations. Not the same thing at all."

An American flag floated out over their heads. There was cheering in the hotel, in the office, in the kitchens.

And someone said, after a silence, "Of course, it's very nice to hang out the flag, and all that, but I don't think——"

But no one knew what this person thought, for the ukuleles broke out afresh, and there was no peace until midnight.

Lance hung about the billiard rooms for a while, until he wearied of the unending, stupid wrangle as to the chances of actual war, and the effect upon stocks. One man had decided to go North early in the morning, and he was preparing for this chilly

exploit by drinking things. Lance wearied of him, and of all the babble. Besides, he had a telegram in his pocket that seemed a deal more important. It had come late in the evening, and had followed him about the hotel until it found him. He decided it was about time to tell Pauline about it. So he yawned himself upstairs, and approached her as she lay in bed, with the gulf breeze blowing tendrils of hair across her smooth cheek, and said:

"Well, it's all settled: we're at war, and there will be a great deal of hate unbottled, and things will be done that we will be sorry for for years. And somebody will have to surrender within three weeks."

"What do you mean? Have they heard anything more?"

"No, they haven't, dear child, but I have."

He spread out the telegram, and Pauline read it with lips poutingly attentive:

LANCE HAPPERTH, Ocean View Hotel,
If Southern resorts too banal, try the office.

G. BRAGG.

"What does he mean? What perfect——"

"Oh, it's clear if you know the code. It means, 'War declared on you. Better pack.' Seriously, Polly, Bragg is tired of the Southern resort scheme, and so am I. We return to-morrow—or next day. Telegraph your mother to have the bird cage dusted, and to have the rug turned over. For we're going to reopen our town house."

CHAPTER IX

THE season was waning anyhow, and the Hap-
perths were not the only people who were
going home. But Lance was the only man
who seemed pleased about it.

So absorbing were the pleasures of travel, and so
roused was he by the prospect of a contest with
Bragg that he scarcely noticed, until directed to
them, the symptoms along the road that patriotism
was astir. Mostly, it was flags. As the train rushed
through some weather-beaten town, there would be a
glimpse of bright bunting hanging from the second
stories of dusty shops, or depending from flag-poles
that must have stood there since Vicksburg was be-
sieged. Then the open country again; greening
fields; drowsy farm animals. But once a boy went
through the train selling little flaglets for buttonholes.
And another time they passed a wagonload of pick-
nickers with the colours wound about their vehicle.
They were singing something inaudible, and they
waved frantically at the train.

"That's the way it catches some people," said
Lance's companion in the smoking room, a young
banker of Cincinnati. "They take their war along
with their picnic, as a lark. Half those young farm-
ers would run like hell from a recruiting sign."

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"You're right. Poor chance scraping up an army in this country. But I guess we shan't have to."

"Don't know. The news doesn't look good to me," said the other, moodily surveying a Memphis paper smeared with headlines.

And both men fell to thinking of themselves, and of what might happen if——

Yes; what if——

The old question that Lance remembered as having buzzed about the local room of the *Press*, years before; that had flung itself at him at intervals ever since! Why was it that every little while this vast, dim question mark sprang out? Was there no more stability in the world? Had the reliable, directing minds collapsed? And must one forever be disturbed by their long-faced warnings, their verbose confessions of failure?

More papers came aboard. More exclamations.

It was remarked by someone that "Wilson was picking on Germany," and nobody challenged this. And certain ladies—Pauline may have been one of them—said "What a fuss about a few old ships!" And Mrs. Brethorn, the Cincinnati lady, wailed, "Why can't they settle it?"

"Oh," said Lance, "statesmen don't settle things. This whole clothes-line row, from the time it began, is just a requiem for statesmen. I wouldn't have one for janitor of our building, if I had the say. He would quarrel with the iceman, or with me, or somebody."

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"Don't you quarrel with your janitor, as it is?" laughed Brethorn.

"I do not. He's the kaiser, nothing less."

The talk drifted away from the war.

At home, which was reached toward noon the next day, the talk did not seem to be of the war at all. Nor was there any other reminder of it. A flag or two, hung deprecatingly among swollen theatre signs, or in front of windows announcing cheap drugs and artificial limbs, was all. And these might have been there indefinitely. For the rest, there were the same wolfish crowds tearing about, the same carnival of shopping women; the same stolid taxi drivers, and cynical idlers in front of hotels, and staring groups in front of picture galleries, and gulping mobs in cafeterias.

And the same Lakeside, with its grand cañons of buildings, and its women starting downtown, nuzzling their furs and groping in their pocket-books, or its women in sweeping caps, shaking rugs over back porch railings and sniffing the frosty air; and children in wool caps and leggings, screaming and dancing on the pavements.

At last, the tall, chocolate-coloured Fannington, with its medallions gleaming in the noonday sun, and Jimmy, the second janitor, washing windows.

Life was not different.

Nothing was impending, after all.

In the flat they had the first feeling of strangeness. Its walls seemed to have contracted, its furnishing to have dwindled. But gradually their minds, ac-

customed to vast hotel areas and sunlit spaces, fell into the Fannington mood. It was "home."

Pauline sank down, retaining her wraps, into a big leather chair, while Lance, shivering, went about turning on steam.

"Well, nothing's changed," said she.

"You didn't expect to find a revolution, did you? Oh, your mother's been here. I observe a book misplaced."

"I wish you'd call her up and tell her we're back. Some of them might have met us without hurting themselves."

After another glance around, like a dog divining an alien presence, Lance went to the telephone. He was gone some time, and during the wait Pauline sat musing. She was already a little homesick for the South, and for the joys of that genial hotel. The winter sojourn was gone, and there could never be another like it. This was truer than Pauline knew. But all she meant was that, even if they went South the next winter, the novelty would be gone. Ahead lay the accustomed round of Lakeside, and even of that she could not be sure. The crowd could not be the same, for the Harrolds. . . . Perhaps their flat was already empty; perhaps poor May, who had always had such a dreadful time with her complexion, was now ruining it forever by lonely weeping.

She got up, with the idea of telephoning to her mother, and met Lance returning. His face was disturbed.

"I must go downtown," he said, "right away."

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He stood with his hands in his overcoat pockets gazing at the suitcases as though they baffled him.

"Did you get mother?"

"Yes—oh, yes," he replied, still with that wrinkle in his brow. Pauline realized he had been telephoning to Bragg also, but she said nothing. To her, Bragg was a paltry detail.

Lance departed, and a few minutes later Mrs. Fanning arrived.

"Well, so you're back," she remarked, permitting a brief kiss, and settling her extensively wrapped and bedizened person upon the davenport. She began, with gloved hands swollen by rings, to unwind her veil. Pauline fancied she had gained flesh; perhaps dignity as well, if that were possible. Her air was superb. Yes, "mother" was an empress, at least. She shone in no glory merely reflected from the Grand Mogul, but in a majesty all her own.

"Let's see, how many things are you president or treasurer of?" Pauline was fain to ask.

There was no relaxation in that massive and heavily powdered face.

"Don't be a silly little thing, Pauline. Do you suppose I'm thinking about my offices at such a time?"

Pauline mischievously rejoined:

"Are you so glad to see me back as all that?"

"What? Oh, I see what you mean. Well—of course it's an event to have you back. However, what I meant was that I wasn't thinking about per-

sonal prestige during this situation; the war situation. I ponder it day and night. And your father——”

“You think there’ll be a war?”

“My dear child, it’s the uncertainty. It’s the not knowing whom to believe, or what news to trust. It’s maddening. Your father hasn’t had a good night’s rest for a week. It’s dreadful to bear such a responsibility as his.”

She swallowed. Could it be that mother, the Gibraltar of the family, was about to cry?

With a feeling of smallness, almost of awe, Pauline watched her recover self-control.

“Had you heard that Elsinore Manor burned down?”

“No!”

“It did. Night before last.”

“That beautiful building. Did the Russells lose much?”

“The Russells!” exclaimed Mrs. Fanning with scorn. “I don’t care what they lost; it’s what we lost. You didn’t know, but your father bought the building only last January. For a hundred and fifty thousand dollars. And now it’s gone. Wiped out.”

Even Pauline was impressed. She managed a sentence ending with the word “insurance.”

Mrs. Fanning shook her head.

“The insurance!” she snapped. “That’s the worst of the story. It wasn’t paid up. It’s all gone, every cent paid on that building. I don’t suppose your father will ever speak to Bob Sweetling again. Pauline, that fellow had the check in his pocket to

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pay the premium—of course they had both let it run longer than they should—and Bob forgot to pay it."

"How in the world could he forget such a thing?"

"How? You may well ask. But he made a clean breast of it, I'll say that. It seems he was out all day and evening with Roy Meredith and some others; away from his work, mind you, and then raising Cain nearly all night. Just the foolish things they do up here. The last thing he told father was, 'I've got that insurance check. I'm going downtown, and I'll turn it in personally.' And that was all, until about one o'clock the next morning, when the building burned. And they called your father to the 'phone and when we looked out it seemed as though all Lakeside was on fire. I never saw such a blaze. The people barely got out alive."

"How awful!" quavered Pauline. "How awful for Bob and Fanny."

"For them!" exploded Mrs. Fanning. "I have little enough sympathy for them. Fanny must share in Bob's disgrace; for it's nothing less. Every mortal in Lakeside—all our friends, I mean—know about it by this time. Bob and Fanny!"

Pauline's private thought was, "I suppose they won't have that birthday party now," but her comment aloud was, "They'll have to move away. Bob's so sensitive, he never can face it out."

"Butterfly Bob," said her mother, witheringly. "He is well nicknamed."

"Well," she continued, after a pause, "that's one

thing. We might have stood it, if it hadn't been for all the other worries."

"The big real-estate deal, you mean?"

"What do you know about it?" asked Mrs. Fanning quickly.

"Why, nothing. Aunt Pringle wrote about it. She said it was all right, so——"

"It is all right. It is all right." She slapped a glove up and down. "I know about it. Your father tells me more things than he used to. He has to, since his affairs got so big and perplexing. Well, the banks are standing up to it, thank goodness."

"I never supposed they weren't."

They looked at each other.

"Pauline, do you ever think what it would mean if we—if your father's interests went smash? How many hundreds of people around here have their little savings—and then, the landlord part of it. The whole thing is mixed up together. So many lives and properties."

"Why think of all that?" asked Pauline with wonder. "Nothing can smash father. He's too cautious; too honest."

"I suppose I'm foolish," Mrs. Fanning admitted; and they changed the subject to the doings at Ocean View, and to the state of health of Voltaire, who had been boarding at the Wiltshire.

After her mother had gone Pauline went to the café for lunch, met May Harrold there, and listened to a mournful tale. Alfred had departed, taking with him all he could carry. He was in a desperate

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mood, said May. She feared for his life. This was an absurd idea even to Pauline. It was not so comic to learn, through a letter which May showed her, that he blamed the quarrel upon the Happerths. Alfred wrote that Lance had talked against him, and conspired against him for months. "He thinks," said May, "that you folks poisoned my mind. What d'you know about that? But I'll tell you what's poisoned it. It was——" and then a long and lurid narrative.

Pauline returned to the flat in a hazy state of mind, and sat down at the piano to play these clouds away. She opened the lid, wiped away some dust, and struck a chord.

A feeble and unnatural tinkle came forth.

She stared, and struck a place higher up, with a similar result.

It was weird. The cold could not have done this. There must be something terribly wrong with Pauline's noblest possession. She examined the interior, but to little purpose. Then she gave it up, and sat looking at the instrument moodily.

This was the news she had for Lance when he came home, morose, after his battle with Bragg. He had won the contest for the time, he intimated; but it had left him with jangled nerves. And then the piano! He doubted there was anything permanently the matter. Insisted upon eating his dinner first; then made a brief examination. Clearly, the piano would not play. And would it ever play?

"That's what we get for thinking we can leave a

flat unoccupied for two solid months," said he. "I felt there was something wrong when we first came in. But I thought I smelled burglars. This is worse."

"Worse? How?"

"Somebody has fooled with that piano," he replied, darkly. "Somebody has hamstrung it. He must have done it with an axe, or else a twelve-inch shell. Now who—— Pclly, kindly run over a list of our enemies."

"We haven't any," she started to reply. And then she paused. It would do no good to tell him what she thought.

It was all over the Fannington next day that something dreadful had been done to the Happerths' piano. Roy Meredith and his wife came, looked and exclaimed. The janitor came, looked and scratched his head. He was followed by Mrs. Winchell, and, a little later, by May Harrold, who confirmed Lance's theory that the thing was no accident. Nobody had any sane opinion about the vandal nor, of course, could the expert who arrived later in the day offer anything useful beyond a diagnosis too technical for these pages.

The Sweetlings came not, nor were they heard from. The curtains to their apartment were drawn. It was understood that Bob was out looking for a job, and Fanny flat-hunting. It was a sad case.

There was no sympathy wasted on them that evening at the Wiltshire, where the Fannings gathered for a sort of welcoming celebration for Lance and Pau-

line. The sympathy was all for the piano and its owners. Barton Fanning suggested a detective agency, while his more subtle brother proposed that watch be kept at night, on the theory that the criminal would be irresistibly drawn to the scene of his crime. The Rev. Augustine meant this in jest, but nobody understood it that way except Lance.

And Lance only smiled drearily. He was very quiet that evening, complained that he was cold, that his blood had become thin. Aunt Pringle kept a concerned eye upon him, and in a favourable moment whispered to Pauline that she "had better watch out." Aunt Pringle did not know of the combination of Bragg, Ellsworth, and a question of Lance's efficiency that had confronted him the day before, and which, added to the distressing and mysterious piano episode, made him feel that enemies lurked everywhere. He was never less genially disposed toward the Fannings. His father-in-law's regal bearing at the head of the table, the precise accents of Augustine and his wife, Mrs. Fanning's portliness, even Aunt Pringle's solicitude, made him wriggle in his chair and bite his lips to restrain spiteful remarks.

Pauline, however, was joyous, despite the piano. She was reassured about her father. He did not look as though he had lost \$150,000. If anything he was ruddier than usual; his hair and moustache nattier. Nor were there any signals of distress about the ménage. Pauline noticed the addition of a maid, and, more significant still, there was a man-person

in evening dress who served. The dinner was in six courses, and the salad alone contained no less than twelve kinds of edibles.

There was some rallying of the parents for having outgrown even eight rooms and three baths.

"No joke about that," said the banker. "I'm thinking of buying the McDougall house over on the Drive."

"That monster place!" cried Pauline. "What would you and mother do in seventeen rooms?"

"Give the servants a chance to stretch," laughed Barton.

"Well," said Aunt Pringle, "they say it's bad luck to live more than seven years in one apartment. I'm going on my third over at the Terrace."

"And we have five more in the Fannington," came from Pauline. "At least we hope so; don't we, Lance?"

"Counting on it."

"You can't count on anything these days," sighed Mrs. Fanning.

"That's so," put in the tactless Augustine. "Think of the Manor."

"It was the war I was thinking of," his sister-in-law gave response.

Augustine, overlooking the hint, continued, "What became of that young fellow—Sweetling—the recreant——"

Mrs. Augustine jogged his elbow, and a fragment of pudding fell upon the ministerial trousers.

"Pshaw!" said Barton. "We can't talk about it

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in the family. I'm not worrying; certainly not about Sweetling. I replaced him quick. Got a fellow worth two of him; chap named Reeker."

The table listened politely.

"Clever chap with a business head. Knows a thing or two about Lakeside, too. It was he told me that Alfred Harrold——"

A warning look from his wife, and the barker halted, and became busy with his plate.

"What? What?" begged Pauline.

"Why drag in all the unpleasant subjects?" ruled Mrs. Fanning.

"Very well," said Barton. "Bully pudding, this. Meekin, be sure the wine is cold."

"Since when did you start drinking wine at dinner?" from Aunt Pringle.

"For my health," and he winked at Lance. The Augustines looked steadily at their plates. Lance observed this, and combining it with other signs he had noted during the evening, concluded that the contrast between the brothers, a temperamental difference always very marked, was developing into an estrangement. But he forgot about this when Barton Fanning said, as though in spite of himself, "Confound that Annex! It's my nemesis. First there's that bad check case, and then this talk about Harrold. Both in the same flat, too. If it wasn't that I had given my word to little Miss Stone——"

"By the way, is she still working out the sentence?" asked Lance, awakening from his torpor.

The question fell heavily upon the company.

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Barton Fanning moved in his chair, and said "I wouldn't put it just that way," while Pauline eyed her husband in a peculiar manner. And then the hostess burst out forcibly: "For goodness' sake! Lance, do start something about the Gulf coast, about the war—anything. There's a fatality about this dinner."

She rose, and they betook themselves heavily to the drawing room, where Lance started the phonograph with the song that flourished for three weeks, and then died a pitiful death:

"There ain't a goin' to be no war,
Is what I always say—ay.
For how in the world kin we lick the Dutch?
And how kin we make it pay—ay?"

During this number, and the selections from "Lucia" that followed, Aunt Pringle whispered steadily to Pauline. It was a budget of news not lacking in spice, dealing as it did with the Manfred Terrace version of Harrold's wickedness; but it had a benevolent note, too, for Aunt Pringle sympathized strongly with Butterfly Bob, and thought his escapade ought to be overlooked. This view was still in Pauline's mind when she and Lance went home; and, seeing lights in the Sweetling apartment, she suggested they go up. Lance assented.

"At least see if the poor simp is contemplating suicide," he said.

Bob was not. He looked a trifle askance when the

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visitors came in, but he was quite comfortable with a pipe and a sporting sheet. Fanny, he explained, was downtown at a show.

"I suppose you folks have heard no end of strong talk at my expense," he ventured. "Well, it's all true, friends; it's all true. I lost \$150,000 or so for the boss, and if I saved at the present rate for a million years I never could pay it back. So I won't try."

"Please believe we don't hold it against you," said Pauline.

"I'm more afraid of your mother than any one else," he replied, scratching his red poll. "As for your father—do you think he'd knock me if I tried for an automobile agency?"

"Of course not."

"Well, we have to move out of here, anyhow. And God knows——"

He paused and examined his pipe bowl.

"I don't feel like going anywhere," he added with pathos. "I've ducked all the sports about here since it happened."

"Come over and look at our piano," said Lance. "You can't play on it because of a little vendetta or something that's been wreaked—if wreaked's the word."

Followed an account that made Bob sit up in his chair.

"When did that happen?" he exclaimed.

"Don't know. The corpse was cold when we got there," replied Lance.

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Bob was silent longer than a minute.

"Look here," he said, finally, with a long face, "I'll have to tell you something. It's a clew; yes, by George, it's a clew, though I hate to think the fellow would—but, fact is, Harrold was in there a week ago. I let him in."

"You let him in?" Pauline's outcry was both astonished and sharp.

"I did. I suppose it's another frightful exhibition of me as an agent. But I took him in there. He said he had left some music. Gosh, he wasn't there more than a couple of minutes, and I was in the dining room looking at a book."

The three surveyed each other with consternation.

"You've said it," muttered Lance at length. "I believe he would do it."

"But what earthly reason?" wailed Pauline.

"Ah, there you've got me. I can understand his poisoned tongue, for he was born that way. But to assail a poor defenceless piano—well, it looks as though he had it in for you, Polly, and not for me."

"On the contrary," argued Bob. "He knows you'd have to pay for the repairs."

"Perfectly right," said Lance, as though it had just occurred to him. "You're a wise old thing, Bob."

They sat again in gloom and thought.

It was going to be a bad "dog-watch" that night, Lance knew. The impression of being tangled in a web of enmity, and none of it justified, grew upon him. Likewise the realization of his powerlessness in

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such conflicts. He ought to pursue the pianist with detective agencies, and charge him with mayhem or something. But he would never do this, and he knew it. And Bob, seeing through him perfectly, thought, "When will Lance ever get backbone enough to fight?"

Whereupon, desirous of changing the subject, he said, "Have you seen to-night's paper? Another ship sunk."

"Drat the war," growled Lance. "It's no more deadly than life in the Fannington."

CHAPTER X

NOBODY in Lakeside had much time for the war. Spring was about to make an entrance, supported by a whole army of new people in fetching clothes. The winter spurt of prosperity in Lakeside was nothing to this. Father Fanning could well afford to "drop" \$150,000.

There was more of everything: More doing in real estate; more delicatessen shops per family; more and pinker millinery for sale; more and gaudier signboards announcing the new "dance paradise," the enlarged real-ice skating rink, the latest movie knockout, the foxiest collars, the corkingest cork-tipped cigarettes. New restaurants galore, too. For every one that had succumbed to the food speculators, a half dozen sprang up to gamble. Mme. Dolly's tea shop, with blue chintz curtains and a 60-cent dinner, succeeded the Red Mill, which had specialized in Dutch ornaments and French pastry. And no sooner was there one Mme. Dolly's than there were six.

Even the Little Stone Church found it necessary to feed people or be old-fashioned. So the bulletin board that announced lectures and the like was superseded by a red-and-white sign, "Superb Table d'hôte Dinner, 55 cents." The Rev. Augustine

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averted his gaze when he passed this sign on the way to his study. He had thought the idea frivolous, and had yielded only when the trustees, his brother included, cried him down with the argument, "People will eat somewhere; why not here?"

It was a rather unhappy time for the Rev. Augustine. What could he do with such people? They would not listen when he pictured the war scourge, and begged for economy. He was lucky to get at them at all. His congregation was never alike two Sundays in succession. As for calls—well, it was Mrs. Augustine who complained that she was tired of calling on "For Rent" signs. And she said she was discouraged about her work for the poor and afflicted, because "one can't tell the poor from the rich, unless one can distinguish beads from pearls across the street, and the afflicted always move out before one can get there."

Meantime the war was coming on; no doubt about it. Nobody could say there wasn't plenty of warning. Every newspaper was full of dark hints. People just back from New York or Washington looked solemn and told what the White House was thinking. The clouds began to roll up the sky in a volume that masked their speed. And then they broke, and the lightning flashed out, forked and terrible. Immense plans, formed weeks before, were suddenly uncovered. The great determination was released. Words piled up by the hundreds of thousands. Everybody talked, talked, talked. Lance Happerth figuratively held his ears. The wild guesses, the childish com-

placencies, the crude threats that maddened him when Europe went to war were outdone a million times when America went to war.

"Oh, the twaddle!" thought Lance.

Twaddle about Liberty, he thought; twaddle about a "great nation awakening." Old first-reader mottos raked up. Stuff about "the spirit of '76," and "making the world safe for democracy." This was the way it appeared to Lance. He said it was all press agent work. The poor, childlike, impressive American people were being sign-boarded and bannered into helping a lot of frenzied financiers. One could say such things then, and get away with them. Every community had its Aunt Pringle, who opposed the war because she was tender-hearted; its Barton Fanning, who was unsentimental and pessimistic; its Lance Happerth, who sulked.

"Just Salvation Army stuff," Lance said to Pauline. "Beating the drum on a corner, and gathering in the half-wits. One can't go to a movie without having to get up, or to applaud just because a bunch of lumpy-jawed soldiers march across the screen. I saw Uncle Augustine weeping big tears the other night when they played the 'Marseillaise.'"

Pauline did not reply.

"I guess you like it," he persisted.

"I like to do what's right, that's all."

"Well, three cheers for the good little citizen. Of course if you feel better to get in line, and go through the ritual, I won't object. But there's no telling where you'll land. Suppose the Government came

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after all the money we have—your father's money, too—and grabbed it, what would you do?"

"You're always thinking up extreme things——"

"Or suppose it commandeered all the able manhood, including, of course, all the good dancers, to take up arms. Even, perhaps, yours truly. How would you like that?"

Pauline ignored this absurdity.

"If we're really in the war," he said, after a little more thought, "why don't they make it interesting? The Russian revolution now—that was picturesque. But they haven't any new ideas in this country. And they can't accomplish anything but talk. We never can do any fighting."

He said these same things to Roy Meredith a little later, and Roy partly agreed with him.

"Send an army over? Fudge! The alleys don't want men. They want food, and, er—all that sort of thing. But I'll swear, Lance, if we do send an army over——"

"What?"

"Why, we'll give 'em a fancy licking, that's all." Roy grew excited, and almost burned a hole in the davenport with his cigar. "The country's waking up, all right. Recruiting offices jammed already."

"Are you going to enlist?" Lance inquired, with a twinkle.

Roy puffed, and replied:

"Just as soon as I can get my affairs arranged. I'd 'a' sent in my name for the Roosevelt expedition, only that's off. I'm a fan on militaryism, Lance, you know."

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"All you have to do, I believe, is to walk in and sign a paper," smiled Lance.

"Are you trying to make me mad?" Roy retorted. "If so, you old egg, you can't do it. I'm not thin-skinned. I'm not unpatriotic, either. But I'd be a fool to enlist as a private; man of my equipment. Well, if they should open those officers' camps, I'd probably send in my name if it weren't for Marcel-line."

"Does she object?" asked Pauline.

"Object! She regularly hangs around my neck when I talk about it."

The auditors had to smile. A Shenandoah scene staged amid the scarlet glories of the Meredith apartment—perhaps in the hand-painted dining room—was too grotesque.

After Roy had gone, Lance returned to the sun parlour to think it over. He was not going to do any bragging of his own, come what might. Come what might, he was going to "keep his poise." For himself, he would as soon have soaked himself in gasoline, and set a match to it, as enlist. There was Pauline; he could not leave her, "and without a cent saved, at that." And even if there had not been Pauline, the whole notion of being in the army was fantastic. Imagine himself in uniform! Imagine Roy; or Reeker! He thought of a funny story about Reeker, with his skinny legs encased in knickers. He even thought this story might be worth writing out. He fished for a pencil, scribbled a dozen lines, then——

"Oh, Lance," cried Pauline, bursting in, "those

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new people on the top floor, the Waytes, have telephoned, and want us to dance, and go to Mme. Dolly's afterward."

"All right," said Lance, and tore up the story. "Three cheers for the Featherwaytes. I'll bet they won't talk about war, and tragedy, and everything."

The Featherwaytes, as Lance persisted in calling them, did not talk about tragedy. They couldn't.

The husband was about twenty-seven years old—Lance's age—and his wife a couple of years younger. He was something-or-other like a bond salesman; had a blond pompadour; was inclined to smile too much. His wife let them know right at the start that he could dance rings around anybody in Lakeside. She hovered about him so much that her personality, except for a great shock of hair overhanging a remarkably slender neck, and a pair of feet that, in white shoes, seemed too large for the rest of her, had little to say for itself. She was only a chorus for Laurence. He had a way of saying about this or that, "It's a subject I've looked into a little"; and she would always say, "Oh, yes, Laurence has read up about that."

These characteristics the Happerths discovered during the brief walk to the dance hall. They learned, also, that the Waytes had the distinction of owning a baby eleven months old, which, on occasions like this—and evidently the occasions were not infrequent—was left in care of Mrs. Wayte's mother.

Lance felt old, somehow, when he talked to these

"new people." It was something like talking to Roy Meredith, except that Wayte was more modest. He, too, was a "fan on militaryism," and he pronounced it the same way. Generally speaking, his remarks were so conventional that Lance could talk to him and go on thinking his own thoughts. These concerned in part the stupidity of war, and in part his private affairs. He reached a great decision during this walk, namely, that he would not accept a luscious offer he had received to be a moving-picture press agent. Although all was not serene in his relations with Bragg, he preferred that bushy eyebrowed tyrant to the thick-necked movie people, fat though their pocket-books might be.

Having decided this, Lance was free to be joyous. And the world, as displayed in Lakeside that evening, helped him. The motor-horns tooted defiance to war-lightnings. The lights along the glistening avenues were festive; belated diners in cafés, seen under rose-shaded table-lamps, wore laughing faces. The tinkle of a street piano somewhere rose sharply among the voices of a thousand phonographs. And on a corner a sharp-visaged old woman sold flowers to passersby, just as though this were Paris.

Lance bought a huge bouquet for each of the ladies, and they entered the enormous dance "paradise" in triumph.

Almost as soon as they arrived on the floor Pauline sailed away in the arms of the confident and graceful Laurence Wayte. Lance, as was inevitable, pursued them down the polished boards with little Mrs.

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Wayte. It was a splendid evening for dancing, and the floor was quite up to the advertisements, while an organization calling itself the "North Shore Naval Reserve Band" played bewitchingly in the balcony. Nevertheless, after a couple of rounds Lance began to feel bored. He became thoughtful, and his remarks to his partner grew rarer and rarer. Finally she suggested they rest.

Lance guided her between swirling couples to a seat.

"I'd rather talk, anyway, wouldn't you?" she said, looking up at him with an evident intention of humouring him. She seemed to be at once pitying him because he was not a Featherwayte, and suggesting that he must be very clever at something.

"Oh, yes, I'm tremendously fond of talking," he said. (It was likely to be a long and uneventful evening, after all.)

"Do you know," confided Mrs. Wayte, patting her forehead with her hand, "I'd rather talk than most anything. Larry and I talk whole—whole encyclopedias. He's so tremendously well-read."

"What do you generally talk about?"

"Oh, not generally anything in particular. I love to tell stories. I clip them out of the Sunday paper; don't tell anybody. There was such a good one I remember—but perhaps I'd better not tell it to you who are such a great writer and all. Aren't you?"

A great writer! Lance smiled cynically. Fortunately Pauline and Laurence Wayte flashed by just

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then, and in the necessary comment on their "elegant style" Mrs. Wayte forgot to press for an answer to her question.

She racked her brain for something to interest this strange, uncommunicative Mr. Happerth. Just now he was closely watching the dancers. He looked first intent, then amazed, and then ironic. He must have seen someone he knew. She followed his gaze, but none of the couples looked especially remarkable to her. Suddenly he laughed aloud.

"Excuse me," he said, turning to her.

"You saw someone you knew?"

"I saw one of life's little ironies, that's all."

Too subtle, this, for a Featherwayte. He had discovered Tom Fanning, son of the prominent banker, etc., dancing with Ann Stone, who must be just about on her thirtieth week of restoring to this banker the equivalent of \$100.

The humour of the thing, supposing there was any, had not occurred to either of these dancers. Tom had been at great trouble to persuade Ann to come, but had at last succeeded in finding a fun-loving streak underneath her quiet mask. This was only the third time he had met her, and he was determined to have it different from the others. The first was when he walked home with her, and barely learned her name. The second was a bad evening at the Annex when he had insisted upon knowing the terms of her contract with his father, and had gone away angry with his father.

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This time, he swore, there should be nothing to spoil a perfect evening. He would give her one good time, if she never had another. And since he was about to join an officers' training camp, she might never have another with him. He felt queerly cut up about this.

Ann, as she swung along trying to accommodate herself to Tom's somewhat clumsy steps, reflected that this was the first invitation she had had since leaving the little college town; the first dance since the last commencement "at home." All that seemed many lifetimes distant. The young men of that staid commencement dance—where were they now? Especially the one who, during a moonlight outburst, had taken one of her gloves and later, cooling, had returned it by mail. He was a very different young man from Tom Fanning; danced better, perhaps, but as to other things——

Tom was fascinating company. He never pretended he had any social value, or that he knew prominent people, but he let slip an allusion now and then that showed his associations had not always been with taxi drivers and troopers. And when he revealed his enthusiasms, his plans, the reasons why he thought fit to leave his militia regiment and try for a commission, it was with a simple confidence that was not vanity.

He towered half a head above other men in the hall. He was athletic while they were merely agile. Some cavalier, with or without uniform! To-night he was without it.

"It's strange he would invite a little gray creature like me," thought Ann.

She had been twice around the floor with him, and was listening keenly, but saying very little, when she caught sight of Sally Crowe in a group of people who had just come in.

Her attention was at once distracted from what Tom was saying. Sally had told her she was going to the rink. There was nothing special to worry Ann about this, except that she had suspected Sally did not always tell the truth, and now she knew it. It was sad to discover this in one of whom Ann was so fond. But it was more than sad; it was ominous. It must have something to do with the man whose stalwart form—it looked stalwart in the dark, at least—had sometimes accompanied Sally home, but who never came in. There could not be anything seriously wrong, Ann thought; not while Sally clung as she did to the possible return of Dick; not while she cherished his poor old war map, and wept over it; nor while she worked so diligently selling fiction in the Largest Department Store. The constant escort was probably some young salesman who had started dangling after Sally, and whom Sally, in a spirit of fun, was allowing to dangle.

Puzzling things out this way, Ann let slip the opportunity to refuse Tom's kind offer of an introduction to his sister, whom he had remarked across the floor. He saw no reason why Pauline should not know so nice a person as Ann Stone, and he intended she should. Therefore he acted promptly in the

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ensuing intermission. Muttering "some pleasant people I want you to know," he led his partner briskly toward the corner under the big flag where Pauline and her party had assembled. Halfway there, Ann divined his plan, and quailed; but it was too late to invent any way to defeat him. She found herself plunged into the centre of a group that made way for her good-naturedly, but seemed in haste to forget her. In the centre stood Pauline.

"You girls live right next door to each other, and you ought to be friends," blurted Tom, presenting Ann.

"We shall be, I'm sure," smiled Pauline. But her tone was of the sort that ends friendship ere it begins. Matters were helped very little by Lance, who disengaged himself from some shadowy people in the background, and spoke to Ann kindly. It was the wrong attitude for him to take at this juncture. And it did not add anything to Ann's comfort to observe a very frigid nod exchanged between the two young men.

Tom now stood fully aware he had "messed things," and blaming the mess upon Pauline's snobbery. After a moment he could endure no more, and interrupted her in an aside to Mrs. Wayte.

"Come out here somewhere; I want to talk to you," he whispered to his sister.

She shook her head; then met his eyes fairly and gave in.

They went out of a door with "exit" burning redly over it, and emerged upon a sort of balcony.

"Is this what I'm to expect when I bring my friends to meet you?" he broke out at once.

She was not going to let him bully her this time!

"You make such queer friends, Tom Fanning."

"So do you. You married one."

"Leave Lance out of it. He stays in his own set, anyhow, and that's more——"

An elevated train passed with a roar, and cut off the rest of the sentence. Also the first half of one by Tom, which ended in the words, "that Fannington set." And he added:

"Just because she works in an office, and because she is a sort of slave of father. That's why you snubbed her. Father and the rest of you, too, I suppose, have made a sort of a family cash register out of her."

"A martyr, isn't she? That's what Lance seems to think."

"Then I give him credit. He's less of a puppy than I thought."

He pulled a crushed cigar from his pocket, and worked off his rage by mangling it into leaves.

"If I had a cent in the world," he said, "I'd step in and pay the beggarly balance on that bad check. I met Dick Crowe down South; but of course I didn't know anything about this mess until the other night. He's a keen soldier, and I'll swear he never knew a girl was paying off for him. If father had half a heart he never would let her do it. But he has, and you've all stood by without lifting a hand. That's Lakeside!"

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Pauline heard this out with a good deal of patience, and when she spoke it was not haughtily.

"You always get back to that; to your grouch against Lakeside. How are we different? Do you mean that Lance and I should have dug down in our pockets, or what do you mean? There wouldn't have been any sense in doing that for people we didn't know——"

"Ah, that's it," he interrupted. "You've got to know people. They've got to have some kind of an introduction before you can be decent to them."

"Of course," said Pauline, as if that ended it.

And he saw it was ended. He had done his poor best to make Pauline sorry for that snub, to make her see life as he saw it, and the effort was no good. His whole strategy from the moment he led Ann across the floor was a mistake. He could not tear down the wall between the Fannington and the Annex.

"Well," he said, with a shrug, "I must go back and rescue that little girl from your friends. They're probably asking her to show her pedigree. Come on, Polly."

The group they had left was nowhere to be seen. It had melted into the current of dancers, a revolving mass that grew denser and gayer every hour. The slither of feet was like the flight of dry leaves in a tempest; the music beat a faster and more ardent rhythm; laughter floated in the warm air that rose almost perceptibly to the flag-bedecked girders.

Tom and Pauline stood intently scanning the

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merry-go-round. Several of her acquaintances passed, and greeted her with sprightly nods combined with curious looks at the tall stranger.

"Suppose we take a turn," suggested Tom suddenly.

She looked at him teasingly.

"You don't like to dance that well, I know."

"It's a sort of good-bye," he said. "If I get into the camp, Lord knows where I'll be after that."

"Well——" her face changed. Lance and Ann Stone had just sailed by. Tom saw them, too.

"Rather rich," he chuckled. "Rather rich. There goes your Perfecto husband with Little Miss Nobody."

His mood mellowed as Pauline's grew the reverse. The hall was illumined by comedy: A comedy of floor-walkers, niftily made up with British hair-cuts and Tuxedos; of forty-year-old "butterflies" dressed like twenty-year olds; of beer incomes indulging champagne appetites. And over all, a hand of destiny writing—what?

He might have gone on thinking; only it was not his way. He might have reflected how all the little impulses, dislikes, ambitions, that swayed these fragile people would some day be as nothing. The question of Ann Stone's place in society, the unduly gracious conduct of Lance, the fact that a brother and sister had disagreed again—all this would be as nothing.

He looked at his watch. It was nearly eleven o'clock. Probably Ann would be coming soon, to

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be taken home. And she would tell him what a pleasant time she had had!

Suddenly, from the far end of the hall, there came a shriek; then a confused chorus of voices. Dancers all the way down the floor stopped, like street-cars in a blockade. Men and women scudded toward the point of disturbance, and a managerial person could be seen fighting his way through. Even the music had halted, leaving a silence as impressive as the sudden pausing of machinery in a factory.

"Well," said Tom. "Seems like something has gone wrong in this paradise. I'll take a look."

He walked rapidly to the end of the hall, and elbowed his way into the crowd. Pauline waited, feeling much alone, and inclined to self-pity. Tom did not return. Instead, here came Lance and the Waytes, talking and laughing excitedly.

"A row," cried the star dancer, as soon as he could be heard. "Peach of a row. Fellow knocked another down."

"And one of them was in uniform," shrilled Mrs. Wayte.

"Really," said Pauline, with her blonde head held high. "I think that's rather disgusting. Let's go home."

She swept Lance with a look that contained the emotions of an entire evening. She observed the absence of Ann Stone, connected it, as well as Tom's absence, with the fight, and thought her own thoughts, but uttered none of them.

"You should have been there, Mrs. Happerth,"

said Laurence Wayte, more quietly. "There must be something deep behind this."

"Oh, there must be," his wife chorused.

Lance, affecting not to notice Pauline's chilling aspect, said to her:

"The strong-arm boy in uniform has done us a favour, Polly. He avenged us for the piano. The other chap—can you guess——"

She caught his meaning, and her eyes widened in spite of her.

"Yes, our old room-mate Harrold. Polly, he's a sight. I think he's a case for a doctor."

Pauline shivered slightly.

"I suppose you're ready to go. Have you danced enough?"

"I've always danced enough."

He fell in beside her as they moved toward the cloak-room.

"I just took little Miss Stone around a couple of times to save her——"

"So glad you saved her," she interrupted.

"But I guess," he went on, blithely, "I guess this was due to be a bad evening for her. She seems to have been a friend of Harrold's partner—a lady something like a jonquil, or a bad chromo of one. When we left, this lady had her head on Miss Stone's shoulder, and was having a good cry."

"Will you get my wrap?" replied Pauline. "Oh, yes," she remarked coldly to the Waytes, "I presume they were all friends, the whole lot of them, and my brother Tom, too."

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"Oh, yes, indeed," said Wayte. "Friends? I should say so. It seemed the soldier was the husband of the—the yellow lady. And as soon as he had floored the long-haired chap, what does she do but throw herself in his arms—the soldier's, I mean—and sob out, 'Oh, Dick, so you've come back!'"

"There are many, many angles to this," remarked Lance, returning with an armful of coats and cloaks. "And one of them is, what became of the soldier afterward? If found, please notify the manager. Oh, Lakeside will buzz about this for many a week! Consequences, ladies, consequences."

And once more he thought of "life on the other side of the wall" as warmly human, dramatic, rejuvenating.

CHAPTER XI

THERE were consequences indeed.

They moved slowly, but logically, as in rare cases they do. Dick had vanished, so the consequences could do nothing to him. But there were other fates involved. May Harrold, for instance, decided it was time to act, and she filed a bill that had thirty-nine counts and included nearly all of Blackstone. Then Reeker, most efficient of agents, took a hand. He was very jealous of his employer's reputation, was Reeker. More than once he had saved the Fanning buildings from—pitiless publicity. And now he set out to save the Fannington Annex. It took him no time at all to piece together the facts behind the row at the dance hall, and the facts—not yet proved as such—behind May's divorce bill. Reeker was shocked. He laid everything before Mr. Fanning, and Mr. Fanning, good church member that he was, was more shocked than Reeker.

All this took something like two weeks. At the end of the time we find Ann Stone, sitting alone in the back room sewing, and waiting for Sally to come home. It was not very late, but it was late enough. The dance-hall rumpus had somewhat sobered Sally, but it had not turned her into a stay-at-home. Nor had the fact that she was mentioned in the 10,000-

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word divorce bill put her into sack cloth and ashes. She had bought a new waist on the strength of it.

Ann was thinking hard about her as she toiled thoughtfully, and not very skilfully, at the mending. She was also thinking about Dick, and—oh, a very little, of course!—about Tom. And the distant throbbing of band music came to her on the moist wind, through the partly opened window, as a reminder of war.

There was a ring at the doorbell, and Ann admitted a man whom she recognized as Reeker. She was both surprised and displeased at this evening call. The rent was paid; what did he want? Reeker came in, glanced about at the furniture, which he seemed astonished to find in the same condition as when he last saw it, mentioned the weather, and asked if he might smoke. And he did smoke, while his deliberate, light-coloured eyes studied Ann.

He came at last to the point. There were going to be changes in the building, he said. Going to be a lot of decorating, and alteration. "They" would have to ask a number of tenants to vacate—temporarily. This flat especially.

Why this one especially?

Well, as to that Reeker could not say. Mr. Fanning had given particular instructions.

Ann, bringing upon the agent all her force of personality, insisted upon knowing about these instructions. If Mr. Reeker did not know, or did not want to tell, would there be any harm in asking Mr. Fanning?

A pause, while Mr. Reeker examined a paper-knife as though he would like to borrow it. On the whole, he would advise against asking Mr. Fanning. It was seldom wise to appeal to the owner. "He has given me positive orders, Miss Stone, I assure you," added the agent, uncomfortable because his delicate manœuvring had failed. And because he saw a light of combativeness in Ann's eyes.

"Surely we're what are called good tenants. We've paid the rent promptly all winter; never later than the tenth."

Oh, yes, Mr. Fanning was aware of that. He had mentioned it as a redeeming feature. Still, his decision remained the same.

"Well, if paying up promptly, and keeping things in order, and causing no disturbance doesn't entitle one to stay, what does?" Ann flamed out.

Driven clear off the field of diplomacy, Reeker murmured, "There are charges——"

"I know there are charges, but they are false. I shall see Mr. Fanning. It's an outrage to disturb us because of a crazy woman's action."

"I tell you, it won't help you to see Mr. Fanning. He thinks he has done his utmost for you."

Reeker put into this a meaning that showed he knew everything: the reason why Dick disappeared, the magnanimity of Barton Fanning in regard to paying off the debt—everything.

He laid down the paper-knife, and picked up a fashion magazine.

"*How* the styles change, don't they?" he remarked,

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and restored the magazine. Ann made no reply. She saw Sally and herself amid a welter of household goods, packing up to go; lingering over the flimsy furniture, the odds and ends of haphazard married life; returning some of the pieces to the instalment house whence they had come, and conveying others into storage. Then a boarding-house, possibly—she would not long be able to keep her hold on Sally, without even this pitiful anchorage. And Dick, when he stopped wandering, would have no place to go.

But she could think of no more appeals. She bit her lip, and waited.

Reeker said:

"No one could regret more—you know a landlord must be very careful." He managed to get to his feet. "With all that's said about apartments these days, you can appreciate——"

And more that was equally vague and apologetic. If it had only been the other girl, he would have been at his ease.

"Not a word against you, Miss Stone, of course."

Suddenly he found himself confronted by a little fury, who flung defiance at him both as landlord's agent and as agent of social reform.

"Not a word against me?" she flung at him breathlessly. "You think that eases everything, don't you? But I'll tell you, Mr. Reeker, what you say against Sally is said against me, too. I'm on their side, whatever happens—I mean hers and Dick's. The whole of Lakeside can be down on them, but

I'm for them. I suppose you and your precious Mr. Fanning have been digging around in the dirt, and this is the result. I suppose Lakeside wants to get rid of us. They're all so good—so awfully good, on the other side of the wall."

Reeker, who was cool again, looked at his watch.

"May first, or the fifteenth at the latest," was all he said.

He found himself on the stairs, picking at his neck-tie, and with perspiration on his brow. Poor work! He had not expected to find Ann Stone alone. Well, it was done. He passed down the stairs, glad it was done. He felt momentarily more relieved, more conscious of firmness and uprightness. There ought to be a raise in salary for him out of all this; his discoveries and his manful action. He lit another cigarette, and went out into the spring night.

Five minutes later Sally Crowe, accompanied by a quite unusual escort, namely Dick himself, entered the flat. They found Ann standing on the rug just where Reeker had left her. She did not seem thunderstruck to see Dick. She only said, in a queer tone:

"So you've come home. That is, you think you have. But no, you haven't any home, Dick; never did have. Oh——"

And then she flung herself on the sofa and buried her small head in a pillow. Sally sat down beside her, and smoothed her shoulders and loaned her a handkerchief. And Dick sat in a chair, in his ill-

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fitting khaki, and quavered, "Well, well!" They did not know Ann could cry, or "take on," like other people.

They were very much concerned, and did not know what to do. So Dick just said: "Oh, come!" and "Well, well!" while Sally kept on smoothing and crooning, "What's the trouble, lovey?"

After a long time Ann sat up, and brushed back her wave of dark hair. But instead of explaining, she asked Dick questions.

How had he come to go to the dance hall that night?

Dick looked at Sally. It was clear they understood each other.

Hadn't Sally told her? Why, it was just the talk he had heard. You couldn't keep anything quiet around Lakeside.

But had he been around Lakeside? She supposed he was in Mexico, or somewhere. And where had he been since that night——

"I'll tell you all about it," said Dick. "After I did my bit on the border, I came back here, and went to work as a street-car conductor. You see I figured I'd get along better back home, and be just as—just as safe, too. I didn't send any word home because I figured—well, I didn't know just how things would be."

He paused and regarded Ann uncomfortably. Did he know what Ann had done for him? She waited.

"Then when I happened against all this talk about Harrold, I thought I'd snoop around and see what

was up. You know the rest. But it's all right now, ain't it, Sally?"

Her smile confirmed him.

Their *sang-froid* was rather remarkable, but it restored Ann's composure. Such children! She smiled a battered smile.

And then, sustained by their perfect ease over what had happened, and over anything that might befall, she told them about Reeker's visit.

"By gosh, I thought I saw the snipe on the street," exclaimed Dick. "Well, well! So he thinks he'll put you girls out."

His face suddenly hardened.

"A great encouragement for a fellow to go and do his bit, I must say," he added. "These Fannings and that crowd certainly do make things easy for a chap in this world. By gosh!"

And he got up and paced the floor in his squeaky boots.

Ann watched him, and became aware that he seemed bigger. Not only heavier in body, even broad in his chest and hips, but larger in the jaw, more commanding all around. It came over her that he had at last found a job he would not leave; the very job he had perhaps subconsciously desired. Her eyes smarted.

"A fine how-de-do!" he raged on. "Here I am, taking the midnight train for Lord knows where, and I got to leave you girls on the ragged edge of nothing."

Another square turn. All his turns were square.

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"I'd call up the Grand Mogul if it would do any good. But it would only make him sore——"

He bit at a knuckle, ruefully surveying the girls.

"What are you in?" asked Ann. "Militia or——"

"Not me. I'm in the regular army, young friends. No militia for mine."

He added proudly,

"I've been up at the fort now three weeks. My regiment is sure to be one of the first over."

"Why!" exclaimed Sally. "They say none of the troops are going to Europe."

"Don't you believe it," grinned Dick. "It's a regular cleanup this time."

The expression on Sally's face was a study. She was half-reclining on the sofa in her favourite attitude, with one foot swinging. The foot ceased to swing. Her face passed rapidly from indifferent attention to intentness; astonishment, incredulity.

"It couldn't happen," she murmured. "Not so soon."

"Soon says it," cried Dick; and his voice seemed oddly loud. "This is the time for soon. Girls, I hardly know what it's all about; I couldn't make you a speech about it; but there's a song they sing—— We're off for somewhere—for something—we've got to go."

He paused, confused and laughing. But the light of a Dick Crowe come into his own was in his face. Those months, years, of yearning, of poring over time tables and the various symbols of "going somewhere" had been rewarded.

Sally said, soberly,

"You'd go away—you'd—Dick, if you could leave the army now, to stay here with me—would you?"

He answered her good-humouredly, "No, Sally, I wouldn't, and that's a fact. I'm sorry——"

He took a quick glance around the little flat, with its tinsel furniture, its clutter of ornaments, books piled helter-skelter, photographs in cheap frames, the goldfish bowl. And he was sorry. They could see that. It was his only conception of a home. And he said:

"You don't know how often this winter I've wished I was back here. I'm glad I took a chance and came back to see it once more." His face changed. "As for you, Ann Stone, I don't know why you did—what you did. Sally has told me."

He regarded her with a solemn gratitude that struck deep into her heart.

"That'll be something for me to think about, when I'm rolled up in my pup tent, a long way from here: what Ann Stone did for me, and what I can do for Ann Stone."

"It was nothing," she managed to murmur.

Dick wrung her hand, and glanced at the little frenzied clock on the mantel.

"Ten thirty," he said. "I must be on my way."

Sally rose unsteadily.

"Oh," she said, "to think—only a few months ago, you and I——"

She could not continue.

His blue eyes softened.

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"Don't worry, old girl, in a few more months I'll be back; the same old bad penny."

Sally flung herself upon his shoulder.

"Don't worry," he kept saying, patting her shoulder. His eyes glowed with the light of the coming adventure. He winked at Ann even while kissing Sally's moist face.

And then there was the moment of his final departure, the last scrutiny of his valise, his face at the door for an instant. He was gone. His whistle came back to them from the stairs.

CHAPTER XII

SOME time after this Bob and Fanny Sweetling disappeared. No good-byes to any one. The flat was locked, and a wondering postman stacked up bills and circulars over the mailbox.

Fanny reappeared about a week later, with a demeanour somewhere between pride and pathos.

"I've been down to Peoria arranging with dad for a weekly allowance," she announced.

She sank back in one of Pauline's chairs, and looked tantalizingly at the others—Lance and Pauline, Roy and Marcelline.

"But where's Bob?" they all cried.

"He's enlisted in the navy," replied Fanny, loftily.

"What, old Bob?" and "For gosh' sake, what made him do that?"

It was a crusher. The Fannington quartet looked at each other with uneasy faces. They had more than one acquaintance who had "gone in"; they had got used to going downtown, and being elbowed by khaki uniforms or bumped against by fledgling blue-jackets. But Bob! Why, he was one of the "crowd."

"Well, I know one thing sure," said Roy, wagging his head. "If they want me they'll have to come and take me. And my eyes ain't strong."

He removed and wiped the horn-rimmed spectacles

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he had lately donned and which made him look, Marcelline complained, like a broken-down lawyer.

"They can't get me," put in Lance. "Got a pull with Chowder."

"Chowder" was what they called him in Lakeside; the hitherto unknown general whose face now stared from the columns of the newspapers. It was characteristic of Lakeside to invent a nickname while in so many other parts of the city, and widely through the country, there was uneasy discussion, the dread of partings, worry about the effect of the draft upon business. June 5th, registration day, was approaching, and it was expected to cause trouble. Would the young men submit to this? And if they did, what then?

You remember that far-distant time, when patriotism ran thin, and when it was touch and go whether Washington could be arbitrary without starting a riot?

Maybe the war reached its turning-point right then. Let's not argue the point. The facts of history are that June 5th was a success, and 10,000,000 blue cards appeared in the breast-pockets of young Anaks, who showed them to their friends with a combination of vanity and sniggerings. And the next month came the drawing, that ghoulish affair of celluloid globules, a glass bowl, and a blindfolded man, groping among lives with his bare hand. Lakeside paused from its summer gaities long enough to share for one day the tensivity of the national mood. It joined in the breathless watching of bulletin boards,

the scramble for newspapers that printed columns of numbers and names, the rush to the movie theatres where "The Perils of Ida" were forgotten while the screens shone out with fateful bits of Arabic. And through all the rose-lit apartments ran the question, "Were you drawn?" And in the Fannington for at least a day they forgot to talk about the annual midsummer dance, about Winchell's new bankruptcy petition, about the Wayte's baby; while in the Annex the disappearance of "those two girls who lived in flat 17" had long since ceased to be of moment.

Lance's number was among the first ten. Roy's, too. They met the following day, and shook hands solemnly.

"Yours for exemption," said Lance.

Roy drew from his pocket a clipping that told the regulations.

"There certainly are a few loopholes here for hard-working married men like you and me. Even if I pass the exam.——"

Lance left him standing there. He was tired of hearing about Roy's eyesight. For himself, he had no fears. He was not like some of the others; not like Teddy at the office, just turned twenty-one and foot-loose; not like the chaps who lived at the Dorchester, the "high-class bachelor apartments" on Zephyr Street. It amused him to think about those fellows, and to listen to their talk about expedients for "getting off." He was married, he was the "sole support" of somebody who, he might have added,

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took a whole lot of support. Besides, what earthly reasoning could suggest that he would be any good in an army?

This detached and pleasurable mood lasted him through the period of physical examinations, when, after a very disagreeable experience in company with a lot of naked men, he was passed as "fit."

"You've had all your trouble for nothing," he remarked to the doctors. He laughed in the very face of a solemn member of the exemption board.

He laughed at Bragg, too, when the boss asked about his chances for continuing to write his inimitable "ads." The only thing that spoiled this scene was that Ellsworth was standing there with a sort of hungry look; a look not to be misinterpreted. This nettled Lance, and he felt moved to demand an increase in salary; which, however, Bragg waved aside "for the present." Lance got even by going to the cashier and wheedling her into letting him have a week's salary in advance. It was at this time he noticed for the first time that Ann Stone no longer worked for Bragg.

Having filled out his exemption claim, Lance felt so much at ease that he took his summer vacation as usual. Two of those August weeks he and Pauline spent at a northern lake, while the third he enjoyed alone in the east, doing some work (not very definite) for Bragg. It was during this last week, which Pauline spent at the Wiltshire, that Barton Fanning came to his daughter one evening when they were alone and broached a financial matter that puzzled

her. She could not remember afterward just what had happened. Mainly she recalled that her father's face was oddly flushed, and his hands trembled, she thought.

And he asked her to say nothing about it—about her having signed something, that is.

"Not tell even Lance?" she exclaimed, round-eyed.

"Not even Lance," he replied very emphatically.

"You know, Polly, there are things in my kind of business——"

He folded up the paper and put it in his pocket.

And he left her holding another piece of paper, with which she did not in the least know what to do.

When Lance returned, it was to find Lakeside bubbling with bad news. The exemption board was anathema. It had taken no account of social position, nor of the need of "leaving a few live ones in Lakeside," as somebody said. It had marked down Fred Ames, the singer with a bright future; it had deprived, or was about to deprive, the Beach Hotel of its most popular clerk. It was breaking up the Country Club. It dared to call away two of Barton Fanning's most efficient and obsequious clerks.

Lance had a hot session with the three ogres, in which they tried to prove that Pauline could take refuge at the Wiltshire, and leave him in the position of one without dependents. In order to defeat this insidious idea, it was necessary for him to stir up a quarrel between Pauline and her parents—something not difficult to accomplish—and to have them de-

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clare, both publicly and privately, that they would not support her. The details of this quarrel, and the patching up thereof, would make a chapter. But we have too many other chapters.

And after all, the little storm that centred about Lance seemed of small moment beside the terrible thing that had happened to Roy Meredith.

Roy had approached the physical examiners with perfect faith in the horn-rimmed spectacles. And after they had thumped and pumped him, and had taken off the spectacles and made him read letters on a card, one of the doctors had slapped him on the back and exclaimed, "You'll do."

"What do you mean I'll do?" quavered Roy.

"You're the soundest man—eyesight and all—we've had here to-day. Absolutely prime army material, with a little dieting."

By the time Lance saw his friend, the worst explosions of Roy's turbulent nature were over. He had had his set-to with the exemption judges, and they had decided Marcelline, having a profession, was able to take care of herself.

"You see, they don't know Marcelline," said Roy, resignedly. "I don't suppose the girl'll starve, but——"

"How does she take it?" inquired Lance.

"She's sore because I didn't go into an officers' camp. Says she'd never've married me if she'd known I was going to turn into one of those wops with leggings that don't fit. Oh, well!" He sighed, and then brightened. "Look here, I'm going to

have some fun out of this. I'm going to give a draft party; rent a room at Ye Olde Inne. Have Prussian helmets for drinking-cups, and a lot of skulls hung about with lamps in 'em. Will you and Pauline come?"

"As honorary guests, yes," replied Lance. "You know I'm exempt."

"Hope you are," was the unselfish response. "Old boy, write some place-cards, will you? Something rather gruesome——"

The week that elapsed before the party brought so many sober things with it that by the time the crowd assembled at Ye Olde Inne even the absurdity of Roy in a rented uniform and Fred Ames in red French trousers and a tin pail for a hat, failed to "put the thing over." The pink-and-blue drinks were all right, and the skulls were ghoulish enough, but the talk simply would not grow frivolous. The departure of the drafted men was getting terribly near; even the "crowd" felt it. Fred Ames sat most of the time looking into a half-filled glass. Roy himself, with heaven-knew-what ahead of him, made forced speeches. And there was something wrong with Pauline; at least, she was silent and pale. While Lance——

"Now, where is that poet?" snapped Roy, for the fourth time, about ten o'clock.

Pauline at length explained: "He had an unexpected call from the draft board."

There was a general murmur.

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"Well, my dear," said Fanny, "I do hope——"

"Oh, it isn't any trouble; nothing like that, I'm sure," said Pauline.

"Only some more red tape, I suppose," growled Roy. "Only thing is, after Lance forgot my place-cards, its rather tough the Government should deprive us of him entirely. Here, Winchell, have some more of this brew. Drink up, folks, for heavens' sake."

They had begun discussing an adjournment to the last act of the "Midnight Follies" when, without his entry having been noticed, Lance stood in the door.

Roy jumped up to meet him, with the words, "It's about time——"

But Lance did not seem to see Roy. His brow was wet with perspiration. It glistened white in the spectral glow of the skeleton-lamps. His dark eyes, in which burned excitement and distress, sought out Pauline.

She rose and went to meet him. They spoke for a few moments in low tones. Then they beckoned Roy. He was heard to say, "Oh, now, folks, that's too bad." And then, to the huge curiosity of the others, Lance and Pauline left the place.

He had a cab there for her, and in it they were whirled home, while he sat at her side, reticent and forbidding. It was not until they had entered the flat, and he had turned on nearly every light in the place, as though his mental fever bade him illumine the remotest nooks, that he turned to her with a

violence of manner quite foreign to him, and uttered the singular question:

"Have you got \$40,000?"

Pauline, sitting where he had put her on the davenport, with a red, white, and blue scarf about her neck, shrank before the assault. But she started, he thought, not so much with surprise as with the sensation "At last."

She moistened her lips, and lifted her eyes to his unwaveringly. Pauline never was one to "hedge."

"Yes," she replied. "I have a check for \$40,000."

To find this was true excited him beyond measure.

"You really mean it? There's a fortune around the house somewhere, and I didn't know it?"

With that he flopped down upon a chair. In the interval before his next question they heard laughter below on the street. Then the creak of the elevator. Just the usual sounds, but now quaintly unfamiliar.

"Well—where did you get it?"

"From father."

That accorded with what he had heard. He leaned toward her, his white fingers clutching his knees.

"To keep?"

"I suppose so."

Lance made a vague gesture of despair, and got up. He looked bruised and frightened. His tie had pulled part way out of his waistcoat; his hair was rumpled.

"Then—if that's all true—I'm a drafted man, Polly; that's all. I'm in the army. Cannon fodder. And you've done it."

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He walked unsteadily to the table, and fumbled with his pipes.

"Let me explain——" she began.

"It won't help any. Here's what happened to-night: I went to the draft board, thinking there was some detail like a wrong entry; had my birth date wrong, or something. They hauled out an affidavit for you to sign; one like you signed before. I said you had signed one. 'No longer valid,' snaps old Cathercoal. 'The situation has changed. We understand her father has settled money on her,' he says. 'We hear it's something like \$40,000.' And he demands a new affidavit. What he doesn't have to tell me is that this cooks my goose."

"How—how could they have learned it?" gasped Pauline.

"It must have been through Reeker. But hang that! What I'd like to know——"

"Lance!" she cried, with sudden hope. "I can give back the money."

"Can you?" Hope awoke in him, too. Then hers died.

"I forgot," she said, crushing her handkerchief in both hands. "Father's gone to New York to stay two weeks."

"We'll telegraph him. Ah, no! It wouldn't help. The affidavit has to be returned to-morrow. They're just that anxious——"

They sat in miserable silence for a time.

"The trap's all set," said Lance. "And there isn't time to undo this horrible blunder—or whatever it is."

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He got up again, walked to the table, and came back.

"What did he give you the money for?"

"That," replied Pauline, crushing her handkerchief still more fiercely, "is a secret."

"What! You're going to keep that dark?"

"It's father's secret, not mine."

Lance pondered what this might mean, but all he could understand—and he understood it very fully—was that there was no hope. A Fanning would always protect a Fanning.

He smashed one fist into the other, and began to make a tour of the room, kicking chairs aside, knocking over his tall, glass-bowled ash tray, and finishing at Voltaire's cage, at which he glared as though he would throw it into the street. Then he returned to the table, pulled out a drawer full of manuscripts, and started flinging them into the waste basket.

Pauline sat where she was, with the scarf, pathetically patriotic, dangling from her throbbing neck.

"What are you going to do?" she ventured presently.

"I've a night's work to do."

Swish! Thump! fell the manuscripts.

"You'd better go to bed. The first draft goes next week, and they won't overlook me. My life's over."

An hour later, from where she lay, she heard him go into the "guest bedroom," and lock the door.

CHAPTER XIII

A CROSS-STREET downtown. It is a street of shops, leading into a boulevard, which is also of shops. Along both, as far as normal eyes can see, there are people and flags and bedlam.

There are parked motor cars, full of spectators. The windows of tall buildings are full. People are packed along the curbstones. Boys cling by their toes to the pedestals of street lamps. Shuffling, elbowing lines are pushed back by mounted police. Seeing all these faces, you get a telling impression of how unhealthy the people of this city are. Even in their present excitement they are haggard; few have clear eyes or good teeth. They are now happy over a big spectacle that impends. For a few it is like a funeral; for most, like a holiday.

The city has come out to see the drafted men go away. It is more of a revel than a funeral. In the big windows of a club a group of men in leather chairs smoke contentedly. The crowd outside elbows, and jokes, and gossips, while waiting. Only here and there are thoughtful faces. Only here and there, old women, wearing shawls and weeping.

The war is still young.

Three new-fledged officers from Fort Sheridan camp stand grandly on the corner. One of them is

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Tom Fanning. He lounges there, watching the crowd. Presently, as a bottle-green automobile glides up to join the line, Tom vanishes. The car is full of his family. He sees that Pauline is in the car with her parents, and for once in her life she looks tired, distressed.

Then he remembers. Lance Happerth is in this draft. At this point in his thoughts, Tom takes fright, and vanishes.

Sympathize with her over Lance—they might try to make him do it. And that would be the last straw.

That morning had been one of the worst Lakeside remembered. There had been, in a dozen of those pretty and sheltered apartments, scenes appropriate to the fact that, as in Lance's case, "life was over" for certain young men. It was not really half that bad, but when it came to going out into a world as cruel as war made it, "life's over" seemed none too tragic.

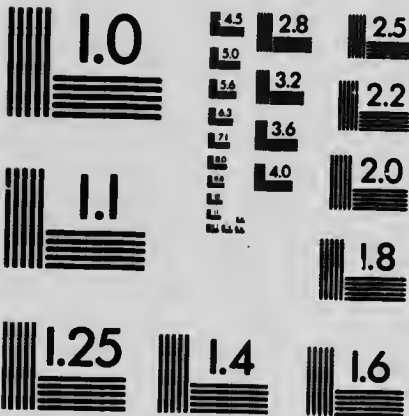
For all these men their wives or their mothers had planned comforts for them to take alone, little reminders, Lakesidean trinkets; only to find they were forbidden. A miserable little bundle; the clothes on his back; with these, Lakeside youth, like the thousands of others that day, for all the world like the "chaps west of the 'L'," fared forth.

Now they were to march in a chaotic procession, keeping step with the rude and uneducated, the badly dressed, uncouth, criminal, or half-witted, along the cross-street into the boulevard.



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It was this odious intermingling, perhaps, that the Fannings grieved about. As Mrs. Fanning said, "Lance won't have a companion he knows, now that Roy Meredith has been ordered to the coast artillery instead."

Pauline said nothing. Everything that could be said, had been, for her.

She and her father were not on the best of terms. Later they would get over it, but not yet.

There was a roar from far down the cross-street. A band began to throb. Cheers started down there; ran along the buildings, above and below, like thunderous combers. Straggling marchers appeared, slipping on the rough pavement, watching each other's lumbering feet. They came rapidly nearer, in wavering lines, dressed in all sorts of good or bad clothes, some of them straight and brave, some of them slouching, some waving and yelling at the window balconies, some staring ahead as in a trance. The shuffle of their feet had no discipline. On their faces were traced a thousand human traits, wild passions, or burnt-out fires. They had only one thing in common. They were young.

A section of them reached the boulevard, and turned into it with a semblance of "right wheel." A placard followed, with the ragged, comic, pathetic scrawl, "We'll Get the Kaiser."

Jeers and yells of "Hurrah for the rookies!"

In some places, tears; fainting women. For it was believed these boys never would come back.

Fully a thousand had passed before the Lakeside

group appeared. They went rapidly, in a little body; friends side by side, where possible. A stricken lot.

And at last—Lance.

He was marching alone, using his reserve strength to hold himself rigidly indifferent to the crowd that he hated. For he hated them all. The city he had once thought romantic, human, friendly, had come out to see his shame. Even the Fannings. He saw them in their car. Why couldn't they let him go, without joining the multitude of gloaters? He looked straight ahead.

He must—he must—look straight ahead.

There was running through his mind a song he had heard Fred Ames singing just a night or two before, while he, Lance, was walking the streets trying to "pull himself together." It was that stanza of the "Rubaiyat" beginning "Oh, moon of my delight," and ending "Turn down an empty glass."

He repeated these words to himself, so that he would not look at the Fannings. And in a moment he had turned into the boulevard, and was gone.

Pauline, as he passed, was leaning forward, with every nerve tense, to catch his eye when he should see her. Once she cried "Lance!" but her voice was puny in the uproar. Suddenly he was gone; gone without seeing her—perhaps without looking for her.

Then she wept; wept despite the horrified remonstrance of her mother; wept as unrestrainedly as though she lived "on the other side of the wall."



PART II

CHAPTER I

THE young man who thought his life was ended made himself as small as possible in the car seat, and watched the shabby fringes of the city dwindle; the last furnace chimneys disappear. His head still ached with the uproar of that pageant now remembered as the finale of his life as a civilian.

The car was filled with boisterous youngsters, crimson with excitement, and reeking of "bad booze." A politician from "west of the L" had supplied every man with a pint flask of whisky and an aluminum comb. The latter, folded within wet scraps of paper, were now supplying an accompaniment to songs inspired by the whisky. They were bold, bad songs, and some of the boys sang shamefacedly. Others looked excessively convivial; they gawped about hoping the others would notice they had been drinking. They smacked their lips and talked about "the real stuff." It was the first drink many of them had ever had.

At times they stuck their red faces out of the windows, and bawled at people on the platforms of the little stations, or at bucolic parties jogging along the country roads in buggies.

None of them were known to Lance, and he sought

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no acquaintances. Occasionally one boy in a plaid cap, or a battered fedora, would glance toward him sarcastically, or wistfully, but he took no heed. He did not know how to be "sociable" with these louts. He felt decades older than they. He was bored with them.

There was a vacant seat beside him, and presently he realized—perhaps he had dozed a little—that a tall, ungainly being had slouched down beside him. His blackened fingers held the stump of an unspeakable cigar, and some of the ashes dropped off on Lance's knee. Lance drew away. At this the newcomer turned toward him, and his teeth were displayed in a smile of apology. This smile was a dreadful thing. It revealed the yellowed fragments of teeth. The man's furrowed cheeks were mottled with some skin disease, and his eyes were bloodshot. Lance shrank farther away. He was appalled by this companion, and a little afraid of him. He had never dreamed of such a contact; but probably this was what the army meant. If he had but known it, the ghastly wreck of youth beside him represented one of those errors the physicians of the first draft so often made. But the knowledge would not have helped Lance, anyhow. His soul gave a final convulsion of disgust, and he looked steadily out of the window, hoping the creature would not speak to him.

There was no danger, for in the next few minutes Lance's seat mate sank into a half-drunken stupor; it lasted during the remaining hour of the journey.

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Then the fellow awoke, and leaned over to look out of the window in his turn.

"We're mighty near there, buddy," he croaked, and his hand fell on Lance's knee. The knee was promptly jerked away, whereupon the toothless one looked up sharply; his eyes lit with anger, and—

But a train hand appeared at the door.

"Here's where you guys start work for Uncle Sam!" he shouted. The car wheels began to grind. The passengers boiled up out of their seats, and Lance saw his loathsome companion no more.

With almost a sense of relief, such as a condemned criminal might feel as the noose is finally adjusted, Lance joined the line moving toward the door. Stiff-legged, and feeling that his clammy face was covered with soot, he descended the steps into the hot sun. As his feet struck the ground he closed his eyes instinctively, for a gust of wind, laden with dust, assailed him. As far as he could see, when he managed to reopen his eyes, there was nothing but this whirl of dust hiding the cantonment, making the long, low buildings loom up dimly, like wraiths.

"Over here, you district 50 men!" yelled a voice. Lance stumbled in that direction, and joined the embarrassed group at the side of the car.

"Who's in charge of this party?" demanded a gruff major of the quartermaster's corps, stopping and consulting a notebook.

"I am, sir." A young man stepped forward.

"Let me see your papers."

They were exhibited.

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"Thirty men, eh? Everybody here?"

"Yes, sir. Here are all the papers the draft-board secretary gave me."

The major looked at him sharply.

"Have you seen service before?"

"Yes, sir. Marine corps."

"All right. You know what a sergeant is, then. You're sergeant of this outfit. Form in columns of two and wait for Lieutenant Morin. You are assigned to"—he consulted the notebook—"Company C, 344th Infantry."

Lance listened to this dreadingly. Somewhat to his surprise he found himself wheeling into line with another young man, a red-haired, happy-looking fellow about Lance's own height. Presently another officer, much younger than the major, and wiping his face with a khaki handkerchief, paused before the little column. He held a brief colloquy with the "sergeant." There was a sharp order, and the column, in straggling formation, and with heads bowed against the unspeakable dust, moved off down the company street.

Across the wide parade ground and down the newly cut roads it flew, this torment of dust, blowing thirty feet high. The new soldiers, like a file of penitentiary inmates, as Lance thought, trudged through the clouds, with the young lieutenant striding, upright and grim, at their sides.

"Oh, you pretty country!" muttered an irrepressible a pace or two behind Lance. "They said it would be so nice out in the country."

"Who started this war?" croaked another, by way of jest.

"Who? Kaiser Bill, that's who. Oh, what we'll do to him——"

Lieutenant Morin turned and grinned at the column. His face was caked with dust and sweat, like theirs; but he could grin. They grinned back, beginning to take delight, seeing his pluck, in the mere act of being plucky.

"Oh, you'll like it, boys; you'll like it," he said.

They took up the words.

"He says we'll like it," they yelled, one to another.

"The lieut. says we'll like it. Oh, boy!"

Lance almost laughed. He surveyed Morin with more interest. It came faintly into his mind that this young man was a person worth knowing. He had a premonition of the fact—it was a proven fact within two days—that "You'll like it" was to be the by-word of the division.

As in a dream, with his thoughts far scattered, Lance found the squad halted before a barracks on whose steps stood another officer. He and Morin exchanged salutes—those ridiculous salutes Lance had seen in plays. As in a dream he watched them in parley, then followed the herd to a low, one-story building, where all were adjured to strip and get into the shower baths. There was hot water. There were clean towels. As he laved and dried himself, among all those other naked, glowing bodies, Lance began to feel more alive. The disgust over this close

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companionship with a "bunch or louts" began to pass away. A few minutes later, in the mess hall of the barracks, he was given a mess kit, and had it heaped with steaming food—beef stew, bread, pudding, and vegetables. He ate this goulash slowly, and with an unexpected relish, sitting at one end of the long wooden table. Gradually the dull misery within him subsided before the resurgence of his animal life.

He found Lieutenant Morin was sitting next him. Lance ventured a polite question.

"Is this a fair sample of army food?"

"It'll be better than this. Wait till you've got a regular mess cook and everything. Have real mess then. National Army food in 1917, buddy, is going to be different from the chow back in 1898. No embalmed beef this time."

"Why don't you say I'll like it?" returned Lance, with only a slight touch of sarcasm.

"You will," said the lieutenant soberly. He took a gulp of coffee, and rose.

"Attention, men!" called a sharp voice. The officer to whom Morin had reported at the door of the barracks stood before the rows of diners. They struggled to their feet, most of them. The officer waited until all had come to a sort of attention. Then he spoke.

"I am going to introduce myself. I am Captain Wellington, in command of Company C. That's your company."

He allowed this to sink in.

"We're going to spend to-day, to-morrow, and the next day, getting acquainted with each other and with the camp. Also physical examinations and inoculations. Then you get your uniforms."

The motley crowd glanced at each other, and some grinned.

"You're not going to be made into fighting sons o' guns in a day, nor will it take a year. We're going about it gradually. But here's a few things to remember: You're not going to be mistreated here. If any man mistreats you, come and tell me. We're going to have a square deal here." The young captain's face became graver as he went on. His eyes looked deep into Lance's for a moment, lingered, and swerved away. "If you don't play square with me, I'm going to punish you. Not the whipping post, either."

His voice took a deeper note.

"Boys," he said, "your country is at war. We're all in this together. I've come into this from civil life, just as you have. You and I are going to do our part; that I know. You and I are going to have the best company, the best regiment, the best division, in the best damned army in the world!"

A cheer started. The captain checked it with uplifted hand.

"Save that for the day we go over the top. All I want now is that you remember you are all Uncle Sam's soldiers. Some day you'll be proud of Company C and what it did."

With that he walked from the mess hall, and cheers,

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unchecked, followed him. The rookies looked at each other, and broke up into groups. They had already lost some of the saucy, chip-on-shoulder bearing they had exhibited thus far. The captain's words had "sunk in." This was not a picnic, after all. It was business.

Lance leaned against the door-jamb, and gazed out over the bleak parade ground. The contest of wills had risen within him again: The old argument whether he should fall in line, or should follow his own bent. Did he want to be a soldier, or not? There had been a thrill or two even for him in that speech; a vision of a great task. But he persuaded himself he did not believe in it. "They'll have to push me every step," he decided. He glanced at his watch. It was not yet one o'clock. His whole world had turned over. Home and Lakeside, and everything else he had known, were gone, and it was not yet one o'clock.

The company had been given an hour's freedom to stroll about the camp, and Lance started off alone. He sauntered among barracks bearing enigmatic signs, "machine gun company," "depot quartermaster," and "base hospital." He dodged huge motor trucks laden with mysterious cargoes. The place was like an enormous ant-hill, swarming with men, with and without uniforms, hurrying about apparently without purpose. And over all blew the sirocco wind and its dust-clouds, through which Lance wandered dumbly, a forlorn fragment of humanity, at whom no one so much as glanced. He

felt as he had years before, when he prowled through the city looking for a job. His confidence was gone.

And then, when he had returned to the barracks, came a final blow to his pride. He was turned to, with every man in the company, on what Lieutenant Morin called a "housecleaning." Half a dozen fellows, Lance among them, were sent for buckets of water. Others were given brooms and mops. The squad room, the mess hall, and the sleeping quarters, were thoroughly swept and scrubbed. Blisters popped out on Lance's palms; his breast heaved, And his soul heaved, too. This stable-boy work was something he had not dreamed of. Even in his worst visions he had supposed there were menials—men more menial than soldiers—to do this sort of thing. And his curiosity overcoming his reserve, he muttered to his nearest companion, "Is this part of the regular job, or——"

As though he had overheard the question, Lieutenant Morin said loudly, "This sweeping job is done every day. Twice a week we'll scrub."

His eye met Lance's, and lingered there. Through the grime on the private's face had appeared the famous twisted smile whose meaning was so well known in Lakeside.

"That man's a character," thought Morin. He spoke again to the company.

"Another thing: We look after your cleanliness as well as that of these quarters. You'll take a bath once a week. If you don't, a couple of men will give you one with lye soap, garden hose, and a scrub brush."

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There was laughter. But Morin turned on his heel without a smile.

During this housecleaning, Lance had centred his interest, in a shuddering sort of way, on the sleeping quarters. And after mess, when darkness began to settle down, this interest became intensified. He had seen the cots drawn together hastily, side by side; and he had seen sacks—mere sacks, filled with straw—piled upon them, and rough brown blankets provided for covering. And Morin had said, with a special glint in his eye for Lance, "The army doesn't know anything about linen sheets and silk pajamas. No, nor pillows, either. You'll find it easier to sleep without pillows than with them."

It was not this absence of pillows or sheets that troubled Lance, however, so much as the idea of sleeping practically shoulder to shoulder with a lot of male animals; the idea of undressing and dressing in public; the idea of having lost his privacy forever. Over the head of his bed there was a shelf, and two feet of that shelf belonged to him. Already some of his mates had utilized it for storing their tobacco and a few other pitiful little possessions they prized. That two feet was now all the space on earth Lance could call his very own, all that represented his individuality. This was what cut the deepest. As he surveyed the little shelf he could almost have wept, thinking how the freedom, the unlimited chance for self-expression, he had possessed but twenty-four hours before, had been swept away.

But instead of weeping—for he was not reduced

quite to that extremity—he sat, after supper, on the door-sill of the barracks, and watched the light over the hills deepen from crimson to brown and then fade entirely. He was enjoying the most complete and unhampered fit of sulks he had known for years. Most of the fellows had scattered to Y. M. C. A. huts, to write letters, or listen to the phonographs. But Lance would have none of this. He sat there, unheeded, thinking. It was at length fully dark, and through this velvety darkness the sounds of the camp, now modified and almost musical, came to his ears. A locomotive was puffing and whistling across the hills. And he heard the roar of a fast train, bound, no doubt, for some place where people were happy and free.

He thought how at this hour in Lakeside groups of his friends were setting out for the dance halls, the rink, the cabarets; and how the lights of the Beach Hotel were streaming out over the lake, and how the orchestra was playing bewitchingly for late diners. Nothing had changed back there, he thought, nothing had happened to Pauline and the Frings, they who, through some blundering, he could not yet understand, had virtually doomed him to all this; they who had drawn him into their life, and then discharged him again. He forgot how, within recent months, he had chafed at that life with its falsities and its ornamentations. Now that it was all gone, it seemed desperately dear.

The men came trooping back to the barracks, and interrupted his reverie. They swarmed up the stairs

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to their "hotel," as he heard them calling it. Lance got up and followed. He remembered that unless he went to bed with the rest, there would be some kind of penalty.

When he got there, some of the men were already undressed, and were sitting up talking, or singing. In one corner four fellows had made up an impromptu quartet, and were bawling out "Tipperary" with weird harmonies. Others, as they tumbled in, had writing materials, and were pencilling letters, with much biting of the ends, and contemplation of the ceiling. A few were even studying "I. D. R."—infantry drill regulations. Lieutenant Morin's eyes rested with satisfaction upon these studious ones, and his report to the colonel, when he went back to the little cubby hole that was his home in officers' row, was full of enthusiasm for his company.

"But there's one chap," said Morin, "that's going to give me trouble. He's a silk-stockings boy from the boulevards. His face is one continual sneer; he won't chum with the others."

"Conscientious objector?"

"Maybe not that bad. More of a spoiled child, I'd say."

The colonel smiled.

"My dear boy, fifty per cent. of our American boys are that." And he said no more.

That spoiled child, Lance Happerth, sat on the edge of his cot and tried to close his ears to the efforts of the quartet. He took a magazine from his bag, read a few lines, and put it back. At last, worn out

by the shocks of the day, he reclined among the rough blankets and closed his eyes.

Suddenly, almost under the window at the foot of his bunk, he heard the sweetly brazen notes of a bugle. It played a tune whose staccato blended into long, fading notes.

"What's that?" Lance inquired of his neighbour, rising on his elbow.

"It's what they call taps," said the boy. "I used to hear my father whistle it."

Another bugler, a little distance away, had taken up the call, and was sounding it with even greater art than the first performer. Then came another, far away through the still night. Then farther and farther, and again near by, Lance heard the silver notes of the military lullaby swell and die. Those echoes, those long-drawn, wistful notes, were beautiful. Lance Happerth, alive to poetry in whatever form, listened in a new mood. The song of the bugles, that mournful yet noble song, was something he could understand.

There was poetry even in the army. There was beauty. . . .

He sank back on his cot. Lights were out. The windows made grayish oblong spaces against the dark. About him there were the last mutterings of voices, an occasional sigh, from one cot the suspicion of a homesick sob. The soft thud of a sentry's feet passed below the windows.

Lance and his new comrades slept.

CHAPTER II

HE STARTED awake, with bugles again in his ears. They were playing a tune this time with nothing of poetry in it. A snappy tune, meant to be cheerful, no doubt. But it fell harshly on the ears of these rookies.

The sun was coming mistily through the eastern windows of the barracks. Far away, little birds piped. Outside the camp, as well as within it, life was astir. It was very early in the morning.

Lance, after one stare at the plain board walls and the strangers tumbling out of their cots beside him, realized where he was, gave a savage kick at his blankets, and sat up. He looked at his watch. It was a quarter to six. He dressed hastily, as the others were doing, and found himself presently being badgered through "setting-up drill." Like some of the others, he became breathless, sore, and desperate; but when it was over, and Lieutenant Morin at last said, "That'll do," he was glowing in every vein, and he was hungry as he had not been for months.

Mess was followed by cleaning of quarters, and then came the never-to-be-forgotten ordeal of physical examinations and inoculations. In an outer room of the regimental infirmary they stripped, piling their clothing along the walls; then, in a long row of

nakedness, they filed past the regimental surgeon. Lance learned that he held the rank of major, and had given up a practise worth \$30,000 a year to do this work. He thought the major a fool, and decided he was unnecessarily gruff with a fellow. The \$50,000 man and his aids, also men from civil life, sounded, thumped, and questioned the new company with a dour attentiveness. They spent an extra minute or two over Lance's heart, and for an instant a wild hope rose within him, as it had when he was drafted. But he was passed, with an extra thump on the back.

The line, reclothed except for arms and shoulders, now marched in front of the medical corps lieutenants for the "shots in the arm." One "Tuffy" McLean, a gigantic former teamster just ahead of Lance, fainted at the first sight of the gleaming syringe of the typhoid man. He was unceremoniously "shot and scratched" while lying on the floor. Paradoxically, the slender Lance kept both his feet and his wits, though after his two doses he felt a bit squeamish. He recovered entirely after the company had been led in a brisk run around the regimental camp; to "scramble the stuff into your blood," Morin explained.

Morin was ever-present. He was slightly less companionable than he had been the day before. At the first drill by squads that afternoon he became positively hateful.

Lance Happerth had never in his life learned to do things exactly as he was told. Even in the *Press* office he had been noted for "taking a different angle

on things," and his originality had rather been applauded than condemned. As for Bragg, well, a "finishing-touch man" always did as he liked. But now orders were orders. Two paces to the front meant two paces, neither more nor less. And Morin's tongue was sharper than any tongue Lance had ever encountered. Further, the young lieutenant seemed to have a way of singling out Lance for his sarcasm. At some of the members of this awkward squad he merely laughed; he even permitted one young Irish monkey to scratch the back of his neck, and when "Tuffy" McLean fell over his feet, he calmly waited for him to pick himself up. But for Lance he seemed to have only scorn. His whole bearing, his words (some of them) bore an implication, which was exactly what Morin was thinking, "You baby, I'll make a man of you yet."

While being made a man of, Lance hated Morin with a desperate hatred.

But there was worse to come.

That morning, while the examinations were going on, several hundred noncommissioned officers from regular army posts had arrived in camp. Lance's company drew a wiry little sergeant named John Christensen, who made up with a profane tongue educated in Cuba, the Philippines, and Porto Rico, what he lacked in inches. He became at once a combination of first sergeant, mess and supply sergeant, besides looking after much "paper work." This would be his task until drafted men could be schooled.

The first thing Christensen did, after afternoon

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drill, was to call the men together, introduce himself gruffly, and dole out the clothing allotment of Company C. Lance, as he walked down the line, was handed a felt campaign hat, two pairs of khaki breeches, two heavy flannel shirts, a blouse, as the army calls a uniform coat, besides shoes, underwear, socks, and leggings. With arms piled high he climbed the stairs to his cot, doffed his civilian clothes, and faced the mysteries of laced breeches and leggings.

Others around him were doing the same.

"Gosh, these things are hot," grunted one boy, as his head emerged from a flannel shirt.

"How in all that's holy do you get into these pants?" wailed another.

When the company stood partially clothed the effect was ludicrous. Fat men had breeches far too small, lean ones could have wrapped their blouses twice around their bony frames. There was much trading, and roars of laughter.

Lance glanced down over himself, when fully dressed, with a wry face. Everything he wore was evidently poorly made, full of wrinkles; the breeches baggy and shapeless, the blouse full of absurd angles and pouches, and the leggings—instead of tapering gracefully to the ankle, they were straight and stiff, like felt boots.

Must he be made a scarecrow, as well as a nonentity?

He went determinedly downstairs and stood before the hard-faced Christensen.

"Say, you must have picked out the wrong stuff

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for me," he remarked pleasantly. It was meant for a dangerous sort of politeness.

The sergeant looked up sharply, surveyed Lance from head to foot, and then suddenly blazed out:

"Go on back where ye belong, and keep yer mouth shut."

And as Lance turned a defeated back, Christensen scrutinized him again, as though to fix him forever in his memory.

That was not the last encounter of these two men, as far separated as the poles in their views of life and duty. But even his troubles with Morin and the doughty sergeant faded before an encounter of a different kind that came a few days later.

On his return one evening from the regimental exchange, whither he had gone to buy a package of cigarettes, Lance was mooning along, dispiritedly watching some low-hanging clouds that promised the first rain for weeks. Suddenly he passed an officer, and, as his thoughts were far away, he failed to salute. He was going on, but the officer, who looked gigantic in the dusk, and who wore the bars of a first lieutenant with a royal pride, whirled and accosted him.

"Look here, boy," he said in a commanding but not ill-natured tone, "haven't you been taught to salute in your company?"

Lance turned back, and, yielding in the same way he had yielded to many other "impositions," he lifted his hand to his hat-brim. The next moment these most unsoldierly words started from his lips, "Well, for the Lord's sake."

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The lieutenant leaned forward and peered into his face.

"Happerth!" he exclaimed.

Lance stood in utter amazement and confusion. This tall young officer, whose handsomely cut uniform contrasted so painfully with Lance's "bags," was Tom Fanning.

The moment was unnerving for Tom as well as for his despised brother-in-law, but he inquired:

"What company are you in?"

"Company C, the 344th."

"Sir!" Tom added.

The blood flew to Lance's cheeks. Say that word to Tom Fanning? Not in a lifetime.

"Look here, Lance," remarked Tom, not unpleasantly. "We're not in civil life now, and it doesn't make a—not a particle of difference that you married my sister. Unfortunately the regulations provide that you say 'sir' to an officer, and you're going to say it or get into trouble."

The private in Company C stood breathing hard.

"Isn't it enough," he queried hoarsely, "isn't it enough that you and all your tribe should have done to me—what they have done? Isn't it enough that I'm humiliated by this dirty uniform; shoved out here to be a dog of a soldier, while your family, and all the selfish gang around them——"

He choked.

Tom loomed up suddenly like a flagpole in the night. He seized Lance by the loose collar of his flannel shirt, and bent his head toward the ground.

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Lance resisted frantically, but in vain. That hand at his neck was like iron.

"Say sir!" commanded Tom. "And take back what you said about the uniform."

There was an agonizing moment, during which Lance sought to trip his opponent, and was kicked on the shin by a heavy boot. Then he gave in.

"I take it all back—sir," he said, faintly.

Tom instantly released him.

"Lance," he said, almost sadly, "now you're in it, why don't you take what you get, and keep that fool mouth of yours closed? That's my advice."

It was almost identical with the advice of Christensen. Lance made no reply, but passed on rubbing his throat. Wild ideas of revenge ran through his brain only to be smothered by the knowledge that he was helpless. Helpless before an officer who bore Pauline's name!

He vanished into the darkness, while Tom stood looking after him, thinking many things, and not all of them disdainful.

Day followed day with its changeless routine of drill, mess, and drill. Lance, although his body responded automatically to the stimulus it was getting, remained lonely and ill at ease. His malicious feeling toward the army and all its manifestations was fading; he was acquiring almost an affection for noble ceremonies like "retreat"; yet he still told himself he was an outsider. Of companionship he had practically none. Much would he have given for a

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glimpse of Fred A nes, or even of Jimmy, the janitor, but these young men seemed to have been absorbed by other units.

He made up his mind he would learn what was told him, and would obey orders, but he would never be "keen on it"; never would do more than was required. He heard others of the company talking about promotion, and thought, "They'll never put stripes on me."

While in this phase he was astonished one day to meet Pinowsky, his artist friend of yore, the wild "Polack" in whose studio he used to discuss the Absolute. Pinowsky had been dragged into the draft "by the neck," as the saying was. And he was still recalcitrant. Lance found him brooding on the steps of the regimental Y. M. C. A. and was fain to pound him on the back, but was restrained by something black and forbidding on Pinowsky's face. He was still in civilian clothes, ragged and dirty. An ultimatum had been given him that day, he said, either to put on the uniform, which he had refused to do, or face a court-martial, charged with desertion.

"I am an artist," he said, pushing back his shock of dust-coloured hair. "Why should I kill and be killed? What do I care for this flag they make much prate about? Heh? Bands, bugles, fol de rol! Salvation army."

His teeth gleamed.

Lance remembered remarks of his own, very much the same. But now he was made vaguely uneasy by

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hearing them spat out by the artist. To his surprise he found himself arguing with Pinowsky. He said:

"I've made up my mind to go through with the game. You know how I feel, Pinny, but, hang it all, a fellow doesn't want to welch."

The uncouth objector glanced over Lance's slim, khaki-clad figure, and sneered:

"I know. You have got rich since I last saw you. It is always the same. You are rich, and you fight for Wall Street. As for me, let them send me to prison. I will come out alive; you will then be dead. We see who has the best of it. Good-bye, Happerth. We meet not again."

Nor did they meet again. Lance thought often of that lonely, spectral figure on the steps, and in later days he shuddered to think that, given a little more stubbornness, he might have become the same sort of isolated, despised being.

By contrast with Pinowsky there was Henry Pelleter, whom Lance had known as a small politician "west of the L." Henry almost convinced him Pinowsky was right. For Henry's philosophy was this:

"Let me tell you, boy: The man who gets through this thing alive is going to get the cream out of life in the reconstruction. You and I are in on the ground floor in this war. Nobody in politics, as I am, or in business, like you, is going to be worth a damn after the war unless he's been in it. Suppose I get a busted finger, or a cracked head; come back all

covered with glory and bandages. No trouble carrying my precinct then, eh?"

"You're going to fight just for what there is in it?"

"Just that, my lad."

It was a new view to Lance. None of the boys in his company—Pelleter was in Company A—seemed to think of the thing that way. It was odious. If that was why men became soldiers, then Pinowsky had reason for despising the uniform.

He sat on a log over the little river one whole evening, thinking it out. And he came to the conclusion that Pelleter was partly right. One way you looked at it, being a soldier was just like any other business. You either were promoted, or you remained at the bottom, despised and snubbed. This idea Lance could not endure. He thought of Tom Fanning, and that ugly encounter, now back in the perspective of a fortnight, and it suddenly came into his head he would seek Tom's advice; perhaps his help. For a time his pride held him back. Then self-interest prevailed. He hunted up Tom in his quarters, and they had a long, earnest talk. The next afternoon a lieutenant of artillery called upon a captain of infantry.

"You have a chap in your company," said Tom, when they were comfortably seated in the captain's cubby-hole home, "name of Happerth."

"I know him," said the captain, with a queer little smile.

"He's my brother-in-law, that's all," said Tom.

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"Is that really all?" inquired the captain, with the same smile.

"Oh, I know what you think of him," grinned Tom. "Pet cat, and so forth. But look here: the point is, he has asked me to use my influence a little, and I——"

The captain jumped to his feet, with his face very red.

"Look here, Fanning——"

"Hold on a minute," interposed Tom, calmly.

"Just listen a minute to my scheme."

The scheme was explained in a low tone, and at the end the captain gave a bark of laughter.

"I apologize," said he, shaking Tom's hand. "I get you perfectly. Let me see——"

He thought a moment and then slapped his knee.

"Lieutenant Fanning," he said with mock gravity, "your intercession for your brother-in-law has——er——worked. Have a cigar, and most glad to have met you."

The next morning Sergeant Christensen came out of the captain's orderly room with a leathery smile on his face. He singled out Lance from a group preparing for mess, and said: "I've been asked to give you some special duty. This is it: 'K. P.' Go to it."

Lance knew what K. P. was, but thus far he had escaped it. Now he found he was in for a week of it. He peeled bushels of potatoes, shed oceans of tears over deserts of onions; scrubbed all the pots and pans in the world, and was "cussed out" as he never had

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dreamed of in his worst visions of the army. In the intervals, he was put to work cleaning the latrine. If a visitor came in sight, that was when Lance Happerth was sent outside to empty a pan of ashes.

At the end of the week came the final humiliation, when the passes for leave were given out. Lance's application was ignored.

"Look here," he protested to Christensen, turning to that officer a smeared and defiant face, "doesn't my application go?"

"You haven't earned it," growled the sergeant.

In a sudden heat of rage, Lance, the good-natured one, the man who had let a shrimp like Ellsworth bluff him out of an umbrella, aimed a blow at his sergeant's face. The next instant he found himself pinioned in a peculiar grip, and without ado he was led to the guardhouse, and introduced to the lieutenant on duty.

So this was a fine ending for a "career." Here was Lance Happerth, not merely a dog of a private, not merely the man they picked for dirty kitchen work, but a prisoner!

He was too abject during the rest of that day, and during the awful night that followed, even to identify himself with the brilliant Lance that was. Lakeside, Pauline, the office—all these were as though they never had been. He was a dirty, dishevelled, despairing morsel of humanity in whom beat the pulses of a human being, but who had lost all else that was

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human. He lay inert on his bunk, while faces passed before him—the brilliant face of Tom Fanning, the morbid countenance of Pinowsky, the stony features of the sergeant as he gripped him.

And if he had the strength, he would have butted his head against the wall until his senses left him. But he was too weak, too indifferent. And at last the dawn came, and he was taken from prison. He was led back to the barracks under guard, and there in the captain's room he faced the grave and candid face of his chief.

The captain was sitting behind a table, and somebody was repeating some kind of charges. For a long time the captain sat there, looking down at the table. Then he suddenly glanced up, and in his eyes there was no censure.

The slender young prisoner, with his short-cropped curly hair matted beside his temples, and his delicate face grooved with despair, stood with trembling knees. And then these words came in a leisurely manner, almost sadly, from the captain's lips:

"Happerth, don't you think you've been a fool long enough?"

There was no reply.

"You think you've been made a goat," continued the captain, his blue eyes eyeing the wreck of Lance Happerth. "You've been given the dirty work, and all that. You blame Christensen. Happerth, Christensen acted on my orders. He said you hadn't it in you to do a man's work. I said you had. Which was right, Happerth?"

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Lance moistened his lips, but still said nothing.

"You've got it in you to be the best soldier of the bunch. You're an American born and yet you're going to let some Pole or Italian beat you to the stripes—or are you? I ask you again, Happerth, are you going to stay a fool—a damned fool at that?"

And Lance heard a voice—he presently recognized it as his own—saying, faintly, "No, sir."

"That's all."

He was free. He stumbled back to the mess room, and crawled upstairs. It was a recreation hour, and a group of the "foreigners"—a dozen or so Greeks, Italians, and "hunkies" who were sprinkled through the company's ranks—were discussing the forthcoming appointments as "non-coms." They were boasting, in their jargon, of the stripes they would win, just as Captain Wellington had intimated. A sudden pride in the fact of his birth, a pride in those rawboned Happerths of Vermont, filled Lance's heart to bursting.

He would show everybody. He would show the Fannings; Tom, even Pauline. Did she care what became of him? Probably not. He would be a man, yes; a man worthy of her; worthy of two of her. The captain was right. . . .

And so, on this day of his abasement, Lance entered a new phase. The spirit of the old *Press*, the life of intellectual freedom and cynical individualism, had been the first to go; then Lakeside, with its tinted walls, its steam-heat and sofa-pillows and

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mental anæsthetics—that had gone, too. And now the new life, the life of harsh duty, and virile comradeship, and courage, stretched out before him.

The bugle sounded for drill.

CHAPTER III

HE WAS right about one thing: Lakeside was not changed. Neither was Pauline.

For about a week she thought she never would get over it; the grief of that last day, the feeling of desertion and bewilderment. But her sadness wore off with amazing quickness, and in its place came a thrilling sense of independence. Independence of Lance, now a dun-coloured being far away; independence of her parents, of her aunts, of everybody. She was a "single woman," without one responsibility or worry.

No wonder Fanny Sweetling, paying a "visit of condolence," decided there was little to condole about. She found Pauline playing the piano, while Voltaire poured out ecstatic tribute to the afternoon sunlight. Magazines and candy boxes were strewn about. A sparkling costume from Mme. Dusac's lay across a chair in front of Pauline's dressing table.

It took no more than a glance over the apartment to convince Fanny that words of sympathy were superfluous. She sat down with Pauline in the sun parlour, with her feet on a very new rug, and indulged in envy. She herself had moved to "that unspeakable Murdstone," and she had neither new rugs nor sparkling gowns.

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"You miss Lance, of course?" Fanny suggested.

"Of course. Have one of these things in silver paper, Fanny. Aunt Pringle gave them to me, to cheer me up."

They savored the dainties in silence.

"One thing sure," said Pauline, balancing a blob of chocolate on her forefinger, "now that the shock is over, I'm not going to wear mourning. Would it make Lance any happier to think I spent my time looking at his picture? I don't doubt he's having a good time in his own way. Nothing to do but present arms, or whatever they do."

She swallowed the last of the chocolate.

"And he's within walking distance of the village. He can dance there with the country girls, if he likes."

The fact was that the village did not give dances for the soldiers, whom it resented rather than welcomed. About all army men could do there was to buy "soft drinks" at double prices, or listen to squawking phonographs in a cavernous "music parlour," or sit forlornly in hotel windows. But Pauline did not know these facts.

"I suppose the army is very different from the navy," said Fanny, with a shadow of a sigh. "Bob says up at the training station it's nothing but drill and study; drill and study. And he spent two whole nights guarding a silly old coal pile."

"Well, of course, Lance wouldn't do anything like that. He'd leave the army first."

"So would I," replied Fanny, emphatically shaking her small head.

Pauline turned to the piano, and played a few bars of the latest from "tin pan alley."

"You play so divinely," murmured Fanny. After a pause, "Do you know, I never look at that piano any more without thinking of how Alfred Harrold tried to spoil it. Wasn't that the queerest thing?"

"How do you know he did it?" demanded Pauline.

"Why, I thought everybody knew he did it."

"Everybody doesn't include me, then," replied Pauline. "In fact, he was here just the other night and denied it."

"Alfred was here?" Fanny's eyes widened with surprise and curiosity.

"Yes; why not?" returned Pauline, meeting this gaze squarely.

"No reason. Only I thought—didn't Lance forbid him the house?"

"Not to my knowledge. Besides, I'm boss here now. And I'm not going to bar out an amusing fellow just on suspicion. I don't more than half believe he touched the piano at all."

There was nothing more for Fanny to say. She made some further inquiries, sufficient to confirm the fact that the vengeful May was still on the warpath, and to develop that Alfred was fighting both the divorce and the draft with "whole armies of lawyers," and then dropped Alfred as a topic. She observed privately that this news would not please Lance a little bit; and in order to keep the secret quite safe, she did not tell any one but Bob.

There were two other pieces of news that Fanny

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bore away from this conversation. One was that Lawrence Wayte had packed off Lily and the baby to her mother's farm, and "gone in for aviation"; the other was that Pauline paid full rent to her father for the Fannington flat. Here, as by a flashlight, stood revealed the fullness of Pauline's independence. It meant, apparently, that the Fannings did not pay Pauline's expenses at all.

And this was strictly true. Barton Fanning had offered to remit the rent, and even to turn over a monthly check. Pauline said it was quite unnecessary; it was as absurd as the idea she should go to live at the Wiltshire. She was excited over the prospect of being "on her own." She had a maid, and an account at a garage, and some bankbooks full of blank checks. There was plenty of money downtown, Lance had said (the absurd fellow would not deposit his savings with Father Fanning), and plenty of money must mean, well—thousands. So why worry? When Pauline wrote a check she scarcely ever looked to see what balance remained. Most of the bills she forgot until days afterward, and then, remembering—and having mislaid the bills—she would pay approximately the sum involved, and cast the matter from her mind.

When she paid the October rent her father showed reluctance, but finally accepted the check. If Lance had left that much money available, so much the better. Oh, yes; all very much to the good, in these times when banking was a lot like tight-rope walking. It took an extra bookkeeper now to keep track of the

muddle of withdrawals and what not. For although few people noticed it, the war was causing a chaos of moving, of "doubling up," of financial readjustments. And there was a Liberty Loan that for a few days threatened to make Barton Fanning give up the "big deal," and do nothing but be a banker. The horror of this idea—or some other worry—gave him sleepless nights. His hair and moustache whitened quite rapidly that autumn. And his tongue got raspish. And sometimes he acted very unreasonably.

It was very unreasonable of him to "start in on bankbooks and so on" that evening in mid-October when Pauline called at the Wiltshire to exhibit a new velvet wrap, and to ask a small favour. This was to get her father to indorse a note Marcelline Meredith had given Pauline for a loan of three hundred dollars. Pauline explained, while her father sat slowly smoking, and her mother struggled with a pair of army socks, that Marcelline had insisted on giving this note, and it had to be indorsed by somebody, or it wouldn't be legal—would it?

"Well," said Father Fanning, "she can get somebody else to indorse it. I won't."

"Father——" began Pauline.

"What's the matter with Marcelline?" asked Mrs. Fanning. "I thought she had gone to work since Roy left for that—what is it?—artillery place in California."

"She has gone to work. But she's trying to pay Roy's bills. As fast as she gets a new job as a model somebody comes along and garnishees her."

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Fanning laughed aloud.

"It's funny, yes," said Pauline. "But the poor thing—Roy keeps sending her bills he'd forgotten, and found in his clothes afterward. And the old ones were enough."

"Well, I'm not indorsing any notes," grumbled Fanning. "I've got troubles a-plenty. And look here! Are you lending money to every Tom, Dick, and Marcelline in Lakeside?"

"Indeed I'm not!"

"What are you doing?" inquired Mrs. Fanning, with a sharp look. "Are you saving anything?"

"How can I save?" returned Pauline with scorn. Her father looked at her in his turn.

"You're keeping books at least, I hope."

"Oh, yes, I keep books," she laughed.

"And do you save your receipts?" asked her mother. "Dear me, Lance must have left you a fortune."

She spoke as though he were dead.

"Why?" demanded Pauline.

"Well, that cloak and those slippers are new, and——"

"I don't know why I should go about looking like somebody from west of the 'L'."

"That isn't the point," frowned Barton Fanning. "The question is, are you living on your capital or your——"

"Gracious me! I never think about such stuff."

There was a silence. The smoke from the banker's cigar curled into the table lamp, and rose from its top

in beautiful rosy shapes. His thoughts wandered away from Pauline's finances, and then returned.

"By the way," he said, "I'm about ready to take back that \$40,000. I trust you don't count that as part of your capital."

"Oh, I do and I don't."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean I—why, I don't bother about it, that's all."

He laid down his cigar.

"Where is the money?"

"I deposited it—just like you told me."

"Well, what has become of the interest?" inquired the banker.

"I suppose it's down there—where the money is."

"Well, where's that?" Fanning pursued.

"I don't remember which bank."

"Heavens!" burst out her father, impatiently, and with some signs of alarm. "You don't even know where it's deposited?"

"I told you I didn't. But it ought to be easy to find out."

"In whose name is it?"

"That I don't know, either. I was in such a hurry——"

"Pauline," came the stern voice of her mother. "One would think you were just born. You can't mean that you have treated \$40,000 as carelessly as all that. And just when your father——"

"Oh, we'll find it," he broke in. "But I can't

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understand how Lance was so unbusinesslike. Ah, I had forgotten he didn't handle it." The shadow of a remote unpleasantness flitted across his face. "Come, Polly, we'll go and look. You see, that money cuts some ice with me, though it was such a trifle to you."

"Won't to-morrow do?" asked Pauline. "I wanted to ask mother about a lot of things."

"I would prefer," he said, biting his lip, "to go into the matter now. I'd sleep better. The whole business has been a bit queer."

"There I agree with you," retorted Pauline. "Seeing it cost Lance his place in civil life."

"You can't get over that, can you?" rasped Mrs. Fanning. "One would think he'd gone to jail instead of being an honour man."

There might have been a renewal here of an argument that had raged every time Mrs. Fanning used that term "honour man"; but Mr. Fanning was in too much haste. He cut in with sharp impatience, bore Pauline away almost by force, and escorted her in an ominous silence the four or five blocks to the Fannington.

Pauline let him into the flat with an irritated jangle of her keys. If there was going to be this trouble about bankbooks and all that—

"I never saw you so unreasonable," she grumbled, switching on the living-room lights.

"Where are those books?" was his only reply.

After considerable hunting they were found in a bedroom in a handkerchief box. Fanning bore them

quickly back to the living room and fell upon them, with the stump of his cigar gripped in his teeth.

The amounts represented in two of the books were not thousands. In the Fanning Trust, in Pauline's name, was a trifle less than \$500, as nearly as he could make out (she had forgotten, she said, to fill out a number of stubs). In the Caledonian, downtown, there was a remnant of Lance's savings. In a third book, however, the parental auditor discovered a different story. He stared at this book for a long time. Beyond question he was on the trail of the elusive \$40,000. Only there was not \$40,000 there. The stubs showed thirty and some hundreds—and the dates on the stubs were several weeks old.

"What does this mean?" he inquired with growing horror. "You've been drawing on it."

"Have I?" rejoined Pauline, calmly. "Well, what should I do with it?"

The banker groaned, and examined the stubs more carefully.

"Can't make head or tail of it," he muttered.

"I'm dreadfully careless about writing up the stubs."

He fixed a wide and angry gaze upon her.

"This will stop right here," said he. "I might have known it wasn't safe to deal with you children. Lance—you and he between you—have practically been embezzling money from me."

Pauline turned a bit pale. She still wore her coat, which she now threw off on the table.

"How can you blame Lance? As for me, you

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made me a loan. I gave you a note. Why, what was the money for if not to use? Did you think I'd stuff sofa-pillows with it? And about Lance; could he be spending any of it when he was in camp?"

"I don't recognize such flimsy arguments," said her father. He had risen, and was evidently very angry. His hands were trembling. "This is a serious time for me. It's going to be more serious if I can't trust my own family."

He flung the bankbooks on the table.

"There!" he exclaimed. "Write me a check for every cent in that big account. You little fool!" he added recklessly.

"Wait a minute," said Pauline, becoming clear-headed as her sense of injustice mounted. "Wait a minute. If I gave a note, it must have had a date. When is that money due?"

"What difference does that make?" he shouted.

"A lot. When does the law say I must pay?"

"I say you must pay now."

"I'll pay when it's due," she insisted.

There was a moment's silence between them. Two Fannings, with equally strong wills, and equal ruthlessness about money, stood facing each other.

"I call the loan right here," he said at last, a trifle hoarsely.

"You can't," she retorted. "I know that much. You must tell me when I have to pay. Oh," she cried, suddenly, "this is what you do, after all your offers. If you want to support me, why don't you leave that money where it is?" She flung the words

at him blindly. "Do you think you can do it cheaper some other way? What am I going to live on—tell me that. I'm going to call up mother! I'm going to call up Mr. Reeker, and see who's right."

She moved as though to go to the telephone.

"No!" he cried, flinging up his hand.

He sank down on the davenport, to brood, or else gather strength.

"Let it go," he said, heavily, at length. "You're right, in a way. You've got to live. May as well be on old money as new. Let it all go. Let everything go."

Her sympathy, her alarm, were as quick as her rage had been.

"No, I'll give it up," she said. "Father, I had no idea it would worry you so."

She sat down by him, and laid her hand on his knee. He did not move. The silver-mounted clock ticked loudly. Voltaire freakishly awoke, and uttered a few words. They sat in silence, while the sense of her uncertain future kept staring at Pauline, and Fanning thought—of other things.

Suddenly the telephone rang. Its voice sounded astoundingly loud.

Pauline went and answered; returned looking mystified, troubled.

"It was mother. She asks you to come home at once. A message."

"My God, what now?" said Fanning, looking up dazedly; then, more intently, "why couldn't she give me the message?"

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"She didn't say," replied Pauline, gently, observing how stiffly he rose.

"What now?" he repeated, as he found his hat and made for the door.

"I'll send you a check for all that money, to-morrow," she said at the threshold. It flashed across her mind, like an impossible thing, that she would then have no money herself; but she was not as much frightened by this as by her father's face. He made no reply to her remark, but went quickly down the stairs, like a man catching a train. It was as though he divined what that message from home meant; as though he was in a hurry to meet—whatever lay ahead; as though the \$40,000 was, after all, a detail of his complicated agonies.

Not until the following day did Pauline learn what had called him home. Sitting propped up in bed while her maid cleared away a dainty breakfast tray, she read in the paper—and wondered if this really could be "it"—that Herman Ulrich, partner in the "big deal" had, "owing to ill health," shot himself with an automatic pistol, and was dead. An inquest would be held—and the funeral—

There was something about the cold, brief story that suggested the funeral of the "big deal" itself.

CHAPTER IV

THERE was other news that morning much more important to most of the world. American troops were at the front! The first shot had been fired into the German lines by an American gunner.

The headline loomed big and black at Lakeside breakfast tables. Its message buzzed through populous buildings and unloosed the tongues of hundreds of families. And in one tiny room in a weather-stained apartment hotel "farther south," where streets were noisier, narrower, and more fecund than in Lakeside proper, a yellow-haired young woman, snatching up the paper during a dash from her bedroom to the street, cried out:

"There's been a battle! And I bet Dick was in it!"

"Have you got a clean handkerchief?" was Ann Stone's reply. "What did you say? Dick in a battle? Sally, let me see."

"Oh, hang this torn place," exclaimed Sally, giving her sleeve a brief inspection. "I'm sure he must have been in it. Why, he was one of the first to go over!"

And she sped down the stairs.

Ann sat down for a few minutes alone with the

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paper. She was not due at her own office for an hour, nor would there be any severe penalty if she were late; for Ann was no longer a "filer" for Bragg & Co. She was in a downtown bank, in a job from which a young man had conveniently departed to enter a training camp. She now had luxurious hours, and what seemed to her almost royal pay.

In spite of this great change, together with the fact that Sally was earning two dollars a week more than before, Ann had insisted upon moving into the Zealand, probably the dingiest and cheapest place near Lakeside. They had lived "all over" since leaving the Fannington, but the Zealand was the worst. Sally had objected, then yielded to argument. There was a change in Sally, though hardly an outward change. Almost any of her friends, seeing her swinging along Clarendon Avenue, near the beach, would have said she looked just the same; just as smart, and just as plentifully powdered. But there was a difference. Ann knew.

She took a pair of scissors, and snipped out the piece about the battle. They were keeping a scrapbook about the war. The scrapbook, to date, contained a three-column story written by one Fred Westcott, the brilliant correspondent of the *Press*, about the disembarking of American troops in France; and an account of a ball game played "somewhere," in which Corporal Dick Crowe, of the — regiment, was mentioned as having made a home run; and a postcard photograph of a severe-looking young soldier, with his hat tipped over one eye. That was

all. Not much of a scrapbook yet, but it was going to be bigger. And with each item that was added Ann thought she saw the change in Sally become more vivid.

Having accomplished her clipping and pasting, the scrapbook editor all at once noticed the account of Ulrich's suicide. The name of Fanning caught her attention. She read the story clear down to the place where it mentioned, with great care in the wording, that the unfortunate victim of melancholia was "associated with Barton Fanning, the north shore banker, in the Shadyland addition, a sensational home-making enterprise of the northwest side. Mr. Fanning said last night that the affairs of the corporation were in excellent condition," etc.

"That means, I suppose," said Ann to herself, "that they're in bad shape. If not, why should the reporters have asked him about it?"

She began her preparations to go downtown. Once during the process of brushing and smoothing her warm coat (the days were cool now, and Ann, a Southerner, none too warm-blooded) she returned to the newspaper, and read once more the epitaph of Mr. Ulrich.

"Oh, well," she mused, half aloud, "I don't suppose it would affect him much anyhow."

Which remark could not have been construed as applying to Mr. Ulrich, now deceased, nor even to Barton Fanning, who was bound to be affected much if at all.

So—whom was Ann talking about, anyhow?

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And whom was she thinking about that evening as she and Sally devoured lamb chops and potatoes au gratin in the E-Lite restaurant, at a little table looking out into the whirligig of Sheridan Road? She was gazing squarely at the broad brown back of a young officer eating one of the E-Lite's dangerous wedges of pie at the lunch counter. But she was not thinking about him. She said she was not when Sally twitted her.

"Oh, I know it's not him," mocked Sally. "But every time you see one you think it may be him. Oh, I know."

Ann did not deny it. She looked quickly away from the young officer and studied the angry-looking liquid in her coffee cup.

"But what gets me," continued Sally, staring defiantly at a "fresh" young man two tables away, "is how you can keep on thinking he's got any use for you when he hasn't been near since he went to camp—hasn't even written."

"I asked you not to talk about it," protested Ann, with dignity. "But since you insist on it: well, I'd like to know how he could call or write when he doesn't know where I live."

"Oh, piffle for that," Sally's eyes rolled mischievously. "He could find out if he wanted to."

"Maybe he could," agreed Ann, indifferently.

"And why hasn't he got your address? You've written to him in camp, of course."

"I have not." Ann's colour began to rise.

"And again piffle. Who have you been hammering out those long letters to, these evenings?"

"My father."

"Her father," echoed Sally, pretending disgust, and gazing out into the street, where the crowds ambled by—women with bakery goods from the delicatessen stores; young men with imitation fur collars on their overcoats; triplets and quartets of women made up to look "svelte" like the magazine advertisements.

Sally leaned over the table.

"Do you want to see him, Sister Ann? Tell Sister."

"Let me alone," snapped Ann, so far as she was capable of snapping. "I'm too busy to think about such nonsense." But her tone was not convincing. And right there Sally conceived a little plan. She knew a young man at the national army camp. He had been a clerk in the Largest Department Store, and was now the proud keeper of a team of mules. She reflected. Yes, she decided this young man would do her a good turn. It would not be difficult to find so shining a military figure as Tom Fanning, even though the camp was large and lieutenants as numerous as the sea-sands. She looked affectionately, protectingly, across at Ann, and winked.

Then, with great diplomacy, she picked up an evening paper that someone had left in departing, and smoothed it out, and her eyes flitted hungrily over its first page. There was nothing about the American troops, but there was news about the

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"Fanning interests." Another interview, in which Mr. Fanning again heatedly denied that the suicide of Mr. Ulrich affected him except that he had lost a friend. And, for some reason, there was an enumeration of the Fanning holdings, a very guarded reference to an investigation, a paragraph that represented Lakeside as doing some intense thinking.

Sally read the article with a look of baffled absorption, and slid the paper over to Ann.

"Some of our old neighbours getting their names in the paper," she said.

"Yes, I saw it this morning," replied Ann, with vague interest.

"Kind o' getting after Pa Fanning, wouldn't you say? Oh, baby, if they should get him, wouldn't I be sorry?"

"I would," responded Ann; and again you couldn't be sure; you couldn't be sure just whom she would be sorry for.

The young man Sally knew in camp, though a mere muleteer, was an able plotter. Together with a correspondent of the *Press* named Stub McCord he conspired to have two visitors admitted to the camp on a Saturday afternoon. Sally played her part well, too. She found a reason that satisfied Ann for paying a visit to the muleteer: a message to deliver from a dying grandmother, or the like. It was all a little vague, but perhaps Ann had her own reasons for not demanding particulars.

Anyhow, the two girls alighted from a dusty train

that Saturday afternoon very merry, and quite oblivious of the fact that they had irritated two excellent employers by demanding this holiday. Stub McCord was there to greet them with the *Press* automobile, a little box-like choo-choo nicknamed Schrecklichkeit. Very polite was Stub, and pompous, too, as he pointed out village landmarks and emitted camp lore, the while manœuvring the skitish car around sharp turns.

Once out of the village, the road stretched along the river, past some russet woods, and on over gentle hills until it suddenly widened and hardened, and became a military road. They began to pass enormous trucks and quick-speeding cars containing officers, and transport wagons full of grinning boys off for "leave."

Ann clung to one of Schrecklichkeit's sides, and sat very still. Sally chattered to Stub. Did he like newspaper work? Did he not have wonderful experiences? and so on. The words fell almost unheard on Ann's ears. She was thinking what a marvellous life, here in this vast open country, had come to thousands of young fellows from offices, from factories, and from unreal places like Lakeside. This was life in earnest; everything enormous, energetic, and free; yes, despite discipline, free as compared with the routine of civil life. And she thought of Dick, and what wonders he had seen; of Lance Happerth, somewhere in the incredibly vast camp that loomed up yonder; and of another. . . .

"Commander's residence—press headquarters,"

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Stub announced, as they sped by a couple of converted farmhouses.

They passed an automobile containing a big, stout major and a couple of dark-faced military men in light blue.

"French officers," ejaculated Stub. "Down here to look us over. I had a scoop on 'em this morning."

"What's a scoop?" asked Sally, holding on to her hat, for the camp sirocco caught them at the bend.

Stub failed to answer the question, and Sally did not press it, for now they were fairly within the camp; they were amid barracks where lounged unnumbered hosts of youths in brown uniforms; they passed prisoners conducted by amiable-looking guards with rifles; they had glimpses of kitchens, with smutty-faced youngsters grinning o'er their pans; and of Y. M. C. A. buildings, whence came the sentimental strains of phonographs.

"Of course you won't see much drill—harg this accelerator—but that wasn't why you came down, was it?"

And he could not forbear a glance at Ann.

"You'll have to ask Mrs. Crowe why we came," she said.

Stub looked at Sally. He had understood it was "Miss" Crowe, and somehow he felt disappointed. But he merely gave Schrecklichkeit an extra "kick," and drove on.

The mud was rather deep in some of the company streets, and the car seemed to be having spasms.

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Presently, among some buildings that bore signs referring to the 300-and-something Artillery, it gave an angry jerk, and stopped entirely. A group of soldiers examining a mule's hind feet looked up from their perilous occupation, and two of them strolled across the road.

"Engine trouble?" inquired one; then, "By Jove, if it isn't Mrs. Crowe!"

It was Sally's department store friend.

There were greetings and introductions. Meantime Stub explored the interior of Schrecklichkeit's rusty nose. Suddenly he glanced up toward the door of the nearest company building, and appeared to forget his car entirely. He remained thus standing, with a half-smile on his face, until Sally's muleteer caught his eye, and also turned.

Next a long shadow fell across the group, and a quiet voice, in which there was nevertheless a thrill, said:

"Miss Stone, isn't it? And Mrs. Crowe."

And Tom Fanning stood there, lifting his visored cap, very straight and formal, but with a sparkle of such delight in his eyes that the mere privates made poor work of saluting.

One of them said to the other that evening, "Now that was doing something for my country. Did you see the Lieutenant's face?"

"How did you dope it out he wasn't going to town?"

"I didn't," said Sally's conspirator. "Just took a chance on that. But I'd heard he wasn't much for

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weak-end leaves. Prefers to sit around and read I. D. R."

That day there was no I. D. R. for Tom. There was, instead, a rare October afternoon, with all the wonders of the camp to exhibit, and two angels from heaven—one angel, at least—to show them to. We need not describe all that they saw. They saw everything. Toward evening they even visited the "creek," where homesick soldiers sat on logs, and watched insects skating across the quiet pools. And they saw the sharp-shooting ranges, and the camouflaged artillery emplacements—all those things so marvellously like war. And by favour of the captain of Tom's company they peeked into the squad-room of his barracks, and the kitchen, where they saw great slabs of meat in coolers, and huge shallow pans of rice pudding.

Then they drove back to the village over that hard, white road, and had dinner at the hotel; a dinner that tasted like rose-leaf and champagne, although it was really an affair of tough veal and impossible fritters.

And Tom kept saying to himself, as he saw the small, sweet face of his most unexpected visitor across the table, "My Lord, what a dandy place the world is!"

After dinner came an astonishing thing: Sally announced she had developed a headache, and retired to her room. It was part of the plot, but Ann did not know this. She pursued Sally with solicitude and hot water, in return for which she finally got

this shot, "Don't ask too many questions, you little fool. Go and entertain Mr.—I mean Lieutenant—Fanning."

There was nothing for Ann to do but obey. She returned to the sitting room, where she found Tom examining an ancient print of the battle of Gettysburg.

"Those fellows," he remarked as Ann came in, "didn't know what war was. No machine guns, no H. E. shells, no gas, no aviation control. I wonder how they did it."

"And yet they killed each other," she said. She sat down on a dusty horsehair sofa. There was an embarrassing silence.

"Is your friend—er—very ill?" asked Tom at length.

"I don't think so. I can't quite make out."

He sat down on the edge of a table, and swung one large brown boot. The room, indeed the entire house, was remarkably still. From outside came the hum and clatter of passing street cars, and the tramp, tramp of military feet in endless, aimless promenade.

Was this the Moment?

Tom suddenly felt his throat become dry and constricted. The small head, with its dark waves of hair, only a few feet away, seemed waiting—waiting. Words he had long dreamed of rushed into his brain, to his very lips, and then—remained unuttered.

He swung himself off the table, and, with the feeling of a coward, a sweating rustic, proposed gruffly:

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"Well, let's go to a picture show. It's all there is to do."

Ann, released from a strain as tense as his, jumped up with exaggerated joy. But somewhere in the obscure depths of her being there was a pang of disappointment. She banished this as soon as she identified it. Picking up her gloves, she turned to Tom with a smile that was a perfectly commonplace smile, and yet conveyed mysteriously the message, "It's all right, my friend; it's all right."

They went out into the street chattering like children.

The street was full of soldiers, bearing down three abreast, or standing in doorways with cigarettes cornerwise in their mouths, or streaming in and out of candy stores. Tom, with Ann in the crook of his elbow, as it were, strode among them like a lord. The walk recalled to Ann that other evening, many months before, when they had threaded the crowds of Wilson Avenue. Why, some of the same people were probably here, in this swirl of uniforms!

"It seems impossible—impossible," she thought aloud.

"What's impossible?"

"That since last spring—last summer—they've all turned into soldiers."

"Americans can do that any time they like. We've shown 'em," said Tom, soberly. "I thought once we couldn't. Now I know the contrary. These fellows—nothing can beat 'em."

"Are they really—will they really make an army?"

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He turned to her with flashing eyes.

"Will they? They're an army already. There's a whale of a lot of work ahead, but we know their class now. And it isn't only what are called the born fighters. It's all of them. It's the bank clerks, the theatre ushers, the fox-trot specialists. It's our old silk-socks of Lake side. I take off my hat to 'em."

He felt Ann's arm quiver in response to his earnestness.

"And another thing," he added. "I used to think it was the foreigner, with his big chest and broad cheeks, and peasant ancestry, that would turn out the best. Now we know the good old American stock is the stuff. It has come up out of generations of soft living, as sound as ever." He laughed. "You ought to see 'em getting after a dummy with a bayonet."

He felt Ann give a little shudder.

"Well, that's enough of that. There's the Grand Opera House, and we're going to see Mary Pickford."

Just before reaching the theatre they passed another hotel. Behind its large front windows some dozens of soldiers were lounging in cane-bottomed chairs. Here and there a youth sat, with his feet on the window-ledge, staring out into the night. There was a lassitude, an evident homesickness, about these that wrung Ann's heart. Her soft eyes dwelt upon them tenderly. Suddenly she gave an exclamation.

"Look," she exclaimed, "that second fellow from the end. The one reading a letter."

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Tom looked.

"You're right. You see before you a complete example of citizen soldier. Yes, it's Lance Hap-perth, bless his little heart. And he's reading a letter from home."

Ann was for hurrying by the window, but Tom held her back.

"It's a letter from Pauline," he speculated. "And she's telling him how she's coming down to see him next week. Don't worry about him. He's happy."

Lance did not look up.

"Want to go in and speak to him?" inquired Tom.

"No," was her hurried answer.

"It's just as well. Leave him to his lonely bliss."

And they went on. But if they had been a bit more experienced in reading Lance's expressions they would have realized that he was far from being happy. And they might even have gathered that the letter was not from Pauline.

It was from an old friend, and it had made him angrier and more disgusted than he had ever been in his life.

CHAPTER V

FOUR o'clock the following Saturday afternoon; almost time for the city-bound train.

The soldiers who had been restlessly swaggering about the waiting room, or buying gum at the fly-blown "refreshment counter," were making for the platform. Scores of others, swinging their legs from baggage trucks, or sitting on the stairs that led down into the lazy street, were growing alert and watching for a column of smoke in the distance. They wore, without exception, a special type of grin; the week-end grin, excited and anticipatory. They slammed each other on the back, stole each other's hats, danced jigs. And the smoke of scores of cigarettes curled up under the smoke-blackened roof of the train shed.

At the extreme end of the platform, away from the mob, Lance Happerth leaned against a gorgeous circus poster. He was neither dancing, grinning, nor smoking. His face looked precisely as it had when Tom and Ann saw him. And he was still thinking about the letter.

Another swarm of boys in khaki came up the stairs, brushing by Lance with a gust of talk and laughter. Then the train rushed in. Before it had stopped the troops were on the steps, in the cars, all over the

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platforms. A group of officers sauntered with superb dignity back to the chair car; and Lance, suitcase in hand, headed that way, too; but a voice spoke out at his elbow:

"Hey, Happerth! Goin' to town? This way, or you'll get no seat."

"I'm going up in the chair car," replied Lance to this worthy, a famous "card" of Lance's company: one Kelly, who had been a newsboy, a prize fighter, and a train "butcher," and who bore scars derived from all these pursuits.

"Chair car? Look here, take my dope: stay out of that car. It's for officers."

Lance shrugged his shoulders, and turned toward the smoker, with Kelly beside him. He accepted this exclusiveness of the chair car as one of the inevitable things. He no longer battled with the inevitable, even inwardly.

Besides, he was still thinking of that letter.

He found a seat by the water cooler, and Kelly sat on the arm and swung his legs. The car was full of hats, legs, sun-burned necks, and a noisome mixture of cheap tobaccos. Kelly yelled:

"Now, boys, the old one; all together now."

They roared:

"Glory, glory, what a hell of a time they had,
Glory, glory, what a hell of a time they had,
Glory, glory, what a hell of a time they had,
When they tried to make a soldier out of me."

"Why don't you sing?" the former boxer growled

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at Lance between verses. "Somebody dead in the family?"

"I've got my own troubles," answered Lance, with reticence. He looked out at the skimming landscape; the flat monotony of cornfields, brown roads, and tree clumps. Of all the men in that car he was the only one who could not rejoice that each clank of the wheels brought him nearer the city. The infamous letter lay across his heart like a leaden weight. His lips were compressed, and he looked steadily through the window regardless of loud demands that he "come out of that grouch."

Twilight suddenly fell upon the fields. Lights gleamed remotely in the farmhouses. This was the time when the people of Lakeside were sitting down to dinner under their pink-and-gold dining room shades. All light and music there. And the night life of Wilson and other avenues was about to awaken. And a thousand subtle human relations, born of the coming of night in Lakeside, were being entangled and disentangled; there in that rich, complex, and perilous place where Pauline was.

And he was a stranger, going there to discover—he knew not what.

For certain reasons, connected with the letter, he had not sent word to Pauline that he was coming. Therefore, when the train crept into the great, echoing station toward seven o'clock, he found himself unwelcomed by a soul. Most of the others alighted straight into the arms of screaming and

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babbling womenfolk; they were swept down the platform with wives, mothers, and children clinging to their hands, or running along behind. Lance, with his hat pulled over his eyes, walked swiftly in and out among these groups, impatient with them.

It was from this very station—from this very platform—that he and Pauline had launched their Southern trip. Here the "crowd" had stood, tossing jokes and bon-bons into the window. The platform had been a noisy place that day, just because Lance Happerth and his wife were going somewhere. Old, glittering days—— He wet his lips, and strode on.

He went into the lunch room, squirmed onto a stool, looked blankly at a lean waitress who smirked closely into his eyes, and ordered rolls and coffee. He scarcely knew what he ordered. The plan of that evening was beginning to form in his mind. He would not even telephone to Pauline. On the contrary, he would make his homecoming a complete surprise; not in order to intensify Pauline's delight at his return, but—well, for reasons. It was going to be a sort of skulking thing, and he did not half like it; but he did not know what else a fellow could do under the circumstances.

The circumstances, as Bob Sweetling had hinted at them—Bob was the author of the pernicious letter—justified almost anything.

His imagination, as he sat gulping coffee and staring unseeingly down at a sloppy bill of fare, painted the situation in Lakeside more and more vividly. The

words of the bill-of-fare, thoughtlessly read, became jumbled in his mind with all he was thinking. Chocolate eclaire, five cents—not like Pauline at all, and yet—as the fellows said, “they have a devilish good time while we’re away, don’t you forget it”—French pastry, 10—brilliant Lakeside, devil-may-care Lakeside—pie of all kinds, 5, à la mode, 10——

He finished eating, and the lanky waitress cleared away. Lance rose stiffly, lit a cigarette, and went out through the criss-crossing crowds into the street.

In Michigan Boulevard the automobiles were gliding, gliding to north and south, like whispering wraiths in the dusk. And as far down the street as he could see, their lamps glowed and bobbed. To the north the tall buildings wore spangles, and the white cornices of a regal hotel, illumined by a sort of searchlight device, stood out in pearly beauty against the soft blue-black of the sky. Ah, yes, the City of Deadly Ambitions was beautiful at times; cruelly beautiful. And Lakeside, its creature, was still more beautiful, and more cruel.

A great clock—Lance could not for the moment think what building this clock ornamented—hung on the horizon like a planet. Its enormous, crinkled hands almost seemed to move. They pointed to half-past seven.

Time to go north if he were to accomplish his errand. Pauline would be going to the theatre, or to the rink; if there still was a rink.

It was strange to be within telephone call of her, and not to bring her voice to the wire, and say,

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"I'm home, Polly; I'm home." But this was not possible. Bob's letter, with its implications, must be laid before her. As he thought of it, visualizing her cool stare at Bob's straggly handwriting, the implications did not seem as serious as when he read them in camp. Any one else but Alfred Harrold! Lord, how could she admit him to the flat? And here Bob had said, as though it were the most natural thing in the world, that she let Harrold call upon her. And if, after all that had happened, all that the pianist had done by way of direct and indirect effort to injure her husband, she let Harrold call on her, it would not be the last time. For it meant that Pauline did not care what people did to him, Lance; and it might mean more than that. . . .

An elevated train bore him swiftly among the tall buildings, and across the river, toward Lakeside. He smoked cigarette after cigarette, sitting with tightly folded arms at the extreme end of the car, which was almost empty. The guard who manoeuvred the gates, and stuck his head into the car at regular intervals to announce a station, looked curiously at this dejected figure in khaki. And the guard decided, "A draft man, he is; and he don't like the army a little bit, he don't."

By the time the train had rounded the big curve that led from the district of two-story houses into the flat-building world the car was empty save for Lance, a sleeping negro, and a jovial elderly man reading a newspaper. The last-named passenger had glanced frequently at Lance, and now, folding up his paper,

he deliberately moved over alongside the young soldier.

It developed immediately that he was that product of war most dreaded by army men on furlough—the Civilian Who Wants to Know How You Like It.

"Home on leave?" he croaked at Lance, with a grin that showed a decrepit set of teeth.

"Yes."

"Draft or volunteer?"

"Draft."

"They're both alike," grinned the man. "All honour men, damn it. We—er—we honour 'em both alike. 'S what I say."

Lance gazed woodenly out at the dim shapes of roofs.

"Married?" pursued the tormentor.

His victim recrossed his legs, and finally replied, "Yes." His good-nature was too innate for him to repulse even this bore.

"Well, I hope you find the fambly all well. The kids—got any kids?"

"No."

"An' a slim chance now, eh?" grinned the yellow teeth. "Oh, well, it's great to get home anyways; ain't it? Say, here's my card. I got two boys in service. Give 'em up without a whimper."

Lance took the card and twiddled it between his fingers. He thought of getting off the train; then pulled himself together again.

"Yes, sir. The home flat'll be all lit up for you. The wife'll have the fatted calf dressed 'p with

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pussley. Don't you worry. I s'pose she's been lookin' out the window for you for two hours an' more."

Lance suddenly decided ne could not stand this. He picked up his suitcase, and murmuring a word of excuse, went into the next car. The civilian remained behind chuckling. As he told his wife that night: "I always speak to the boys. Durn it, sometimes they're grumpy, like a feller I spoke to to-night. But it's bashfulness, Martha; just bashfulness."

"Fatted calf." "Looking out of the window for you." Lance could have murdered the author of those words. He was a cheerful fool, the worst kind of fool there was. The kind that beams upon the world and imagines all women are faithful slaves, and all households harmonious wholes. This might have been true of a certain household in the Fannington, too, had it not been for certain things. That was what made it all so bitter. Given a different environment, and what a Pauline Lance would have had!

He left the train, and walked through streets he had not seen for two months; streets familiar yet strange. Compared with the wide reaches of the camp, how cramped and cold Lakeside was! And how self-sufficient! Aside from a few Red Cross and Liberty Bond emblems in the windows Lakeside gave no sign of knowing there was a war. Lance thought about this with wonder and disdain as he strode on.

But soon, realizing he was nearing the Fannington, he ceased to think about Lakeside, and pondered his programme. It occurred to him he could hardly burst in without warning, without even having telephoned. How would he explain this?

He paused under one of the statuesque street lights of Westmont Avenue to think about it. An automobile load of people swept by, and at one window he thought he saw a familiar face. But none of the passengers more than glanced at the stranger in uniform. Lance shrugged his shoulders, and walked on. In a moment the familiar structure, with its French towers and bulging sun porches, rose above the surrounding buildings. He shot a glance at the windows behind which he had lived. Pauline was at home! At least part of the flat was lit. The windows of the sun parlour and living room were almost dark; but at the side, where the library was, with its glimpse of the lake—there, where he had sat so many evenings and dreamed of great things he was going to write—the windows, with their light yellow shades, were like gold bars in the night. There was nothing odd about this sort of illumination, and yet to Lance, whose soul quivered to a hundred imaginings, it seemed singular. A sort of camouflage of being alone. As this notion struck him he determined not to go in the front way, but to turn in on the alley leading from Thoreau Place, and take to the back stairs. If Pauline were alone, he could pass off his appearance at the back door as one of his bad jokes.

So he went into the rear court, with its view of

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tiny kitchens, and the clink of dishes from a scullery part of the café, and, discovering his own back staircase with some difficulty, went up the two flights, and tried the back door.

It was open.

He stepped circumspectly into the kitchen, through the pantry, and pushed irresolutely the swinging door into the dining room. Now he heard indistinct voices; principally a man's voice. Then a word or two in Pauline's clear, abrupt accents.

With his suitcase dangling from one hand, and the other gripping the edge of the dining table, he stopped and listened. A faint glow from the court brought out the shapes of well-remembered pictures on the walls; steins and vases on the plate-rail; the serving table he and Pauline had bought together when they were "accumuiating." Among these reminders he stood, with his pulses beating, and a feeling of the incredible, a feeling of shame, together with a wild desire to laugh, all mixed up together in his brain.

Spying!

Suddenly the indecisive Lance Happerth of former epochs perished forever. There came into his head something Lieutenant Morin had said at drill: "When you're in a tight fix, don't step back. Plunge ahead; always ahead—and give 'em hell."

Lance set down the suitcase, kicked a chair out of his way, and "plunged ahead," through the dining room, along the hall, and into the library.

There sat Pauline, pale and frightened; and there sat Mrs. Fanning, with tears running off her nose.

And there by the mantel stood "the man." It was Father Fanning. He was trying to figure on the back of an envelope, but his pencil made vague stabs. And he seemed tremendously amazed at something; besides, his lips were blue.

The two women shrieked when Lance came in, and half rose.

"Lance!" cried Pauline, in a strangled way.

But Father Fanning only gazed at him, as if from a great distance, with eyes shadowed by what seemed like years and years of pain.

Lance moved to the centre of the room. He was fascinated by the sight of this Grand Mogul turned old and feeble. Alfred Harrold, the whole object of his visit—all that, Lance had forgotten. The knowledge of some family calamity gripped him.

He said:

"Well, I'm here? What's wrong? Tell me, Polly."

Pauline did not move or speak, but Mrs. Fanning got out of her chair, like an ancient and corpulent duchess, and the next moment collapsed again on the davenport, wailing:

"We've failed, Lance; we've failed."

"You mean the bank?" He frowned, and even at that moment they had time to wonder at his bronzed face and straight back.

"Yes, the bank," said Father Fanning. "The bank, the bank, both of the banks."

He looked at Lance with a sort of foolish shrewdness.

"You see," he said, "we've failed."

CHAPTER VI

THE usual number of hours, thirty-six, elapsed between that Saturday night and Monday morning. But none of the Fannings knew just how many hours there were. They remembered this period afterward as a time of huge and horrid arguments, of lamentations, of futile figuring. It was a nightmare having as a background a sort of dark, swollen flood—this being the Fanning fortunes flowing down to perdition—and a foreground in which floated the tortured face of Father Fanning, shouting, "I can settle everything if they give me a chance." In this foreground, too, appeared from time to time the agonized and arguing personalities of Pauline and her mother, of the two Augustines, of Aunt Pringle. All that Saturday night and Sunday the Fannings came and went, with careful footfalls on the stairs, and voices hushed in the hallways. And Lance sat steadily on through every conference, a new Lance with a grim look and a tanned face, whom they all but feared. Reeker lent his presence at times (a pale, nail-biting presence) and so did an elderly lawyer whom none of them had met, but who seemed to know all the details.

Monday morning at nine o'clock a sign went up on each of the Fanning banks:

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"Closed for investigation by the state bank examiner."

Inside the Fanning Trust sat its sole owner, across a table from the urbane examiner himself.

The fact that these signs were up, the fact that Father Fanning was sitting there, both of these things were the work not of the examiner, not of the elderly lawyer, but of Lance. Late Sunday afternoon he had found the banker packing a suitcase, and looking furtive. Then had followed the angriest argument of all. With a sudden realization of what this flight would mean, with a determination that surprised none of them more than it did Lance, he had fought to keep his father-in-law at home to face the music. He stood over the collapsed Mogul with clenched fists, and threatened him.

"No, you can't pull this off. You can't sneak away, and leave the women to do your explaining. I'll expose you; I'll put the police on your track. You stick, Mr. Fanning, or——"

And the emperor of Fanningdom gave way.

Yes, it was Lance's work, that stunning confession of failure that hit Lakeside on Monday morning. But Lance was not there to see the effects. He was back at camp, doing setting-up drill. He moved with a sluggishness that drew reprimands from his lieutenant. His eyes burned with sleeplessness; his chin was scrubby and unshaven. And after drill one of his mates whispered to him, with a wink, "You must have had some swell time in town, old boy; some swell time!"

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He lay on his cot in the "recreation hour" after supper, with a drowsy sense of having done the right thing for once, but with fears of what must have happened in Lakeside that day. It had been hard to leave Pauline to face all that alone. They had quarrelled again about it; for Pauline could not be made to understand that army rules took no account of private calamities. She had accused him of deserting her just when things were hardest. But at least they had no time to quarrel about Harrold. That problem would have to be settled some other time. But it would have to be settled. His soul was grimly set on that.

Pauline remained secluded in the Fannington all that day, sleeping, or else sitting in the sun parlour with the shades lowered, trying to think. Even she, with a newspaper education, could understand what this crash foreboded; and she gave it a more melodramatic tone than the facts themselves. She imagined violent crowds before the bank doors; police beating them back with clubs; her father cowering in a back room to escape would-be lynchers. And she imagined some things that were more or less true: an outcry from half of Lakeside, poisonous comment by people who had fawned upon the Fannings, a sibilant suggestion that her father was a thief and that "now those snobs would get theirs." People always said a ruined banker was a thief. It was of course no more true this time than in lots of cases. He would prove it; they would beat down all this

talk. Pauline's pride in Fanning grit, her belief in Fanning luck, sustained her while she "thought things out."

Once or twice the doorbell rang, but she did not answer. So did the telephone, which Pauline silenced by removing the receiver for the day. She ate nothing at noon. She was like a prisoner.

But it was not in her to endure more than eight or ten hours of this, so at dinner time she pulled herself together, put on one of her smartest "things," and went down to the café. It was almost empty, and the head waitress, in whose eyes flickered sympathy rather than hostility, took her to a quiet corner. And there she ate hungrily, while her consciousness of great trouble became vaguer and vaguer.

This consciousness might have vanished entirely, for the time, had not May Harrold discovered her.

May was the last person Pauline had expected to see. For several weeks the litigant had been away from the Fannington. It was supposed she was "staying with friends," as her furniture was still in the flat. Now she had suddenly returned, to plague an unhappy Pauline.

Her sharp gaze explored the restaurant, and almost at once she descried Pauline in her corner. There was no escaping her. She came slithering over the slippery floor, with a large bag on her arm. May was never seen without this bag, which probably contained "papers."

She sat down at the table, cleared a place for her bag, and said to the waitress, "No, thanks, I don't

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want a thing; well, a plate of soup, maybe." And to Pauline, "Don't go. I know you don't want to see me, or anybody, one bit. But I just want to ask you one thing."

Pauline regarded her old friend across the table with an enigmatic expression.

"I just want to ask you," continued May, "if you can speak to your father, and——"

"No, I can't."

"Wait till you hear. You ought to be willing to help me out just this little bit. I only want just enough money to pay my lawyer. If I don't get it he won't go on with the case, and there's no telling when it'll ever be tried. I've been to the bank, and to Mr. Reeker. It wasn't any good. They don't understand how my trouble is different. Pauline, I haven't a cent—not a cent."

From the look on her face she was about to burst into tears. Bother!

"Come upstairs," said Pauline, hastily. "Oh, there's your soup."

"I don't want it," quavered May. "Take the horrid stuff away," she commanded the waitress.

The few people in the room stared, while the two young women fled. And a Fannington tenant of some weeks standing whispered to his table mate, a newcomer, "Look there! that woman, the blonde—that's old Fanning's daughter. Reckon she won't be wearing so many rings a month from now, eh?"

In the flat May seated herself with apparent composure, and then she had the crying spell fore-

shadowed in the café. After this she became again gloomily serene, and also talkative.

"I don't suppose there's anybody else in such hard luck as me. Here within a few months I've lost a husband, and a home, and had to give up pretty near all my jewellery, and now the bank with all my money is busted. Did you ever see such luck? I don't know where to go. I went down to Danville to my aunt's, and they didn't want me there. And I don't know what to do with the furniture."

"Why don't you go on living in the flat? Father would never disturb you."

"Perhaps not," returned May, sagely. "But the new owner—there, I didn't mean to say that, Pauline. Lord knows I don't want to make you feel any worse. I don't blame you, or your father, either. And that's more than most people——"

She bit her lip.

"You can tell it," said Pauline, drily. "A lot I care what people think." Yet just that was what she had been pondering all day.

"I shan't be the one to tell you," and May shook her foolish head vigorously.

"Yes, you will. If anybody's been talking to you, I want to know what they said."

"It was only Mr. Winchell. I happened to ride out in front of him on the 'L.' He said he had known this was coming for a long time. He said Lakeside might have had better sense than to put all its eggs in one basket. And a lot of sneering things about pikers getting stung by backing a wind-broken

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horse. There! I knew you wouldn't want to hear it, Pauline."

"Go on."

May looked at her doubtfully a moment, and continued:

"Over at Chapman's drug store, where I dropped in to get a soda, everybody was just buzzing with it. I could tell that half the folks at the tables had lost money. They were kidding each other about it. Oh, they weren't bitter at all, Pauline. They were just joking about five cents on the dollar, and how the receiver would get most of it anyhow."

"The receiver! They'll get fooled. Father says he can open the banks again in a week."

"Will he?" cried May. "Oh, that's good! And you'll see I get my money when he reopens, won't you? I guess that'll be good news for lots of people. When I came away from the bank this morning there were two women just ahead of me crying and taking on something awful. You see it hits different people different ways. And oh, Pauline, I'll bet your poor Aunt Pringle will feel it. Such a dear old lady! Didn't you tell me once she invested everything with your father? And what about your uncle and his wife? My dear, when you come to think of it, how dreadful it is for everybody! Do you expect to go on living here? Now, I suppose I shouldn't have said that, either. I'm an awfully poor comforter. It's my own troubles makes me dwell on such things. That reminds me: I never paid for that soup."

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"It's a trifle," said Pauline, sighing.

"Perhaps they won't charge it against me, because your father, in a way, owes me a lot more than that."

"Father doesn't control the café," replied Pauline, listlessly. "Another man runs it."

The visitor started to open her bag, as though to see if it contained the price of the soup, but changed her mind.

"As you say, it's a trifle," she decided. "I guess they won't bother a poor widow woman. Oh, my Lord! The worst of it is, if I happen to pass *him* on the street——"

She rattled on about her sorrows until the doorbell rang. Pauline's maid, who had been given leave of absence for the day, but had now returned, went to the door. In a moment she came in, looking stealthy. She whispered in Pauline's ear.

"Would you believe it," said Pauline to May, "I forgot to pay for my dinner. 'Tell him,' she said to the maid, 'I'll send down the money to-morrow.'"

The girl went out, and soon reappeared.

"He wants to see you, ma'am."

"The nerve!" exclaimed Pauline, rising. She noted a quizzical look on May's face, and suddenly flushed angrily. It took her only a second to flounce into the hall, and in a few seconds more she came back, with her flush angrier than ever.

"Did you give it to him?" inquired May.

"Give it to him!"

"I mean, did you tell him where he got off?"

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There was more than indifferent curiosity in the question, and Pauline made no answer to it. She knew by May's manner that it would be known throughout Lakeside in a few hours that the daughter of Barton Fanning had been dunned for a 60-cent dinner in Barton Fanning's own Fannington.

Worse ordeals lay before Pauline Happerth, but they did not develop that evening, nor the next day. On that Tuesday she decided she had been foolish to shut herself up, so she went abroad, clad with defiant luxuriousness and forcing a smiling face. People whom she met greeted her with scarcely perceptible coldness. They were still uncertain, so far, whether "old Fanning would come back," or "stay dead," and they tried to temper their greetings to either possibility. Besides these mere acquaintances Pauline met some real friends. Among them was Fred Ames' mother, whom Pauline encountered at the Bon-Ton millinery shop, and who said, with the wistful smile that matched her placid gray hair, "It'll all come right, dear. Your father is too good a churchman not to do the very best he can for all of us." This was a really brave thing for Mrs. Ames to say, as she had \$1,500 in the Fanning Trust.

And then there was Aunt Augustine, who had had very little to contribute to the family conferences, but who now rose up nobly to comfort them all. She met Pauline on Wilson Avenue, and walked part of the way home with her. She said it wouldn't matter if they all were poor, providing everybody's honour was untouched. "And I'm sure, Pauline,

that when everything is known your father's reputation will come out unscathed."

"Of course," rejoined Pauline. She wondered why Aunt Augustine should talk about that at all.

Later in the day, impelled by a curiosity quite too strong for her, she strolled westward into the region where the bank was, and walked by on the other side of the street. It might have been better if she had not done this. The sight of the drawn shades on the building, that ominous white sign on the door, and the glaring irony of the bronze lettering "Bring your valuables to the safest vaults in the city," shook her somehow. Besides, there were still people prowling by, and they looked at the bank, and nudged each other, and laughed. And a little boy had the effrontery to throw a great blob of mud against one of the plate-glass windows. There was no crowd now; there was no mob, as she had imagined, hanging about to lynch the banker; in fact, it wasn't a bit like the movies, yet the whole impression she got was forlorn.

She walked back toward home, with her jauntiness gone.

Pauline felt suddenly very young, and alone, and dependent. And then it came to her, like a message from her better nature, that her mother must need her, and that she had not spoken to her for a day and a night. She hastened her steps toward the Wiltshire.

Mrs. Fanning herself opened the door. Pauline divined, without inquiry, that the two maids, not to

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speak of the grand but somewhat transient manservant, must have taken their leave. For the rest, the apartment seemed just the same. It was in perfect order, and the parrot, a recent acquisition, was climbing about the wires of his cage and shouting.

Mrs. Fanning, too, was in perfect order. She wore a gown with lace at the neck. Pauline recalled having helped her select it, and they had argued over whether the neck was cut too low. Mrs. Fanning's neck rose now as robust as ever, and the face above was altogether composed.

They sat down opposite each other. The talk was desultory. Once the telephone rang, and Mrs. Fanning, returning from answering it, looked a shade the worse. But she did not explain. Another time she went to the door, spoke for a few minutes with the caller, and again resumed her place without any more definite explanation than "A man to see your father." Her reticence made question after question arise to Pauline's lips, but she did not utter them. She was a trifle hurt and overawed.

Suddenly in burst Aunt Pringle full of eagerness and scandal. The powder lay on her face in patches, and her earrings jingled a louder tune than ever.

"Mary," she cried. "Is it true that man Reeker is to be made receiver? It would be perfectly——"

"Hs-sh!" warned Mrs. Fanning. "We're not talking about receivers."

"You might as well. All Lakeside is. And they've left me out of that card party at the Beach. I just feel like crying."

Pauline gazed at her aunt with rising sympathy. It seemed too bad that this dear old profligate, whom everybody loved, should suffer.

"You'll be a preferred creditor, Aunt Pringle," she said. "I believe that's the word."

Aunt Pringle stared at her.

"Gracious, child," she said. "You don't suppose I lost anything—in money? A few hundred, that's all. And I've got \$10,000 of the bank's money; the bank's got my note. I'm not going to starve. It's having everybody turn a cold shoulder that I hate. I'm going to move to California."

Mrs. Fanning looked at her curiously.

"If you have \$10,000 of the bank's money you'll have to turn it in," she said.

"I won't do any such thing," stormed Aunt Pringle. "My lawyer says——"

Mrs. Fanning leaned forward with bulging eyes.

"Have you told a lawyer about it?"

"I took legal advice—yes," replied the elder lady, with nose in air.

"Then you did very wrong!" shouted Mrs. Fanning, suddenly losing her self-control.

"I act as I please," replied Aunt Pringle, getting up. "No, I shan't stay to dinner as I meant to. And to-morrow I'll see the last of Lakeside. It's as much as one's social standing is worth to be even related to a Fanning."

With that she departed. Her exit speech was crushing, but they knew it was bunkum.

A couple of hours later Pauline and her mother sat over the remains of a meagre meal, bestowed carelessly upon a small part of the great round dining table: scrambled eggs, cooked by Mrs. Fanning, and rolls obtained at a little bakery by Pauline, and what was more, borne home by her in a paper bag. They ate alone, for Mr. Fanning had not returned from the ceaseless investigation at the bank, and no other Fannings chanced to appear.

The solitary meal, attended by the splashing of cold rain on the windows—for an autumn storm foreshadowed all the afternoon had now settled down to stay—confirmed all of Pauline's growing fears about the Fanning fortunes. Only four days had passed since she first heard definitely of her father's troubles, and already the servants had gone, and life partly dependent on the delicatessen store had begun. There was not even an automobile for her father to ride home in. It had been "attached," Mrs. Fanning said vaguely.

Pauline looked about the gold-and-white dining room, and thought of that dinner so far distant, just after she and Lance came back from the South: the first appearance of the manservant, the talk of buying that mansion on the beach, her father's joy in life. Lance—and no war. She did not remind her mother of these things. A great sympathy for her mother was growing in her. It might be—it might be that even the Wiltshire would have to be given up. Mrs. Fanning had already hinted that the Fannington was as good as lost, and Pauline, to whom this

revelation came only as part of an accumulation of things to be borne, faced the prospect stolidly.

She sympathized with her mother; she loved her mother. All their differences and quarrels were forgotten in this hour, as they sat munching bakery rolls on a tiny area of the big table, under the light of a single electric globe.

Mrs. Fanning betrayed no consciousness of the rain nor of forlornness; but she was very thoughtful. Her face had been perhaps a shade more troubled since Aunt Pringle's outburst. It even looked pinched. But Pauline hesitated to learn the reason. There might be worse things to be told than had been told already. Pauline shrank from hearing any more. Good Lord, how could there be more?

They cleared away the dishes, washed and wiped them. There was a sort of quaintness about this that almost gave Pauline a feeling of pleasure. It was like being a little girl again, living in the old brick house that was torn down years ago. And it was like being a little girl to be shown to bed by her mother (for it was useless to think of returning to the Fannington for the night in that storm) except that the brass bed and mahogany furniture was not the kind little girls use. She left the door of her bedroom open, and lay awake, listening to the rustle of her mother's newspaper in the drawing room, and hearing the rain play monotonous tunes in the drain pipes. She recalled her life in this same apartment, the entertainments she had given, the tempestuous times over Tom; then her meeting with Lance, her

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wedding—how vividly she remembered every detail of that afternoon—then her reign as queen of the Fannington. It was like the developing action of a play, each scene more gorgeous and fascinating than its predecessor. And it had ended like the fading of footlights.

The "crowd" had gone; Lance had gone; life in the Fannington would never again be lived.

A fragment of one of Uncle Augustine's sermons, a sermon he had preached when he was trying to warn Lakeside of its follies, floated into her mind. It was a commonplace theme, but worth remembering now. Briefly, the burden of it was that people mostly got what they deserved.

But she could not imagine how she, how all of them, had deserved this much.

CHAPTER VII

IN THE meantime, a very important Fanning—perhaps the most important of all the Fannings—remained to be heard from.

When the first news came he merely laughed grimly, and thought, "Humph! Got the old man at last, did they?" This mood lasted about twelve hours. It was succeeded by one caused by mute but explicit signals of sympathy from other lieutenants. This mood was an angry and contemptuous one, in which Tom nearly swore outright at certain companions who chose to regard him as heartbroken. And then came the third mood, induced by these words in a newspaper: "Mrs. Fanning is understood to be prostrated."

It was at this point Tom decided he was needed at the front. So he obtained special leave—even the colonel looked as though he understood the case—and journeyed up to the city.

He rode completely surrounded by newspapers, and accumulating more as he rode. He had discovered a steadily growing colour of surmise, of innuendo, in the "bank failure stories," that struck through even his tough and sanguine nature. There was a suggestion, probably founded on certainty, that the Fanning banks, supposedly stuffed with money, and

with a reserve drawn from the Fanning properties as a whole, were in fact mere shells. Such sentences as "suffered from heavy withdrawals due to the liberty loans," and "reported that the Fanning enterprises have been a drain upon the banks," occurred frequently. And the accounts of Lakeside's attitude were vivid. These papers made the most of the mud-throwing; both the literal bespatterment by small boys, and the sort that went on in the Beach Hotel, the Country Club, and other places.

Clearly a net was closing about Father Fanning. The Lakeside he had helped develop into a brilliant and self-sufficient community was turning on him. More politely than it would have been done in one of the "Dago districts," but no less cruelly, Lakeside was preparing to crucify its Grand Mogul.

The latest paper Tom bought told of a hearing that afternoon before a master in chancery. "Astounding revelations predicted."

"Curse the reporters," exclaimed Tom. He waded up the newspaper, threw it into a corner, and lit a defiant cigarette.

He reached the city a little after two, lunched hastily, and sought out the master in chancery's court. Tom had no plan. The idea "offer my services" brooded in his mind half sardonically. And he thought he might somehow "see the old man through." He was a partisan of his father's, now that everyone else was against him. Pauline in her seclusion, Tom in his bold descent upon the court, had an idea in common at last. They were anxious

to see Father Fanning get a square deal; and fearful that he wouldn't.

Arrived at the right room in the Caledonian Building, Tom found himself in a chamber with people roosting on window-sills and packed three deep along the walls. There was a long table at one end, where two stenographers bent desperately over their notebooks. Tom's entrance made no commotion, though one or two people glanced at the man in the huge military overcoat, and glanced away again. He flattened himself into the only remaining wall space, and took his bearings.

It was a Lakeside crowd, clearly enough. In the main they were strangers to Tom, but he recognized a few of them: A druggist and a grocer whom he had known before their hair was gray; the watchman at the Fanning Trust; the carriage-starter at the Beach. None of Tom's family was visible. The chairs were occupied for the most part by women; women of the sort that made Lakeside famous and made pocket-books flat. They were gloating over the testimony as though it were a murder trial. And they darted venomous looks at the back of Barton Fanning's head.

A drily smiling person with horn-rimmed spectacles was giving very dry testimony, while the pink-cheeked master alternately studied his fingernails and eyed the women of Lakeside. Now and then Fanning's wiry little lawyer would leap to his feet, snap a few words, and subside. Neither testimony nor objections were intelligible to Tom. He stood

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shifting from one foot to the other for fully twenty minutes, and began to doubt the wisdom of having come.

Then in a twinkling all this was forgotten. A young woman in a plain brown coat, with a blue feather in her hat, had risen, and was edging toward the door. In the crowd she failed to notice Tom. He almost lost her. Then, to the great distress of the people wedged beside the door, he smashed through, and caught up to the fugitive in the hall.

He said: "Miss Stone, I——"

She stopped. Her gray eyes flashed delightedly for an instant; then she became very composed. Her lips opened, but he could not hear what she said.

"Where are you going?" he demanded anxiously rather than peremptorily.

"Anywhere away from there," replied Ann. "I couldn't stand it any longer. I was supposed to stay there, but I didn't."

"Did you lose money in the bank?"

"I hadn't any to lose," she answered, with a faint smile. "I'd almost rather have it that way than be what I am supposed to be—a witness."

"A witness!"

(What legal monstrosity was this?)

"They've summoned everybody who ever worked for the bank, it seems," she explained, drearily.

Tom looked at her with great intensity. He remembered now that she had spent all those evenings alone with the bank records. She might know more than any one thought; more than she herself dreamed.

It would be pretty rough if it were she who, in the hands of clever examiners, disclosed something or other that gave his father his final kick downward. Yet no one could blame her if she found a certain pleasure in doing so. The Grand Mogul hadn't treated her very well, after all.

But the worst of it was that she would be in the opposite camp from himself, Tom; from himself, who was becoming every minute a warmer partisan of his father's against all those wolves. Could she be as much his friend, under those circumstances? Hardly. And he wanted her not only to be as much a friend as now, but more—oh, very much more.

His face tied itself into knots as he looked at her.

"Are you in a hurry?" he begged. And without waiting for her answer he drew her to the end of the corridor, where there was a big window overlooking a landscape of tall buildings, smoking chimneys, water tanks; and beyond, a narrow view of the lake, of dim, slender piers and idle ships.

They stood together, looking out on this scene, so symbolic of the complexities, the huge, harsh processes of city life. And they both felt that they would gladly escape from all this to some place without skyscrapers, and enmities, and deadly ambitions. If they could but leap off that high window-sill together, and float on beyond the roof-tops to peace!

But all Tom said was, "Well, do you like the idea of being a witness?"

"I thought I told you—I hate it!"

He almost broke out: "Then why be one?" but he

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remembered in time that this would be in the worst of taste, and perhaps even illegal.

"It isn't as if I knew anything," she went on. "What could I know, when all I did was check up lists?"

"You can't tell," he said, gravely. "I don't know myself just what father did with the banks; whether all that newspaper stuff is true. But it's easy to twist a little thing, and make it look black; and it seems there are about seventy-six lawyers ready to do the twisting. Once a man's credit is gone——" he completed the sentence with a gesture.

He could see only her profile, but it looked wistful and anxious.

"And you," she said, softly. "How will it affect you? You have ambitions, too, I suppose."

Tom laughed with a sort of contempt.

"Thank the Lord, my line isn't the kind to be hurt by it. I'm well out of all this civilian muddle. Much bigger game I'm in. You don't know what a relief it is, Ann—I say, that slipped out. I've got certain things to do, both here and when I—when we get across. And so long as I do what I'm told, and do it with all the pluck I've got, I make good automatically, don't you see? That's the satisfaction of being in the army. Don't have to bother about all the measly little cheap twists and turns of life around here. I don't express it very well, but——"

"I understand you," she said.

There was a comfortable silence, while the delight of being understood sank into Tom. Then Ann said:

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"I'm so sorry for your sister; yes, for all of them."

"Why?" he demanded, compelling her to look at him. "They never treated you decently, not by half."

"Well, that wasn't their fault, either," she replied.

"Anyhow, as you say, your father is down now where every enemy he's made has him at his mercy. I'll not be one to make it any harder for him, Mr. Fanning; that I'll promise."

Tom's face grew suddenly red with the effort of something he was about to say. He loosened the tall collar of his coat.

"Is it—tell me, Ann," he said, moving closer to her, "is it altogether father you want to be good to? Isn't it——"

She darted a startled look at him, and drew away.

"Wait a minute," he urged, feeling clumsier than on his first day in the "awkward squad," "I want to know if it isn't just a little on my account that you feel sorry, and all that? It won't hurt you to tell me."

The pause that followed seemed to both of them hours long, and breathless. Then Ann said, without meeting his eye, "You know it is." And her voice caught a little on the last word; and she fled down the hall, leaving him there by the window.

Returning to the court, with the blood fading from his cheeks, Tom discovered a new witness on the stand. It was a pale young man, with reddish eyelids, and a way of holding his head forward, as though

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his neck was too weak to support it. But he faced the master boldly, and was giving his testimony with a certain air of relish.

Clearly this was a very important witness. The crowd was drinking in every word. And Barton Fanning had lifted his head, and was staring at the pale young man with a kind of horror.

"Mr. Reeker," came the cool voice of the master, "when did you first discover the withdrawals of which you speak?"

The room waited.

"When I first became manager," said Reeker. "Almost the first thing I found out was the way the funds were being misapplied."

He gave a furtive look in the direction of Fanning.

"Then why did you not inform the authorities?"

A long pause.

"I wished to obtain further evidence—to be sure——"

The master leaned toward him.

"Did you not realize you were indirectly guilty of those practises, in countenancing them?"

Reeker evidently was prepared for this.

"I protested," he said. "I was not responsible. I protested to my superior, but it"—he relapsed, in his excitement, into the grammar natural to him—"it didn't do no good."

Barton Fanning half rose from his seat, and said hoarsely, "That is a lie."

The master frowned and crushed Father Fanning with a gesture. The examination continued. Tom

could not make head nor tail of it, except that this dishrag of a chap on the stand was accusing his father of something rotten. He wished he had heard the first of Reeker's testimony. As it was, he could only listen for the explanation.

It came presently, when the master began to delve deeper. Reeker pulled out a pocketful of notes, and referred to them. He glanced at Fanning again, and told the rest of the story.

A black enough story it was; even Tom knew that. He did not fathom the technique, but the main facts he could not miss. Barton Fanning had used his banks, used the money given him in trust, to build up his private deals. He had taken deposits—here the testimony became very technical, and figures flew about in blinding clusters—and flung these thousands headlong into his real-estate speculations. The "big deal" with Ulrich had robbed the Fanning Trust of a shade less than a hundred thousand. That was only a sample. The burning of the Elsinore Manor, for instance, had not meant money out of Fanning's pocket. He had reimbursed himself from the savings of people like Mme. Dolly, who now sat glaring balefully at her former banker and friend.

"These—er—withdrawals—in what way were they concealed?" inquired the master. He appeared to presuppose the answer, and stared out of the window while it was given.

"By notes," answered Reeker, glibly.

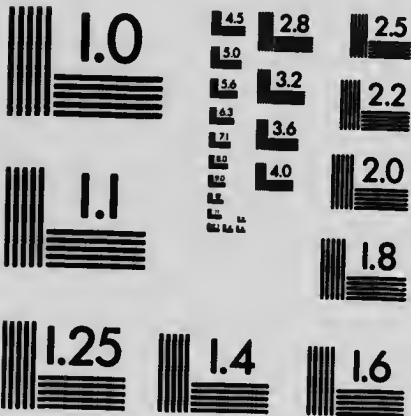
"Notes given by whom?"

The witness grinned. He glanced over the crowd,



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and looked disappointed to find none of the family there.

"There was one loan to Rev. Augustine Fanning—\$5,000," he testified, without referring to his notes. "Another of \$10,000 to Mrs. J. S. Pringle."

He continued down the list. Chapman, the druggist, even the janitor of the Little Stone Church, gave notes. Fanning loaned to anybody and everybody. The bank was stuffed with these things; and the witness thought—he could not be sure, he only surmised, with the accent on the wrong syllable—that Fanning's idea was to call in this money at the opportune moment and make good on what he himself "borrowed." "Take, for instance, the case of the loan to Mrs. Pauline Happerth——"

There was a squeak from Tom's corner. He had accidentally jabbed his elbow in someone's ribs.

Mrs. Pauline Happerth, testified Reeker, had given her note in the sum of \$40,000. There was a very interesting story in this, if the court cared to hear it.

But the court, in a dry way, checked Mr. Reeker right in the middle of an eager sentence, and remarked, "You can tell that to the grand jury." The court had observed that the crowd was becoming too excited, the air too close. He was a fastidious master in chancery, and a nervous one. He disliked the idea of a "scene." And Father Fanning looked as though he were about to make one. So court was adjourned until the following morning. Just one more question was put, this time by Fanning's lawyer. It was "You understood, did you not, Mr.

Reeker, that Mr. Fanning's disposal of the bank monies was made with a view to the development of Lakeside? That his whole soul was centred on its welfare? That without him——"

"Object," said the lawyer for a creditor; and there was no answer. But the crowd, as it filed out and streamed down the hall, answered for itself.

"Did you hear what the little lawyer tried to put over?"

"Clever, wasn't it?"

"Old Fanning put him up to it. Just like the darned old——"

"To pretend he did it for us!"

"And me saving up for that set of furs at——"

The murmurs died away with the clack of Lakeside's high heels. Tom scarcely heard them. He was waiting at the threshold for a certain person to emerge. This person, after the crowd had quite disappeared, at length came sauntering out, looking pleased with himself. Tom let him pass, and then, when he had almost reached the elevator, hurried after him and tapped him on the shoulder.

Reeker started, and turned about.

"I say," said Tom, settling his round cap firmly on his yellow pate. "I listened to all you said in there. It was clever. But I'm the son of the man you told it of, and I just want to tell you, you lied."

Reeker stepped back to the wall. He was pale, but stood his ground.

"Figures don't lie," he replied.

"You twisted 'em so they did," insisted Tom. "I

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don't care what you said, or what the figures said—I don't know a cuss about figures anyhow—you lied. That's all."

The former agent started to walk on.

"You'll find it borne out when the grand jury gets busy."

Tom grabbed him and swung him about.

"You'll get him," he said. "I don't doubt, between you and the other liars, and the slimy lawyers, you'll get him. But you're a pack of crooks, and ingrates, and liars. The lot of you."

"Is that all you've got to say?" sneered Reeker. He had decided this military person was harmless, after all.

"Not quite all," remarked Tom, coolly. He pushed Reeker against the wall with one hand, and with the other slapped him savagely across the face.

"That's one remark," he said, "and here's another——" and he slapped Reeker's face again with such violence as to bump his head against the wall.

The agent covered his streaked countenance with his elbows and shrank back.

"You murderer——" he began.

Tom, with blazing eyes, took another step toward him. But just then a descending elevator stopped at the floor, and Reeker escaped in it.

"The slimy snake," thought Tom, rubbing his hands together as though to cleanse them. He was not entirely proud of his deed, now it was done; not sure he had been right. But something had to be

done. And since punching the leading witness was all that had offered itself, he had punched him.

He returned to the court to have a word with his father and find out if his mother was prostrated, as reported. Barton Fanning still sat at the table, while his lawyer spoke eagerly in his ear. The master was stuffing papers into a leather bag, and smoking a cigarette.

The fallen banker looked up when his tall son approached; looked up with eyes that wondered and wavered.

"Father," said Tom, "I've come back, so to speak. I'll forget our old quarrels if you will. I'm on your side. What can I do?"

For an instant Fanning drew himself up haughtily; then he suddenly collapsed forward on the table, with his face buried in his arms. His shoulders shook. No one spoke in the darkening room for a full minute. Then the little lawyer said:

"Let him alone, young man, is my advice. You can't do anything. It isn't a very good time for—er—family reunions."

CHAPTER VIII

THE lawyer was right, as it took little further investigation on Tom's part to prove. His mother was not prostrated; not enough, anyhow, to be different. He sat in her drawing room for ten minutes, fidgeting before her, and was relieved to take his red and swollen presence out of that austere atmosphere. Pauline was defiant. She scoffed at legal process, and stuck out her tongue at him when he asked about the \$40,000 note.

He returned gladly to camp, where life was simple.

It seemed unnecessary to complicate it by conferring with Lance. Even if Lance had any practical value in the world, which he doubted, they two together could not help the self-reliant Fannings. Nor did Tom feel that Lance cou'd elucidate for him the mysteries of banking—those notes, for instance—as so expertly unveiled in the courtroom. His instinct was correct. Lance had read about the notes, and had understood scarcely anything he read. The papers implied that the revelations were shocking. Lance supposed they were. But as regards the really shocking part, the effect of that note-juggling on his own fate, he could get no light from the papers, for they were, happily, in ignorance of all that.

The more he read and pondered, the more he was

led to conclude that Pauline had only submitted to the inevitable; the inevitable as established by Fanning hocus-pocus. Keeping the secret—well, he could hardly blame her for that, either. She was a Fanning subject; a helpless atom in that whirlpool of intrigue and four-flushing. She had to hold her tongue or be cut off from all Fanning privileges, which he supposed included gifts of money. Lance had the haziest idea of how she was living, except that he was sure she was living "high"; entertaining lots of company, and so on.

And whenever he got to that point, the hateful thought of Harrold—the hatefulest thing in his life, the thing he had tried to forget, and couldn't—came up and smote him until he swore he would forget Pauline. He would never write to her again, or think about her.

It was too dreadful to work as he was working, and have a vision of Harrold, exempt, contented, smug, tripping about Lakeside in his fancy-collared overcoat, making love to soldiers' wives!

When the cold weather came on, he reached another kind of crisis in his experience. His spiritual troubles passed to the rear when it came to enduring army life in winter. Morning after morning he had to rise and dress in a room through which the wind had shrieked all night. His bare feet on a floor powdered with snow—Lord!

He had always hated the cold; wasn't to blame for it. Did they take no account of the way a fellow was made? His grumbings over the new grievance rose

louder than any he hitherto had made. They came to the ears of Christensen, who directed three huskies to take Lance out and roll him in the snow. This they did so thoroughly that his "dander rose," as they said, and he fought them like a tiger, coming in with a black eye, but with his circulation improved.

At evening mess Morin noticed his swollen eye, and made inquiries about it. Summoning Christensen, he said,

"That'll be enough of that."

"Yes, sir," replied the sergeant, saluting. But to himself he said, "Going to try petting him now, are you?"

Petting was not Morin's plan at all. He picked squads for "hikes," and sent Lance with them. Frequently he led these squads himself, steaming along the road for miles; and as the snow grew deeper, in layers that never thawed, he plunged across country up to the knees, leading a file of men whose feet became leaden, and whose breath came in feathery gasps. There was no stopping this demon Morin. The first day Lance "fell out," but after that he struggled on with "the bunch," and to his secret astonishment his energy increased tenfold, and he felt the cold no more. He discovered, too, how beautiful the country was in winter; how it glittered, and beckoned, and arrayed itself in colours that made summer seem false, that made winter-time in the city something to be avoided for its boredom and unrelieved chill.

Then came snow-shovelling parties, and sentry

duty in a zero temperature. Lance almost revelled in the snow shovelling. The night duty he endured, imagining himself, like any schoolboy, a Jack London character sticking it out in an Alaskan pass. He came into the barracks with frost-bitten fingers, and had the honour of being treated by Morin himself.

What time had he now to muse upon his Lakeside troubles? He was altogether occupied with animal living. He had become absorbed in a world of men, who slept, ate, and worked by system, and whose toughened minds were insensible to the little shocks of civilian relations. They had news from home of sick wives, of new babies, of great good luck and great bad luck, and they felt as though those things belonged to a secondary existence. They grieved more over a lost pipe than they did over a departed relative; they rejoiced more about a furlough to the village than they did about the new babies. They were gloriously irresponsible as to "things back home." They were free. Lance, by degrees, got into the mood. He became more like the Lance he had been before the Fannington began to smother him; joyous and inventive. No longer was he "the grouch of Company C." He was its poet laureate; a Kiplingesque poet, making great use of words like "buddy" and "chow." These scrawls he would read to stray groups after mess, amid appreciative howls. Nor had he ever had sweeter praise.

He read in the papers that Barton Fanning was placed on trial. It was all that much idle print.

But still there were occasions when he thought about Pauline in spite of himself. Her face sometimes protruded from his memories of that outgrown life in Lakeside, as distinct as a photograph. And there were evenings when he and his pals would be loafing in the Y. M. C. A. rooms, and they would be sprawled over desks, making tracks with stubby pencils, while he would sit empty-handed.

Among his friends was a curly-headed yokel who, one such night, looked at Lance over the envelope he was licking, and said, "I say, Happerth, you ain't married?"

"Oh, yes," smiled Lance, with perfect ease.

"You be?" exclaimed the fellow. "Well—I never see you writin'——"

And he became tongue-tied.

But later he became as distinctly confidential.

"You wouldn't ever 'a' thought I was married, maybe," he began. "Fact is, we've been on and off—I don't know as you'd understand."

"On and off? I understand, of course."

"It was like this. I live down Peoria way. Our town isn't much. Neither was I. When I was nineteen, brakeman on the Rock Island, I meets a farmer's daughter named Clara. We got married. Skipped to the next town, of course. All well an' good. Well, I'm drafted—see? And Clara, she says to herself (she didn't say nothin' to me), 'I guess you're as good as dead'—meanin' yours truly. Anyhow, she took up with another chap, a clerk in a store. I guess she married him at that."

"Why, how could she?" put in Lance, somewhat astounded.

"Oh, marryin' ain't nothin' down our way," said Barker. ("Just Barker is my name," he had told the receiving officers.) "The country ain't like what you think it is, you bein' a city man. Well, here's the rest of it. Last month I went back to show off my uniform. Say, the town goes wild. You'd 'a' thought I was Gen. Joffrey or somebody. They rode me to the hotel in a hack, and give me a chicken dinner—you see, I was the only soldier from there—an' stuck cigars in all my pockets. An' Clara——"

He rocked with laughter.

"Welcomed you back?"

"She reg'lar hung on my arm th' whole time. Nothin' too good for me. Mr. Clerk, he sort o' hung about when he didn't think I was lookin'. Figured I'd shoot him, I guess. 'Fore my leave was up he blew. An' so me and Clara is all right again."

He waved his letter in the air, and eyed Lance roguishly.

"Makes a difference bein' a soldier, don't it?" he suggested.

"In some parts of the world," Lance replied, strolling out into the frosty night.

Among simple people like that—well, matters settled themselves. He determined never to return to Lakeside.

Christmas drew near, and with it the excitements of anticipated furloughs, and the stirrings of accus-

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tomed emotion and more vivid thoughts of home. Lance had always hated Christmas, both as a season and as a symbol. He hated it now, for another reason, because it gave him an unreasonable and shameful sense of loneliness.

So leaden was his spirit that when, on one of those December days, he found his name on the bulletin board among those advanced to "non-com." rank, the news brought little thrill. If he had been going home, to dash into the old flat with such tidings for Pauline, he would have been excited enough. But as it was, the promotion brought him only the dubious and ironic pleasure of passing on other men's requests for leave.

After he had handed out nearly a hundred such passes, the week before Christmas, his captain asked him,

"Aren't you going home? Haven't you any friends or family?"

The question was not altogether straightforward, for the captain read the papers, and he had followed the stories of Barton Farning's trial. But he wanted to get at the trouble that plainly embittered the young "non-com's" days.

Lance replied merely, "If it's all the same to you, I'll stay here."

The captain shrugged his shoulders, but his gaze followed Lance from the room with a touch of sympathy.

So Christmas Day came on, attended by howling winds, by zero temperature, and snowdrifts twelve

feet deep. Lance employed his leisure in defying the weather by long walks. He wandered to the "Five Points" centre of the camp to watch the preparations for a huge Christmas tree given to the men by someone—few of the men knew by whom. He saw the tree grow from a number of small firs into a monster a hundred feet tall. He read in the village paper and in city papers that the Red Cross and the Y. M. C. A. were arranging gifts and a programme. In adjoining columns were the long streams of court dialogue derived from the Fanning trial. The local event was much more vivid to him. Even when he read of Aunt Pringle, of the church janitor, especially of Ann Stone taking the witness stand, those old acquaintances seemed far away, puppet-like. In vain he tried to grasp what the lawyers sought to learn from Ann. He gathered that she told them little. "How could she know anything?" he scoffed. And he read that Barton Fanning "kept his nerve." In interviews the banker said, "My acquittal is assured." Lance flung the paper from him.

Came Christmas Day at last. His comrades, after morning inspection, marched off to the village with eager strides, leaving him almost solitary. Even Morin had an invitation to the city. Lance passed the time somehow until evening, then joined the closely packed crowd, huddled in olive-drab overcoats, who stood about the little platform under the tree.

With the first early dusk, the flood lights that encircled the giant fir were turned on, and with its

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twinkling jewels, glassed birds, and the light snow that hung on its branches, the tree stood out in the blackness, beautiful.

Lance, to keep warm, strolled about. The men he found himself with were of another regiment, the engineers, and he was lonely; lonely as only a soldier can be who is not with his own "outfit." But presently the major-general commanding the division, a gray-moustached dignitary whom Lance had seen only once or twice before, walked up to the platform with his staff and a group of civilians, both men and women. A local politician made a speech that was mostly lost upon the shivering crowd. A woman stepped forward and announced that the gifts would be distributed "soon." Then came a pause. The general fidgeted, and twisted his moustache.

Suddenly, from behind the platform, came a chord on a piano. It tinkled into the night startlingly clear; a complete surprise. Another moment, and a tenor voice leaped out to join the piano:

"Oh, holy night, the stars were brightly shining.
It was the night of our dear Saviour's birth."

With the first notes, Lance felt a tingling of the spine. He knew that voice.

"That's Fred Ames, or I'm an idiot," he muttered.

He walked about the platform and brought the piano into view. It was Fred Ames, sure enough. He stood there slim and overcoated, pouring out those liquid tones. Lance was so near he could see the veins in the singer's temples swell, his deepset eyes

search the crowd and the starry dark beyond, as he sang.

When he had finished there was a thunder of hand-clapping. Cheers. Fred merely smiled. But a muffled figure at the piano rose and, with a bow, responded for both. He turned his face in Lance's direction. His white teeth gleamed.

There could be no mistake. It was Harrold.

Lance remained where he was standing. The discovery dazzled him. Harrold here! Well, how did they "get him"? Lance was conscious of a troop of questions shrieking for answer. How did he get here? What "outfit" was he with? How was he "taking it"? And what would happen when they met?

For an instant he was tempted to rush up to the piano and confront his enemy. But women in furs were crowding up to the performers, and thanking them; while out in front the presents were being given out, amid much laughter.

His next instinct was to get away. He was edging into the crowd when Fred saw him. Breaking away from his admirers the singer made his way through, and took Lance by the elbow.

"Old chap, have you heard?" he inquired.

Lance turned, with a blank face.

"I've seen," he said.

"I don't know what you mean. My mother wrote me. The verdict was brought in last night."

By his look, it was not the sort of verdict the Fanning contingent had been led to hope for.

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"You needn't look so sympathetic," said Lance. "I don't care three hoots in Hootville what they did to the old scamoucher."

"It was guilty. It means the pen. The jury sat all night."

Lance made no response.

"Tell me, if you know; how did that yellow-hearted slacker—that——"

Fred stared.

"Harrold?" he returned, following Lance's fascinated stare toward the tree. "He was sent down here three weeks ago. He had fought the divorce to a standstill, only to find that it made no difference whether he was divorced or not."

Lance cut off the explanation with a gesture.

"What have you got against him?" asked Fred. "Ah, it was he who mangled your piano. I remember hearing about it."

Lance still stared toward the instrument, now draped in tarpaulin, where Harrold was bending low toward some village "flapper."

"My Lord," he muttered. "I hope we get to France—all of us."

And then he went away into the night. And as he went, he laughed.

CHAPTER IX

THAT winter brought the crucial test of Lakeside's bouyancy. It saw the fulfilment of some of the Rev. Augustine's prophecies. He was not a mean-spirited prophet, so he did not remind any one he had said "Lakeside would pay for its fun." Nor did he ascribe the closing of Mme. Dolly's, and the conversion (temporary, of course) of the Dance Paradise into a warehouse, to an act of Providence. Too clearly these calamities, and others like them, were due to the acts of Barton Fanning, and of Barton Fanning Augustine was not in the least proud.

And oh, the storm in the Little Stone Church! The meetings of trustees, most of them "stung." The pitiful pleadings of the faithful janitor, John, who even at this late day thought the pastor ought to salvage some of his (John's) wrecked savings. The Rev. Augustine was not so much concerned about being recognized as a true prophet as he was about finding another pastorate.

By degrees, however, Lakeside began to recover. It was a fearfully cold and snowy winter. The vast drifts that beleaguered the apartment buildings, troubles about transportation, troubles about coal, brought novelty if not ease. Automobiles were

snowed up in garages, and this made it easy for those whose cars were no longer theirs, because of the failure, to conceal the fact. It was difficult to get out to cafés, so frugal dinners at home became the fashion. Very few people moved away, not even those whom the failure had sent to the loan sharks. The community held together, stripped of much of its pretense, living, in fact, more normally and soberly than ever before; and accumulating funds for new social flights when spring should come.

The recovery began before the winter lost its grip. Three delicatessen stores and a beauty parlour had gone the way of Mme. Dolly's, but new ones came in their stead. The Dance Paradise was reopened. The Beach Hotel, whose main dining room had been sparsely filled for weeks, began to glow again.

And to the eye of Laurence Wayte, standing in the Beach lobby one of those winter evenings, the spectacle seemed as brilliant as ever. Laurence, on leave from his training camp near an Ohio city where the war was taken as a religion, was a bit shocked at Lakeside.

Yes, Laurence Wayte was disturbed; he who had once applauded giddiness, and indulged in it. He had just seen a lady cross the lobby carrying a poodle from whose left forepaw flashed a wrist watch; and through the dining-room door he caught glimpses of waiters conveying trays full of towering confections, not to speak of green and yellow drinks.

"Gad!" murmured Laurence. Then someone came up beside him, and he ceased to stare.

The someone was Bob Sweetling. They stood looking at each other's uniforms, not being sure exactly what rank those uniforms symbolized. But they shook hands, and it turned out that Bob was an ensign, and Laurence a partly fledged aviation lieutenant. Having established this, they sat down in a corner of the lobby where there were tables, to enjoy such refreshment as the regulations permitted.

Laurence's frank scrutiny of the costumes, the dancers visible through velvet curtains, and the gourmandizers at their left, could not escape Bob's attention.

"You feel like Original Ike from Centerville—I know," said Bob. "I do, too, after a few weeks without liberty."

"It wasn't that. It seems kind of funny, though, coming from a place like where I've been, to see just as many fussy clothes as ever, to hear just as much noise, nobody giving a rip——"

"Don't fool yourself about that," interrupted Bob. "They do care. There's hardly a person here, I'll bet, but has a relative in the service. And look at all the uniforms. They do care. But there's different ways of showing it. Lakeside powders and frivols in order to forget. Good a way as any."

Laurence looked rather wistfully toward the dancers. He would have danced himself, had he known anybody. But every face was unfamiliar.

"How long have you been here?" inquired Bob, lighting a cigarette.

"In the city? Just to-day. I'm going out to-

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night to Arlington Heights, where my wife is staying. And the kid." His eyes brightened.

A new group of arrivals swept in at the main entrance, swathed in winter cloaks, laughing.

Laurence examined each face in vain.

"Ever see any of the old crowd?" he could not forbear asking.

"Very seldom. The war smashed some of it to flinders; and the Fanning failure the rest."

Laurence's face betrayed entire ignorance of the Fanning failure, and much curiosity. But Bob pressed on.

"It seems like all that—all those old days—was a three-act comedy, don't it? And the curtain was rung down, and the play taken off, and the props sold for junk. That play'll never be put on again."

"But what about the Fanning failure?"

"You hadn't heard?" responded Bob, eagerly. "Well——"

And he rendered an account, sparing nothing. Bob did not even know what had become of the Fannings, except that, according to Fanny, they had dropped out of sight, and nobody cared.

"It didn't take long to lose even the Grand Mogul, Lakeside being what it is," he commented. Fanny had intended to look up Pauline, but hadn't got around to it. As for Lance, he was "safe in the army."

At this point Bob caught sight of a party just entering the hall, and his face changed.

"By George," he exclaimed. "They aren't all

dead, after all. That old lady there—it's Aunt Pringle. Holy smoke, she seems to have saved something from the wreck."

Laurence, following his glance, saw a stoutish and very animated lady with gray hair, enfolded in rich, bespangled garments, and carrying a cane. She advanced confidently into the lobby, followed by a flock of young people of both sexes. Half the people in the lobby stopped talking to watch her.

Bob waited until she came quite near him, then rose and stepped forward with his best "Butterfly Bob" smile. Aunt Pringle almost embraced him. She screamed a welcome into his ear, and shook his hands up and down.

"I knew you right away," she cried. "You're the same old Bob, in spite of that neat uniform, and the gold stripes. Well, how do I look? Tell me that, Bob Sweetling?"

"You look—miraculous," he replied, gallantly.

"Are we downhearted? No! Meet my friends."

A long string of unfamiliar names. Laurence was brought up and introduced. And then Aunt Pringle swept them all in to supper, which, she announced in no feeble tones, was "on her."

A little later, amid the hubbub of a hundred crowded tables, Bob managed to get her private ear for a few minutes. His curiosity had awakened. If this were the state of one Fanning, what of the others? When he hinted at this, Aunt Pringle gave him a rollicking wink.

"I don't go into family affairs with everybody,"

said she. "But—why am I here, instead of eating prunes and mush in some boarding house? That's what you want to know. Well—the right kind of a lawyer, my young friend. He pulled me out of the failure, considerably to the good. And that's all you need to know. It makes the Grand Mogul furious, poor dear; as furious as he can get over anything. He spends his time over a lot of musty ledgers, trying to prove he didn't fail, after all. You see, he got a super—I mean one of those things that keeps one out of jail. He's going to appeal, he says."

Out of this the picture of Barton Fanning alone stood out distinctly.

"Where are—er—Mr. and Mrs. Fanning living now?" Bob inquired, respectfully.

"With me," replied Aunt Pringle, grandly. She bestowed a powdery smile upon Laurence, who sat an elbow length away.

"It's rather like a melodrammer altogether. You see, they always looked on me as a sort of poor relation. Now things are turned about. When the dust cleared, and my lawyer and the receiver got through rowing, hanged if I didn't find myself the owner of a perfectly good flat building. Not the best—but good enough. Well, Barton and Mary, and, for that matter, Pauline, were simply nowhere. Not a place to lay their heads, as the proverb has it. So I set aside a little apartment for them. Very nice, too. Third floor, sun porch, everything quite complete. They keep house there."

She paused rather abruptly.

"Jove!" muttered Bob, in appalled tones. He was thinking about Pauline rather than the others.

"And Lance?" he ventured.

Aunt Pringle's face fell.

"Ah, that's sad," she said. "That's a sad case." And she was evidently at the end of her confidences, for she turned to her other guests, and proceeded to "speed up" the supper party.

An hour or so later the sole survivors of "the old crowd" fought their way down the boulevard together, breasting a stiff wind. Sparks from their cigarettes blew back over their shoulders. Their conversation was jerky.

The darksome reference to Lance was in the thoughts of both.

"He can't be dead," speculated Bob. "We've heard." Then the thought occurred to him, "She may have meant it's a shame he's in the army, when under the new draft he might be safe and sound in a deferred class."

Laurence delayed reply until they had reached the shelter of the Idler's Club.

"Way she spoke, I thought it was a private affair. Row, most likely. They all must be frightfully upset."

"You know it," replied Bob, sadly.

They pushed on in silence, muffling their ears. Presently they passed the Wiltshire. Bob gave it a mournful look.

"I used to go and call on Pauline in that building,

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long ago, before Lance came along. What if I'd married her? Gee!"

The wind prevented a rejoinder. The two companions struggled ahead, past tall and chill structures whose lights made feeble contest against the gloom.

"It's not the place it was," said Laurence. "I can see that. Not about here, anyhow. I wonder who owns the buildings the Grand Mogul used to own."

"Yes; the Fannington, for instance. Ah, there it is, the same old edifice, as Roy used to call it, towers and all. Adversity, a change of owners, hasn't changed the towers, or the medallions. By Hoke, I can almost imagine I'm coming home from a dance, with Fanny hanging to my arm, and she saying, 'I do hope the café is open, because I've got to have some French pastry and chocolate.'"

"All the lights going, same as ever," contributed Laurence.

In a moment they passed the huge apartment building, glancing curiously into the empty marble lobby. They noted a sign "Café closed." Otherwise the place seemed unchanged. Turning into Westmont Avenue, with "eyes left," they almost ran into a couple walking slowly and uncertainly ahead of them, a tallish young woman in a rough brown coat, and a man who appeared aged and forlorn. Their features could not be seen in the darkness. The sailor and the aviator swung around past them in rapid strides, and gave them no thought.

But as they were almost beyond earshot, the war-

rriors heard a voice raised in remonstrance. It was the young woman's voice, as she steered her companion into the entrance of a building Bob and Laurence had just passed.

"You mustn't do that again, father," said the voice. "It's too much trouble running after you every time——"

The door closed.

Bob ran back and peeped through the glass. Immediately he rejoined Laurence, and spoke breathlessly:

"It was Pauline," he said. "That was Pauline Happerth and her busted father. Pauline, queen of the Fannington. And now, by the great thunderin' Buddha, she's living in the Fannington Annex."

Pauline, unconscious of having elicited this horrified outburst, escorted her father heavily up the two flights of stairs, and landed him safely in the living room of their flat. She helped him take off his heavy wrappings, from which he emerged querulous and blue-nosed, and said over her shoulder to her mother:

"He had only gone about a block."

Father Fanning broke out with: "It's all stuff and nonsense. To say I shan't walk about——"

"Never mind," said Mrs. Fanning. "Here are all your papers. And I've fixed the light for you."

Diverted to this, he sat down at a desk, and was soon buried in documents; both those which went to prove, as Aunt Pringle said, that "he hadn't failed

at all," and others on which he depended to get a decision from the appellate court. He was his own lawyer now, all others having despaired of their reward. And between drawing up a brief (an illegible and rambling affair in which he took pride) and figuring future riches, he was quite happy.

As for Mrs. Fanning, she did the cooking in the kitchenette, read considerably, and was also fairly content.

Pauline alone felt an abiding sense of misery. And this was not because she had gone to work downtown—she was employed in a rather ornamental capacity in a dentist's office—nor altogether because she was forgotten socially, but because, with everything else, Lance had gone out of her life.

Indeed it was a "sad case!"

Since the trial—oh, before that, since the failure itself—Lance had seemed unaware of Pauline's existence. For many Saturday nights she had sat up expecting him to arrive for his furlough, as did everybody else's husband or brother. But he did not come. Worse still, he did not write to explain. She well knew that soldiers were given liberty every month, or oftener. Lance could not be so unlucky, or so insubordinate, as to be kept in camp week after week. There was no blinking the facts any more. He was through with her.

As she lay awake, listening to the discordant domestic symphony of the Annex, she would rack her memory, going over and over the disagreements of their married life; the little squabbles about Harrold

and about Ann Stone. Surely there was nothing there to merit this neglect. Those things seemed too petty, in view of the tremendous changes since, to account for it. Nor could she imagine Lance "dropping" her because she now lived, with her dreary and impoverished parents, "on the other side of the wall." He had always been rather partial to that side, she reflected.

On the whole, it seemed most probable that his education as a soldier, his induction into a vast, unfeeling machine, had changed him. This seemed partly confirmed one week-end when she met Fred Ames, and he told her that Lance was "one of the keenest soldiers at camp." He had been made a sergeant, said Fred, who added, "But of course you know that."

Pauline nodded and smiled. The smile cost her something, but it left Fred with a feeling that Pauline was bearing her troubles remarkably well.

She was bearing them nobly. There was a large and hitherto unused reserve of vitality in her that defied depression, so far as her demeanour (in the daytime, on week days) was concerned. She was a trifle thinner, but this was a gain. She wore old clothes skilfully altered with an air that made them like new. And since she would have perished rather than permit any one, even her father and mother, to suspect that she was tired and sad, she contrived to look invariably radiant and composed.

She went daily to work, enduring freezing "L" trains, frantic caf  terias, and the unwholesome folk

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who thronged the dentist's waiting room, remaining in every outward detail the Pauline Happerth of old.

But in several important respects she differed from that young lady altogether.

After the high-tide life of the last few years, after the shocks and terrors and humiliations of the autumn and winter, it was as though these three Fannings had come to a waiting time. They were halted. And what would come of it all? Imprisoned in five rooms, without a single acquaintance near at hand, visited almost never by a relative or friend, they felt as though nothing would ever happen to them again. Winter had cemented the lake into marble; winter had snowed in and crusted in their dwelling. And it seemed as though another sort of winter had encompassed their lives. To be stationary—that was something Pauline had always abhorred. She abhorred it now. She endured. And through a divination that had come to her these last months, when she tried so to understand things, the feeling came to her that none of this could last. . . .

An evening in March.

After dinner; dinner on a small square table, under a huge pinkish light that symbolized, as it were, the brilliance they had known.

Pauline is eating in silence, with a newspaper by her plate. Her mother complains, "You always keep the paper to yourself. Is there any news in it?"

"None of importance," replies Pauline.

"There scarcely ever is," says Father Fanning, wagging his head. "There scarcely ever is."

Mrs. Fanning sighs.

"Now," suddenly declares the former banker, "if I prove that Reeker——"

He continues on his hobby until Pauline leaves the table.

This sort of thing, day after day.

And then there is all the plaguey business of a flat building. There are the odious encounters with strange women on the back porch, in the laundry. The visits of salespeople. Peculiarities of the agent.

Somewhere, every night, Pauline can hear through her window, opening on the court, a man coughing, coughing. And there is said to be a child with typhoid in Flat 33.

One day there is a funeral. A coffin is carried with difficulty down the stairs, bumping against the wall.

There is a mad musician on the fourth floor; on the first floor a doctor who, it is said, vivisects guinea pigs. There are several families suspiciously brilliant.

This is life "on the other side of the wall."

It either drives one mad, or it makes one patient sadly patient, and capable of enduring worse.

There is sure to be something worse.

CHAPTER X

PAULINE was on the way home on the elevated, alone.

An evening paper lay in her lap, covered with headlines about the great German drive, and about the long-range gun that killed people in churches. But her thoughts had gone far astray from the war. She was idly watching the people in the car, more especially the younger working women, who knitted, or giggled, or read novels. Beside them she felt old, experienced, and lonely.

Her thoughts were divided between these children of the workshop or the office and the friendships she had had. Also the friendship she no longer had. That day she had met May Harrold, who had announced that the last legal evidences of her quarrel with Alfred had been erased; the case dropped. "Because he's in the army," said May, proudly. Even May Harrold, thought Pauline bitterly, was better off than she. Marcelline Meredith, hearing frequently from Roy—even though his letters contained only pleas for money—was better off. And so was Fanny Sweetling. So was—why, so was little Ann Stone, no doubt, wherever she might be.

Pauline's reverie continued to dwell upon Ann Stone. The last time she had seen her was away back

at the trial of Barton Fanning, when Ann had made a very bad witness for the prosecution. Yet Pauline had chosen to pretend that Ann liked to testify, and had done all the harm she could. And she had snubbed her in the hall of the courthouse. She had always snubbed her, for some reason.

She got off at the Lakeside station, and walked swiftly the few blocks home. She usually walked home swiftly, yet ahead of her always raced her premonitions of what might have happened. For she had felt of late that, with both her father and her mother, matters were coming to a crisis.

This time nothing had happened—except callers. Mrs. Fanning met Pauline at the door, and told her in a whisper. The callers were inside. They had come to look at the flat.

“To look at the flat!” Pauline repeated, hotly.

But before she had time to develop the suspicion that Aunt Pringle meant to “bounce” them, she found herself facing a familiar figure.

It was Ann Stone, who had risen to meet her, and looked amiable and unobtrusive.

“I don’t wonder you think it strange, Mrs. Hap-
perth,” said Ann. “We were just looking around,
and the agent had us come here. We had no idea—
I’m sure he doesn’t mean to rent this one——”

The other half of the “we” turned out to be Sally
Crowe, a soberly clad and most genteel Sally.

Now Pauline might have said, “I was just thinking
about you on the ‘L.’ How odd!” Or she might
have buried her prejudices even more, and greeted

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Ann with a cordial handshake. But she was taken too much by surprise. Her old hostility was for the moment uppermost, and she delivered a cold nod, while peeling off her gloves.

In the next breath she was ashamed of herself. The little creature looked so much hurt. And Mother Fanning was so evidently glad to have someone "drop in."

"Won't you take off your things?" said Pauline, almost with friendliness.

"We mustn't," Ann replied. She pulled Sally forward. "I don't know whether you've met my friend——"

"Oh, yes, I remember Mrs. Crowe."

"I hope you don't think——" Ann began; but she changed the sentence to, "We were sent here. Really, we hadn't the least idea you lived here."

It was a difficult conversation, and Ann was making little headway. But the situation was saved, in a sense, by the appearance of Father Fanning. He came shuffling in, and stared at the visitors. Apparently he had no recognition of either. He ponderously shook hands; then sighed, and sat down on the lounge.

If Ann had ever felt bitterness over his bargain with her, the sight of him at this pass would have been enough to bring compassion instead.

Her eyes filled with tears, and she looked at Pauline, but could not speak.

Sally spoke up, "I think we had better look at one of the other flats."

"Perhaps we had," returned Ann, controlling herself. "We've been living all over Lakeside," she added to Mrs. Fanning, "and we thought we would—come home."

They moved to go. And as Sally stepped forward something flashed on her breast. Pauline, looking close, saw that it was a gold star.

Her expression changed slowly from politeness to compassion.

She remembered now, bit by bit, the story of Dick Crowe, of the bad check—everything. So this was the sequel!

"Your husband?" she asked, softly.

"Yes," replied Sally.

"I'm so sorry," murmured Pauline. "You must sit down and tell me about it."

Dinner was waiting for Pauline, but none of them thought of that. They sat down, and the story was told by Ann.

There was really little enough they knew. The telegram had said "killed in action."

"He was one of the first," put in Sally, proudly.

And there had been a letter from Dick, sent weeks before, saying he was in the front line, and busy. And he wanted some home papers. And he had a fine job repairing telephone wires. The captain had warned him to take no chances.

"Which didn't go down with Dick, of course," commented Sally.

They were silent before the mystery, the inexplicable mystery and dreadfulness of Dick's end.

"That's the way they go," said Mrs. Fanning; while her husband, sitting on the lounge, wagged his head like a child. "One by one, like leaves."

Fanning got up and left the room.

"He doesn't like to hear about the war," said his wife. "I don't tell him about Lance—or about Tom."

They followed the old man out with a composite look of sympathy and concern.

"Yes, they'll be going over some day," sighed Mrs. Fanning.

Ann's remark was involuntary.

"In less than two months," she said.

"Do you mean it?" said Pauline, startled.

Ann saw too late that she had brought news to a place where news was poison.

Mrs. Fanning had risen.

"Tom going to France?" she quavered. "Less than two months?"

Ann became pale, then blushed.

"I supposed you knew," was all she could say. Her small face was literally withered with distress.

"They don't mean anybody to know," she blundered on. "It's a secret—a military secret."

"Then how do you——" Pauline began. But she was stopped by something that happened to her mother.

Mrs. Fanning, who had not mentioned Tom during all the quiet and confidential evenings of the winter, who had clung to that much of her pride, gave an odd clucking noise in her throat, and without other warn-

ing, fell with a crash on the rug at their feet. She lay with her heavy body inert, her face turned away from them.

The three women shrieked, and knelt down beside her. Then Father Fanning crept in from the dining room.

"That was a strange thing," he muttered, "a very strange thing for her to do."

And, considering all that had passed in the Fanning family, considering that Mrs. Fanning had contended for years she had no son, it was indeed a very strange thing.

So here was the "something worse" that lay in wait; the very worst, in some ways, that could befall. To the burden impersonated in Father Fanning was now added the tragedy of Mother Fanning, whose life was not ready to depart, but who lay on a bed day after day, smiling pitifully and promising she would "surely get up to-morrow."

Pauline faced impossible alternatives. If she kept her position downtown, who would look after her mother? And if she stayed at home, how would she earn enough for the expenses? There were already medicines to pay for; the doctor. There was an infinitude of expense in sight, and no regular income, except the monthly allotment of Lance's pay—a trifle.

She was in the last ditch, and nobody knew. Nobody could understand.

Aunt Pringle came to see her.

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"Hire a nurse, of course," said Aunt Pringle. "Hire anything you need."

But she did not say she would pay for the nurse, or the other things. There was nobody who would pay for them; no one even to advise. Oh, if only Aunt Augustine were at hand! But the Augustines, uprooted by the quarrel in the Little Stone Church, had moved five hundred miles away. And the others—the old friends? Who was there that was not too frivolous, or too mean? As she thought it out, Pauline realized luminously that Lakeside was no place to be poor in.

There is a certain ghastliness about being destitute in a "high-class apartment building." In the country, where isolation is inevitable, and where neighbours are precious because they are few, society holds together somehow. Among the tenements it holds together by force of mutual suffering and understanding. It is far more dreadful to be "at the end of one's rope" in a building full of imitation grandeur, and quacking phonographs, and people who don't care. The Fannington Annex held, for the most part, tenants who, like the Crowes when we first knew them, spent their days envying the Fanningtonites around the corner. The Fannington now had a new owner, and a new "crowd," louder and less innocent than of old. It was on the way downhill, that building, to disgrace and frowsiness. And the Annex was going with it. Pauline could have nothing in common with the male vultures and feminine freaks who dwelt all about. And they knew her only as a "has-

been," the daughter of a man who at one time, they understood—they were so new they did not know whether it was months or years before—had owned a bank.

Separated from this Noah's ark of transient, feather-brained human creatures only by floors and walls Pauline made her solitary fight. The dentist's office saw her no more. She was nurse and house-keeper. Myriad small and disagreeable tasks occupied her. And her father, in the restless hours when his papers did not amuse him, was a continual source of anxiety. He had "business appointments" to meet. Sometimes she kept him in the house by threats, almost by force. And she had to endure his maunderings about future riches, and his fib, no longer believed by any one, that he "Had a nice little bank account somewhere, if he could only find it."

When she looked in the mirror, after two weeks of this, she saw a face on which, at last, distress had made some impression. Her bloom, she thought, had gone forever. She was old and plain. And there was this much truth about it: That face was not the face of the legendary Pauline. But it retained the stubborn Fanning chin that would not be beaten.

And Aunt Pringle said:

"Child, you can't go on like this. I wish I could afford to help you, but—you know how I'm fixed. It's no joke being a landlord these days. Wish I wasn't. And I've promised to go to the Springs next week——"

"Don't trouble yourself about me."

"But you can't go on like this."

"I can go on till I can't go on any longer, I suppose."

"Have you written to Tom? Have you written to—Lance?"

"No. What could they do?"

Aunt Pringle looked narrowly at her.

"You're almost too proud to live," said the old lady. "What if you should get sick? I see the lot of you being carted off to different hospitals, at the county's expense. That would make a fine story for the papers, wouldn't it?"

"The papers!" exclaimed Pauline with scorn. "Is there any more harm they can do to the Fannings? I don't care a straw for them, or anybody. Tom! Suppose I should write to him. He would come bustling in here, and upset everything. And most likely he would begin 'I told you so, Polly.' This family was built wrong somehow, Aunt Pringle. It—we weren't made to stay. There are lots of people like that. I never knew any other kind."

Aunt Pringle rose hastily. Generalizations always put her out of countenance.

"You're morbid," she said. "I read some Ibsen once, and they all talked like that. You're foolish to leave Lance in ignorance of all this. Ah, don't flare up! I don't know what's wrong between you two, and I'm not silly enough to poke into the mess. But if you were to have just one good talk——"

Pauline confronted her with a white-hot face.

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"It's none of your business," she burst out. "People of your age think those things can be fixed up like they are in novels."

Aunt Pringle gasped.

"Are you crazy to talk to me like that?" she stammered.

"This isn't a thing you can understand," continued Pauline. "Neither you nor any one else in Lakeside can understand it. I'm not a May Harrold, with things on and off. Let me alone! You've about driven me crazy with your interfering."

The old lady arranged her scarf about her bedizened neck, and stared her up and down.

"To be talked to like that—in my own building! I'll not give you another opportunity."

After she had strutted out, Pauline walked to the window and stood there, with every muscle rigid. There was nothing to look at save the impassive front of another apartment building across the street. It was full of strangers. The Annex was full of strangers. The Fanny Sweetlings, the May Harrolds, the Marcelline Merediths—they were gone, and good riddance! There was nobody left at all. The whole fabric of Pauline's former friendships and relationships was gone.

There was nothing that was built to stay.

CHAPTER XI

IN A city not over sixty miles away, a new city of brown wooden buildings and earthen streets, swarming with men all dressed alike, a city without women—that was where things were being “built to stay.”

The camp itself was a transient thing. The buildings were frankly constructed only for this emergency. As for the men, they were only stopping there as at a half-way house on the road to pain or glory. Before long even that phase of their lives would be past, and they would return to pursuits half yearned for, and half despised. So it was not the camp, nor even the military organization, that was built to last.

Deeper things than those. . . .

Lance Happerth sat on a log, in his haunt at the bend of the little river, writing a letter to Fred Westcott, correspondent, A. E. F., Hotel Meung, M——, France.

April warmth had made the haunt again endurable. Lance liked to write there, alone. There were friends of his making soft, untranslatable noises in the bushes; little friends too queer and shy to talk to, and who never came to look over his shoulder at what he wrote:

"MY DEAR FREDDY:

"I happened to get hold of your address the other day through Stub McCord. It's a dandy fine address. I wish it was mine.

"I am in camp here with the ——division, expecting orders to move almost any time.

"‘And how do you like it?’ asks Freddy. I can see your impertinent grin all this distance. ‘How do you like it?’ jeers Freddy, thinking about the Lance that was. I refuse to answer in so many words. What do you mean, like it? Who cares about that?”

Having written this much, Lance sat gazing into the thicket for some time, with his paper idle on his knee, and his feet dangling over the little stream. Then he scribbled further:

"The trouble with me always was that before I did anything I stood off for a while to see how I liked it. Well, the system that brought me here didn't stop to ask me. It just yanked me right out of my precious little existence, where I was ‘completely surrounded by sofa pillows,’ as you once said, and took me by the pants and threw me here. It—the system I'm referring to—knows how to deal with Lance Happerths. It eats 'em alive.

"Now?

"Well, I can lick all but one fellow in my squad in a boxing bout, and I don't have any trouble getting up an appetite for meals. And I've got a lot of

friends who aren't pretty, wouldn't cut much of a figure at the Beach, but who are men I've dug ditches with, and slept beside while the snow whirled through the ventilators, and who will always be friends of mine. We all hated the army together, and we have had our spells of funking the job, and now we're all cured. And we're going over together to do the bloodiest and dirtiest rotten work men can do; but with them——

"Fred, you may laugh, but I wouldn't miss it for worlds. When I read about the torments of those other men over there, I feel *I've got to help*——"

He had just written these words, with a pencil that bit deep, when he became aware of a form thrashing through the bushes toward him. He stuffed the letter hastily into his pocket; for those were sacred words; or not so much sacred as taboo. Nobody was supposed to write things like that; but nearly everybody did.

The newcomer was Tom Fanning. And his errand appeared to be urgent, judging by his haste, and his frown.

"I've been hunting you all over camp," he said. "I've got a letter here; more your business than mine."

In his agitation he had not noticed whether Lance saluted. The latter did so, with a smile, and Tom responded impatiently. He thrust a crinkled sheet of paper into Lance's hand.

"Letters," said the recipient, lazily, "have been

the ruin of me. Who is the writer of this one?" He flopped over the page. "Ah—Aunt Pringle. I should have thought that dear old soul was dead by now; of sugar-poisoning."

He perused the letter, smiling at one or two passages, but in the main gravely. Then he handed it back, remarking, "I see."

Tom regarded him steadily. They had met once or twice during the winter, and on better terms than at first, but were still far from being spiritual brothers.

"Well," said Tom. "What I hope you see is that something will have to be done quick. I don't see how you could sit here and let Pauline's affairs get into that state; at least, without telling me about it."

"I couldn't tell you what I didn't know," replied Lance calmly.

"They hadn't written you about it?"

"Not a word."

Tom sat down bumpily on the log and muttered, "Well, you're a devil of a husband."

"So is Pauline a devil of a wife," flashed back Lance. "A devil of a lot we're married. And a devil of a lot I care."

Fanning frowned at him incredulously. He was so upset about Pauline he had come there determined to "make Lance sweat," and for a moment he was tempted to speak his mind about the estrangement, blaming Lance, of course. Then he repressed the thought. Knowing Pauline, he thought possibly the trouble had been born of some folly on her part. He was not as hasty as he had once been.

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"Well," he contrived to say, with gruff reserve, "whatever the quarrel may be, I should think you ought to go down there and see to things. I can't, just now. I get busier every minute."

"See to things? That's a good one. I suppose I can solve the whole future of the Fannings on a twelve-hour furlough, can I?"

His imagination busied itself with the problem for a few silent moments. The picture was distressing enough! At the thought of Pauline in a struggle like that he felt certain pangs, which he concealed carefully from his companion.

"No, but look here!" exclaimed Tom. "You can't leave things as they are. Surely your pride won't let you permit a—a person not a member of the family to wear herself out, even if you have no sympathy for Pauline."

"That's another mystery," said Lance.

"Ah, you missed it, then. Look over on the back. It's only a line."

Lance looked, and read:

"Ann Stone is here most of the time, God bless her!"

He read it twice, and once more returned the letter to its owner, with the words:

"That little girl seems bound to be the salvation of somebody."

He began to scramble off the log.

"A downright unselfish and unassuming bit of humanity. How did she ever drop into Lakeside?"

Tom had asked that question of himself once—or

more than once. He sat down now without answering it. His big shoulders had a forlorn droop.

Lance noticed this, and his lips twitched.

"Don't worry," he said. "I'll go down there, and chase her home—or whatever you say."

"I've got nothing at all to say," replied Tom, irritably. He swung himself off the log and stood up. A bugle call came just then, meltingly, across the fields.

"What do you think about going over?" inquired Tom, by way of a change of subject.

"I don't think," answered Lance, belying his letter to Freddy.

"I'll tell you how I feel about it. Sometimes I'm half drunk with anticipation, and sometimes I'm damn scared."

Lance put out his hand.

"Myself precisely," he grinned. "Shake on it. You see I'm ^{able} now to shake hands even with officers—even Fannings."

It was May, and the last of May at that, before Lance was able to go home. This for several reasons, one of them being a false report of mobilization, that kept delaying his furlough. Meantime he was on the point several times of writing to Pauline, but he never did. He was afraid his pen might run away with him; that his ghostly—and ghastly—suspicions about Harrold would creep in. He did not want to write about that subject. He did not want to talk about it, either. He was half eager to

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see Pauline, and half dreading it; and this war within himself made him toss upon his bunk o' nights, so that the other fellows threw things at him, and urged him to "take a walk."

When finally he received the coveted pass to leave camp, he found eagerness had almost conquered dread. Perhaps the subject of Harrold would not come up at all. He could show a dutiful interest in affairs at the Fannington Annex, scout about for some solution, and let quarrels rest.

But that would leave things as miserably uncertain, himself as wretchedly half-married, as now. He did not like that, either. It was a puzzle.

Fred Ames was "going in" that same Saturday, and they rode together. He found Lance very taciturn. News had just come of the American capture of Cantigny, and the car was bubbling with this news—speculation about "The Rainbows," talk about the strategy. There were no details. Many persons besides Fred asked Lance what he thought, but he would not be drawn into the discussion. He sat watching the fields slide by, as he had on that other ride to town. Fred, aware of the Fanning tragedy, refrained from bothering him. Only once he said, without preface, "It may not turn out as bad as you think." And Lance gave gloomy response, "On the other hand, it may turn out ten times worse."

Arrived in the city, Fred mentioned a dinner engagement with his mother, so they parted under a great clock bulging out from a department store

corner, and Lance stood alone. Presently a motor-bus came lumbering along the street, thrusting its big shoulders above trucks and street cars like a circus giant among ordinary folk. The solitary soldier decided to board this bus, for the novelty. So he squeezed his way to the low step, and mounted the winding stairs to the top.

There, in a rear seat, he sat enjoying the sweeping view down "the street more marvellous than Piccadilly." He discovered the unfamiliar tops of buildings, noting for the first time classic cornices that did no good up there; the careful individualism of structures that, on the street level, appeared alike. The street roared with delight; with bursts of advertising, with patriotic poster-appeals, with flags, with revolving or kaleidoscopic arrays of lights. And above all stretched the pure sky, still meltingly blue, although it was nearly seven by the "new time," but beginning to be touched by a vague prevision of twilight. On the sidewalks people strolled languidly, for it was very warm. Sometimes the City of Deadly Ambitions foregoes spring, and plunges from winter into summer.

The bus clambered into a side street, and by this avenue reached Michigan Boulevard, along which it sped with a hum of engines. The view was now a lakeward view, comprising a strip of grayish grass beyond which locomotives puffed and freight cars clanked; while still farther east, the lake itself brooded, a pool of silver. A gunboat swung to anchor there, a battered thing now used as a train-

ing ship. Lance surveyed it lazily. It made him think of Bob Sweetling, and of letters, and so of Alfred Harrold.

Why did he always come back to that? He shook it out of himself, determined to enjoy the ride.

The last ride of the kind he might ever take. Think of that! All this was like a farewell. The stores, the ancient shuttered mansions past which the bus now growled and swayed, fell back into memory, like film. There were people on the streets, people idling on benches, who fancied all this was permanent. This was home to them, and because they lived there they thought it would last. But Lance knew—he knew it was all a dream—only a bit of scenery.

Dreamlike, too, was Lincoln Park, with its young, aspiring leafage, its long bridle-paths, its lagoons, where scores of pleasure-boats lay eternally at anchor. Dreamlike, the infinite curving avenue ahead; the patches of vacant land remaining between tall hotels. In some of these open lots, now that evening was falling, little camp-fires were lit for picnickers. Their flames were mirrored in the plate glass windows of houses across the street. And in somebody's porch dining room, far above in one of the apartment houses, there was a dinner party, whose laughter came down in faint treble.

The western sky was turning Prussian blue. Bathers—first of the year—flitted in front of the bus. They ran into the dusk with a flash of white ankles.

And Lance thought:

"I'll never see all this again. I'll never again be where people have nothing heavy and solemn to do. I'll be over in France in a couple of months, in France with its piles of ruined houses, and its weeping women, and sweating men. . . ."

The amber-coloured Beach Hotel, with its jutting wings, suddenly loomed in the path of the bus, and he flung aside these thoughts for the ordeal with Pauline.

It was half after seven. At this hour Pauline would have got her mother to bed, and she and Ann—assuming that Ann still held on—would be doing the dishes. He pictured them having fun over it. For he could not imagine either of them overworked and morose. And yet—Pauline washing dishes in the Annex! The notion was half comic, half appalling.

He decided to wait a little before making his appearance. Pauline would scarcely care to greet him, wiping red hands in her apron. So he abated his pace. Perhaps he would stroll about a bit, and see how old Lakeside looked. A band was playing somewhere. It came to meet him, and turned into a parade, including a company of volunteer militia, and a group of Boy Scouts, carrying banners inscribed "Buy War Savings Stamps," and "Buy at home. Boost the Lakeside average."

Lance stood and watched the procession out of sight, even to its trail of boys on bicycles. And he noted faults in the alignment of the militia. A

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twisted smile was on his face, but it was not altogether for the militia. He was noting also service flags in windows, and Liberty Loan emblems, while at one side of the horizon bleached parasites in limousines rolled along the Drive, and at the other the Dance Paradise blazed with its Saturday night glory.

Lakeside!

CHAPTER XII

HE GLANCED at his wrist watch. It was nearly eight o'clock. The dishes must be "done" by now, and the girls would be making plans for the evening; or Pauline would be manicuring her nails. He wondered what sort of picture she made, with a background of Annex wallpaper. Perhaps this would only heighten her charm.

A few minutes' walk brought him to the Fannington, upon which he bestowed a sour glance. Once he had called *That* a home! He turned the corner, and went into the Annex entrance, feeling partly like an explorer, partly like a man about to face court-martial. It was at hand, this meeting with Pauline that might "make or break." And he did not know which flat she lived in. He had to examine all the cards neatly framed over the electric bells.

"J. Melville Rossiter." "Paul Chesit, professor of languages." "Francis Elliott McDougal."

All strangers.

Then at last: "Barton Fanning." A frayed card, with bedimmed type—the only thing that still testified Barton Fanning had an identity.

He pressed that bell, the door-latch clicked—they must be expecting guests—and Lance went up the stairs.

A door stood open when he reached the third landing, and someone was peering out. Light from within was flooding her hair. It was Pauline, of course. She looked happy and expectant. As Lance came into view, her eyes widened, she almost smiled—but failed.

“Ah, it’s you,” she murmured.

“Yes.”

Their eyes met. They were both anxious, but determined not to seem so.

“Well,” he said, after a second, “may I come in?”

“Certainly you may.”

Her only sign of agitation, as she turned, was that she dropped her handkerchief, and did not notice it. He picked it up, and as he handed it to her, their fingers touched. A pang of some sort assailed him. He swore at it as he followed her.

Scarcely had they passed the threshold when an explosion of laughter came from the dining room. At this point he perceived that every light in the place was turned on, that there were flowers all about—a whole box of them spilling its contents on to the davenport—and that a violently new suitcase stood by the door. He was in the midst of mysteries, and he, a lonely soldier without a home, would have fled from this complexity that was his wife’s; but it was too late. The people in the dining room had seen him, and now he saw them.

First he saw Mother Fanning, bolstered up in a rocking-chair a little apart from the table, and looking blanched, but faintly animated. And then he

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saw Tom, enormous in his uniform. Beside him sat Aunt Pringle, her falsely auburn hair illumined by the big pink table-light. Finally, in a gray gown far more stylish than anything she was ever known to wear, and with her diminutive face flushed with smiles, behold Ann Stone—a suddenly recreated and important Ann, sitting here among what was left of the Fannings, and, it would seem, dominating them.

At the same moment that Tom began to rise, and the others to utter fragments of welcome and surprise, it flashed upon Lance what this all meant. He had time to notice an empty chair, with a disordered napkin on the table in front of it, that presumably belonged to Barton Fanning; but he had no time to wonder where the man had gone.

"I imagine," he said, in the tone of a polite stranger, "that there's to be a wedding."

"There's been one," cried Aunt Pringle. "You're too late."

"So I see," returned Lance, curtly.

There was an uncomfortable moment, while they all gazed at him, wondering what they could say. Then Ann broke out,

"Oh, Mr. Happerth, I'm so awfully sorry you weren't here!"

He was pale with the effort not to seem upset.

"I don't suppose I should expect to be invited," said he. "Why should I?" He was most careful not to glance at Pauline as he said this.

Now Tom got up, napkin in hand.

"You needn't take it so hard, Lance," he said

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quietly. "This was a hurry-up wedding, if there ever was one. Not till four o'clock this afternoon did I know"—he reddened a little—"I mean, it was awfully short notice——"

Aunt Pringle giggled.

Tom glanced furtively at Ann, and continued:

"I had a furlough to-day; the first for weeks, and maybe my last. Any day may be the day, you know, Lance. And I had to settle this—I just went to the bank, and took Ann away from there. We were married at five by an old preacher friend of mine. None of the family knew. I couldn't stand it with a crowd, you know."

Ann was looking at her plate, between laughter and tears. Aunt Pringle put in:

"It's no more a slap at you than at the rest of us."

"There wouldn't have been time to get you down from the camp, anyhow," went on Tom, persuasively, and eyeing alternately Lance's darkening face and Pauline's rigid one. "I tell you it was sudden; just an impulse—no, I don't mean that——"

Then Ann exploded into laughter—or something—and buried her face in her napkin.

"So," Tom ended, with sudden rage, "if you want to get sore, you can just get sore!"

And he sat down.

Lance started to put on his hat; then took it off again.

"It doesn't matter," he said, with a huskiness that made him hate himself. "I scarcely belong

to the family any more. It doesn't matter. All this——"

Pauline moved as though to speak, but set her lips together stubbornly, and remained as she had been, with eyes cast down, her hand upon a chair-back.

"Oh, children——" began Mrs. Fanning, quaveringly, from her place by the window. Pauline went to her instantly, smoothed her hair back from her forehead, and said, "You'd better let me put you to bed, Mother." She paid no attention to Lance, though he was moving toward the door. He was just a dragging torment; a puzzle she could not solve. Fortunately, she had duties.

"Where did father go?" she inquired.

"He went out only a minute ago," said Tom. "He's all right," he insisted, grumpily. Lance had spoiled the wedding supper, confound him!

Lance was at the door, but could not seem to go. He was quivering on the verge of throwing off his proud sulks entirely. Then he glanced at Pauline's back, bent over her mother, and he fancied it to be uncompromising, indifferent. His eyes rested hungrily upon the little group an instant; the next, he was actually out of the dining-room door. Just then he heard a cautious click of the latch out in the hall. Like someone coming in. He waited a moment, but no one entered.

He put his head back into the dining room, and said, in Pauline's general direction, "You were expecting someone else?"

She looked up, with miserable hot eyes, and re-

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plied in a tone he never forgot (after he came to understand it),

"I was hoping, not expecting; hoping for the same person I've waited for for months."

Lance withdrew his head. So she had confessed! He went out through the living room, with its scent of flowers, into the hall, and down the silent stairs.

Emerging upon the street, he said to himself, "That ends it."

He had ended "it" many times before in his mind. But this closing of his heart was real. The words had practically been spoken. And in the meantime Tom and Ann were just starting out. Well, they would be happy . . . They had the elements of happiness and trust within them.

It must have been a weird spectacle when Tom proposed. But what matter? Just so they had love waiting to be consummated, and no villainous interferences. . . .

Lance was at the corner now, and just ahead of him, now visible under a street light, now a dim shape in the half-dark, was a man walking rapidly, with bowed head. He was going east, whither Lance was bound (as much as he was bound anywhere) and kept on ahead about at Lance's pace. Lance was not thinking about him, but he noticed, while his mind went on brokenly and sadly on other matters, that the man walked faster as he neared the lake. He proceeded in hurried shuffles, with his hat crushed down, and his collar up. An odd figure, on the whole.

Not a leisurely Lakeside person at all. He passed, as Lance did, many leisurely Lakeside persons, but ignored them.

As this figure reached the Drive, where there was a torchlight parade of street lamps, it became more distinct. The man paused, and turned his face half about.

And Lance's sharp eyes, from a quarter of a block away, recognized him as Father Fanning.

Now Lance had not gained from Aunt Pringle's letter a very definite idea that Father Fanning was not permitted abroad. He saw nothing especially odd—that is, his reason did not—in the fact that the former banker was out for a stroll. But an instinct that awoke mysteriously made him pause, and turn, and look after the old man with wonder.

He was in an astonishing hurry, that was clear. He forged ahead with his coat tails flying, like a sort of caricature of Barton Fanning in a hurry. What could make him so furiously alive?

Lance hesitated a moment, and then followed.

"I'll run up and clap him on the back and say, 'Here I am; just in time to take you home again,'" he thought. For he began to doubt more and more whether Fanning had any business anywhere except home. Then he thought, "No, I won't. I'll snoop along, and see where he goes. Maybe he thinks he's got a date at the Beach. Maybe I can keep him from making an ass of himself."

The fugitive did turn up the boulevard toward the hotel, but he kept on beyond it, past the tennis courts

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and the latticed tunnel that led to an open-air theatre, and arrived at a path leading down to the lake. There he halted.

Lance also stopped, about a hundred feet behind.

"He's just wandering around; snuffing the evening air," mused the pursuer.

The pursued, however, as though he had overheard, started down the path. He went less rapidly now, in the greater darkness, but there was light enough from the diadem crowning the hotel to reveal that he had cast away his hat. His head was a white, bobbing glimmer.

Straight down the path, across the sands, and to the ripples themselves, he marched without pause. At the water's edge he halted. Lance watched, his pulse quickening a little.

Then the old man half wheeled, climbed with desperate energy the three steps leading up to the pier, and started out along the concrete floor.

Suddenly the idea flashed with certainty into Lance's mind, "He's going out there to jump in." A sort of panic, a buzz of voices in his brain, in which the certainty strove with "No, no, it can't be true," seized him. He began to run. But Father Fanning had accomplished many strides. He was now a hundred feet out on the pier; barely visible in the dark.

Lance leaped up the three steps, and ran swiftly out along the concrete. His heart was thumping painfully. His own hat had fallen off. And he thought, "If I get there—if I get there——"

Father Fanning stood erect on the edge of the pier. He faced the bespangled curve of the shore, the hotel and all its tributaries; the apartment buildings, with their jewelled lights, every twinkle of which meant a household. It was here Father Fanning had chosen to die, with the music of the hotel in his ears, and with all Lakeside, once his vassalage, like a milky way before his eyes.

He mumbled something, and swayed. Just then Lance caught him by the arm.

"Here! here!" he heard himself saying, foolishly. He tried to jerk the old man, now desperately struggling, away from the edge.

Then the lights from shore, and the impassive stars, described a quaint and terrible curve before Lance's vision, and he and Father Fanning fell together into the dark water.

.

He awoke in a room. It was a small room, and not one he knew. Yet he felt, vaguely, at home.

A great weight had gone from him. He had dreamed that a very heavy man—or perhaps it was an elephant—was sitting on his chest and head. This creature was no more. But he was very weak; oh, unconscionably weak. The task of opening his eyes was enormous. He closed them.

In a few minutes a new stirring of energy awoke in him, a new curiosity. His drowsy eyes, under their long lashes, rested upon an electric light, shaded

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rudely by a newspaper. A queer way to ornament an electric light.

The rustling of a dress . . . Someone was sitting there, concealed from him by the footboard of the bed.

It was all very strange. . . .

A long interval, and he moved a foot under the bedclothes. At this the person sitting beyond there rose and came toward him. It was Pauline.

She walked around to the bedside, and stood looking at him. She wore a long waistless garment of blue, with lace at the throat. The light fell very softly on her cheek. She came nearer, and he would have held out his arms to her, but for some reason he could not move them, though he felt no pain. He was not surprised that she did not speak. It did not seem necessary that she should. People do not speak in dreams—not always.

Suddenly his mind cleared, and he remembered leaving the camp, coming up on the bus, and worrying. Worrying about what?

No matter. There was nothing to trouble him in this silent room, which smelled of a strange odour, like the base hospital, but which was altogether comforting. He wanted to lie there indefinitely, and to have Pauline there. The presence of a woman; that was, after all, something. . . .

She said—and her voice was like a soft, distant bell, he thought—"Do you feel better?"

He managed to stretch out a hand, and she laid



His eyelids closed again . . .
on his third revival Pauline
was beside him, holding
something for him to drink

upon it a soft palm whose touch almost brought tears to his eyes. Her face was soft, too; soft and saddened. He struggled to remember when he had seen it like that before.

Then he made an effort to sit up. The nightmare was coming back. He was again in the water, fighting. Fighting, with that weight upon his breast, and wet lights dancing in his eyes.

Pauline laid him back on the pillows, and breathed, "Yes, yes; it's all right."

"Did he—what became of——"

"It's all right, I tell you. Keep quiet, dear."

He looked up into her eyes with a steady question that she had no trouble in reading. And she made answer to it—but looking away as she spoke—"You saved him, Lance; yes."

His eyelids closed again, and he swam away somewhere. On his third revival Pauline was sitting beside him, holding something for him to drink.

"What day is it?" he begged.

"What day? Why, it's only midnight, dear. It's the same day."

He drank, with his dark eyes looking at her over the rim of the glass. He was lapped in deep comfort. Some great worry—not the worry about Father Fanning—was gone from his mind.

"Come close to me, Polly—closer."

She bent over him. Their lips met.

"I've always loved you," he murmured. "Always."

He slept again.

CHAPTER XIII

A FEW days later Lance sat by a window in the living room; a window flooded with sunlight and admitting the familiar tootings and tinklings of Westmont Avenue. He was dressed in an old bathrobe, saved from the vanished splendours of the Fannington.

He looked very much himself—very much his old self—as he sat there, fingering an old pipe that had also survived. Some of his tan had faded. His hair had outgrown the camp restrictions, and again curled beside his forehead. Indeed, it would have been easy to fancy that he had never been drafted, never had been “made over,” that he was the same old idler in his wife’s dainty nest, instead of being a valiant and eager member of the 344th. But his thoughts, had they been uttered, would have shown that he was impatient of this idleness, this ease. He was hoping he could go back to camp that very night; or at least the next night.

Withal, Lance was grave. He did not hear the tootings and tinklings from the street. The things he had learned since they let him sit up had impressed him anew with the mysterious, ironic phases of life.

Father Fanning was dead. He had lived only a

few minutes after Lance saved him. He was buried. The sturdy figure, with iron-gray hair and rosy complexion, that Lance had first almost feared, then despised, then come to regard with an idle and cynical affection, was through living. It had done no good to plunge into the water after him. Or had it done good? Had it been any use to any one that Lance risked his life? And how had he come to do anything so headlong, so self-forgetful? He was surprised at himself. Mysterious; ironic! It was tangled somehow with the inexplicable things of these last days.

The week's illness had left him full of puzzling thoughts and memories. He had lain there in bed, flitting in and out of consciousness, while people like shadows visited him or avoided him, while voices murmured, doors banged, dishes clinked; a multitude of human sounds floated in from the court, the back porches, the alley. Pauline had been much with him; occasionally Ann. No other visitors, except a man with a brown beard, who was always fitting tube-like things to his chest and listening. In his visionary moments Lance had fancied that this physician was trying to estimate his morale, to discover symptoms of cowardice. And once the patient spoke up, "You'll find me all right, doc; I'm not yellow!" At which the beard had smiled, and said, "I guess not, young man. I guess not."

At times during this "white week," as he thought of it—perhaps because the counterpane was white, and the walls—he had rebelled against his seclusion;

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had insisted on getting up, on seeing people, on sending word to the camp. His nightmares hovered around marching regiments, glorious amid sunlit dust-clouds, or trains thundering through the night, with the locomotives showering sparks. In the nightmares he was running behind these trains, trying not to be left behind.

Then they had begun bringing him news, feeding it to him piecemeal and tenderly, like his food. He heard about Father Fanning before they meant him to. Aunt Pringle's fault, this was. But he survived it. And then he learned other things. He was told about Laurence Wayte, killed in his airplane in an English training camp; about the arrest of Reeker by the receiver for the Fanning banks. Also about Mother Fanning's departure to be, for an indefinite time, the guest of the Augustines. Also about the latest gains of the Germans, and the world's anxiety for Paris. And one day Aunt Pringle came in with her hands full of newspaper clippings, on which his quick eye saw his own name. Pauline seized them, and stuffed them in a drawer, "for him to see later."

"Well," burst out Aunt Pringle, before she was banished, "I'll just say this, if it kills him: He's a hero, any way you look at it. And the last man I ever expected——"

Pauline laughingly hustled her out of the room.

And now he was restored to the luxury of a view from the front window, and the doubtful ecstasy of a bathrobe. He had that divine sense of having

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recaptured a world that had almost slipped from him. And it was a world somehow purged of its uncertainties, its suspicions. His doubts of Pauline had vanished, without a word spoken on that subject. All that had been left behind. His life, short though it might be, lay ahead, beautifully definite. He knew exactly what he was going to do with himself.

It was the first week in June, and an American force, said to be largely Marines, had just outfought the Germans at a place called Belleau Wood.

Pauline came in from marketing about eleven o'clock. She found him studying a map of France, and tried to take it away from him. A scuffle.

"My! What a grip you have!" she exclaimed, after she let the map go.

"Nothing to what I had before I was sick." A peevish look came upon his face. "Look here, Polly, there's got to be an end of this; this sitting around draped in a crazy-quilt. Pack my suitcase, won't you? I'm due elsewhere."

She looked at him steadily.

"When do you think you will go?"

"Well—the two o'clock train; the five o'clock at the latest."

Pauline took off her hat very deliberately.

"I would rather you didn't go to-day," she said. "You know this is almost the first time I've had you when you seemed natural."

"I appreciate that; but Morin and the fellows—they'll say I'm stalling."

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"And there are so many people who want to see you."

"Well, who?" he frowned. "I don't know who's left around here that I want to see."

"I know one."

"Who? Show me somebody in Lakeside I want to see."

"I will," replied Pauline, nodding her head at him tauntingly. She went north with into the hall, spoke a number into the telephone. Lance listened, motionless.

"Marcelline—yes, it's Pauline. How are you enjoying your vacation? Listen! Roy may come over as soon as he likes——"

"What!" cried Lance. He boggled at the bathrobe, trying to rise. Before he had accomplished this, Pauline returned, laughing.

"I told you," said she.

"Well, why didn't you tell me before? How long has that friend of my boyhood been in town?"

"Only since yesterday. He's on the way east; to sail, or something."

Lance made a grimace.

"Another man getting ahead of me. And to think that Roy—does he still pronounce that word 'militaryism'?"

"He pronounces everything just the same. But his looks—Lance, he's stunning!"

"I suppose so." Gloomier and gloomier. "He'll come here and open up a line of artillery technic.

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Or else he'll patronize me because our outfit hasn't had orders to move. I know him."

However, when Roy and Marcelline "ran over" just after lunch, the two companions of gayer days were so delighted to see each other, and so astounded at the way one had "gained" and the other "gone off," that technic had no chance. They fairly fell into each other's arms. Lance was surprised at himself. He hadn't realized he liked Roy half that well. And even Marcelline, whose baby tricks had not entirely disappeared; he could endure her. There was a zest in life now that made everybody seem welcome. And Lance had lost something—that old tendency to sneer—that had never been worth while.

It turned out that Roy was a sergeant in — he named battery and regiment. "We handle those big fellows, you know." That was as far as technic got. Yes, Roy was very natural. He made vast predictions concerning a war to last for years. Didn't believe a word he read in the newspapers. He had "inside dope." And he strutted just once, when he said:

"The wife says I look pretty good in my togs. What do you think?"

"Grandiose," Lance assured him; and he was satisfied.

"How do you feel about going over?" Roy asked at last. The ladies happened to be silent at that moment, and listened also.

"Well," Lance included them all in his whimsical

gaze. "I feel like Pauline's brother Tom; half the time damned scared, and the other half bursting to go."

"Did Mr. Fanning say that? The great soldier?" put in Marcelline. "That's the brother we met one night?" she turned to Pauline.

"My only brother," was the quiet reply. Pauline was looking at her re-constituted husband with an expression that was—well, Marcelline could only think of it afterward as pitying. And Marcelline said inwardly, "Some women make such a sentiment out of their husbands' going. I don't believe——" etc., etc.

"When you think of it," said Lance, "the right kind of attitude is neither of those things; neither funk nor fever. The war's no picnic. Have you read Barbusse's book?"

The Merediths looked blank.

"He wrote 'Under Fire.' It tells you what a sickening, dull, muddy business it really is. But when you read him right, when you get the feeling for those miserable, struggling, tortured beings, one has just got to get in beside them and help." He saw that the visitors were beginning to droop before this philosophy. "After all," he finished, "every fellow must have his own reasons for going; for going in; for sticking it out. The thing is, here are you and I, Roy, who a year ago were jeering at the idea of being in uniform, and who fought for exemption like a couple of——"

"Tango Twins," supplied Roy.

"And now we're not only reconciled, but eager. What happened to us?"

"Why, Uncle Sam just yanked us out and shook us up a bit," replied Roy. "And a good thing, I say; eh, Marcelline?"

"Nothing will ever seem hard any more," mused Lance.

"Sh'd say not," the other agreed, with vigorous nods.

"Except waiting," and the late invalid gazed out of the window.

The Merediths were preparing to leave when the doorbell rang. Pauline ran into the hall. She came back bringing Fred Ames. There was a further reunion; not, perhaps, as cordial, but very animated. Then Fred sat down on the window-sill and inspected the convalescent.

"You look fitter than I expected. I shall have to report to that effect. Lance, they're about ready to fire the starting gun."

Lance sat up with flaming face.

"Glory!" he cried. "When do we go?"

"They're weeding out the last of 'em now. The unfit, I mean. Camp's in a fever. A million rumours a day. Bless you, I don't know when we're going. But soon, boy—soon."

"For the Lord's sake," said Lance, now on his feet, his eyes snapping, "get me out of this! Take my passage on the next boat. Polly, that suitcase—at once."

She looked at him tenderly, but did not speak.

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"Oh, not so fast," laughed Fred. "You've got to pass another physical, old man, don't forget that. I've had mine. They said I could take care of six squareheads, at least."

He strolled to the piano, sat down, and bent his head over it, smoothing his fingers along the keys.

"It's a beautiful thing—a beautiful thing," he murmured, rather ambiguously. Suddenly he turned.

"This piano—why, it makes me think. I don't suppose the news has reached you folks yet—about Harrold."

They shook their heads.

"Disappeared—deserted—jumped camp."

"No!" exclaimed Lance. "How could he do that?"

"He could and did. Day before yesterday. They haven't found him yet; but when they do——"

He made a sinister gesture with the edge of his palm across his stiff brown collar.

A pause; then Pauline asked, "What will they do with him?" Lance was looking at her—he could not help it—and he felt a sort of relief (although that Harrold madness of his seemed to belong to another existence) at seeing her face betray nothing more than a natural surprise and regret.

He did not hear Fred's answer, nor Roy's short laugh. He was thinking how glad he was he had not assailed Pauline with ugly questions. His morbid theory, born of three years' experience with the "crowd," had "blown up," and left no trace.

Fred continued to fondle the keys; then he struck a

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chord, and began to sing, first tentatively, then in a firmer and more eloquent strain:

"Ah, moon of my delight, that knows no wane;
The moon of heav'n is rising once again."

The four listeners never moved. Even Roy was sobered by this golden music, and by the magnetism of the singer. The soft summer breeze quickened, fluttering the window curtains, and bringing the distant drone of a steamer whistle.

"And when thyself with shining foot shall pass
Among the guests star-scattered on the grass,
And in thy joyous errand reach the spot
Where I made one—turn down an empty glass."

He finished with a triumphant chord, and turned upon them with a smile.

"Oh, that's too horribly sad for me," exclaimed Marcelline.

"Sad? It's triumphant," retorted Lance. "Once I thought it was no end gloomy, but——"

He did not tell them, however, in what mood he had repeated those words to himself as he marched away, a drafted man.

"Well," said Roy, rising, "in one way it's a shame to lose that voice. The war ain't worth it."

"So I used to think," returned Fred, blithely. "So I used to think. And I suppose it was something like that that got poor Harrold started wrong. Well, what'll his life be now? Hunted from village

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to village, from one clump of bushes to another. And they'll get him——"

He, too, rose to go. The party broke up. And this shadow of the desertion of that strange figure, Harrold, whom none of them liked, whom none of them, perhaps, understood, tempered their farewells.

Life was a succession of farewells, each different from the other.

After they had gone Lance confessed to being a little tired. He decided to postpone his departure until the next afternoon. That evening he spent shaking his head and grinning over some of his old manuscripts, which Pauline had preserved. She spent it knitting. She said very little.

The next morning he was in a fever of impatience again. He donned his uniform, and threw a few things into a suitcase. The two o'clock train sure, this time!

"Tell the doc. he needn't come," said he, when Pauline returned from one of several trips to the telephone. "I don't need him any more."

She failed to reply. It seemed to be a habit she had formed. Her mouth opened; closed again in silence.

"I suppose the last day is rather hard," he thought, and withheld comment on this reticent, puzzled Pauline.

But within the half hour she was animated again and came out with a most remarkable plan: a pleasure drive. She had hired a car. It was the very last

bit of extravagance, she said; the very last. Astonished, but secretly amused, by the flaring up of an old trait, he fell in with the scheme; helped her into the very comfortable machine; and talked to her gaily as they drove off. It came out presently that she had another bit of news for him, saved until now for some woman's reason: She had found her father's hoard, the "little bank account" he had always insisted he had somewhere. It was only five hundred dollars, "but oh, Lance, how big it seems just now."

"Big as a house," he agreed. "And now that removes the only worry I had about going away. You can pay the bills and live on the five hundred until you get that job back. As Ann is going to live with you it ought to be easy. You don't know how relieved I am, really. Ann is going to live with you when Tom goes, isn't she?"

"Perhaps," Pauline replied after a trifling hesitation.

"You must make her," he said; and then he had to know where the money was found, and how Father Fanning had managed to conceal it: details that proved commonplace in the telling.

They were rolling all this time along the boulevard by the lake; past the Beach, past the place where Father Fanning had taken his last walk on earth; and farther north. Then Pauline spoke to the driver.

"Now downtown," she said.

"Downtown!" echoed Lance. "What for? It's a funny day to do shopping."

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Her response to this came in accents that a woman would instantly have recognized as carefully arranged. Lance, for all his acuteness, was not subtle enough. He listened with a shade of surprise, but nothing more, while she explained that a sudden ambition had seized her to see the old *Press* office, where he worked before she knew him. Would he not like to have one more glimpse of the old "gang"? She had thought it would please him. He had so often talked about it——

As she went on Lance, doubtful at first, embraced the notion with growing interest. Yes, it would be something to see the murky, low-ceilinged room where the wallpaper was crinkling off the walls; where he had pasted doggerel verse above his desk; where he had "cracked out" many a story with a sense of creativeness he had not recaptured later. He wondered if many of the old boys still worked there; if Bland still reigned, with the green eyeshade, and the bell he pounded with the flat of his hand, to summon errand boys.

"I'm glad you thought of it, Polly; I am, indeed," and he thought she must really love him now, to have arrived at such a plan.

In fifteen minutes or less they drew up before the *Press* building. With a mingling of many emotions Lance found himself ascending in the aged, creeping elevator; getting off at the top floor, and hearing through a half-open door the swishing, clanking sound of linotype machines.

He guided Pauline into the local room. It was

the middle of the forenoon, and the reporters, as should be the case in a hustling afternoon newspaper office, were out. But there sat Bland, sure enough, eye-shade and all. A little grayer, but the same slow-moving, tired-looking, gravely polite Bland. He rose and solemnly shook hands with Lance and Pauline. His eye flitted over the uniform. And he looked at the floor.

Was it imagination? Lance thought the glance of his old chief, when he raised it, sought and held Pauline's with a sort of understanding. The fancy passed.

There was a pause. Then Bland said:

"Everything looks about the same, I know." He moistened his lips. "There's one new wrinkle I'd like to show you, though. After you, Mrs. Happerth. Down the room here a piece. We've fixed up a corner——"

They passed down the local room. A grizzled copy reader rose and shook Lance's hand shyly. A boy whom he had known, now promoted to clip newspapers, and wearing an air of authority, grinned at him. Thus they reached a remote corner of the room, where a desk and typewriter had been partly isolated by the simple process of moving an old book-case out from the wall.

A slim young man rose from an adjacent desk. Lance gave him one look; then:

"Fred! Freddy Westcott!"

"The same," returned the well-known war correspondent.

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"We had to bring him home; got scooped too often," twinkled Bland.

"The truth is, I got sick," said Freddy, surveying Lance affectionately. "Trench life was not for me."

They were too full of emotion, these old comrades, to say much.

"Of course," observed Lance, "you would come home just when I'm going across. This is your desk, is it? Whose is the next one, with the nice new typewriter, and all those bully drawers?"

Freddy turned to Bland.

And Bland said to Lance, "It is yours."

The room was astonishingly quiet just then.

"Mine?" Lance hesitated. "You mean when I come back?"

"No," said the city editor, firmly. "Yours now."

And just then Lance felt his wife's hand grip his, and he looked down into her eyes, which seemed to be saying, "Oh, won't you understand?"

He stood there motionless while the meaning of all this seeped into his mind. He saw Bland's kind, resolute face; the lines about his mouth. He saw Freddy's lips pressed tightly together. He felt Pauline's persuasive clasp of the hand.

And in a tick of time it was all clear.

They thought he was not going. They knew he was not going. They knew something he did not know.

He tore his hand from Pauline's and stepped back.

"Don't leave me in the dark," he begged. Some-

thing was pounding crazily in his breast. He laid his hand there. More light came.

Pauline, all but sobbing, drew near him.

"I couldn't tell you by myself," she confessed. "I had to have someone to help me. I wanted to make it easy for you. So I thought of this way——"

"I'm disqualified, am I? What does it mean, Freddy? Bland, tell me."

"The doctor says you can't go," continued Pauline, huskily.

"What doctor?" His anger was beginning to rise. "That Lakeside ninny? What's wrong with me? Don't stand there with your mouths open."

"It was when you jumped into the water," offered Bland, painfully. "The exertion——"

"That! I got over that." His dark eyes shot from one to another of them, frightened, gleaming.

Suddenly he struck one fist into the other passionately.

"If it's true," he choked. "If it's true I'm to be cheated of this—this chance——"

Freddy swore half audibly.

"All this year wasted—just when I'd got to the point where those fellows, my outfit, were everything to me. I can't believe it even now. Boys, do you suppose whatever it is runs this universe would hand me such a piece of cruelty? Never to see France with my fellows; never to go at all. And for such a reason; because I saved that old——"

Here he paused, the instinct of shielding Pauline's feelings asserting itself.

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Freddy came up and hooked an arm in his.

"Suppose it's true," he said; "what of it? Life goes on."

"Ah, but not the life I want. I gave up one life for this; for the army. Now——"

And then, as quickly as he had despaired, he pulled himself together, wiped his forehead with his handkerchief, and straightened.

"I'll go down to camp. If the regimental surgeon won't pass me, there's still the base hospital. A Lakeside doctor! It takes a specialist. They can't lose me until every stethoscope in the camp is worn out."

When he left the room he was still talking in this strain; but deep down, he knew the Lakeside doctor must be right. He was done for.

CHAPTER XIV

AND now we see him in one last hour of defeat, one final throe of disappointment, that made him the comrade of thousands to whom the war became nothing but a bitter mockery. Like them, he got over it. Like them, he is going on with life, and there's a lot of it yet to be lived.

It is far past midnight, and Westmont Avenue sleeps. There is no symphony of sounds within the Fannington Annex. From the little iron balcony outside the sun-porch Lance Happerth, standing there, can hear the keening of the lake. He is fully clothed—but not in uniform—as though he has not been in bed. Nor has he. He has been downtown, waiting through the midnight hours for a certain train to come in, and a certain forlorn hope to bloom or wither. It has withered.

The scene, just over with, is still vivid: The sweating locomotive entering the train-shed; the brown, silent cars; the groan of brakes. Here and there a tousled head peeping from a berth. Nothing else. This was a troop train, but its destination was not the City. It was to be switched to a through track, and plunge on eastward without delay. In such manner, without pomp or pause, stealing through great cities, roaring across meadows in the moonlight, our troops

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were moved to the seaboard. And that was how it was with the division to which Lance had once belonged. He knew he had a poor chance of seeing his friends, of succeeding in his wild scheme. But he had to try.

He recalls now, gazing into the darkness with a flitting smile, how he ran along the inhospitable cars, seeking an open vestibule, and realizing more keenly every moment how absurd it was; then how he encountered Morin, who never slept, enjoying a cigarette and a chat with the fireman.

Lance's smile is at his own expense. What a figure he must have cut——

Pauline is at his side, in bath-gown and slippers. she has come silently, like a warm-breathing spirit.

"Come in," she whispers through the open window. "You must get some sleep."

He withdraws from the balcony, but remains by the window.

"It didn't work," he says. "Of course it didn't work. Morin wouldn't listen. I offered to go as a cook, as a stowaway, as a servant—anything. Against regulations, Morin told me—of course."

"How could you expect it, after what the camp doctors said?"

"Oh, well, I didn't know but even if I was no good for fighting, I could—— I told Morin I just had to be with the fellows somehow, if only to fetch water, to pull off their boots when they came in, tired out. No go. Nothing doing."

"My dear, dear Lance, you must get some sleep."

Sleep? Not now. But he consents to sit down, and to have his brow smoothed.

"Yes," he keeps saying, "might as well call this the finish. I'll get over it. . . . Worst of it is, Polly, I'm not sick. Not really sick."

A pause.

"I'm good for a long time yet, with care. All the doctors admit that. But what to do——"

A much longer pause.

"I suppose—I might as well take that job on the *Press*."

"I would."

"It would seem like getting home, some way; and like starting over, and having to make good——"

They are silent again for some seconds. He rises again restlessly.

"Has it all been a waste, Polly? When you think of it all, what do you suppose Providence, or what-you-call-it, is about? And poor old Uncle Sam! To spend all that time and effort on me, and the others who didn't pan out. . . . Well, it must have been for something. . . ."

The blackness outside is beginning to pale.

"You know, it makes me feel . . . I'm no longer a kid. Remember the poem? . . . Well, youth's sweet-scented manuscript is closed. . . . What next?"

"The next," says Pauline, sternly, "will be bed. Let all those problems and reasons wait. Nobody gets anywhere trying to solve them, anyway."

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A taxicab—it must be—roars past the building. Somebody is just getting home. Coming up from the opposite direction is the jingle and jog-trot of a milk wagon. The sky now is gray, with spreading pink streaks reflected from the east.

Another day is beginning in Lakeside.

THE END

A LETTER TO MR. CARL SANDBURG

MY DEAR CARL:

At two o'clock this morning I heard distant whistles, the bravura of horns, a faint uproar from the city on the horizon, and I knew the war was over. The book of a million adventures was closed.

Never again, perhaps, will submarine battle submarine, or thirty airships blaze at each other above the clouds; never, it may be, will men live in dugouts, or fight like beasts amid snell-holes. But the book of permanent adventure is not closed. There remains "just life," the poor little story of people like ourselves. It has been going on all the time those tremendous dramas have been in progress in Europe. It has reacted to the war, more or less. People have changed—some of them. And it has seemed to me worth while to record the experiences of a typical group, living in a sort of conservatory altogether remote, it once seemed, from the long arm of war.

The army division that figures in the story never got into the fighting, so I didn't have to pretend I had seen any of those soldiers in the trenches. They were like some thousands of other fellows who looked forward for months to all the mystery and horror, who gave up the idea of living, and then were saved—against their wills. So, in a feeble way, the book

342.A LETTER TO MR. CARL SANDBURG

is a tribute to those who never "got across," or who came very near their heart's desire, but were turned back. Hats off to these, Carl, as well as to all the others.

A word about pretensions to military lore: I haven't any. When it came to that I sought the help, both technical and literary, of our friend Paul Leach—and he collaborated most skillfully.

As for the principal people in the story, none of them is "taken from life." A pretty vague and insignificant lot, I admit. But you shouldn't imagine people of the sort are superfluous in the Grand Scheme of Things. Nobody is quite that, you know.

Sincerely your friend,

H. T. S.

Nov. 11, 1918.



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