

**CIHM
Microfiche
Series
(Monographs)**

**ICMH
Collection de
microfiches
(monographies)**



Canadian Institute for Historical Microreproductions / Institut canadien de microreproductions historiques

© 1998

Technical and Bibliographic Notes / Notes techniques et bibliographiques

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

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

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

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

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

	10x		14x		18x		22x		26x		30x	
						✓						
	12x		16x		20x		24x		28x		32x	

The copy filmed here has been reproduced thanks to the generosity of:

D.B. Weldon Library
University of Western Ontario

This title was microfilmed with the generous permission of the rights holder:

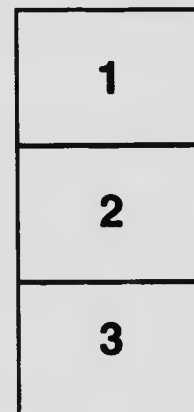
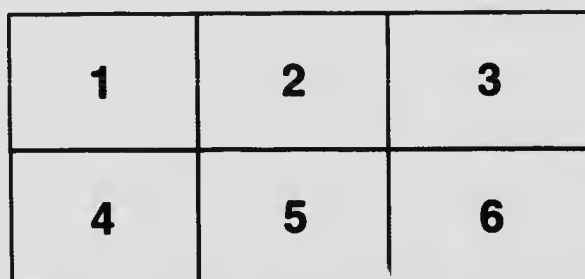
The Wason Family

The images appearing here are the best quality possible considering the condition and legibility of the original copy and in keeping with the filming contract specifications.

Original copies in printed paper covers are filmed beginning with the front cover and ending on the last page with a printed or illustrated impression, or the back cover when appropriate. All other original copies are filmed beginning on the first page with a printed or illustrated impression, and ending on the last page with a printed or illustrated impression.

The last recorded frame on each microfiche shall contain the symbol → (meaning "CONTINUED"), or the symbol ▼ (meaning "END"), whichever applies.

Maps, plates, charts, etc., may be filmed at different reduction ratios. Those too large to be entirely included in one exposure are filmed beginning in the upper left hand corner, left to right and top to bottom, as many frames as required. The following diagrams illustrate the method:



L' exemplaire filmé fut reproduit grâce à la générosité de:

D.B. Weldon Library
University of Western Ontario

Ce titre a été microfilmé avec l'aimable autorisation du détenteur des droits:

The Wason Family

Les images suivantes ont été reproduites avec le plus grand soin, compte tenu de la condition et de la netteté de l'exemplaire filmé, et en conformité avec les conditions du contrat de filmage.

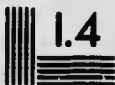
Les exemplaires originaux dont la couverture en papier est imprimée sont filmés en commençant par le premier plat et en terminant soit par la dernière page qui comporte une empreinte d'impression ou d'illustration, soit par le second plat, selon le cas. Tous les autres exemplaires originaux sont filmés en commençant par la première page qui comporte une empreinte d'impression ou d'illustration et en terminant par la dernière page qui comporte une telle empreinte.

Un des symboles suivants apparaîtra sur la dernière image de chaque microfiche, selon le cas: le symbole → signifie "A SUIVRE", le symbole ▼ signifie "FIN".

Les cartes, planches, tableaux, etc., peuvent être filmés à des taux de réduction différents. Lorsque le document est trop grand pour être reproduit en un seul cliché, il est filmé à partir de l'angle supérieur gauche, de gauche à droite, et de haut en bas, en prenant le nombre d'images nécessaire. Les diagrammes suivants illustrent la méthode.

MICROCOPY RESOLUTION TEST CHART

(ANSI and ISO TEST CHART No. 2)



1.5

1.6

1.8

2.0

2.2

2.5

2.8

3.2

3.6

4.0

4.5

5.0

5.6

6.3

7.1

8.0

9.0

10

11.2

12.5

14

16

18

20

22.5

25

28

32

36

40

45

50

56

63

71

80



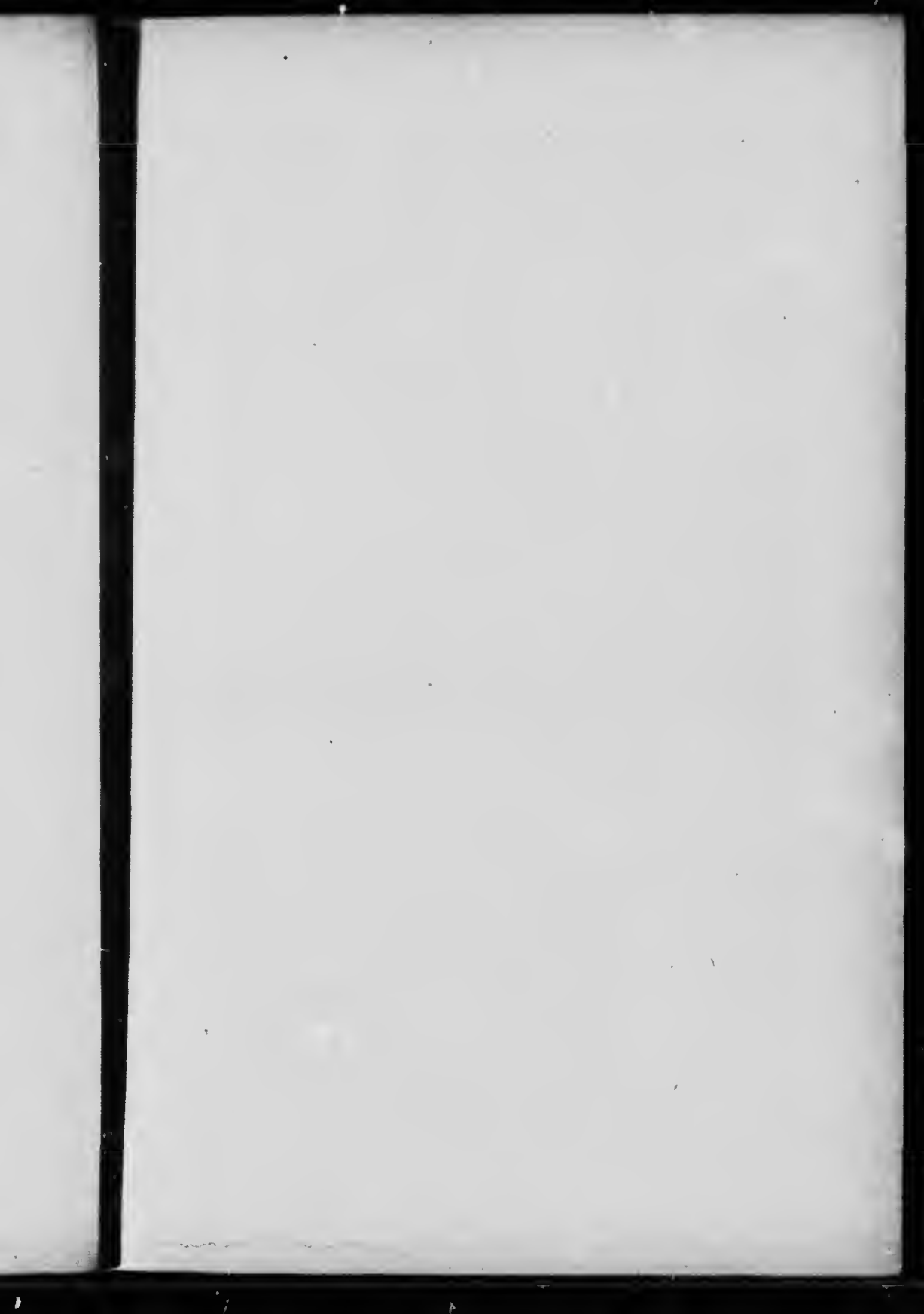
APPLIED IMAGE Inc

1853 East Main Street
Rochester, New York 14609 USA
(716) 482 - 0300 - Phone
(716) 288 - 5989 - Fax

The Knight- Errant

Robert Alexander Wason

THE KNIGHT-ERRANT





"I've studied it all out and there is mighty little demand for a duffer like me." *See page 12*

THE KNIGHT-ERRANT

A NOVEL OF TO-DAY

BY

ROBERT ALEXANDER WASON

AUTHOR OF "HAPPY HAWKINS," ETC., ETC.

ILLUSTRATED BY
HANSON BOOTH



McLEOD & ALLEN
TORONTO

COPYRIGHT, 1911
BY SMALL, MAYNARD AND COMPANY
(INCORPORATED)

Entered at Stationers' Hall

THE UNIVERSITY PRESS, CAMBRIDGE, U. S. A.

536259

CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I SHE THROWS HER GLOVE	1
II PHIL IS DISPOSED TO LEAP AFTER	16
III THE COLONEL ADVISES CARE	33
IV SKATE MORTON IS INTERESTED	48
V NATHAN MEYER SUGGESTS CAUTION	56
VI EDITH IS THREATENED WITH REPENTANCE	64
VII PHIL IS QUITE COMPLACENT	74
VIII A GENERAL MÉLÉE	86
IX AN UNEXPECTED THRUST	97
X HONORS THRUST UPON THE COLONEL	110
XI PHIL BEGINS HIS QUEST	123
XII A LACK OF ARMOR	131
XIII THE LONE DAMSEL APPEARS	141
XIV AN UNUSUAL PROPOSITION	154
XV A SHADY BYPATH	162
XVI ANOTHER LONE DAMSEL	169
XVII PHIL WINS A TILT	185
XVIII HE TENDERS HIS RESIGNATION	193
XIX DISTURBING THEORIES	201
XX EXIT THE GOLDEN-HAIRED GIRL	213
XXI THE ENCHANTRESS	228
XXII PHIL IS DIRECTED	243
XXIII A WIDE DETOUR	257
XXIV LAZY BILL ADVISES	271
XXV A STRICTLY NEW LADY	281
XXVI A HARD FALL	287
XXVII PHIL REBELS	299
XXVIII CLOSE TO THE BRINK	313

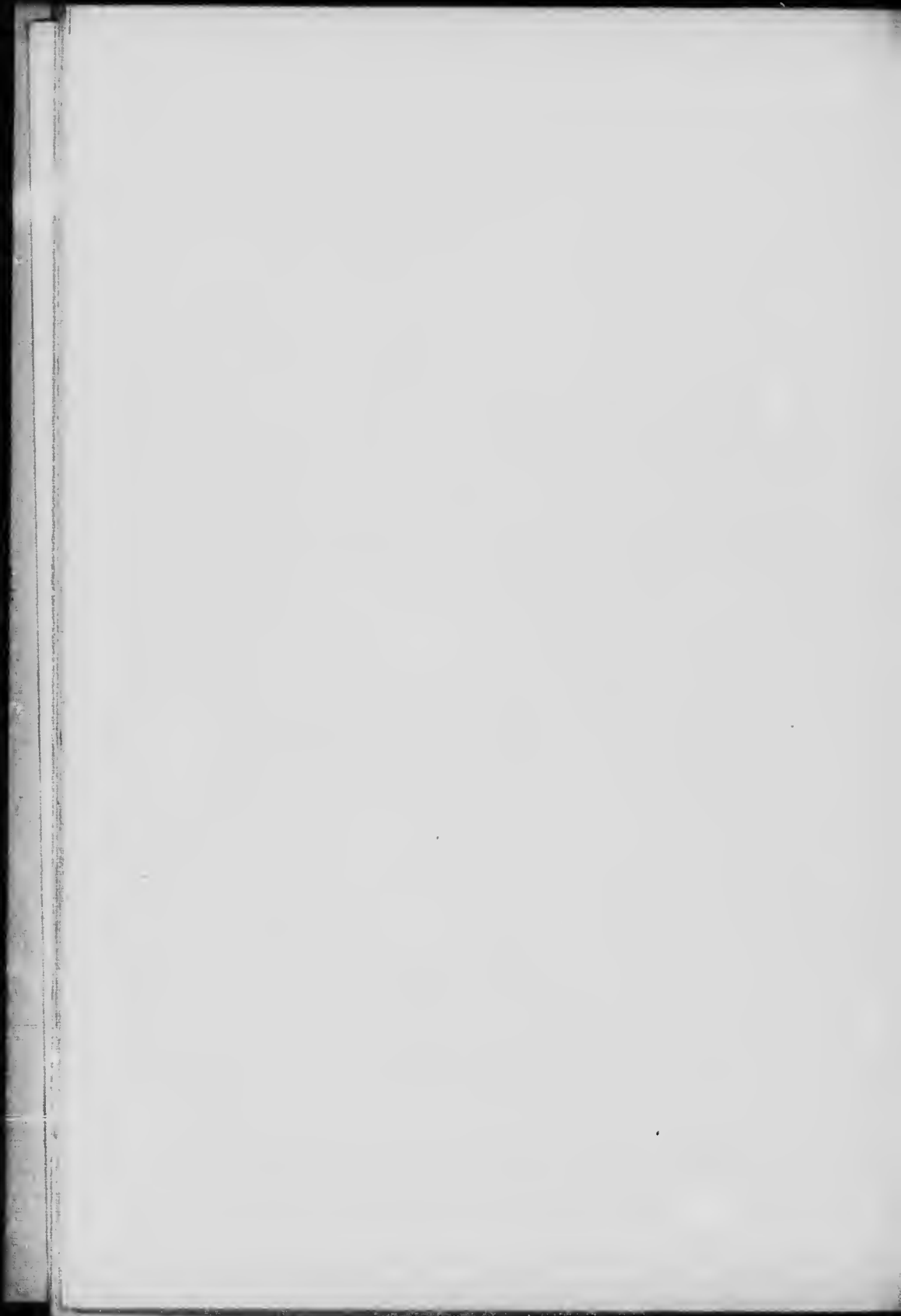
CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
XXIX THE GRIM GRAY VALLEY	321
XXX OUTSIDE THE WORLD	329
XXXI INITIAL STEPS	339
XXXII A PEACEFUL PAUSE	349
XXXIII A NEW COMRADE	355
XXXIV THE WHEEL OF FATE	366
XXXV AN IDEAL FEAST	374
XXXVI A FEAST-IDYL	384

PAGE
321
329
339
349
355
366
374
384

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

- "I've studied it all out and there is mighty little demand
for a duffer like me." *See page 12 Frontispiece*
PAGE
- "They will be able to tell just how many kinds of an idiot
I have been and just how much I have lost and just why
I pulled up stakes and slipped off between two days." 126.
- "I shall be to you what all women, but no one woman
has been before." *See page 235* 236
- "I hate you, I hate you," Phil cried fiercely 320
- Critical moments have this unpleasant habit of stripping
formality from us and leaving our souls naked and
our inmost emotions bare to all the world 394



THE FORETHOUGHT

When the idea of eternity enters a mind, as it occasionally does at most inopportune moments, the mind is stricken numb with awe and dread. A mind is a venturesome entity and is forever striving to think about the unthinkable; but it is never completely smothered in its own weakness until it attempts to conceive the infinite. "There never was a beginning, there never will be an end." When this particular thought begins its horrid tramp around that deeply-trodden brain-circle we all shun, it not infrequently suggests suicide as the logical escape from the burdens and responsibilities of life.

But, shocking as this suggestion is, it is perhaps less foolish than is the attempt to think the thought which engenders it. It is as though one were to chain one foot to New York, hitch an engine to the other, and start the engine toward Chicago. It would be an extremely painful stretch; and so the mind receives a painful stretch when it attempts to envelope something infinitely larger than itself. To walk from New York to Chicago a step at a time would be a pleasant, and in most cases, a beneficial journey; even as the contemplation of any appropriate portion of time is a pleasant and profitable exercise for the mind. The difficulty is, that both minds and feet find it hard to confine themselves to their own limitations.

As far as the human mind is concerned, nothing, absolutely nothing, ever had a beginning or will have an end.

When did your last meal begin? Probably coal in some form was used in its preparation; and when did the coal begin? It was formerly an immense weed which evolved from a water plant which — But already one is on a circle the immensity of which is stupefying. If we consider the food there is no relief: we have traced back the evolution of cattle until it loses itself in a small, rough creature bearing no resemblance to the prize steers with their billiard-table backs and sedentary habits; and the same is true of the forage upon which modern cattle are prepared for the final sacrifice. The entire universe perceptible to man's senses, is rushing through space and eternity from a position which is unthinkable to a position which is equally unthinkable; and it merely depends upon our viewpoint whether or not the entire scheme is simple or complex. To the oyster it is very simple, to the scientist it is terrifically complex; so we see that after all there is much compensation in not having formed the habit of thought.

Indeed, true meditation is a harrowing experience. Take, for instance, a commonplace, familiar subject like man. Packed away in every man is the epitome of human history with all its endless vagaries. Eras, customs, traits, all the social and individualistic vagaries of life are mixed in each personality like the geological strata in the whirling sphere we have elected to call the Earth. Physical cataclysms heave up the shattered ends of these geological strata in the most unexpected places; even as emotional cataclysms throw to the surface human traits which have not been generally normal for thousands of years, and many a modern has felt his blood chill with horror when into the eyes of one of his fellows has suddenly glittered the atavistic glare which was merely the business expres-

sion of his cave-dwelling ancestor. Thus we sometimes see a weary clerk glance absent-mindedly out through a tenth story window, while deep in the heart which he does not himself understand, there is a hungry yearning for the shepherd crook, the fleecy flock, and the soothing repose of the mountain peaks above the fat green pastures; but strangest of all, we occasionally see the charming strata of Chivalry, streaked with all its curious inconsistencies, poking its way up through the hard, practical crust of present-day Capitalism.

All this has nothing whatever to do with the following novel, and doubtless the reader is entitled to an apology; but when the author seated himself upon a quiet porch to begin he inadvertently glanced at the adjacent body of water, and these thoughts came bobbing in with the waves; and as they refused to break and spread upon the beach as the waves did, he has found it necessary to slap them on paper and pass them along.

It really is arbitrary and somewhat impudent to select a few links from an unbroken chain which reaches back to that misty period when the Morning Stars were singing together over what they, in their innocence, were pleased to believe was the dawn of a new creation, and to call one of these links, the beginning, and another link, the end. Neither history nor fiction deals with beginnings or ends; but merely draws the veil aside for a few moments to give a clearer view of the motley parade which marches so bravely along the dizzy path, coming from no whither and going to no thither, yet, for all that, taking itself very, very seriously.

And now, with no fear of being misunderstood, we shall state that this story opens on a hot July afternoon in the

viii THE FORETHOUGHT

year nineteen hundred, upon a road leading out of that town which means so many different things to so many different people but which is familiarly known to all the world as, Little Old New York.

R. A. W.

that
many
l the
W.

THE KNIGHT-ERRANT

THE KNIGHT-ERRANT

CHAPTER ONE

SHE THROWS HER GLOVE

"WHERE are you going?" asked Edith Hampton. It was a clear July day and the speed of the car successfully offset the heat of the day.

"I don't know," answered Phil Lytton with his usual smile. "What does it matter?"

Edith leaned back with a sigh which was meant to be a symbol of resignation. Resignation, however, was not one of her characteristics; and in a moment she straightened and looked at Phil reprovingly. He knew she would and had no opposing prejudices in the matter. If it had really been necessary, Phil was an individual who really had it in his make-up to be resigned.

"Phil Lytton," she said, "you are positively provoking. Your entire life as well as every little detail of it is contained in that answer. You don't have one single serious purpose, and you don't see why it should matter that you should have one."

"No," he replied with perfect candor and perfect good humor, "for the life of me, I can't see why I should everlastingly be taking observations like a mariner in a fog on an unknown coast."

"Observations cannot be taken in a fog," corrected Edith

with her usual rectitude. "Worrying over you is actually aging me before my time."

"I have repeatedly pointed out that it was not necessary to worry," he observed calmly. "Why don't you be reasonable? I have a safe and satisfactory income, I have good health and pleasant friends, I have a nice little round of amusements and recreations, I have — It is exactly like this ride. Now I am not sure where we are nor exactly where we are going; but the road is good, the car is chattering cheerfully, I would not exchange my company for any other in the world, no matter where we go we have enough funds to insure decent entertainment, and when we want to return all we have to do is to set about it and doubtless there will be half a dozen equally agreeable ways. Why should I stew myself into a froth speculating about a lot of things which cannot possibly add to my enjoyment? I only want to live one life at a time, but I want to enjoy that one: you want to live a dozen lives, and you mix them all up, and you add the sorrows of the past to the doubts about the future until your present is merely a barren rock with the tide rapidly rising. If you could merely learn to stretch out on a green grassy bank and watch the clouds change from one beautiful form to another, it would do us all a heap of good. But no, you would have to know the exact longitude and latitude of the grassy bank, its ant and malaria-germ population, its proximity to a telephone and a trolley line, its —"

"Spat!!!" interjected the tire.

With automatic precision Phil brought the car to a halt, after which Edith remarked with dignity: "Now perhaps you also may be interested in longitude and latitude, tele-

SHE THROWS HER GLOVE 3

phone and trolley car, and other first aids to the heedless. It always takes you an age to replace a tire."

"How perfectly wrong you generally are," replied the imperturbable Philip with an amused smile. "I have discovered that repairing tires is not compatible to my temperament; so I merely call up Wilson and have him bring my car. If you will compose your adorable form upon yon aforesaid grassy bank, I shall mount this young hill and seek the abode of the closest telephone. We are decidedly living in a convenient age."

"And it is decidedly spoiling you," half pouted Edith as she ignored his suggestion and prepared to climb the hill at his side.

This was in the early days of motoring, the year nineteen hundred to be exact, and it seemed shocking to Edith that any man should permit another to repair the wonderful French car. There were a great many of Phil's traits which had this effect upon Edith.

As Phil found it irritating as well as expensive to salve the feelings of his fellow citizens who still drove horses, possessed of firm and active aversions to the uncanny, self-propelling, evil-smelling inventions, and as he also admitted the justice of the equine viewpoint, he had formed the habit of selecting byroads rather than highroads; and now they were both surprised to find, upon climbing the hill, that by simply crossing a pasture lot they would come to a fine country home whose telephone connections were plainly visible from where they stood.

"See," quoth Philip with a comprehensive wave of the hand. Edith sighed as she caught step with him and started across the field.

"Why did you not select this road in the first place?" she asked.

"The horses," he replied, a little surprised that so useless a question should be asked. Phil had ready sympathy for any creature in distress; but it was the sympathy of the spectator and seldom prompted him to a definite action which would serve to permanently remove the lamentable condition.

"It seems pretty rough," he added after a moment's pause, "that immediately after having overcome their original convictions against bicycles, the old adage should not infrequently be reversed and injury added to insult in the shape of independent motors which tear up the road without rule or reason. Of course they will have to come to it in time; but I am minded to break it to them as gently as possible."

"You are certainly a peculiar combination," said Edith, looking at Phil but speaking to herself.

She waited at the gate while Phil went up to the house and was cordially extended the privilege of the telephone. Very, very seldom were favors granted grudgingly to Phil Lytton. There was a boyish assurance about him which was as far from affectation as it was from impertinence and he candidly made known his desires with the blissful confidence that if it were possible they would be satisfied. His eyes held an unexpected trace of sadness, but all the rest of his features seemed just at the point of breaking into a quiet smile. He was clean and trim and tall, his clothing was stylish and tasteful, everything about him bespoke the presence of one in high favor; so that it was not at all surprising that the rays of cheery content he scattered so freely made him welcome wherever he chose to go.

SHE THROWS HER GLOVE 5.

He talked a minute or two with his hostess of the moment, found, as usual, that they had a few mutual friends — Phil was so intensely aristocratic that it was impossible for him to be snobbish and his friends were scattered through Society from the lowest layer to the very top — and then he rejoined Edith, who, having begun to miss him, was naturally more incensed with him than ever.

Edith's mind was logical and consistent — which is scarcely a safe condition for the feminine mind. The same cause would invariably produce the same effect with her, and it always irritated her to have Phil escape the just consequences of his own heedlessness through favorable circumstances which could be ascribed to nothing except luck.

“Instead of being shipwrecked mariners taking foggy observations on a rockbound coast, we have come to anchor in a delightful port and all the joy-lamps are lighted in our honor. Mrs. Morton wants us to stay to early tea, after which she will drive us to the station.”

“Who is Mrs. Morton?” demanded Edith coldly.

“Why, she's almost the regular aunt of Old Skate Morton. He used to come here to do his spring vacations, and I've heard him say a hundred times that food was her long suit.”

“I do not think we should stay.”

“Well, I thought you'd think along that line, so I regretted for us both. We'll have to run the new car back, anyway. Let's go on to that still higher hill and see all there is to see while we wait for Wilson. Isn't this a glorious afternoon — I wonder where this breeze hails from? When I desire a summer home, I'll have the Mortons select the site. Mrs. Morton wants me to come out the first week

in August: the Skate will be here and she says she'll turn the place over to us."

"Are you going to accept?"

"Well, I did n't accept definitely. It's too far ahead. I told her that I had half promised to go half a dozen other places; but that I should much prefer to come here and if I could possibly arrange it, I'd come. I have n't seen much of the Skate lately and a little reunion would go fine."

"Phil Lytton, are you never going to mature?"

"Not if my vote is the deciding one," he replied gaily.

"You seem to take as active an interest in your own career as though you were one of the little cubes used to play dice. You let circumstances be the shaker and care not a whit in what direction you are thrown."

"What's the use? Would n't it be stimulating if I were to look on a week's outing as part of my career and divide and multiply and add in order to see how I could make it pay best? No matter where I go, I'll have a good time and come back feeling fresh and young again."

"Again?" repeated Edith with curious inflection.

"Well, here we are at the top of the hill, and— Well, what do you know about this! You can call me a sage if yon silvery glint is n't our old friend the Sound. Who'd have expected to find Long Island Sound in this neighborhood— right in the busy season, too. Oh, this is as full of promise as a table of contents. Sit thee down, fair maid; and for the love of Mike, relax yourself for a few moments."

Edith seated herself sedately, but instead of looking at the distant Sound, she fixed her gaze upon Phil. "You don't think I nag at you because I enjoy it, do you, Phil?" she asked him.

SHE THROWS HER GLOVE 7

"Heavens, no," he replied serenely. "You do it because you think it amuses me, and I am lots more thankful than I appear. Now relax."

"Don't you ever expect to have an ambition, a great purpose which will absorb you, arouse your latent strength and make you a man among men?"

Phil sighed while a shadow strayed across his face to be instantly followed by a happy smile as he squirmed on the rich grass and felt the taut muscles roll beneath his skin. "A man among men, eh? Well, I sort o' feel that way now. I like to get caught in a regular crush and be a man among men to such an extent that they are pushing me, pulling me, and seeking to occupy the same space that I am occupying. Then, again, at other times I like to relax. Did you ever try relaxing? It's great."

"It decidedly is not great; it is dreadfully commonplace. You are always fond of appealing to the lower species as final authority, and in this instance I ask you to consider the oyster. The oyster spends his entire life in a relaxed condition and yet could anything be farther from true greatness than an oyster?"

"True greatness, my child," answered Phil in a calmly patronizing tone, "is one of life's pleasing exceptions, while for the purposes of study, it is well to limit oneself to the rule. In order to demonstrate true greatness a large character must find itself in the midst of a critical situation in which widespread results merge. The oyster, however, is both a sport and a gentlem.an: it is evident that you have seldom endeavored to open an oyster with those two strong hands of yours, or you would not think him a permanent relaxer. When he declines to be bored he does not make a verbal fuss, he quietly closes his door and holds it fast by

his own nicely-developed strength. The truly great have usually been violently executed, the worldly great have generally degenerated at the sickly end of a short career; but the oyster —”

“You cannot compare a man with an oyster,” interrupted Edith impatiently.

“I did not think you could,” said Phil sweetly; “but I always try to please you, and you seemed to think it possible. If you would only keep your eyes on that fleecy cloud which just at this moment resembles a boat with a canopy at the raised stern, and would try to imagine yourself reclining on a downy couch beneath that canopy, you would find it easy to relax and, no doubt, the gentle motion would be most soothing.”

“I don’t want to be soothed; I want to be stimulated. I cannot take an active share in the great struggles of life, myself; but I want you to take a leading part. Phil, I want to live the full life, the complete life. So many people in our circumstances give themselves up to a continuous hunt for amusement until all the real pleasures of life are denied them. Pleasure is invariably a by-product. When one starts in determined to be merry and gay, he is generally bored and peevish, but when he accepts a duty manfully and does it with all his heart, he is surprised to find that his cup of joy is overflowing.”

“A person would suppose, Edith,” said Phil, sitting erect and looking at her with deep earnestness, “that your general reputation for happiness was so enviable that countless thousands had urged you to go forth and convert the miserable — and that I was the miserable. You have juggled along with your shoulders worn callous from the countless duties you were manfully putting over; and yet,

SHE THROWS HER GLOVE 9

hanged if I can see where life is any more of a scream to you than to me. Remember, I am not complaining: if it soothes you to preach at me from now to doomsday, why steam ahead. I love you, I suppose I always have loved you, and I know I always shall love you. You could n't preach love into me, and you can't preach it out; and for all I know you may convince me that I was cut out for the daily grind—but I'll bet you what you like that it would do you more good to relax than it would me to work, so what's the use, anyway?"

"That is another thing," said Edith after a thoughtful pause; "you do love me, you suppose you always have, and you know you always will; but that sort of feeling is not really love. We have been thrown together all our lives and we have merely taken it for granted that some day we shall marry and, as it is the usual thing for love and marriage to be associated ideas, we must be in love, and that is all there is to it. You never tried to win me, you have never really made love to me, you have never done some noble, worthy deed, just for my sake, and—"

"What do you want me to do?" cried Phil. "Great Scott! I have lugged home dozens of medals for you, I have carried a dray-load of football players across a goal-line for you, I have taken you to grand opera, and to New Thought meetings of every kind and description, I have lived a fairly decent life for you, I have—"

"Yes, but all these things were general acts, fine enough in their way; but not that great change which a woman wants to feel she has made in a man's life."

Phil looked at the clouds, the far off silver of the Sound, and then at an ant hill. The clouds were beautiful in their ever changing softness, and yet in spite of the endless varia-

tion, they seemed filled with repose; the Sound also sent up a shimmering glitter which was a harmonious blend of perpetual motion and eternal repose; but in the ant hill —

“Edith,” he said solemnly, “I wonder if you will make me a saint, a devil, or merely an ordinary fool? There never was anything which irritated me more than being told to go to an ant for real instruction. I’d rather be a cloud than an ant! If a confounded ant were to relax long enough to give a sigh of relief, he’d split up the back and blow away. I’d rather be anything else in the world than an ant — Now you take a moth, and they are generally held up as a warning to the young, but I’d rather be one moth than a whole hill of ants!”

“You are a moth, Phil; and I fear that you will have to be pretty badly singed, at least; and I hope that you will not utterly perish in the flame, which is the common fate of so many of the silly things.”

“Edith, you scatter practicability, and utility, and high purpose, and such words like a street sprinkler; but your outlook is fully as immature as my own — even if you don’t get as much fun out of it as I do. I think occasionally, myself. I really get a lot of amusement out of quiet reflection. Just because our philosophies differ is no absolute indication that mine is wrong.

“Did you ever stop to consider that it was the mystery of life which made it attractive? The greater the mystery, the greater the attraction. Take the mystery out of religion and who would stand for being a martyr? An ant has no mystery, and I have often thought that the reason they rush around so, sticking their noses into everything, is because they were hunting for something they could n’t understand. I’d as soon be a gimlet as an ant! But a

SHE THROWS HER GLOVE 11

moth — Ah, he is the boy that revels in mystery; he loses himself in it, he becomes completely absorbed in it, he forgets his own tiny being and merges himself with true infinity, in the only way possible for a finite creature to feel the blissful content which, perforce, must be a characteristic of the infinite. The barren life is the logical one, the mathematical one, the one which is chained within the circle of reason. The fruitful life which blooms without thought of its prodigality, is the life which feels on every side of it the great, enveloping mysteries of creation, and therefore does not care a white bean whether or not it piles up each minute a given amount of bricks or straw, or whatever it has set itself as a worthy stint. Just to live is glory enough, if the life currents surge along with a song."

Phil's voice was mellow and musical like the voice of some old time shepherd poet, and Edith listened with a fascination she fought against as an indication of weakness. His philosophy had no effect upon her. In fact, she would not have dignified it by the name of philosophy; but he, himself, his clear skin, his deep eyes with their unexpected trace of sadness, and his voice which made little inner nerves vibrate in unison with its own pleasing melody stirred her nature to its depths in spite of watchful opposition. In the far off days when the world was young and trusting, if he had come to her out of the wood, she would have looked upon him as a god, and would have been supremely happy — until he went away again; but this was to-day and it was woman's mission to be an active force in a man's career and Phil could be such a man if only he would awaken.

"It is certainly a proud moment for me," she said at last with forced sarcasm. "I wonder if there was ever another

woman in the world forced to hear the man to whom she was engaged express a desire to be a moth."

"Especially when that woman happened to be a species of gigantic ant," continued Phil, mocking her tone and inflection. "Oh, give it up, Edith. We can be as happy as white mice leading our own lives together; but we never could go the distance if we both tried to lead one life. I am perfectly willing to be referred to as the good-natured husband of that intellectual Mrs. Lytton; but I know I could never learn to manage a career of my own, so let me be your office boy and messenger. I've studied it all out and there is mighty little demand for a duffer like me. I am serious; I have gone over all the vocations and avocations, and they are crowded with better men than myself, so you relax like a good girl and let the world flop along on its own hook a while."

"There is always room at the top."

"And there is always a struggling mess of dopey dupes who have been knocked silly by that doubly condemned mushy old maxim, and who devote the balance of their lives to fighting each other like Kilkenny cats, without any more hope of reaching the top than a cave bear had of inventing a telescope. There is no more room at the top than there is at the bottom. The top is smaller than the bottom and the topnotchers are already there and they are so mortal 'fraid of being elbowed that they spend half their time tramping on the fingers of the strugglers who have begun to show class. A man who is doomed to do big things has a special commission sewed into his bosom before he is born, and he starts on his career, not because his friends and lovers urge him, but in spite of all their efforts to make him a butcher, a baker, or a candle-stick

SHE THROWS HER GLOVE 13

maker. I tell you I have looked into this thing, and I know. Another of your pet maxims is, 'Opportunity knocks once at every man's door'"—Phil said this most disrespectfully—"but the truth is that Opportunity never had a chance to knock at the door of the genuine ambitionists. They called around a full hour before Opportunity was ready to arise, jerked her out of bed, knocked her down with a chair, and choked her until she offered them everything she had for the sake of peace."

"Now, Phil, don't for pity's sake hide in the last ditch and whine that there is no opportunity for a man like you."

"For a man like me—that is just it. I am a hot house flower; I have been fertilized and cultivated and cared for until I have lost the old, militant, grabbing spirit of the weed. I lack incentive; my great-grandfather, who made the fortune, used up the major part of the family allowance, his son used up the rest, my father tried to ruin the family stamina through dissipation; and I am trying to get it back through good, healthy sport. The fortune was left in trust, old Nathan Meyer who now has charge of it is honest and shrewd, all I have to do is to go down every year or so and sign some papers and he tells me how much larger my income will be, and I hunt up new ways to blow it in. You should be tickled to death that I am fairly decent without spurring me on to make some vague sort of a killing. Now be specific for once: just what is it you want me to do?"

Edith looked confused, pained; it was very unjust for him to thrust the full responsibility upon her. "I do not care in the least what you attempt, Phil," she began with dignity. "The important thing is that you do attempt something."

"There you are, there you have it in a nutshell. Be an ant, scurry about, climb up one blade of grass and if you don't find it there climb another one and when nervous prostration sets in, come to me and I shall nurse you with an expression of patient suffering on my face. Oh, rats! Imagine a coach saying, 'Now, boys, I don't care what you do with the ball, just so you keep it moving; the goal is not important, action is what counts; it is not necessary to have any end in view; but it is imperative that you play a hard, fierce game.' Don't fourflush now, Edith. You have me on the slide, pick out the direction and give me the final push and I'll give you one beautiful run for your money."

"And then if it turns out badly, you'll spend the rest of your life reproaching me." Edith was really alarmed at the determination she saw in Phil's face.

His face flushed beneath its tan at this, and his voice was cold and stern. "Now, I may be nothing but a filler-in; but hanged if I'm a welcher. I intend making a try at something, and I should be heartily thankful for any suggestions. If I make a go of it, you get the credit; if I lose, why we'll say no more about it. Now then, name your route."

"Business seems the most natural outlet for the modern man's energy," said Edith slowly and without enthusiasm; "or one of the professions, although that would mean a long course of special preparation —"

"While any dub can jump into business and scoop the seasoned players into his net," interjected Phil scoffingly. "Well, you have done something with me at last, anyway. I can see now that you could never have loved me, just for myself. I suppose that it was given to woman to urge man into combat for the good of the race. All the way

SHE THROWS HER GLOVE 15

back you can see w... tender-hearted woman has stood on the sidelines with thumbs down and has urged man to gather enough scalps while he is at it to furnish her with fringe trimming for a winter suit. She's a curious combination, woman, she wears dead birds, and the furs of dead animals, and in a good many cases the blood of dead men; but believe that I am absolutely sincere when I say that all this has been for the good of the race, and if I can't make good I am not fit for you, so from this minute you are free and when next I make love to you, I'll make love like a man — your kind of a man."

She made no reply: her lips were trembling and a mist across her eyes hid the silver sheen of the Sound upon which they seemed to be fixed. She felt that he was terribly unjust, but she could not make her own position clear without going into all the details of their conversation, and in some way, this would have appeared to have been an acknowledgment that she had been wrong, while she felt that she had been right; so they sat in silence for quite a period.

"I think that Wilson is responsible for that dust in the distance," said Phil at last, "but I am going down to see if I can fix the tire before he arrives."

CHAPTER TWO

PHIL IS DISPOSED TO LEAP AFTER

AT eight o'clock next morning Philip Lytton arose and shaved himself. He was under the shower and the hot water was dwindling to cold when there came a startled knock at the bathroom door. Even a dull ear could have classified it as a startled knock.

"Come in," called Phil. He had no intention of denying himself the luxury of having the warm blood, he had brought to the surface, caressed and stimulated by the needle sprays; neither did he see that his natural condition was a just cause for keeping anyone waiting at his bathroom door, after he had knocked upon it with a distinctly startled knock.

The door opened a few inches and Phil faced it over his shoulder with a frank smile of welcome; but no one entered. Instead a voice, dignified and decorous in spite of its undertone of anxiety, asked; "Is there anything wrong, sir?"

"Oh, that's you is it, Hereford?" Then changing his voice to one of serious intensity, Phil continued, "Yes, there is something very, very wrong."

Hereford is entitled to a very formal introduction, for, of a truth, he was a very formal character. Hereford had been trained in the service of the Earl of Barrington and had later been the traveling valet of Lord Merceston. Why he had left England and why he had taken service

PHIL DISPOSED TO LEAP 17

with Phil, no one could imagine, unless it was Hereford himself, and nothing short of a major operation could remove private information from Hereford.

His work was so deft, so seasonable, and so faultless that regardless of the fact that Phil felt a positive affection for him and played gentle jokes upon him and unconsciously confided in him, he generally looked upon him as a wonderful automaton, priceless and infallible. Phil never knew how he dressed or what he wore, but he never missed an engagement and he never went incorrectly clad.

When Hereford heard Phil say that something was wrong, he shuddered. Of course Phil could not see the shudder and Hereford would never have demonstrated such bad form as to shudder in a rude, uncouth manner likely to make the door he was holding creak or the bric-a-brac twinkle; but some of the shudder was audible in his voice as he asked contritely, "What is it, sir?"

"Hereford," said Phil, and paused ominously, "I have been wasting the best years of my life, and now I am going to work."

If Phil had announced war with a first class power and himself as a recruit in the militia, Hereford would have immediately selected the best military tailor in the country and would have suggested that the making of the uniforms be left to him. If Phil had confessed a terrible murder, Hereford would have told him when the next fruit boat left for South America and the proper way to board it without attracting attention; but when Phil made the above startling declaration, Hereford was stunned. He had no reply, he had no suggestions. He merely gasped and closed the door.

Phil chuckled softly to himself as he turned off the

shower and proceeded to give his clear skin a friction polish. He was still smiling when he emerged from the bathroom drawing the cord of his bathrobe about him. Phil was orderly in many things: for instance, he almost invariably ate his breakfast in a bathrobe and his dinner in evening clothes, just as he voted the Republican ticket and occasionally attended the Episcopal church. They seemed the proper things to do, and so he did them. When things satisfied his sense of fitness, without making unreasonable demands upon him, he was equally courteous and did not probe about in their past or make them furnish up to date credentials.

Hereford was standing in front of the open window, his hands clasped across his breast, an expression of brooding sorrow upon his face. When he saw Phil's cheery smile, a timid smile came to his own face, although it was forced to hide itself behind the gloom of a real hurt. "You were pleased to jest, sir?" he asked.

"I was indeed pleased to find that I could still jest after having lain awake all night thinking about my wasted past, Hereford; but if you mean that my intention to embrace a business career was merely a pleasantry, you err. That is the simple truth, Hereford, you err."

"Then you are going to work, sir?"

"Don't speak of it in that doleful voice, man. Work is an honorable calling. Nice world this would be if nobody worked!"

Hereford shook his head; not with the intention of impertinently denying the statement, but in a vague attempt to express his hopeless doubt as to the nature of the calamity which had come upon them. If it were merely a question of money, why he could have fixed that; but he knew

that Phil was an unusually long distance behind his income. His health was perfect, insanity was out of the question — Hereford gave it up.

“Will you wish breakfast, sir?” he asked in a diffident voice. Always before, the first drop of Phil’s coffee had been poured into his cup at the exact instant that his fingers touched the doorknob.

“I knew there was something lacking!” exclaimed Phil. “Don’t be silly; there is no possible theory which would presume that a man would stop eating simply because he was going to start working. Or did you think that I would begin at once to eat from a tin pail?”

Hereford merely bowed and hastened to the kitchenette, while Phil lighted a cigarette and strolled through his suite, the genuine melancholy in his eyes at last having gained possession of his facial expression.

The building in which his apartment was situated stood on the west side of the avenue and the morning sun was warm and cheerful as he peered out through the curtains — and sighed. The morning parade, differing completely from that of the afternoon, yet equally typical, was in full swing. “They do not work,” he muttered. “Yet somebody must, or they couldn’t do it.”

He turned and gazed about the room: the furnishings were rich, yet cosy, tasteful, and comfortable. Nearly every item was a gift with some odd little memory attached; signed etchings and sketches adorned the walls in a profusion which was truly Bohemian and truly harmonious. One of them was the head of a bulldog, his lower teeth warning the entire world to tread softly, his brown, wide open eyes denoting the loving heart and the convivial spirit. It was the work of a boy whom Phil had found in the

park ten years before and who was now exhibiting in the Paris Salon.

Phil looked into the eyes of the picture while a mist came across his own. "Poor old Truffles," he murmured as he pointed his finger tragically toward the skin of a black panther which lay upon a bench of curious design and quaint foreign carving, "he used to sleep every night on that skin; and Saunders was killed less than a week after he sent me that pelt. And now little Iola is painting portraits of human aristocrats."

Phil sat on a chair made of horn and rawhide and dropped his chin into his hands. "Supposing I win?" he asked the assembly; for so personal were his surroundings that he habitually visited with the spirits of those who had made them so. "Supposing I do win, what then? What if I should break through and rip things up the middle and get into the papers as the new Napoleon of finance, what would it bring me? There's a new Napoleon every week and I never saw one I envied. Of course I'll go through with it for Edith's sake; but no matter how it turns out, I don't see where I stand to win."

He sank into a reverie which was broken by Hereford's solemn announcement that breakfast was served.

Phil ate a trifle less than usual. The chance observer would have been perfectly satisfied with the condition of Phil's appetite, but to a scientist like Hereford, it was horribly apparent that wires were crossed, the fat was in the fire, and every day in the week was to be Monday.

As soon as he finished his breakfast, Phil telephoned to his garage. "Wilson," he said, distinctly, as one speaks when he does not desire to repeat or to invite discussion, "I want you to sell both cars. I am going to work and I shall

have no further use for them. When you have sold them, call me up and I shall make a settlement with you."

Phil smiled more freely after this message. It had a crisp, business twang, and he felt that he must possess considerable executive ability or he could not so promptly have put into operation a matter of such moment. It had taken a trip to Europe and much testing before he had decided upon the purchase of the cars.

"The morning papers, Hereford," he said briskly.

"The *Sun* is on your table with the mail, sir, as usual," reminded Hereford nervously.

"From now on, I want them all," said Phil. "The entire edition of the *Sun* and the industrial pages of the others."

Phil very rarely shaved himself and there was a little patch at the curve of each jaw which seemed to rasp against the soul of his man. Hereford longed to ask permission to go over the face himself, but did not dare.

"What will you wear to-day, sir?" he asked.

"What will I wear?" exclaimed Phil. "Why, what do I generally wear?"

There was a streak in Phil Lytton which yielded very readily to the occult and Hereford was clever beyond natural deftness. Phil had often been pleased to find that he had accidentally worn a tie or a pin or carried a handkerchief which had formerly been praised or presented or marked by the young lady upon whom he was making a call. He gave fate the credit and, in a measure, he was right. Hereford was the best fate which could have befallen him.

Phil's method of taking life for granted and being pleasantly thrilled by little mysteries which seemed to favor him,

lifted him far above the worries and cares which hamper the flights of so many. He was not aware that he consulted with Hereford, and still less aware that in very many matters it was Hereford himself who was the real director; so this morning Phil was shocked at the responsibility of choosing his own apparel.

"You expected to ride in the park this morning; and had not quite made up your mind whether you would motor or play polo this afternoon. You said that so many of the young gentlemen were out of town that—"

"Yes, of course, but I certainly have plenty of business suits, have n't I, Hereford?"

"What kind of business are you going to engage in, sir?"

"I am gradually going to take charge of my own fortune and tend to its reinvesting in enterprises which pay a larger dividend than it is at present producing," replied Phil with reserve. Hereford's face lightened.

"Will you have a down town office, sir; or will you transact your business here?"

Phil took a turn about the room, his arms folded across the breast of his bathrobe. "For the present, I shall not open a down town office. A down town office always makes me nervous, and unless I decide to enter the directorate of some company, I can just as well transact business right here."

"I think that you have plenty of business suits, sir," replied Hereford, without permitting his gaze to rest even covertly upon the bathrobe.

Phil walked into his library and picked the *Sun* from beneath a large assortment of rather more delectable mail. He read everything of an industrial nature with his brows

drawn together into a frown, and then crumpled up the paper and hurled it into a corner. "It's drudgery, that's what business is!" he exclaimed. "Labor disputes are everlastingly being finally settled to everybody's satisfaction, and everlastingly breaking out again a few weeks later; coal miners don't do anything from one year's end to another except strike, and I can't see how they live or where the coal comes from; money is always getting tighter or looser, but I have handled quite a little of it without being able to tell for the life of me whether it was loose or tight. Something falls off a point and everyone has a panic. It's stupid! I'll have to get Hereford to help me. I'll have to fix it so he can take the paper after I have read it and see how much of this junk I can remember. Oh, rot, I've half a mind to give it up even now!"

The rest of his mail had a more soothing effect. Very largely it was from ladies who had found certain drawbacks to the business of conducting a smooth and successful summer campaign. The men who came down for the week end either huddled together talking business or playing poker, or else they flirted with the wrong ladies, and Phil was always reliable and altogether a dear and a comfort. This sounded more like a human appeal to Phil, than the senseless jargon of a market report. He wondered vaguely what else a market did besides making its stupid report.

He laid three of the letters aside to answer himself and left the others to Hereford who wrote exactly the same hand as he did and composed in exactly the same style. It was a source of keen regret to Phil that Hereford was not also able to attend some of the more formal functions as his substitute, but it was impossible. They were the same size, but there it ended. Age was a thing apart from the man

and no one could tell whether he was thirty or fifty; but he was always the man and it would have been as hard for Phil to disguise himself as a valet as for Hereford to pose as a gentleman of leisure, if a man as busy as Phil, can be so characterized.

"There they are," mused Phil, "romping about in the mountains and at the seashore; and here am I, up to my knees in the sweetest kind of a pasture and braying my fool head off for someone to come and put the harness on me. I can see why a man would work to get what I have; but I honestly can't see why he should keep it up afterward. I am going to see the Colonel about this. He's a hard old nut and I'd risk a bet that he'll see it in the true light. If Edith were to announce that she intended to open a millinery store, we'd put an ice bag on her head and ship her off to a rest-cure without consulting her much about it; and it is exactly the same case with me. Hereford," he called, "get out my things, will you. I'm going down to see Colonel Edgerton."

Phil picked up a copy of Omar and looked at the soft leather cover. "Now, here was a sport and a philosopher," he said with an eloquent gesture. "Can you see anyone scooping him into a business net? No, I should say not. Supposing instead of slipping a book of verses, a loaf of bread, and a jug of wine into her suit case and accepting his invitation on the spot, she had drawn herself up haughtily and said, 'No, you have wasted the best years of your life already. I insist that you engage in commerce and industry.' What would Omar have done, huh? That's the question, what would Omar have done? Omar would have pulled verse number twelve on her and she would have blown up all the business colleges in the

country and would have followed him to the North Pole in a bathing suit. She does n't love me; Edith does n't love me, and that is the real answer."

A downcast look came to the boyish face; but before the gloom had been permitted to penetrate very deeply, Hereford announced Wilson, and Phil admitted him.

The chauffeur was a young fellow with a keen, reliant face thoroughly tanned, and just at this moment filled with gloomy foreboding. He carried his cap crumpled in his hand and his eyes shot forth reproachful glances akin to those with which a dog wounds the master who has just sent him home, after they have arrived at the game country.

"You don't really mean it, do you?" he asked. It was almost man to man with them and their association had been most pleasant. Wilson was a superior fellow and had too much self-respect to presume; but driving a car was a passion with him, and the realities of life had crowded aside their forms.

"Certainly I mean it," replied Phil a trifle coolly.

"But, great Scott, Mr. Lytton, you have the best cars in town and they are just getting thoroughly seasoned. It seems a shame—"

"I appreciate, Wilson, that you take a personal interest in your work and that you are perfectly sincere; but my mind is made up. I shall have no further use for the cars. I am going into business."

Wilson looked at his employer steadily. "Might I presume to ask the kind of business, Mr. Lytton?" he asked respectfully. "I have given a lot of thought to the motor car, and especially in regard to its adaptability to modern business needs."

"The kind of business I expect to take up will not leave

me much time for exercise, and I must choose the kind whose reactions are more direct than riding in a car."

"Let your car be the annex of your office. What ever form of business you go into, you can transact a lot of it in a car. Every kind of business depends on selling something to someone. I don't suppose you will be a — Of course, you understand that I am not trying to find out what kind of business you are going into, but have you really considered whether a car won't be of actual service to you, dollars and cents service?"

"No, Wilson, I admit that I have not thought over the question seriously; but as I have always looked upon a car as a mere luxury, I fear it would be apt to interfere with my serious affairs. I want you to sell the cars for as good a price as you can, and I leave that entirely to your judgment. I shall give you a liberal commission and a recommendation which I think will have some weight. I really hate to give you up, Wilson."

The chauffeur sat with his eyes on the carpet, studying. He was a man of extreme concentration and before long he had embarked upon a line of thought which drew him rapidly away from himself and his employer. Phil waited several minutes patiently, and then said in a mildly suggestive tone, "I think that you will probably find it more convenient to plan your campaign alone; and therefore I leave it entirely to yourself."

"I'd like to go into business, myself," said Wilson explosively.

"Yes, this is a funny world," rejoined Phil enigmatically.

"I could take just those two cars and make a fortune out of them. I'll tell you what I'd like to try, Mr. Lytton,"

PHIL DISPOSED TO LEAP 27

— with enthusiastic earnestness — “I’d like to run those cars as income producers for just one week, and see what happens. I’ll take half the proceeds as wages and give you —”

“No, I really can’t be mixed up in that kind of business,” interjected Phil, but not with convincing finality.

“You won’t be mixed up in it, your name won’t be used in any way and I’ll take the entire management and pay all the expenses out of my half. Are you aware that already over three hundred and eighty-eight million dollars of capital are invested in the manufacture of motor cars in this country, and most folks think it is some kind of a toy and talk about riding in one as though it were going up in a balloon? It is only in the experimental stage now; but when they get it headed home, everybody in the world is going to have some kind of a car. Hokey pokey men on the East Side will peddle their stuff from a car in ten years, messenger boys will own cars with phonograph attachments, to read to them as they ride, you know, the bicycle crowd will rush to them in a body, the clerks — Why in a dozen years people will take a ride on the trolley cars on Sunday, just for the novelty. You have the best cars in this town, but I have figured out fifteen ways in which they can be improved and I’m going to have a couple of patents as soon as I can save a trifle more.”

Wilson paused and looked into his employer’s face. Phil was looking at the chauffeur in ill-disguised envy. Here was a man who was keen for business, who knew what kind he preferred, who had talent and skill and sound judgment, even if he was carried away by his own enthusiasm, and Phil felt his own inefficiency all the more keenly because his sense of fair play had already warned him that he was

going to give this man his chance. Wilson felt some of this and with hope and doubt struggling for the mastery, he asked, "You — you would n't like to invest some of your money along this line would you, Mr. Lytton?"

"I must admit, Wilson, that you seem to have considered the situation with some care."

"Mr. Lytton, this is a situation which you don't have to consider. It runs after you, button-holes you, and talks you into a trance. Everything about an auto can be improved, until it can go over any old road at high speed. It is going to open new country to money-making industry which is n't doing anything but lie out doors now. The factories are not going to be able to keep up with orders as soon as the people get wise; but I should n't want to go into the manufacture of cars even if I had a chain of banks. The big play, according to my guess, is to lag around on the outskirts and make the findings, the best thing in lamps, the best sort of horn, the little things that can be hit up for a gorgeous profit without looking like a hold-up to a man who has just paid for a car. Then, right here in town is a wonderful opening for cab lines — Oh, Mr. Lytton, if you are going into business, here is your opening. Why, I could take a hundred thousand dollars and make it pay fifty per cent. profit from the start."

"And that is big interest, I should say," murmured Phil thoughtfully. "Well, I'll think it over, Wilson. You try your experiment with the two cars for a week or so and then we'll have another talk. Good luck, Wilson."

"Thank you, sir. Good morning."

Phil had treated Wilson more nearly as an equal at this interview than ever before. This was the very first time

PHIL DISPOSED TO LEAP 29

that Wilson had ever called him sir. Neither of them were aware of this.

"I am in something of a hurry, Hereford," said Phil hastening to his room and flinging off the bathrobe. "We'll have to have breakfast earlier after this."

"Would you mind, sir, if I just ran over your face a bit with the razor, dry? There's a stub or two here and there which you missed, and I've always taken pride in your face, sir. I would n't want any one to notice that it was n't quite smooth, sir."

"Hereford, I'll probably be so rushed pretty soon, that I won't shave more than twice a week — but this morning I guess you may plane it down to your own satisfaction. It is nearly one now, any way, and there is no knowing where the Colonel is."

"I suppose, sir," said Hereford as he deftly ran over Phil's face with the razor, "that there comes a time in every man's life when he wants to go into business for himself."

"He's driven into it, Hereford," said Phil confidentially. "Either his vanity or his necessity drive him into it." Phil did not have the faintest idea that Hereford would presume to include himself in a general discussion of men. Hereford had never before done such a thing.

"That is true, sir. I should never have thought of it if you had not declared your own intention this morning. I supposed we were settled just as we were, for life, sir." Hereford was abnormally solemn.

"But it won't make any difference in my domestic arrangements!" cried Phil in alarm. "I'll have to eat and sleep and bathe just the same. What are you talking about, Hereford?"

"It has made a difference already, sir. I have always been used to living with gentlemen of leisure, with one exception. When I first went into service, I took on with a business man. He was an English business man, but it was not pleasant to serve him. I could never stand it to do for an American business man."

"You've lost your reason, Hereford," said Phil in disgust. "I'd like to know what difference it would make in me."

"You'll get nervous, sir, and fidgety and cross. You won't appreciate things and you will treat others not as they deserve but as your business happens to be going. You will become a part of the business and everyone who waits on you or is related to you in a domestic way, must turn and twist with the business. I could not bring myself to take service with anyone else in this country and I don't want to go back to England — so I think I'll go into business also."

Phil threw himself back in his chair with a nasal "humph" and stared at his man almost in consternation. Hereford held the razor aloft and looked into the eyes of his master with his own face going pale at the effect of his manifesto. Had a stranger entered the room at this period, he would forever after have been convinced that he had prevented murder.

"Well, good Lord, man," exclaimed Phil as soon as he caught his breath, "is the blame thing contagious?"

"No, sir, I think not," replied Hereford in all seriousness, "but I must admit that it never occurred to me until you announced your own intention, sir. Then I thought that it would be well for me to consider my own future. You see a dependent upon a business man is also dependent

PHIL DISPOSED TO LEAP 31

upon all the dangers to the business, in addition to the personal whims of his employer. It takes all the comfort out of life, sir. You might fail in business just at the time that I received an accident which would prevent my finding a suitable position; and that would be most inconvenient."

Phil was in a daze: to think of Hereford considering Hereford's convenience was to see the solid earth crumbling before his eyes. "What kind of business would you engage in, Hereford?" he asked meekly.

Hereford almost started to seat himself, but recovered in time. "I have been thinking very steadily this morning, sir. Many gentlemen cannot afford to keep a man constantly, and yet when they wish to present a proper appearance they could pay liberally for one for a short period. I am considering the training of a corps of young men to let out by the day, week, or month. By a careful system of books, I should not need to send the same man with a different gentleman to the same house, and I should keep the matter quite exclusive in order to avoid the slightest embarrassment. Then there is an opening for professional packers. I should train them to pack clothing so that it would cross the water without needing pressing, and this department, I should advertise. Through this opening I should find the gentlemen who require temporary valets, and I think it would be highly remunerative."

"How much money have you saved, Hereford?"

"Twenty thousand three hundred and sixty-five dollars, sir," replied the man with quiet pride.

Phil sighed: here was a man who had labored all his life, doing the very best sort of work possible to his subordinate position, and yet he was proud of having saved a miserable pittance! Still the main cause of the sigh was envy. In

spite of the fact that Hereford attempted to be ultra humble, it was apparent that he was inflated with confidence and he had picked out his particular business as readily as Wilson had picked his, and both of these enterprises possessed elements of originality which would demand a high order of executive ability to make them successful; while he, with so much greater opportunities, felt like a lost child.

“I think I shall have something more to say on this subject, Hereford; but now hurry me into my clothes as I have an important appointment.”

CHAPTER THREE

THE COLONEL ADVISES CARE

PUT not your trust in facial expressions. Ninety per cent. of the people who for the first time saw Colonel Edgerton striding up Rector Street to his office, would have said, there goes a stern man. The Colonel carried his head well up in the air and a little to the right; he was tall, with good shoulders and altogether a military figure. He had a fine head of white hair, bushy white eyebrows, and white moustaches and imperial. Sometimes he slipped his right hand across his breast and into the bosom of his coat which he invariably wore buttoned. Always he wore a preoccupied look as though tortured by the responsibilities of some impending judgment. Yes, fully ninety per cent. even of those accustomed to seeing the Colonel would not have hesitated in pronouncing him a stern man; and yet in reality he was Edith Hampton's guardian and she was beyond question the commandant of their small post.

Edith felt no necessity of striding, scowling, or assuming Napoleonic poses; she placed no reliance upon overawing the enemy; when it came to the actual conflict she would close in and crush him; but in the meantime she would be as sunny and tranquil and smiling as the grassy bank which hides a disappearing gun. The Colonel much preferred an enemy willing to capitulate without a single blow. He never tried to overawe Edith; in fact he had a

habit, as unconscious as it was comical, of lifting his eyes to hers from time to time while a tiny shade of apprehension came upon his firm, soldierly face. He had been a vigorous fighter in the Civil War, a man of action, quick, powerful, certain; but he had assumed the guardianship of Edith shortly after her fourth birthday, and since then he had felt like a corporal commanding a regiment of captains.

He was a conservative man, was the Colonel, accepting the conventions without question and living up to his code, free from the slightest temptation to question its rectitude. He had a choice and exclusive coterie of friends in whose company genuine good fellowship flowed pleasantly between high banks of rather pompous etiquette. A title was never dropped or slurred in this environment, and every topic of conversation was regarded as a distinguished guest, worthy of being received with the main guard at attention and the colors uncased. The Colonel looked upon slang as the first step to atheism and he engaged in many earnest meditations upon the flippancy of modern youth. He was in no sense a philosopher: things reached his heart by a direct road and his intellect was frequently at work seeking defences for opinions which his heart had accepted without question.

He was a man of warm affections, tender sympathies, and fierce denunciations, a man to rely upon to the farthest limit, when once his limitations were understood. Edith fully understood them and their mutual love was steady and strong despite his awe of her and her failure to feel awe of him.

This was the man whom Phil Lytton was hastening to meet — Phil Lytton, riding on an elevated train and filled with an aggrieved wonder as to what further sacrifices busi-

ness would demand of him. The Colonel was fond of Phil without being in the least able to understand him. He loaded himself to the very guards with duties, while Phil politely stepped to one side in order to give each duty an untrammelled passage around him. Possibly the closest bond between them was their mutual awe of Edith.

Phil entered the Colonel's office and found the solitary clerk, a dapper little man of advanced age, mechanical precision, and military deportment. He and the Colonel invariably saluted when they first met shortly after nine in the morning, and he always stood at attention to receive instructions which were usually general, not special orders.

"Is Colonel Edgerton at leisure, Mr. Blake?" asked Phil. No one ever dropped the title in addressing Mr. Blake.

"He just stepped out, Mr. Lytton; but I think he will return shortly."

"I shall step into his office and wait for him."

"Certainly. Will you look at the morning paper?"

"Morning paper at this time of day!" exclaimed Phil in a shocked voice as he passed into the small inner office and seated himself at the desk which resembled a model battlefield with its accessories arranged for maneuvers.

"The Colonel's a good old sport," murmured Phil. "Business has n't hurt him."

He found the cigars and helped himself with a sigh of resignation. The smoke was of exactly the orthodox blue, and he found it very soothing. His feet unconsciously mounted to the top of the desk, his hands clasped behind his head, and he was soon busily engaged in day-dreaming under the delusion that he was doing some very hard and consistent thinking.

36 THE KNIGHT-ERRANT

"Good morning, good morning, Phil," cried the Colonel heartily.

"Good morning, Colonel," responded Phil without enthusiasm.

"With any one else I should have said, good afternoon; but I suppose it is still morning with you."

"Not to-day, Colonel, nor any other day," said Phil dolefully.

The Colonel's expression changed immediately to one of the deepest sympathy. He placed his hand on Phil's shoulder. "What is it, my boy?" he asked in a kindly tone. "No matter what it is, you can count on me; and remember, a trouble shared is a trouble halved."

"I am going to work," answered Phil solemnly.

"Work!" ejaculated the Colonel, and then he seated himself and wiped his brow with a very large handkerchief.

"Phil, have you been speculating?"

"Not yet."

"Then why are you going to work? I'll confess that you have irritated me at times, because I have envied the opportunities you have ignored; but still it startles me to think of your actually engaging in business. What kind of work are you going to do, any way?"

"That is what I want to consult with you about."

"Hu-hum," said the Colonel with closed lips, after which he stroked his imperial with his fingers and sat in meditation. "Phil," he said at last, "perhaps you have noticed that whenever I can escape Edith I never go to church any more?"—Phil nodded—"Well, I began to notice that the preachers were as badly puzzled as the balance of us when it came to giving specific directions. When a man gives me directions, I want him to say, you go

to exactly such and such a corner and then turn to your left and go exactly so much farther. The world is full of advisers, but they don't give you the details, they merely suggest a lot of inanities which you know already, and what you are after, is a list of the small details which will apply to your own individual case."

"That's it, that's where the trouble comes in," said Phil who was feeling much comforted.

"Now if I were you, Phil, with your temperament and your income, I should not go into business at all." A great joy came to Phil's face, and the Colonel continued, "If you had ten times as large an income you could not get any more fun out of life, and you would probably not get half so much. You don't enjoy making money, you enjoy spending it. You have plenty to spend, therefore why should you risk what is amply sufficient, in order to make a lot more which you do not want?"

"That is what I have been telling Edith, but —"

"Oh-ho!" exclaimed the Colonel with an instantaneous change of expression. "So Edith is back of this, eh? Well that alters the case entirely. I suppose you are thoroughly determined to go into business?"

Phil shut his lips and nodded without speaking. The Colonel also nodded in silence and for a minute both men were buried in thought.

"What you should do," said the Colonel, "is to start in as an office boy or something like that. Learn the business, live on your wages, let your own income accumulate until you have learned the business and then invest the accumulations without disturbing your own principal. There is a sensible plan for you and it goes into details, too."

"I certainly should have a fine time of it living on the wages of an office boy," said Phil resentfully. "I don't know what an office boy receives, but I'll wager I pay Hereford four times as much and he has only saved twenty thousand dollars in his entire life."

"Now, you must understand, Phil, that Hereford and the automobiles and the polo ponies, and your suite will have to be discarded if you do go into business. Business is a jealous damsel and you can't give her just your spare time. You have to make a business of wooing her, and you have to discipline yourself most rigidly. What on earth possessed Edith to put this idea into your head?"

"Edith is a very superior woman," said Phil.

"I am aware of that," rejoined the Colonel, dryly. "I have served under her for twenty years now. Still, I have occasionally been suspicious that it was merely her manner and not her judgment which was superior. In this particular case for instance, I very much doubt if she is right. In fact, I apprehend that she has made a grave mistake. Do you play poker?"

"Yes," answered Phil in surprise.

"When you win, how much do you win?"

"All the other fellows have."

"When you lose, how much do you lose?"

"All I have."

The Colonel nodded his head. "I thought so, I was sure of it. You are a plunger and you are almost certain to lose at the start. You won't stick to your income, you'll risk your principle. Phil, I'll let you into a secret if you'll keep it from Edith."

"You should know me better than that by this time, Colonel."

"Yes, but I also know Edith. Now, has she ever said anything about me in connection with business?"

"She nearly always cites your case as exactly proving her contention that an active business life is the perfect outlet for the modern man's energies."

"Phil, I have no more use for an office than I have for a dorsal fin. She drove me into business when she was eight years old. The papas of the other girls were in business and she felt the disgrace of having a guardian who did not have to work. Positively that child so wrought upon me that I have ever since pretended to be a business man. I have — Phil, you 'll think I'm insane; but I have managed two estates in the most conservative way possible and yet with enough shrewdness to greatly increase their incomes, and all the while I have kept Blake for the sole purpose of following up my fictitious speculating. All those books contain the record of it, and fictitiously I am at present worth over two hundred million dollars."

"Seven years ago I was nearly wiped out — fictitiously, understand — and when things straightened out again, I had to go to a sanatorium and Edith told about the terrific struggle I had been having. The news got into the papers, I was interviewed, or that is I had to refuse half the reporters in New York, and I did it so brusquely that they were convinced that I was one of those mysterious side street manipulators. I don't know how much of it Blake, himself, understands, but he has more diplomacy than a Chinese ambassador. Since that time I have been a marked man and the two estates I managed have prospered wonderfully; but actually, Phil, I'm not a regular business man. The routine work of the two estates could be transacted in a half hour out of the week; but I sit here and plan campaigns,

mostly in real estate, and I follow my judgment through until I close out at a big profit or pull out to save my risk. It is far more exciting than poker, and I now have one of the finest investment lists in this town, and —”

“Well, why don't you play for keeps and make it worth while?” demanded Phil.

“There! There you are!” exclaimed the Colonel pointing a finger at Phil and sinking back in his chair, as one who had finally proven a long contested point. “You would have to play for keeps; you are that kind. All my talk has been in vain. I hoped you would see the way out, but it's not for you. I hoped, Phil, that you would go into partnership with me in my fictitious business; there really is more of it than I can attend to any more, and you could get a clear idea of business without risking —”

“I'd sooner play bridge with three dummies,” interjected Phil. “No, I've put this aside for over a year. Now, I'm going to see what there is in it, and I'm going to play the real game, and for keeps.”

The Colonel was hurt: he was a sensitive man and it had tested his fondness for Phil when he had uncovered the inner workings of his peculiar business. “Phil,” he said sternly as he sat erect in his chair, “I don't want you to think that I am any less of a man than you would be. I also want to play the game for keeps; but when it comes to a case of my desires against my duty, I throw my desires and trample the life out of them. I wanted to go into business on a big scale, but I felt tied. It's a long story, and —”

“Oh, unload it; I've nothing but time,” interrupted Phil.

“I wish you children would not use slang. I find my conversation daily growing less correct, and sometimes I

COLONEL ADVISES CARE 41

am seriously embarrassed by the things I—now, I came within an ace of saying, unload. You compare everything mentally with something entirely different, and then when you speak you criss-cross the comparisons and, really, it often seems to add force.”

“You see we have so little to say and so much time to say it in, that if we did not invent new ways of saying it, we should die of ennui,” rejoined Phil candidly.

“I think I shall condense the story and tell it,” mused the Colonel aloud. “Don’t ask me for any particulars. I’ll tell you enough to show you how I have been tied—.” The Colonel paused.

“They’re off at Sheepshead,” said Phil encouragingly.

“My father went to Athens, Indiana, in eighteen thirty-six and located there in business.”

“What do you know about that?” exclaimed Phil. “I’d discard my hairs one at a time if it would give me a head for business like that. Athens, Indiana!”

“It was at that time the end of the Wabash and Erie Canal. Chicago was a small trading post, Indianapolis a struggling hamlet, Athens was the distributing point for a vast territory, and my father amassed a fortune. My brother was a wild youth, two years my junior. He took no interest in business or in study. I was at Princeton when the war broke out and, of course, I went. Elbert, my brother, had just enraged my father by secretly marrying the hired girl. My father disowned him, drove him from the house, and naturally he also enlisted, leaving his wife with her parents.

“After the war, I returned, breveted a colonel. Elbert returned with one arm missing and without even the stripes on his sleeve. I was received as the prodigal son

is generally supposed to be received, while Elbert was given a very plain and rather severe lecture; but was permitted to live at home owing to the fact that during his absence his wife had died. I desired a professional life, but yielding to my father's wishes, I engaged in business with him. He ran a general store and an immense warehouse. Elbert traded horses and spent a large part of his time in recounting his adventures during the war. I divided with my father the responsibility of teaching my brother a better mode of life, and shared with my father the sincere respect which Elbert freely gave. He was a good boy but obstinate, fun-loving, and wild. Finally Elbert went west and that was the last I ever heard of him.

"My mother, I forgot to say, had passed away previous to the war; and soon after Elbert left, my father also died leaving an estate of nearly four hundred thousand dollars and a most exasperating will, a most exasperating will. Athens had had its little day, the canal was being superseded by the railroads, and the canal was the sentimental streak in my father's character. He left the estate intact under my exclusive management, with the exception of the warehouse, which was to be turned into a home for superannuated canal-boat men, The E. E. Edgerton home. One third of the income from the estate was to be mine, one third Elbert's, and the remainder to go to this idiotic home. Canal-boat men never had a regular home of their own and did not know how to use one, and they so irritated me that I finally procured an order from the court to convert the estate into available funds which I brought to New York for investment. Under the ruling of the will, the home was to receive an endowment suitable to its economic needs upon the death of either Elbert or myself

and the remainder of the estate to be equally divided between the remaining son, and the heirs of the one deceased. In case the deceased son left no heirs, the entire remainder was to go to the surviving son. In case both sons died before the estate was settled, the entire estate was to be given to this diabolical home for superannuated canal-boat men.

"Phil, you cannot conceive of the way that home has pestered me. If my father had hated me without stint, he could have left no worse revenge. It is under a directorate formed of the mayor, the county doctor, and the oldest inmate of the home. The county doctor and the mayor change from time to time, and always for the worst; while the oldest inmate is eternal and gets more vicious with every breath he draws. All the tramps in the world have heard of it and they settle down on it in swarms, the requirements necessary to entrance are so loose that any one who ever saw a canal can get in, and the graft is a thing to, to, to — Well, Athens, itself, has put in most of its improvements by skilfully stretching the needs of that fool home. Water-works system; paving, parks, sewerage, everything they have was originally financed by the home and while they were at it they just made the plants large enough to accommodate the town as well.

"Under my management the estate has increased until it yields an income of two hundred thousand a year. My brother's share has compounded until it is five times as large as it would have been originally, and that confounded home goes along eating its head off until I am distracted. The directorate has a probationary plan which is rather clever and very useful. Every new applicant is now placed in the involuntary squad, and made to do public improvements without pay for a year. Athens is the most

beautiful little town in the world, they tell me. I've never been back, it would give me a fit; and all my reports are made out here.

"Now you see how I'm tied; I have a tender conscience when it comes to another's trust, and I have never speculated with either this estate or Edith's. I have made some remarkable investments, but none which could be called speculation, and yet I can put my finger right now on some of the — I nearly said, juiciest — propositions you ever saw."

Phil held out his hand silently and the two men exchanged a warm handshake.

"Edith's father saved my life, you know," suggested the Colonel a little wistfully.

"Yes, yes, you told me the story," said Phil hastily. He had heard it a hundred times and it was in no way remarkable.

"What are you going to do?" asked the Colonel, after they had sat in silence for some time.

"I don't know," said Phil in savage self-scorn. "I wish to heaven I were an ex-canal-boat man."

"Why not be my partner in the fictitious real estate business?" asked the Colonel invitingly. "After you have watched the movements for a year you can begin investing your actual funds, and Edith need never know. You have an ample income, and it really looks perfectly sane to me."

"Oh, it is the sanest thing possible; but I am not sane. I am one of those who could never play killed in a sham battle, or even get any excitement out of it. Even as a child, I could not pretend I was something else, as most children do. The only time I played burglar, I stole a diamond ring and it nearly caused —"

"Yes, I have heard of that," interrupted the Colonel, squaring himself with no small degree of comfort. He sat for a space in meditation, and then placing his hand on Phil's knee said earnestly: "She should not have done it, Phil. She has started something which frightens me. Why don't you be a man, why don't you snap your fingers in her face and tell her that you are your own master? A woman is a restless, impulsive, surface-skipping creature and a man is not required to tell her everything. He should in a measure regard her as he would a child."

"Well, I'll do it," said Phil with mock seriousness. "I'll quote you as authority, and I'll tell her what you have discovered of women after a lifetime spent in studying them."

A look of genuine alarm came into the Colonel's eyes as Phil arose, but it was quickly chased away by a smile. "I'm not worried about that part of you, my boy," he said heartily, also rising, and putting his hand on Phil's shoulder; "but I do wish I could talk you into my original, private, and perfectly safe outlet for the business impulse. You see, Phil, as a nation we are rather young and the young are likely to overdo, to plunge, to draw on their surplus in other words to lay up rheumatic joints for their old age by intemperance in their youth. That is what we are doing about business. Other things are worth while besides business, but just at present, it is a fad with us, and it runs through our blood like a fever. I wish Edith were more docile."

"Docile — Edith?" murmured Phil with a grin. "Well, any way, Colonel, I am much obliged to you for your kindness and I shall not abuse your confidence. I hope you make a billion dollars in fictitious money and that

the genuine ex-canal-boaters never get one red cent of it. I shall think over your proposition carefully, and if I can force myself into it, I swear I'll do so; but it is a bad, bad bet. Do you know, Colonel"—very soberly—"that I am sometimes a little worried about myself. For the most part I am as steady going and free from care as a quart of clotted cream, and then some small idea arises in the back part of my head and begins to push and elbow until it has standing room, and after that it begins to drive. I am often forced into doing things which my judgment tells me are foolish; but which something entirely aside from my judgment tells me will be for the best some time, some place, some way. It is a queer feeling, this having a vague, rather feeble faith in something opposed to reason, and blindly obeying it, while all the time reason says that I am the world's favorite in the open class for feeble witted."

The Colonel's expression was profound. He motioned Phil to be seated again and, after shaking his head from side to side, he gave expression to the one portentous word, "Liver."

"As indicated by the color of my skin," added Phil with his eyes twinkling.

"I can't explain it, I can't explain it," muttered the Colonel after a critical examination of Phil's glowing expression; "but Philip, I have those same dizzy spells myself and blue mass always makes me as right as a righter."

"Dizzy spells, blue mass!" exclaimed Phil indignantly. "This body of mine was built to run a hundred years. You know about as much about the soul, Colonel, as I do about business. It is now four o'clock, and with your permission I shall again thank you for bracing me up, and leave you, to make a call upon your ward."

COLONEL ADVISES CARE 47

"Phil," said the Colonel as they were shaking hands, "no matter how everlastingly foolish you act before this fit blows over, you come to me when it looks the blackest, and I'll let you stand on my shoulders until you can knock a few plums off the tree for yourself. Good luck, my boy."

CHAPTER FOUR

SKATE MORTON IS INTERESTED

PHIL walked slowly from the elevator to the curb, buried in deep thought and looking rather disconsolate. He stood on the curb for several minutes, his brows wrinkling while his hands strayed from pocket to pocket, according to their wont when his mind was preoccupied. The right one presently brought forth a cigar and this had the effect of putting Phil once more in touch with himself.

"I wonder what can have become of Wilson," he muttered impatiently. "I certainly must have told him to either wait for me or else to call at this hour. He has never failed me before. I am — Oh, I remember."

With a sigh, Phil turned toward the Sixth Avenue elevated and started to walk rapidly, with the result that he collided with a man of quite considerable weight.

"I beg your pardon, sir," said Phil with that chilly civility which so cleverly conveys the true message, "You stupid ass, why don't you stick to the streets until sufficiently trained to use a sidewalk with safety to the general public." It was bad enough to walk along a business street, crowded as it was at this hour; but to walk along this crowded street in order to board an elevated train was beyond the demands of courtesy.

Phil included all of this in his formal plea for pardon, but it fell flat, very flat indeed. The man of weight

straightened, looked Phil full in the face and raising his hands palms outward, he brought them down on Phil's shoulders with a resounding whack. "Why Phillie, Phil, Phil!" he exclaimed heartily. "Should the sun rise in the west, the North Pole set in the south, and all the stars join hands and dance a ballet, I could view the spectacle with equanimity; but to see you on foot in this neighborhood—Come, let us get a stimulant while you break the news to me as gently as possible."

"Skate, old boy, I'm rejoicing at the sight of you!" exclaimed Phil, his face beaming. "But what do you train on—lard oil and grape sugar? You run to suet like a fat stock show. Why don't you work some of it off?"

"Work? Why, you leisurely old loafer! I work sixteen hours every day and lie awake all night planning the next campaign," returned Mr. Ronald L. Morton, sometimes known as "Skate," as he locked arms with his friend and hurried him along at what Phil considered a most unseemly pace.

"You still look fit for the mile, son; how do you do it?" asked Morton, a bit wistfully, as soon as the waiter had been attended to.

"Easy enough," said Phil, who had for the nonce emerged from his doleful present; "you see I . . ."

For the next half hour the conversation volleyed back and forth between the past and the near-present like a brisk game of tennis. They had been good friends at college and had taken diverging paths since leaving it. There was a rich, old flavor to this chance meeting until at last Morton suddenly asked, "But man alive, Phillie, how did I happen to catch you slumbering on Rector, with all your social duties to attend to?"

Phil's face fell. A face never really falls independent of its immediate surroundings; but the horns of all the little crescents with which his face had been dotted flattened out and turned the other way, and this being the outward and visible sign that his high spirits had fallen, the stock phrase is not so outrageous as most of them are.

A wave of sympathy rose to Morton's face at this quick change in his friend. "Speak your piece, little one," he said encouragingly. "You have put me over a good many high places in the old days, and I hereby offer my humble body for a stepping stone if you can think up any way to use it."

Phil's face hardened into an expression of grim determination. "Skate," he said in the low, slightly tremulous voice in which the man chosen to lead the forlorn hope leaves directions regarding the final disposition of the watch containing the miniature, "Skate, I am going into business."

Morton put his hands on the table and looked searchingly into his friend's eyes, looked a long moment, and threw himself back in his chair with a howl. "Phillie, you certainly will be the death of me yet. That was exactly the stop you pulled out when you told me that you were about to elope with the Simson girl. Some of these days, you'll take yourself just a shade too seriously and die a hero. Going into business!" and Morton threw back his head and roared with enthusiastic joy.

All this time Phil was sitting bolt upright against the unyielding back of his dignity. "It is a serious step," he said without unbending. "I do not know any more about business than you do about good manners, and I have a lot to lose. I don't mean just the money end of it," he

MORTON IS INTERESTED 51

added scornfully. "I mean the little luxuries, habits, and recreations which have heretofore made up my life; the quiet evenings in my own apartment when I look about and see on every side the loving tokens of old friends . . ."

Morton leaned forward and gazed mournfully upon the polished face of the table as he clasped his hands across his breast. "How natural he looks, how peaceful, and almost, almost happy," he murmured softly, while his eyes danced.

"Confound you, I mean it!" exclaimed Phil.

"Mean what?"

"That I am going into business."

"Then I know what my work is for the next few months," said Morton, dry-washing his hands after the manner of one who has made a pleasing bargain.

"What is it?" asked Phil innocently.

"Sleuthing around after you and getting my share of your honey. What vandal ever put such an idea into your head anyway?"

"No vandal," replied Phil decisively. "There comes a time in every man's life when his own responsibilities stand up and confront him, when the lost opportunities of his own past steal forth from their lurking places and taunt him, when —"

"Gently, Philip, gently. I have known thee a fair long time, and something other than a new birthday has filled thee with a restless conscience and blank verse. Art thou in love? Madness always cometh with love, although usually in a less violent form than yours. Speak out frankly, place your burdens on my shoulders for a space and I shall tote them along while you are getting your breath. You remember, don't you, that formerly I made very comfortable interference for you? All right, then try

it again, play series number two without signals, and play fast."

"I am in love," answered Phil, his face reddening a little, "but that is only an item. I have recently had a complete awakening and my mind is fully made up. I am going into business."

"All right," said Morton briskly. "Now, business is my present element. I am no longer to be classed merely with the land animals, I am more than that,—I am a business animal. I know where you can invest some money to make it pay you. Do you know anything at all about the customary size of legitimate profits?"

"Wilson said," answered Phil without hesitation, "that we could make fifty per cent. profit from the very start."

"Wilson is a faker!" exclaimed Morton, lunging forward in his chair and striking the table violently, a movement which immediately summoned the waiter, who properly took it for granted that a little of the same was desired. "Fifty per cent.! Why, you would have to invest in a kit of burglar's tools to make an investment pay fifty per cent. nowadays. Who is this Wilson?"

"He is a man with whom I have had much experience, and in whose judgment I have the utmost confidence," answered Phil loftily.

"Philip, you can't afford to trust him. Once in a lifetime, perhaps, a man has a chance to hang it on the fifty per cent. hook; but the odds are so long that most of us only look back and sigh for not having played the bet. How much was he talking of investing? Of course some little deal might lug home a trophy like this, but not the big ones. Too many sharp eyes on the watch for them."

"A hundred thousand dollars," responded Phil; "and

the proposition has taken such a hold on me that I am thinking of increasing, rather than decreasing the investment."

Morton shook his head. "No wonder you're worried. Why, if I had a hundred thousand in any such wild cat scheme as this, I'd be off my feed until it had gone under and left me free to think again. Now, I have up my sleeve a business proposition, a genuine chance for legitimate investment, which figures a paper profit of forty per cent. on a million dollar investment. Knocking off ten per cent. for incidentals and accidents, and you have thirty per cent. as safe as water from a spring. While it is in its present stage you can get in on the ground floor and go on up with a company of trained and seasoned financiers. Oh, Phil, don't fool your money away on gold bricks. Where was this Wilson going to invest this money?"

"Right here in New York," answered Phil sturdily.

"Don't that prove it?" demanded Morton, holding up his hand for judgment. "Why, I'd pay out a good piece of money just to look at the man who can invest a hundred thousand in New York and make it pay back fifty thousand every time the clock struck a new year. You're hypnotized."

"Where is your investment?"

"Not in New York, I assure you. New York is already in the hands of the Philistines, and if you are in search of the golden fleece, you have to make a regular quest for it. It is n't even in this country. It's half way around the globe where the heathen are still fussing about pleasing their idols, and that is about the only stage of arrested development where they will pay a brainy man fifty per cent. for taking their hides off. You get fifty per cent. away from

a New Yorker and you have to chloroform him, and when he comes to he puts up such a howl that you generally have to pay part of it back to soothe him."

"What sort of investment is it?"

"Now, Phil, a fellow can tell you all about a fifty per cent. investment while you are waiting for a car; but to give you the full details of a legitimate business proposition requires time. How much time have you at present?"

Phil looked at his watch in consternation, and then rose hastily. "Great Scott, Skate, it is after five and I had an engagement with Edith at three."

"Edith is the name, is it?" commented Morton. "Well, as long as Edith is responsible for your plunge, she will have to accustom herself to waiting; so you might as well sit down and listen to me with your very best brand of attention, while she sits home and fusses herself into a fuller respect for you. The fear of woman is the beginning of weakness."

"No, I really want to see her on matters of importance."

"Is she any relation to Wilson?" asked Morton quickly.

"She positively is not," answered Phil.

"When can you see me and give me plenty of time? Have you an office?"

"No; at present I am conducting my affairs at my apartment. Give me your card, and before I make any new investments, I promise to give you a chance to convince me. By the way, I met your aunt, quite by chance, the other day, and she invited me to spend the first week in August with her."

"Aunt Mary? Well, don't you miss it. She is the salt which never does lose its savor, and I'm going to be there

MORTON IS INTERESTED 55

myself. We'll have the time of our lives and— Is either Edith or Wilson to be there?"

"I am not yet sure that I shall be there myself; but I am sure that neither of them will be. Now, I really must go. I have to ride on a beastly elevated and I'd rather shovel dirt."

"Phil," said Morton solemnly as he rose to his feet, "to-day we flourish like the green bay tree, but if we listen to the siren song of the fifty percenter, to-morrow we actually shall shovel dirt. The slides are always greased, remember, and don't go near them unless under the care of a truly friend. I'm mighty glad to have met you again. So long."

Phil felt much refreshed as he hurried away. Already he was a man of affairs. At least, he was watching the new game from the sidelines, and an old familiar itch for new games was stirring within him pleasantly.

CHAPTER FIVE

NATHAN MEYER SUGGESTS CAUTION

PHIL was not familiar with that part of the city. He did not like the odor of it, the appearance of it, or the sounds of it. As he had said, once or twice a year he hurried down to sign some papers, and then hurried back to discover some new way of increasing his expenditures in order to balance his increased income.

Now, he left Morton and hastened away in what he supposed was the direction of the elevated; but so busy was his mind upon new and, as the new always was to him, interesting topics, that he became turned about in the maze of small streets through which he traveled, and the maze of large thoughts which traveled through him.

It was with a start of surprise that he suddenly stopped and examined a dingy building of the old school which had a strangely familiar appearance. "The office of Nathan Meyer is in this building," he reassured himself; "his address is Maiden Lane, therefore I must be in Maiden Lane."

Pleased with the accuracy of his conclusion, Phil turned in at the door with the mental comment, "Nathan is one of the genuine grubbers; he never goes home, and it will be a stroke of clever business to step in while I am in the neighborhood and learn just how much I am worth and how quickly I can turn it into cash."

MEYER SUGGESTS CAUTION 57.

He abruptly paused and a thoughtful frown came to his face. "I was to ride in the park with Edith this morning, and there make up my mind whether I should polo this afternoon or make that call she has been fussing about. I can't remember whether I was to wire the boys that I should play polo or that I should n't. Under some condition, I know I was to wire; but it makes no difference. All my life I have been cursing others for offering business as an excuse for forgetting engagements, and it is high time the wind set in another direction for a change. The Skate was right; I shall just let Edith fume to a froth. This is her handiwork and if it proves to be a Frankenstein, she should be the last one to register a kick."

Having thus examined himself faithfully and found that he, at least, was free from blame, Phil climbed a flight of stairs and entered the sober office of his high steward.

Nathan Meyer was a slender Jew with high forehead, beautiful, deep set eyes, and a look of culture. His face showed the leanness of the mental athlete, and his white, flowing hair suggested a poet. He was a scholar, a student, a man of tireless energy, but not a grubber, as Phil had lightly called him. The wide variety of his tastes saved him from that.

He was seated in his inner office reading "Heine" in the original, when Phil opened the outer door. The clerks were gone and the door between inner and outer office was standing ajar. Nathan hastily slipped the volume into a drawer, covered his face with its habitual reserve, and stepped into the outer office. Instantly his face changed to one of pleasure. He was very fond of Phil. The boy's trust in him, his utter ignorance of business, and his joyous, healthy personality, all appealed to a side of the old

Jew which few suspected, and very few indeed ever encountered.

"Oh, it is you, is it, Philip? Come in, come in and take a seat. I am filled with curiosity to learn what can have brought you, uncalled, to my spider web."

"Mr. Meyer"—it was thus they invariably addressed each other and it added to the pleasure of their association—"I happened here quite by accident, and thought I would kill the proverbial two birds. I was on my way to catch the Sixth Avenue elevated and did not know I was in your neighborhood until I came face to face with this building."

"From where did you start?" asked Nathan.

"From over on Rector," answered Phil innocently.

The only symbol of Nathan's amusement was the increased twinkling in his eyes. "You are right, Philip. Always save as much time as you can. When once a man learns how to use time he finds little enough of it at his disposal."

"I wanted to ask you how much I am worth and how long it would take to turn it into cash."

Nathan leaned back in his chair and examined Phil critically. "I have handled your estate a long time, Philip; but this is the most surprising question you have ever asked me. I should say that your estate was worth at least sixteen hundred thousand dollars"—he paused, but Phil's face expressed neither pleasure nor disappointment. It did not even express surprise—"But if you were to turn it rapidly into cash, it would probably not yield over fourteen hundred thousand."

"That will be enough," responded Phil lightly, but with a thoughtful expression on his face. "That will leave me three hundred thousand dollars still to invest."

MEYER SUGGESTS CAUTION 59

"Could I venture to ask you a few of your reasons for desiring a change?" asked Nathan.

"I am utterly weary of wasting my opportunities," answered Phil earnestly. "Here I am nearly thirty years old, and no broader purpose in life than I had when I left college, and not so much as I had when I entered. I am going to plunge around a bit and become a man of affairs."

"It is an original method," said Nathan gently. "Plunging around a bit always brings results, but very seldom that one. Do you mean that you are going to use your fortune to capitalize a new venture which will be entirely under your own control; or—"

"No," answered Phil in answer to the suggestive pause, "I shall probably invest a million in one proposition and a hundred thousand in another; while I still have one to investigate before coming to a decision upon it."

"I have been in your confidence a long time, your estate has largely increased under my management, and it would please me if you would go into the particulars of these new investments. Even a hundred thousand dollars is a sum worthy of quite careful consideration." There was dignity in Nathan's opening sentence, satire in his closing, but, like many of Nathan's remarks, aimed too far above his listener's head to even attract his attention.

"Oh, I am going carefully all right," said Phil. "I am having practical tests made now in the smaller proposition. Of course I do not understand the fine points of business; but I do intend to play a hard, careful game of it and pick up the scientific details as soon as possible."

"About what interest do you expect to make your capital earn, Philip?"

"The hundred thousand parcel will earn fifty per cent.

from the very start, while the million will win at least thirty, and probably forty. It figures out a safe forty on paper; but I have estimated that unforeseen accidents and incidentals might bring it down ten per cent., and it is best to be conservative."

"Yes, very true," corroborated Nathan; "it is best to be conservative; and after all, even thirty per cent. is a pleasant return upon an investment of this size, a very pleasant return. I do not suppose that you would be willing, even under the pledge of my secrecy, to tell me who is back of such an opportunity? I cannot believe that this is all your own scheme, Philip."

"No; Wilson is back of the smaller deal, and Ska — Mr. Ronald L. Morton brought my attention to the larger opportunity."

Nathan rubbed his forehead with slender, sinewy fingers — fingers which could coax beautiful music from harp or violin. "I cannot recall the names," he said shaking his head. "It is odd. I am familiar with most of the men who nose out the good things, but I must admit that if such game as this is actually afloat, you have stolen a march on me. What is the nature of the business?"

"I shall put the hundred thousand into a branch of the automobile industry, but I do not feel at liberty just at this time to even hint at the character of the larger proposition. You understand how I am situated, I am sure."

"That is all right, Philip, that is all right. Even to me it would not be right to divulge plans not yet ready to put into operation. I think that you have chosen well as to the automobile industry. It is going to grow to immense proportions, and if your friend Wilson is capable and honest —"

MEYER SUGGESTS CAUTION 61

"I have already had much experience with him, and he is in every way reliable. He not only has a theoretical, but a practical, knowledge of the automobile industry, and I can see no possible way for his plan to fail. The larger investment is not so certain; so you will probably have plenty of time to turn the estate into cash to a good advantage. I shall probably not need it for two weeks yet."

"That is certainly plenty of time," said Nathan gravely. "Now, Philip, it will not be hard to convert your estate into cash as it is at present very satisfactorily invested—although it is not earning fifty, or even forty per cent. If you will take a little advice, you will leave it as it is and borrow the hundred thousand dollars. If it does pay fifty per cent. from the very start, it will soon pay itself back. If, on the other hand, the venture refuses to respond in reality as enthusiastically as it did on paper—a phenomenon not unheard-of in the business world—you can save enough out of your income to repay the loan in a few years and will have received no actual hurt at all."

"Why should I borrow money of another when I have some myself?" asked Phil in a skeptical tone.

"That is the way business is mostly done," reminded Nathan gently. "Philip, my interest in you is much more than that of an agent for his client. I have studied you closely, and you are not of the temperament which succeeds in business. There are many other fields. Why do you not engage in some sort of sociological work? This is a vast field; almost every level of society offers an outlet for the very best a man has in him. Very often the man who engages in methodical philanthropy has within him some bitterness left by past struggles with the very people he is trying to help. This warps him and prevents

his doing his very best; but you are still unspoiled. You would enter into this work with the heart of a child and the mind and strength of a man. I feel that I am right in warning you that you will be saddened and embittered if you engage in business."

"I appreciate your attitude, Mr. Meyer, I truly do, and I half fear that you are right; but the deuce of it is, that I have already signed for the cruise and I'm going on with it even if it is proved that all will end in a wreck — and I'm going to steer my own boat, too."

Phil folded his arms and sat with his eyes on the ceiling. Nathan drummed silently on the arms of his chair and sat with his eyes upon the carpet. His sensitive, reserved face very faintly indicated the busy thoughts which convened behind his high, smooth brow.

"You have so many of the things which money seems to offer, but which money cannot always get," he said at last, not enviously, not bitterly, but still a little wistfully. "My income is larger than yours, and yet I cannot grant the wishes of my daughter."

Phil frowned ever so slightly. He was aware of Nathan's one weakness. He had never seen the daughter, although Nathan had repeatedly made the suggestion in a diplomatic and quite indirect way. Phil felt much that his reason could never have gathered. He knew that Nathan would do anything in his power to induce Phil to introduce his daughter into the exclusive center of Phil's social spiral, but Phil had always managed to ignore the suggestions, subtle though they were.

As long as the Jew is content to merely covet the stocks, bonds, and real estate of the Gentile, he moves with the dignity of a conquering prince; but the very moment he

MEYER SUGGESTS CAUTION 63

stoops to covet the artificial social privileges of the Gentile, he opens the way to a thousand germs of weakness. Nathan knew this also; but his daughter, his only child, was a fact stronger than all theories whatsoever.

"I'll have to go, now," said Phil, shaking hands. "Get the stuff in shape for prompt action and don't worry. Things always turn out right, even if we don't live to see it. Good-bye."

CHAPTER SIX

EDITH IS THREATENED WITH REPENTANCE

PHIL, being in a thoughtful mood after leaving Nathan, took little heed as to his direction and naturally reached the elevated by the most direct route. It was beginning to rain as he mounted the steps, and everything was peculiarly dirty, and everyone was in a particular hurry, and Phil himself was surfeited with disgust. The one ray of light was the fact that it was after seven and Edith had already been forced to wait for him twice.

He did not sit, although there was space enough when he first entered; but the clammy appearance of the seats repelled him and he stood in the aisle looking bored. It was a motley division which rode on the elevated at this hour and Phil stood with his head tilted back and his eyes fixed upon nothing at all. As the car traveled north, people of color got on and off, and he was bumped and jostled without ceremony. Suddenly the frown on his face lifted and beneath it shone a happy smile. "I shan't change a rag," he said to himself maliciously. "I'll go around just as I am and I won't even have the dirt rubbed from my shoes."

This noble purpose put him in good humor with himself once more and he was quite contented when he left the car at Fifty-ninth. This content made a comforting and inviting light beam from his eyes and inspired Mrs. Bran-

nigan to ask, "Won't you buy some fruit, sir? I have here some foine apples, extra foine apples."

Phil turned and saw that he was addressed by a portly woman standing beside a small fruit stand. Her fruit was protected by a tattered army poncho, but she herself was facing the rain, which dripped from her dilapidated hat, streaked her weather-beaten face and trickled down the faded shawl which covered her shoulders.

"Why do you not have a covered stand in which you can sit, like the others do?" asked Phil sternly.

"Oi can't afford ut. I ran this stand all last winter just as it is, freezin' me feet aich day; but makin' an honest livin' fer meself an' Patsy. Oi've saved ivery cint he's made sellin' paypers, and he's goin' to get a bit iv schoolin' some day."

"Yes, and you'll get the pneumonia and not be here to see him at it," scolded Phil. This woman was actually in business and there seemed to be a thread of class interest between them. "How much would a good stand cost?"

"Oh, fifty dollars nearly, more thin Oi could save in six months. It's out of the quistion. I get along purty comfortably most of the—"

"This is nonsense. Now if I give you fifty dollars, will you promise me that you will get a good, comfortable stand with a stove in it for winter?"

"Oi would n't have the heart to spind all that on meself. I'm wonderful healthy, an' Patsy is—"

"All right, then I'll keep it myself," said Phil gruffly. "I am willing to advance you the fifty dollars if you'll promise to get the stand at once; but if you refuse to promise"—Phil frowned severely—"I shall have a stand put up here to suit me—and keep the change for the

bother you might have saved me by tending to it yourself."

This practical reasoning so astonished Mrs. Brannigan that she felt she would be imposing upon this kindly-faced young man who stood without heeding the rain which spattered upon him and swept her away by the sheer logic of his arguments.

"Will, if that's the way you feel about it Oi'll axcept your proposition. Oi'll agree to have a foine stand set up here wid a stove in it; but why are ya doin' this fer a pore owld woman ya niver set eyes on before?"

"I am going to charge you interest," said Phil fixing his eyes upon her as though about to claim his pound of flesh. "Every time I pass here you are to give me one apple, the brightest and reddest of them all."

Mrs. Brannigan laughed. "That will be turrible drain on me! Oi've been here two full years now and this is the first time you have iver passed. Oi niver forget a face — an' few women would forget yours."

"I have just started in business and I'm likely to pass here seven times a day," threatened Phil.

"Will, Oi don't belave a word ya say; but if you do, Oi'll be glad o' the soight o' ya. Tell me what makes ya give me fifty dollars."

"I'm superstitious. I've just started into business and I am doing this to bring me luck," said Phil as he slipped a fifty dollar bill from his book and held it out with a smile.

Phil's voice was careless, but the quick tears came to Mrs. Brannigan's eyes. "You'll have all the luck Oi can send ya, all roight, an' me prayers wid it. I give ya luck, long loife, double love, an' prosperity — an' God bliss ya ivery minute ov the day!"

Phil hurried on, chuckling to himself, and soon forgot the fat little woman in calling up Edith's consternation when he came dripping into her immaculate domain. When he reached the Circle the rain had increased and he decided to call a cab.

He stood upon the curb making up his mind which cab to signal—all of Phil's actions were complicated, he himself being totally unconscious of this—the driver's face and the horses feet usually decided his choice of a cab. But instead of selecting one of those on the stand, his heart gave a thump of joy to see his own motor car coming into the Circle from upper Broadway. He was a little surprised to see it in charge of a strange chauffeur, and holding up his hand with a commanding gesture, he ordered him to the curb.

"Sorry, sir, but I have a fare," said the man at the wheel.

"Whose car is that?" demanded Phil authoritatively.

"It belongs to the Wilson Public Service Company," answered the man unawed, "but as I said, I already am engaged. Here is one of our cards and any time we can be of service—"

The curtains of the auto parted and the keen, good-natured face of Mr. Skate Morton appeared between them. "Phil, you pest, get in here," he said. "I would rather take you wherever you want to go than to have you hold me here all night asking silly questions of the driver."

"Madison Avenue, double some X," said Phil shortly as he stepped into the car. He was a little put out at having the privileges of his own car held from him until granted by a man who did not hold the faintest proprietary interest.

68 THE KNIGHT-ERRANT

"This is a great find, Phil," said Morton. "Don't touch me, man! you are as wet as a drowned rat. Sit ahead there and I'll tell you the how. This concern has the two finest cars in New York, for rent by hour, day, or week. Jimmy Hodge had it this afternoon, picked me up on my way home, got out and sent me on. I overtook old Tightfist Meridan, invited him in and hauled him out to West End Avenue. I think I have landed him for a good bunch in that scheme I told you of and it will only cost me eight dollars for this wagon. You had better get in on that deal early, Philip. It is the biggest fish in the pond at this writing."

Phil was smiling inwardly now. Wilson's spectacular enterprise in the matter of having cards printed and starting away at full speed appealed to his sense of the picturesque, and he chatted comfortably with Morton until the car stopped in front of Edith's door.

"I suppose that this is the abode of Edith," said Morton sagely; "and you must be on extremely sure grounds to venture to enter in your present condition. Well, happy times, happy times."

"Many thanks, Skate. I'll pay your street car fare the next time we are out together. So long, old man."

"That Wilson is a real wonder," ejaculated Phil as he waited in the vestibule after ringing the bell.

He had hard work ironing the mischief out of his expression as he climbed the stairs to the parlor. The maid had permitted her surprise to become visible and Phil hoped that there was company; but in this he was disappointed.

Edith sat alone at the farthest end of the narrow room, and she was dressed for almost any kind of evening affair.

There was a glint of reproach in her eyes, and a chill in her voice as she asked, "Are you aware that you had an unconditional engagement with me this morning, another this evening and a conditional one this afternoon?"

Phil put on a hurt look. "You do not suppose that I could forget an engagement with you, do you, Edith? I remembered, certainly; but I have been rushed to a degree to-day and have not even had time to telephone."

"You must have been ordering some new clothes," was the sarcastic response. "You undoubtedly need them, or you would not think of making such an appearance after dinner."

"Dinner!" exclaimed Phil with general surprise. "Now you have touched upon a most important lapse of memory. I have had but one meal this day, and that a very skimpy one. Could you possibly — is the Colonel at home?"

"The Colonel was called out upon a pressing business matter immediately after dinner."

"Good! Well, could you get me his smoking jacket — my coat is wet through — and then if you would hunt me up a small snack, any little thing, some cold meat, a bottle of claret, a bit of fruit — don't go to any bother, but really, I'm famishing."

Edith rose, started towards the door, wavered, turned to Phil and asked, "Phil, whatever is the matter with you this evening?"

"Business, Edith. I am in the grip of my arch enemy, and I am beginning to feel that I can learn the game and put him on the mat three points down."

There was a new confidence about him and Edith's face wore a puzzled expression as she left the room.

Phil removed his coat, chuckled aloud as he caught his reflection in the glass and noted the condition of collar and tie. "Ah, ha, you would, would you?" he really asked Edith, but addressed the reflection, which held up a warning finger to match his own. "You would throw your glove into the lion's den with a laugh. Well, I am down in the den now, and you can just continue to laugh. I may laugh myself before it's all over."

When Phil was finally called to the cosy dining-room, he contented himself for the first twenty minutes with giving an exhibition of a hungry man getting rid of that annoying sensation. Edith watched him with that well-disciplined patience which was one of her most reliable assets. When Phil gave his third sigh of relief, she ventured to ask, "What possible business could you have found in one day?"

"I have found investments for eleven hundred thousand dollars, I have gone into details with Nathan Meyer, I have investigated the most original and complicated real estate business in existence, I have formed the Wilson Public Service Company, and I have arranged for the erection of a building for the retailing of fruit."

In checking up his day, Phil was surprised at its scope and as he confined himself strictly to facts, his simple sincerity made a strong impression upon his audience. Edith made no reply; she studied his face carefully; but he was once more busy with his appetite, and she saw that he had evidently performed after some fashion the acts which he had mentioned.

"You must be very cautious, Phil," she said earnestly. "I wish that you would consult with Colonel Edgerton.

He has had unlimited success, and I am sure he would be glad to advise you."

"Wanted to take me into partnership; but he is too easily satisfied in the matter of dividends. I am not going to follow the beaten paths. The Wilson Public Service will pay fifty per cent. clear from the very start."

Edith felt that she had lost something; the machine which she had constructed had proved stronger than her control, and she felt deserted, cast aside, entirely unnecessary. In order to reassert herself it seemed desirable that Phil be properly humiliated.

"Pride goeth before a fall," she began.

"And victuals before a famine," added Phil.

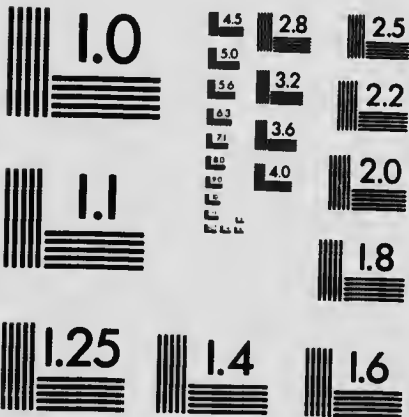
This was not successful, and Edith putting on her most severe look said: "Phil, I have never had faith in your judgment since the day you sent me that miserable dog."

Several years previous Phil had gone into the country, and being touched by the suffering of a Great Dane attached to an Uncle Tom's Cabin troupe, had bought the dog and sent it to Edith to care for until his return. The dog was old, lame, of immense size and forbidding countenance, and in addition had the mange. Edith was fond of dogs *a la mode*, rather than *au naturel*. She did her best for Phil's sake; but he had stayed six weeks longer than he intended, and on his return the dog had nearly caused the breaking of their engagement, which at that time was quite new and strong. He had taken the dog to his own apartment and had bestowed upon him such loving and loyal service that the dog forgot his early prejudice against the Sorrowful Star, and when he passed away, he carried with him an impression of this earth such as is



MICROCOPY RESOLUTION TEST CHART

(ANSI and ISO TEST CHART No. 2)



APPLIED IMAGE Inc

1653 East Main Street
Rochester, New York 14609 USA
(716) 482 - 0300 - Phone
(716) 288 - 5989 - Fax

vouchsafed only to the darlings of the gods. He died in Phil's bedroom, and Phil held one of the gaunt gray paws at the last. It was one of Phil's sacred memories and a dangerous one to trample on.

"You seem to have a terrible time getting that dog out of your system, Edith," he said curtly and a little coarsely. "I wish that all my friends were as true to me as Simon Legree was."

"Your friends are true to you, Phil, even though you generally fail to appreciate them. I am sure that I am ready to do anything in my power to aid you; but I do not want you to do anything foolish, and then to feel that I am really responsible for it."

"Your responsibility ends with having awakened me; I shall shoulder all the after results," answered Phil with head thrown back.

Before Edith could answer, the maid entered with the announcement that Mr. and Mrs. Fenton were waiting in the reception room.

"I forgot to tell you, Phil," said Edith, "that they wanted us to go with them this evening, roof garden and supper, or something like that. We could drop you to dress and you could join us later. Your car is still outside, is it not?"

"I am no longer keeping a car. I shall have little time to use one for pleasure, and I included them among the assets of the Wilson Public Service Company." Edith stood aghast. "Furthermore," continued Phil, "I am very weary and to-morrow I must arise early and put through a lot of work; so you must excuse me. I don't suppose you will see very much of me until things get to going smoothly, but I'll drop in every odd minute.

REPENTANCE

73

Now, I'll go into the Colonel's den and smoke a cigar, and you go along with the Fentons and have enough fun for us both."

This suggestion was finally acted upon, after Edith had vainly attempted to overrule it; but it must be confessed that when Phil turned in at eleven, he possessed a feeling of content surpassing that held collectively by the other three.

CHAPTER SEVEN

PHIL IS QUITE COMPLACENT

It was ten days before Edith saw Phil again, ten busy, bothersome, blitheful days — for Phil. He arose early and during his dressing listened to the remarkable scope of the field which Hereford desired to exploit. Hereford was piqued to a degree at the difference which had taken place in Wilson since his having become the business partner of his late employer, and Hereford, not a venturesome man naturally, was each hour finding some new reason why Phil should also be the silent partner in the Hereford Domestic Service Company, which term was the result of much earnest cogitation upon the part of its author.

Hereford was not original, but he was very thorough, and Phil was becoming interested in the case as Hereford presented it. Wilson proved to be a marvel of energy, and The Public Service Company was paying a profit of one hundred per cent. upon its original investment, over and above all expenses. Phil was ready to advance the hundred thousand the very moment that Wilson decided upon the type of car he wanted. Wilson felt that the class he most desired as clients would prefer that the cars they rented should have the appearance of private cars, and he was doing some very careful figuring.

Skate Morton finally succeeded in getting a satisfactory interview with Phil and left Phil very much in favor of his

scheme. Morton spent three evenings at Phil's apartment; but found it impossible to do anything but gossip; and he finally took Phil for a drive in Phil's own car with Wilson driving, and this so delighted Phil that he listened to the scheme, and was lost. Morton confessed that an English company was back of it and that he was merely working on a commission, that it was so remarkably picturesque and promised such high dividends that it appeared to be a colossal confidence game and therefore he found it very difficult to interest the large investors. Phil had to admit that it was an exceedingly interesting project and could hardly decide whether or not it appeared quite sane; but he pondered over it constantly and consulted with his friends in a round-about way. Curiously enough, Wilson's enthusiastic views upon the future demand for tires proved the strongest argument influencing Phil.

Nathan Meyer on one hand, and Colonel Edgerton on the other, argued conservatism with Phil until their relations were a trifle strained. With Nathan and the Colonel attracting him in one direction, and Hereford, Wilson, and the Skate attracting him in the opposite direction, Phil was held exactly in his own orbit; but the strain became, naturally, very noticeable at times.

It was not noticeable, however, on the evening of his call upon Edith after an interval of ten days. He was wearing a Tuxedo and a pearl gray Fedora, and proposed that they go where there was "music, small tables, and a big crowd." Both Edith and Phil had reached the plateau where friendship is more to be desired than envy. With everyone who goes into society there is always a period when the peculiar elation incidental to "making up" is made radiant by the thought that in a few minutes many

a desirable personage will be filled with envy at the result of the process. It is an honest feeling, legitimately handed down through ages of evolution and dates back longer than man himself. It is so emphatically part of his nature that man himself is not aware of it — until he outgrows it and is able to look back upon it from above.

We are liable to deride vanity, but it is probably the characteristic with which the world could least afford to dispense. Vanity has made ten heroes to every one which patriotism can claim, ten martyrs for every one which religion can show, ten scholars for every one which the Platonic love of absolute knowledge has begotten; and heroes, martyrs, and scholars are quite essential. If it were not for vanity we should all be lazy, dirty, ignorant, and contented; whereas we now wear ourselves out years before our time, doing things which do not greatly matter anyway.

And furthermore, we do not outgrow vanity itself; we merely outgrow different phases of it. The child's vanity waxes fat upon a sore toe or a pink ribbon, while the philosopher may affect slouchy raiment and whiskers. When we pause at the various plateaus of our upward climb, we look back sheepishly at the different vanities we have discarded, and bravely take a vow to live up to some new vanity, thinking, in our innocence, that it is a great principle. After mounting to the roof of his own vanity and brazenly shouting: "Vanity, vanity, all is vanity," the poet might have added, "And a mighty good thing for the human race, too."

So that their development is very clearly seen, when it is stated that Phil and Edith had ceased to become enthusiastic over balls, formal receptions, and kindred painful

functions, and now sought less conventional gatherings where they could give expression simply to natural joy without feeling any twinges of conscience. Phil was more firmly ensconced upon this plateau than was Edith, the human male being less vain of the outward and visible than the female; and, in order to maintain the balance, cherishing in his midst eccentricities of thought and habit as picturesque and unreasonable as the hats and gowns of the ladies.

"Where do you want to go?" asked Edith.

"Oh, Madison Square roof will do. I want to be alone so I can tell you all I have accomplished in the last few days, and everybody is alone in a place like that. It is cool, stimulating, noisy enough to permit easy talking, and—"

"I suppose that will do as well as any," conceded Edith without enthusiasm. Edith was not quite herself these days, and she was very eager to be once more in perfect touch with Phil's plans. The Colonel had suggested that she use her influence to turn Phil from business to sport, and she had resented the suggestion by lecturing the Colonel upon his misdeeds which had gone unchidden for several weeks.

The most minute invoice of a woman's *deeds* would not inspire love. She must herself be seen; and to see Edith this night would explain much that is otherwise not apparent. She was very beautiful, which was all the more impressive from the plainly evident fact that this was a matter of small moment to herself. Her brows were drawn into a thoughtful little frown, altogether bewitching, and Phil floated upon the peculiar cloud which always afforded him transportation when he followed Edith

through an assembly of his fellow citizens and noted the glances of admiration which were showered upon her. There was a simplicity about Phil's love which made it almost unique in the modern world of flippant affections.

When at last they were seated and the order had been given, Edith squared her shoulders, leaned toward Phil and said, "Well?"

Phil unconsciously squared his own shoulders in turn, took a deep breath, and smiled. "You are entitled to laugh as much as you please, Edith," he said after a minute; "but the sooner you get serious, the sooner we'll get to the finer points of the discussion."

"I never was more in earnest," protested Edith.

"Yes, but you have not yet heard the proposition upon which the Skate has steered us. You would not guess it in a hundred years."

"It is very hard to associate practical business with a man by the name of Skate," objected Edith. "Why do you not call him by his real name?"

"It is harder to associate his proposition with practical business than practical business with his title," warned Phil.

"You act as though ashamed to tell me what it is," Edith scornfully.

"Well, it does test my nerve a bit," admitted Phil; "but any way I'll make a plunge. It has to do with sacred cows and rubber plants."

Phil paused and Edith's eyes opened wide with surprise and incredulity. "What in the world do you mean?" she demanded.

"I rolled on the couch in a convulsion of mirth, when the Skate sprang it on me," confessed Phil; "but the more you

listen to it, the more it sounds like the low, vague rap that Opportunity gives at your lattice window when you are still enjoying the forty winks. Now listen:

"In the Malay Peninsula, as in holy Benares, itself, for hundreds of years the sacred cows, snow white, with funny little humps on their shoulders, and an exaggerated idea of their own importance in their hearts, have been fed upon rose leaves, and similar dainties, and in return were only asked to chew their cuds in philosophic content, and exert a mystic influence upon the gods for the good of the people."

"But what has all this to do with your business investments?" interjected Edith. "You have been silly enough about animals before; but I trust that you are not contemplating the importation of sacred cows with an intent to make them a fad?"

"As long as they were part of the religion, the only way to get private possession of one was to steal it; but when business needs a thing, religion and theft become matters about which we have no concern. The sacred cows have become, theoretically, useful to business. The new company is to make them practically so.

"The soil of the Malay Peninsula is peculiarly adapted to the raising of rubber; rubber is peculiarly adapted to tires, tires to automobiles, automobiles — Well, you ought to hear Wilson on that subject; no one else can do it justice."

"Who is this Wilson?"

"Superintendent of the Public Service Company, a man with whom I have had an intimate acquaintance for some time. Now to go on with the larger proposition: A company has been formed in England for the purpose of de-

veloping the Malay Peninsula, planting ten million rubber trees, getting control of the tin and gold mines, squeezing the natural resources instead of letting them moulder away. Mules are expensive and scarce, and besides, a mule is a temperamental animal and subject to all kinds of nervous affections which render him irritable and difficult to —”

“ Well, what on earth have mules to do with it? ”

“ Exactly the question I asked. I rejoice to see that our minds travel along similar grooves. It is going to take a lot of motive power to clean out the jungle and turn it into a rubber grove, and the first step will be to remove the sacredness from the cattle and turn them into oxen. See? It is a great scheme and it is typical of this age; it is up to the minute, and it will pay corking dividends. Labor will be cheap there, too. Singapore is a great range for the human mavericks of the East, Chinamen, black, hairy Klings, Japanese, oh, a goodly assortment of hard workers accustomed to living on rice and fresh air. We shall need a lot of more skillful laborers, also, and when they arrive we shall sink the sacredness of the cattle another notch, and butcher the old ones for beef. I declare, Edith, when you look at it critically, the whole thing is profit, the cost of running won't amount to anything, and the largest expense will be slipping the graft to the maharajahs and the priests. We'll have to soak them pretty thoroughly at the start; but after that it will be happy days for the stockholders. The only thing I am hesitating about is whether to invest twelve hundred thousand or only the even million.”

“ It sounds like piracy to me,” said Edith thoughtfully.

Phil stared at her. “ Piracy? ” he exclaimed.

“ Yes, to go over there and take advantage of the people's

ignorance and take their wealth away from them, and trample on their religion, and —”

“You are a beautiful specimen of a civilized race,” interrupted Phil with great earnestness and taunting scorn. “The idea of a Christian having the slightest regard for any other religion! What do we send out the missionaries for, I’d like to know? You are everlastingly siccing some old lady onto me for a missionary contribution; and now you seem to prefer jungles to rubber groves, and sacred cows to hymn-books! Do you know what a set of tires costs?”

“I can’t quite explain myself,” said Edith doubtfully. “I know that the Christian religion is the only one to consider; but, still — I have been reading about the other religions lately and it is surprising how much they resemble each other in some things. I —”

“You read entirely too much. I suppose this is some of your New Thought nonsense. There is no putting a finger on you any more; you are a regular mental flea. Here I have been working myself to a bone to satisfy you, and now when I make a report which ought to arouse your enthusiasm, you prate of piracy and wish to continue the worship of sacred cows. Isn’t a stick or a stone as good to worship as a cow — and it costs less to keep, too. It is impossible to civilize a heathen without making him skeptical of his heathenism. You are one of those curious make-ups who long to see the poor dwelling in comfortable frame houses, but would refuse to give your consent to the cutting down of a single tree. Now I wish you would attempt to explain yourself in simple primer words, so that I can understand part of it, at least.”

“I can’t explain myself,” exclaimed Edith. “Phil, you

cannot imagine all I have been through since that afternoon. I thought I had a settled philosophy, and I find that I am all at sea; I thought I wanted you to be so engrossed in affairs that I should be but a minor incident in your life; I find I want you near me most of the time; I thought —”

“Well, I’m glad to know that you are human, after all,” said Phil with a chuckle of genuine relief. “I never supposed you had any problems to work; it always seemed to me that the flowers in your garden all grew with labels on them bearing their scientific botanical names; and really it helps me a lot to discover that there are forks to your road as well as mine. I feel so joyful over this that I am a regular poet and shall stir up metaphors to my heart’s content. I like mixed metaphors best anyway. For a straight diet, straight whiskey and straight metaphors; but for gala occasions the mixed drink for mine. There is a certain heady —”

“Don’t get so far from the subject, Phil,” cautioned Edith. She felt unpleasantly the new independence in Phil’s tone, and refused to abdicate without a struggle. “You said that you were hesitating as to whether it would be best to invest a million or twelve hundred thousand, why —”

“Nathan Meyer says he can only raise fourteen hundred thousand on short notice. I have put one hundred thousand into the Public Service, and shall put a like amount into the Hereford Domestic Service Company. This leaves me twelve hundred thousand, and I don’t know whether to put it all into the Unicorn Developing Company, or —”

“What gives you so much confidence?”

“I have given you a hasty sketch of the prospectus, and this alone is enough to inspire confidence; but I must con-

ness that it is on account of the Skate's connection that I feel so sure."

"What other American capitalists are in it?"

"Martin A. Meriden has unbelted for a tidy sum, and as you may have heard, he has honestly earned the title, 'Tightwad.' There is a long list of English titles in the company, and I am sure it will be a live actor. By going in early, I get an equal amount of common stock for all the preferred I buy, and—it looks like a safe bet to me."

"What does Colonel Edgerton think of it?"

"Oh, he and Nathan Meyer belong to the same school of knockers. Anything which appears good must necessarily be bad, is their one and only business rule. Of course I have not told them any details, but I have sounded them and they croak so dismally that it hurts me to hear them."

"I wish that instead of putting in over a million, you would put in only half that sum," said Edith hesitatingly. "It may be as profitable an investment as you think, but it sounds too much like Jack and the Beanstalk to convince me entirely, and at any rate, five hundred thousand dollars is ample risk for a man to put upon the judgment of his friend."

"And also on his own judgment," added Phil with dignity. "You see, Edith, business is not like going to see Yellowstone Park. We have been putting that off for years on the plea that it would always be here and sometime it might happen that we should not wish to go anywhere else; but in business it is necessary to snap shoot as the game leaps across the narrow opening—or else put on a sickly grin and pretend that you never had a chance at all and that Fate would go barefoot over a bed of hot cinders in order to throw sand in your eyes."

"Let's leave it to Fate," suggested Edith.

"That sounds more reasonable," assented Phil. "What's your propo?"

"Write the different sums from five hundred thousand to a million on slips of paper, shake them up in your hat, and draw one."

"That's all right, only we'll make it on up to the twelve hundred thousand. You write the even numbers, and I'll write the fifty-thousand ones and this will give us quite a variety."

Edith wrote eight cards, upon seven of which the lowest figure was written and upon the eighth was the highest. She showed this one to Phil as she dropped it, and he smiled invitingly at the tiny slip as it fluttered into the hat. Edith's face was a little pale; her conscience did not pain her in the least for having arbitrarily made the chances seven to eight in favor of the smallest number, but she was extremely anxious to keep her subterfuge from Phil. He was a fanatic upon strict rigidity in every form of sport, and she did not wish to be judged by his standard, even though she refused to acknowledge to herself the infallibility of the standard. In this peculiar attitude she was very distinctly Edith Hampton, and yet she did not appear to lose any of the typically feminine traits.

Phil, as innocent as a lamb, shook up the hat with a hearty good will, and Edith picked out the deciding slip. It proved to be eight hundred and fifty thousand, and she gave a sigh of relief as Phil tossed the remaining numbers into the air.

"Well, that settles that," he said simply; "but it puts a lot more work on me. Such chances as this are not running around loose and—but we left it to a test, and

PHIL IS COMPLACENT 85

I'll not welch. That's just a bully dress you're wearing to-night, Edith. I wish that —"

When Phil set his sails on this tack, Edith had no problem at all in steering him, and they both had a happy evening.

CHAPTER EIGHT

A GENERAL MÊLÉE

"You will regret this," said Nathan Meyer a few days later as he handed Phil a certified check for eight hundred and fifty thousand dollars.

"I never regret things," responded Phil with simple dignity.

"You have had so little business experience that it is not possible for you to place so large a sum in one investment without taking unwarrantable risks. I wish that you would change your mind even yet, Philip."

"I did not make up my mind; Fate decided the amount. I cannot take the responsibility of thwarting Fate."

"This makes nine hundred and fifty thousand dollars," mused Nathan.

"And you had better cash the rest as promptly as possible," added Phil, "as I shall need it shortly."

"You will regret this," warned Skate Morton an hour later.

"Not a chance," said Phil confidently.

"You'll have to root up the entire crust of this earth a mile deep to find another investment to match it, and a few months hence it will be too late. You should have put in your last cent and all you could borrow."

"I don't yearn to be wealthy," protested Phil. "I am merely assuming the burden of looking after my own prop-

erty in order to be placed in closer touch with the privileges and responsibilities of true citizenship. When I look back upon my wasted youth —”

“If you live to be as old as Methuselah, you will never be able to look back upon such a wasted opportunity as this one,” said Mr. Morton solemnly.

When he mentioned the matter incidentally to Hereford, Wilson, and Colonel Edgerton, Phil likewise received their individual assurance that he would regret placing his investment without first gaining their approval. Edith was very quiet and thoughtful, and Phil was both hurt and indignant. It pained him deeply to be treated as though he were incapable of managing his own affairs, and if he had had more leisure for thought he would have been quite depressed and unhappy, but he was extremely busy.

In the customary mysterious way it was noised abroad that he was on the watch for attractive investments, and that he had untold millions in cold cash. This brought him into violent contact with affairs and he certainly was in a position to appreciate the “privileges and responsibilities of true citizenship.” He was beset by promoters of every description until in desperation he stole off to Asbury Park for a vacation.

He rightly calculated that this would be the last place in which those who knew him would think of looking, and he wanted to be alone. He lived quietly at one of the smaller hotels and was surprised to find how pleasant complete rest was to one wearied of the cares of business. He bathed in the surf, attended the band concerts, and relaxed. On the fourth day he began to notice a certain drag to the hours, and to long for some sort of excitement, sport or business, it mattered little which.

On the evening of his eighth day he was seated on the piazza feeling very much bored. Phil very rarely took an invoice and therefore was much surprised to discover at rare intervals that he was possessed of unsuspected feelings, capable of wielding a great influence over him. He usually regarded himself as absolutely independent, and now that his own resources had proved unequal to the task of buoying him up, he was still unable to perceive how entirely dependent he was upon outside sources. He really thought that the delightful climate of Asbury Park did not agree with him, and his expression was quite doleful as he endeavored to imagine symptoms of ill health.

A chance word from a couple of men earnestly engaged in a low-toned conversation near him made him instantly alert, and he turned his head to one side in order to glean further information. It is a strange thing that we feel no shame in doing a host of things the detection of which would bring our cheeks with burning blushes. Vanity certainly does more for civilization than conscience does.

The men were talking of a gold mine, a wonderful mine which the brother-in-law of one of them had discovered in Colorado. Situated in the very center of mines which were paying fabulous dividends was a plot of ground which had not been claimed. The owners of the developed mines thought it had been properly entered with the rest of their holdings; but the brother-in-law, who was superintendent of one of the mines, had stumbled upon the oversight quite by accident, and as he felt ethical qualms against using information, which he had learned as an agent of his employers, to take away a valuable piece of property which they supposed belonged legally to them, he had turned the matter over to his brother-in-law, who had filed the claim,

run a shaft almost to the big vein of ore, and had then unfortunately found himself without funds. The company owning the mine already developed, the Honor Bright, were willing to buy him out at a large price; but his brother-in-law, who was, of course, his silent partner, insisted that their claim, the Rosy Dawn, was worth millions and that the proper thing to do was to form a company and work the mine themselves.

This was what he was then doing, and the man to whom he was making his explanation was a very close relative and also a very close friend. It was to be kept in the family if possible, although they did not possess collectively quite enough to push the development as rapidly as its certainty warranted. Their voices were kept at a low tone, but occasionally in their enthusiasm, some peculiarly attractive sum would be voiced with a triumphant ring which had an electric effect upon Phil, and made him ready to swear that there was no locality upon the face of the earth where a business man could be bored.

He tried to devise a way to intrude upon their conversation, but no decent one suggesting itself, he heaved a somber sigh. At the sound the two men turned in surprise, and then they whispered together for a moment. Finally, the man who had been explaining the proposition arose and diffidently approached Phil.

"I beg your pardon," he said, frankly paving the way for frankness: "but did you happen to overhear our conversation?"

"I must confess," said Phil with his conscience sinking to about the level it would have taken if he had just landed a fine salmon on the preserve of a man who did not approve of fishing, "that I have caught a chance

word here and there which has given me a very fair estimate of it."

"I'm sorry," said the man simply, and then he turned and joined his companion. They walked to the far end of the porch and Phil watched them discuss the situation earnestly.

Presently they returned and, after having drawn their chairs close to Phil's, the one who had been explaining the proposition grinned ruefully and said: "About all there is to do about it, is to throw ourselves on your mercy. Would there be any inducement we could offer to assure your silence on what you have overheard? You are an utter stranger to us, you understand, and we cannot tell but what you may have interests out that way yourself."

Phil was thinking rapidly: if the men had merely asked him as one gentleman to another, to faithfully observe the gentleman's code in the matter of overheard secrets, and to fully appreciate the delicate position of their relative, the mine superintendent, why, Phil would have acquiesced like a gentleman — but to offer him an inducement was to throw an entirely different switch, and he considered the matter strictly as a business man.

"It would depend upon the inducement you are in a position to offer," he answered coldly.

This seemed to congeal the warmth of the man with the brother-in-law, and he sat in silence for several moments. "My name is Swallow," he said at last, "and this is my cousin, Mr. Flint." Phil bowed without voicing his own name. "I think that we can take it upon ourselves to make you a small cash offer, or what would perhaps be better, a little block of stock from the reserve."

Phil smiled. "That would be like bribing a man not to

play poker by offering him the privileges of tiddle-de-winks. Now, I admit that you have aroused my curiosity in this matter, and if the proposition is as you state it, I want a large block of the stock. I still have a little money which needs investing, and I am sure to investigate your claim, and if it is as you present it, I am going to get into it at the right figure."

"We can't very well do that," demurred Swallow.

"You see we want to keep it a family affair," added Flint.

"While, on the other hand, I must place my money where it will earn large dividends," objected Phil.

"Sort of a dead-lock, is n't it?" laughed Swallow.

"I don't know," mused Flint aloud. "You could not do us much damage, any way."

"Then everything is all right and you can resume your conversation just where you left off while I go up and pack for a western jaunt," bluffed Phil.

"Oh, I'll concede that you could make us a lot of bother," admitted Swallow candidly. "If it would get out that my brother-in-law had slipped this over on the Honor Bright people it would kill him out in that country and he is worth more to us as superintendent of the other mine than he would be giving all his attention to the Honor Bright."

"That is perfectly natural," continued Flint. "You see . . ."

This is the spiral they traveled, the two gentlemen, having the pig in the poke, conscientiously explained to Phil reason after reason why he should not invest, and hinted reason after reason why he should. As Phil grew keener on the trail, they cautioned him to be cool and deliberate,

explained to him fully the improved methods for fleecing a lamb over those which had flourished during the old, jovial, salting days. They showed Phil maps which perfectly illustrated how natural and simple it had been for the larger company to overlook the small, gold-laden nest where the Rosy Dawn was hiding, and then told him that a mining engineer could make such a map out of his imagination, and that Phil owed it to himself to investigate. They incidentally dropped the information that another capitalist, and one thoroughly seasoned, had practically agreed to finance it the minute they were ready to take in an outsider, and then advised Phil to put his money into a business with which he was familiar.

They eventually adjourned to Phil's room, and there the conference continued throughout the night. All three left on the early morning train for New York where the papers were drawn which permitted Phil to turn over two hundred thousand dollars and become the holder of eight hundred thousand dollars' worth of stock in the Rosy Dawn mine. It took several days to complete the arrangements, and the only part which Nathan Meyer took was in providing the two hundred thousand.

After this was done, Phil breathed easier.

But he was not one to rest when once he had started into a new game. Nathan had informed him that he had done a little better than he expected on such short notice, and that Phil still had three hundred thousand to invest. Nathan was very reserved, but not at all cold, and Phil felt this keenly. It made him feel a bit unsatisfied with himself; but he could not explain why, and so he shrugged his shoulders and dropped around to his club to freshen up on social intercourse, the pleasing flavor of which he had

sadly missed of late, without quite realizing it. This reaching out of our roots into the soil and this reaching out of our leaves into the air, is what we call life, and very few of us realize the difference between roots and leaves.

It was the middle of August and none of Phil's cronies were at the club. He dropped into an easy chair and looked out upon the avenue sadly. It, also, had but a drooping suggestion of its familiar gaiety, and Phil sighed. It was an empty world: he fully sympathized with Alexander.

A man came in and seated himself at a table some distance from Phil. He drew a lot of letters and clippings from his pocket and after reading several telegrams, proceeded to make some entries in a notebook. Phil glanced at him but failing at recognition, turned to criticise once more his fellows upon the avenue.

He was interrupted in this by the man at the table who shut his notebook with a snap, gave an incoherent expression of satisfaction, and rising, sauntered over to Phil's window.

He was a slender man of medium stature; his face was drawn into a frown of concentrated consideration. It was a cold face, an alert face, a brooding face, as though it had fed for a century upon an exclusive diet of currency. The man's clothing was not stylish and yet it suggested prosperity. Altogether, he seemed to be a man accustomed to paying by check without having his checks put to an embarrassing scrutiny.

Presently his eyes met Phil's, and held them for a moment. "Phil Lytton, is n't it?" he asked easily.

"Yes," replied Phil without warmth; "but you must excuse me — I can't quite recall your name."

"I was boning my way through while you were eating at the training table or a frat house. Scranton is my name, I. C. Scranton."

"Glad to meet you," said Phil, his face lighting. "Sit down and have a little drink. I'm as lonesome as a lost pup."

"I don't drink," said Scranton, seating himself, "or smoke either," as Phil offered his case. "I've had to dig from my youth and I need all the nerve force I can get."

Phil looked at the gaunt form of the speaker. "Have you any special diet?" he asked gravely.

"Could n't live at all, otherwise," answered Scranton.

"Some day," confided Phil, "I am going to see a pink faced chap with a laugh beaming from his eyes, and not a single wrinkle to balance his dimples, and I am going to ask him politely if he is on a special diet, and he is going to say that he is — and I am going to fall dead."

"And some day," responded Scranton in an equally even tone, "I am going to go to the fat stock show; and I shall ask the blue ribbon steer if he regards protein, or starch, as the more valuable food element, and he will lick his nose and attempt to swallow another mouthful of chopped feed — and a week later I'll have one of his porterhouse steaks braised according to Dr. Salisbury."

Phil laughed heartily. "Do you know, Scranton, that I have n't had anyone come back at me like that for weeks, and it was just what I needed."

"It is just what a lot of you healthy ones need," responded Scranton, his face disintegrating into unaccustomed lines of mirth. "The world has always learned from the weak, after first having bravely roasted them for

being cranks. It was undoubtedly a weak cave man who discovered the benefit of lever and roller and made use of them while his stronger fellows stood around and grunted incoherent jokes. It was a man with weak vocal organs who found grunting too tiresome to express his emotions, and so invented speech; and all the way along it has been the man who has first had to overcome his own deficiencies, who has afterward overcome circumstances."

"And thus endeth the first lesson," added Phil respectfully. "There is a lot in what you suggest, Scranton. Everything has been so easy for me that I have browsed along like a fat buffalo, until it suddenly dawned upon me that I was several decades behind the times; and I am now attempting to catch up."

Scranton smiled cynically. "You don't show the strain much as yet," he said; "but I had a little talk with Morton the other day and he told me that you had gone into that deal of his. He did not state the amount, but intimated that it was rather a large one."

"What do you think of it?" asked Phil.

"Oh, it is not my kind of gambling."

"What is your kind?"

"Cotton."

"Cotton? How do you have any fun out of cotton?"

"It is n't exactly fun the way I play it," rejoined Scranton with a smile. "You see, I started out as clerk to old Tightfist Meridan, a wonderful man. I stayed there doing two men's work until I learned many of his methods. Then I happened to overhear a tip, put in what I had saved, drew out five times as much, and have since been steering my own boat. I happened to do Tom Norton a service, and he always drops me a little news on cotton."

"Norton?" repeated Phil with interest. "Well, if you are trailing him you must be pretty well to the good."

"I am pretty well to the good, considering my start; but I do not trail anyone. I have a complicated system of my own which I am perfecting and some day I expect to go on over Tom Norton."

There was a faraway light in Scranton's calm gray eyes as he said this which aroused Phil's envy. "Do you buy the actual cotton, or only margins?" he asked.

Scranton smiled. "Margins," he answered shortly.

From this on Phil plied him with questions until at last Scranton was forced to tear himself away, leaving Phil thoroughly convinced that the greatest sport in the world was buying cotton on margins. "Five cents a point," he mused to himself. "Why, it sounds as cheap as riding on the elevated; but to-morrow I'm going to take a little whirl at it and see if I get any new sensations. Scranton says that all beginners should be bears, and I shall buy to sell. Rubber plants, gold mines, Public and Domestic Service companies are all future prospects; but as Scranton says, Cotton is going up and down all the time, and a fellow does not have to sit around very long to get action. Action is what I want, action is what I need, and I shall get action in cotton to-morrow."

CHAPTER NINE

AN UNEXPECTED THRUST

IF woman fully realized her power, she would make this a better world — and, incidentally, a much more perplexing one for its male inhabitants.

Edith Hampton was filled to the brim with a restless energy, a desire to do things, a courage to face serious questions, and an active mind which found much of its delight in studying them; but with all that she was feminine. After having reached the distinguishing borders of her own sphere, she felt dizzy as she looked across the gap which divided her from the turmoil and strife of the larger life. Instinctively she felt that this gap should be bridged by some coarse-grained, unsensitive material, such, for instance, as a man.

She had used the man most available for a bridge, and now she felt hurt and abused because the bridge refused to be merely an inanimate convenience, because the bridge appeared to be taking more interest in the fascinating affairs which took place entirely outside her personality, instead of, as formerly, boring her by a blissful content in herself as the real center of the universe. Woman has frequently been paired at the similarity of a man to a cake when she has tried to both use and keep him.

She only saw Phil at rare intervals now and he was

moody, engrossed in problems, absent-minded, altogether unappreciative; and quite naturally she resented this, pretended not to care, refused to admit to herself that he was perfectly consistent, and hoped that he would come to her, confess that after all she was the one thing of importance, and that he could not live without her. She hoped that he would fail, and that she would be able to help him; and yet she did not want him to fail; she wanted him to succeed, to rise to a commanding position, and then to find himself more lonely without her than ever before. She lay awake at night trying to make her own position logical and found herself in the disturbing rôle of a battlefield wherein her various personalities met and warred for supremacy. Her face showed all this like a veritable traitor; but Phil, the mean thing, did not notice.

He was having an affair with a dame familiarly called King Cotton, which was quite disrespectful for, in spite of her regal disregard for individuals, her coquetry, her whims, and her wayward fancies were all typically feminine. At times Edith even feared she was a woman of flesh and blood, so thoroughly had she taken her place in Phil's mind.

Poor Colonel Edgerton had to bear the brunt of the complication. When any sort of object, or doom, falls, it alights upon the man who happens to be under it; and the Colonel happened to be under Edith's displeasure, although he was not in the least responsible for it. He had pointedly disapproved of Phil's course, and it aroused his righteous wrath to be chided by Edith because Phil had insisted upon doing, against both his own and the Colonel's wishes, exactly what Edith had wanted him to do. In his simple, diffident, courtly way, the Colonel stormed about the situa-

AN UNEXPECTED THRUST 99

tion at home, and pestered Phil to reform whenever they happened to meet.

This made Phil indignant and he refused to confide in the Colonel who carried his injured feelings to Nathan Meyer and scolded him for permitting Phil to do what he had a perfect right to do. Nathan, in turn, defended his own position, but promised to do all he could to save Phil from himself as soon as the opportunity presented itself. He furthermore confided to the Colonel that nearly Phil's entire fortune had passed into his own control, and that he, Nathan, did not look with favor upon the disposition of it.

As for Phil, himself: he was making disturbing discoveries in the might of the mi-nute. Five cents a point had sounded so childishly trivial, and he had not known the difference between a bale and a bat when he had started to interest himself in cotton. He started by selling ten thousand bales, and then grew ashamed of his discretion, and sold twenty thousand more. It gave him an odd sensation, a slightly ridiculous sensation to sell something which he did not own; and he tried to balance this by buying ten thousand bushels of wheat. Then he hired one of the Wilson Public Service cars, in charge of a new chauffeur, and took a solitary ride just to complete an altogether unusual situation—a man who had just sold what he did not own, and bought what he did not want, paying to ride in a car which belonged to himself. He thoroughly enjoyed the ride.

Cotton fell and wheat rose, and Phil permitted his caution to go with the cotton while his spirits joined the wheat. He closed his deals and bought and sold again, reversing his former attitudes toward the commodities, just to keep

in the game, and permit the brokers to make a little something so that they could share in his enjoyment; and, strange to say, the market switched a few hours after he did, and men said one to another that young Lytton was getting hunches. Phil denied this regretfully, for in his new environment, the getter of hunches was a man of quality; but his denial was not taken seriously and he found men whom he had supposed to be in touch with every movement, showing him little attentions and gently seeking to extract private information which would have been greatly treasured if he had only possessed it.

Scranton passed him one day with an excited expression in his usually inscrutable face. "Buying, or selling?" called Phil genially.

Scranton stopped and turned with a scowl upon his face, but at sight of Phil it vanished. "Hello, Lytton," he said good-naturedly. "I understand that you are something of a wizard, yourself. Which are you doing?"

"I am going to buy wheat and sell cotton again," replied Phil on the spur of the moment.

Scranton drew his eyelids close in a puzzled expression. "Where do you get the tips, anyway?" he asked.

"Oh, I have a system," laughed Phil.

"Well," said Scranton slowly, "I don't know anything at all about wheat and never touch it; but don't hang on to your cotton deal this time. It is going to whirl with a jerk. And above all things, keep this mum, or I'll camp on your trail until I get you."

Phil had nearly four hundred thousand to invest, and he sold forty thousand bales of cotton through a former college friend, Carl Morgan, putting up two hundred thousand dollars on a hundred point margin, and lightly

AN UNEXPECTED THRUST 101

telling Morgan not to close the deal without orders; but if it jumped above a hundred points to cover and draw on him for further funds. This sounded very knowing to Phil and put him in a pleasant humor. His offhand methods made a profound impression, and Phil went home that evening in a very contented frame of mind.

Hereford received him with chilly servility, and so pronounced was this that Phil decided to have an understanding. As he recalled Hereford's demeanor for the past few weeks, he was aware that there had been a growing spirit of dissatisfaction in the many little services behind which his man hid his individuality. Phil had been so intent upon his own novel experiences that he had noticed this but dimly in its evolution; yet now the accumulated mass loomed ominously, and Phil drew himself up, looked down upon his man for a moment, and said gravely, "Hereford, what has been wrong with you lately? I have overlooked a great deal in the past few weeks, but you seem to be getting more and more careless, and I should like to know what is wrong and how long it is to continue."

One great reason at the bottom of our domestic service trouble, is the fact that employers are inclined to dodge a square facing of difficulties. Instead of calling the cook into the parlor, addressing her calmly by name, and stating her grievance in reasonable terms and with comprehensive, yet conservative, frankness, a lady is likely to invade the kitchen, the cook's own realm, and begin an impersonal harangue with the irritating statement, "Well, if I did not have sense enough to . . ."

This putting herself upon equal terms with her servant denotes a love of fair sport, but is not the easiest method of conducting a pleasant household. The employer is held

up by class distinctions, the servant held down by class distinctions; when conditions are made a mere matter of personality, the comparison is not invariably odious to the servant. One accident of birth may have given her greater poise than her employer, another accident of birth may have given her a more abusive vocabulary; therefore, it is well to keep accidents of birth in mind and get all the help possible from the traditions of class.

The change of sex is purposely made in the foregoing inexcusable interruption, because the feminine is inclined to rush in where the masculine fears to tread.

Hereford's fingers fidgeted and his eyes shifted. It had been years since his conduct had been worthy of reproach, and two kinds of pride were struggling within his breast, pride in his work and pride in his manhood. The pride in his work was of long standing, the pride in his manhood was new, untried, diffident. "I think I shall have to leave your service, sir," he said at last.

Phil slowly seated himself in an ancient chair, heavily carved and not at all adapted to such a purpose. He lighted a cigarette, blew a ring, and said blandly, "I should have preferred your giving formal notice instead of slurring your duties until it became necessary for me to speak of it. I don't think I have quite deserved this, Hereford. Is there any special reason for your leaving my employ?"

Hereford was most unhappy. He had not looked at this phase of the question and his delicately adjusted conscience reproached him with conduct unbecoming a gentleman and a valet. "I'm sorry, sir," he began contritely. "It never occurred to me, sir, to irritate you intentional. I—" Hereford paused and his facial expression underwent a subtle change; he dropped his tone of repentance,

AN UNEXPECTED THRUST 103

and suddenly said with reproachful earnestness: "But Wilson, sir, 'e's getting to 'ave airs with me!"

"Why is this? What right has Wilson to have airs with you?" asked Phil, entirely without patronage or ridicule.

Have you seen a dog who was unjustly scolded on circumstantial evidence, and then, when the case was made clear, showered with apologies and sympathy? Well, that was Hereford. His eyes grew large and he winked them rapidly; it would have been perfectly in keeping if a pink tongue had moistened his upper lip with that peculiar unction typical of the consciously virtuous canine.

"Well, sir, ever since 'e 'as been in partnership with you, 'e 'as raised 'is eyebrows at me, and strutted."

"Why don't you raise your eyebrows at him and strut back?" asked Phil. "You are just as much in partnership with me as Wilson is. Both companies are incorporated in New Jersey; you are president of one, just as he is of the other, and I have put the same amount into each."

Hereford was dazed. He stared at Phil a moment, and then shook his head. "No, sir, you probably meant to do it, sir, but it slipped your mind. You 'ad me sign some sort of papers, but that was all."

"What?" demanded Phil. "Why, Hereford what is the matter with you? We went into this thoroughly: I found that I required less of your services since entering business than I had before, and told you to improve your added opportunities by organizing the Hereford Domestic Service Company." Hereford nodded. "And I gave you a check for a hundred thousand dollars as my share of the capital."

Hereford shook his head in emphatic denial. The two

men looked into each other's eyes. "I certainly did," insisted Phil.

Hereford shook his head in sorrowful silence. Fnil took his check book from his pocket and examined the stubs. "Here it is," he cried triumphantly. "I wrote it over three weeks ago. Whatever did you do with it?"

"I never saw it, sir. Upon my word I never did!" Hereford's face was white.

"Well, don't get hysterical, Hereford. A check is nothing but a nonsensical bit of paper until it is cashed, and no one could cash it but you; so that there is nothing to worry over. If we do not find it shortly, we'll stop payment on it and draw another one—but I would like to know what became of it, just for curiosity. I don't feel like going out to dinner to-night; could you fix me up a little lunch?"

"Certainly, sir, right away," replied the relieved Hereford as he hastened to the kitchen.

"Now, then," said Phil arising and walking toward the mantel, "I shall light a pipe and force my memory to dig up and return the incidents surrounding the making of that check."

He selected a meerschaum, dark and rich as the result of tender solicitude, and half mechanically he lifted the gargyle which served as the lid to his tobacco jar. Phil did not often smoke in this room, his front one, and as his fingers met a bit of paper instead of tobacco, he drew it forth in surprise. It was the missing check, and instantly all the circumstances flashed before him. He had found this particular tobacco jar empty on the night he drew the check, and thought he would teach Hereford a lesson by putting the check there and making him await its

AN UNEXPECTED THRUST 105

benefits until his dull sense of duty aroused him to a more radical thoroughness.

"Hereford," he called after he had replaced the check and lid.

Hereford entered, his eyes big with questioning, and saw his employer standing very grim and upright and holding a pipe at a menacing angle.

"When did you last fill this tobacco jar?" demanded Phil.

"I don't know, sir. You very rarely use it, and I've overlooked it completely lately. I'm very sorry, sir."

"Open it," commanded Phil dramatically.

Hereford obeyed, looked into the jar, drew forth the check, examined it, turned red, turned pale, examined his employer's face and then let his eyes fall once more to the bit of paper in his hand. "I don't deserve it, sir," he stammered huskily, handing the check to Phil. "If I'm careless in my work already, I certainly am not fit to be your steward over a fortune like this."

"Put it in your pocket, Hereford," said Phil largely, as he waved his hand in an airy sweep. "We all make mistakes once in a while, and this will make you all the more careful in the future. Now, if I were you, I should not gloat over Wilson until your own plans are fairly at work. This will let him know that you are a doer, not a boaster, and he will never know exactly what cards you have buried — which is a good thing in business."

"I think you can trust me in the future, sir," was all the reply Hereford could make as he left the room, humbled as we all are by frank and hearty magnanimity.

Phil smiled as he recalled that Hereford had entirely forgotten the absence of the tobacco which was the im-

portant part of the affair after all. "Well, now that I have found the check it is not necessary to smoke anyway," he said philosophically.

As soon as he had dined, Phil removed his clothing, put on his pajamas and bathrobe, lighted a long-stemmed pipe, seated himself in his den and summoned his new partner. "Has this scheme of yours any focus, Hereford?" he asked.

"It is all worked out, sir," replied Hereford modestly.

"From now on, you have a double part to play, Hereford. As my business associate, you must never be servile. You are the president of this new company and I am merely the board of directors. You must initiate the policies, and I shall stand out for cautiousness and conservatism. You must have all your arguments at your fingers' ends and you must over-ride the board of directors and have your own way in everything. Also, you must pay dividends or the board will replace you with a new president possessing better executive ability. This is the regular way, and if you imagine business to consist in raising the eyebrows and strutting, you are doomed to a serious and lasting disappointment. Wilson is guiding the venture under his control as skillfully as he used to drive a car. I have no doubt that you will administer your new affairs as smoothly as you always have, with one exception, administered mine. On the other hand, I shall expect the same quality of personal service to which I have been accustomed. It is to be understood that this particular household is not to the smallest extent, a part of the training school."

There was a noble humility shining in Hereford's face. The part of his intellect which was not mechanical was

AN UNEXPECTED THRUST 107

metaphysical, and he felt that he was standing in the shadow of a miracle — which was indeed true. Our entire financial and economic system is a miracle, and no perfectly sane outsider would believe a word of it if it were explained to him for the first time. For instance, here was Phil Lytton, a decidedly loveable chap, but one utterly incapable of producing a penny's worth of real value. Yet by making a few marks on a worthless bit of paper, he miraculously transfers a hundred thousand dollars' worth of surplus value from those who actually did produce it, and hands its curious power over to a man who had absolutely nothing at all to do with the production. Phil saw nothing peculiar in the transaction; but Hereford who understood it even less, was subdued and chastened by the marvel of it.

"You need have no fear, sir, Mr. Lytton. I already 'ave ten applicants in training at our club. You are perhaps not aware s — Mr. Lytton, that I am a member of the Gentlemen's Gentlemen Club. We have our own building on Forty-fourth Street, and I 'ave been training them for over a month. Any one of them is now fit for — for an assignment. I 'ave figured out a scale of prices which I think will prove attractive and also pay a large profit. The profit will increase with the business at a much faster rate than the expenses. I 'ave been carrying on a fictitious correspondence with some of our best people, trying to imagine what their needs could be so that we could fill orders at a moment's notice. Each man will wear a slightly different livery so as to keep up the appearance of continuous employment instead of a merely temporary service. I believe that a judicious combination of this company and Mr. Wilson's will be most helpful. The men

who use these machines would very likely at times need a man for a short time, and by listing them and writing them personal letters —”

“If you find out that you don't like this business, I think that Colonel Edgerton could use you very well in his real estate emporium,” interrupted Phil with hidden mirth; “but you really have made a fine start and I don't mind telling you that you interest me very much. Here, Mr. Hereford, have a cigar, take a seat, and let us go to the bottom of this thing.”

They talked well into the night, Phil delicately accenting the words he wished to call to Hereford's attention, words upon which, either as to their pronunciation or meaning, Hereford seemed to hold unorthodox opinions. As they talked, the new president gradually thawed into a quite human and very companionable individual. Unconsciously he assumed his Gentlemen's Gentlemen air, and in the circle where it was habitually worn, Hereford was quite a personage. Phil was surprised to see the scone of the scheme as it had already been outlined, and he entered into it as into a game, his imagination took fire and he made suggestions which aroused Hereford's enthusiasm. Two boys they were, planning a frolic—which is the kind of business life was intended to be.

Next day they went office hunting, Hereford having strict orders to assert his dignity and not to treat Phil as a superior. He found this a difficult task after their long years of rigid, though comfortable etiquette, and Phil was forced to remind him occasionally; but with all others, Hereford asserted himself with calm assurance, and they had a pleasant day together. They found four places of equal suitability and dined together at Sherry's. Here-

AN UNEXPECTED THRUST 109

ford did the ordering very deliberately, very tastefully, very satisfactorily, and then they drove home in a Wilson car.

Phil was in a delightful frame of mind; he fairly beamed. He had found Hereford not only shrewd and alert, but affable and pleasant. Phil felt as though he had been dragged to an unwelcome play, and that it was turning out to be amusing after all. It was a very pleasing vista which he encountered as he looked into his future. It would be great sport to be the silent partner in the two service companies which he had already started and he felt that before long he would be deeply engrossed in the active management of their affairs. He had really cut the teeth of his ambition, and it was with a thrill of joy that he pictured all the tough propositions still to chew in the world. He felt a big capacity for action, he felt that he himself, the real Phil Lytton, was greater than the luxurious corner in which he had found himself, and he decided to withdraw his money from idle speculation, and embark in a business of his own, a Phil Lytton Business. Then, as he climbed the single flight, he remembered Edith, and how little he had felt her presence all that day. It made him smile with triumph.

A messenger boy stood on the landing, a tired little fellow; he reproachfully handed Phil a message. Phil read it, felt a queer tremor go through him, and then unlocked the door and motioned the boy to follow him.

Once inside, Phil left them and entered his den where he again read the message which was already burned into his memory as with a brand.

"This is my fourth wire C has jumped three twenty points cover at once. Morgan."

CHAPTER TEN

HONORS THRUST UPON THE COLONEL

EVENTS have a strange lack of proportion, an utter disregard of the demands of art and an impertinent scorn of the orthodox methods of the stage. When little Martha really does starve to death, there is no slow, quivery music; she does not drip beautiful platitudes as the belated philanthropist strolls closer in an irritatingly purposeless way, especially designed for the stimulation of suspense. Instead, she merely curls up tighter and tighter into a numb, commonplace knot, to the distant rumble of an early milk wagon, while a gaunt alley cat looks on with idle curiosity or cannily estimates her value as a future asset.

It is thus all the way through: the little things make the big noise and the big things have so much to do that they refuse to waste any energy in keeping an audience awake. The thunder storm frightens the entire animal kingdom, and knocks over an old stump, or sets a barn on fire, while all the time, without any fuss or pretense, the visible supply of water continues to evaporate until sooner or later — unless some more picturesque method intervenes — the big round Earth with its swarming parasites will be nothing but a glistening tomb bobbing about in the cold beams of a dying sun.

And this same obstinate inconsistency is equally apparent in the history of a race or the life of a single individual.

THE COLONEL HONORED 111

For instance, when Phil, rich and with a glowing prospect of success, prepared to embark in business he made his sorrow manifest through much bewailing; but now that the little game appeared done, he stood quite silent amidst the wreckage, idly drumming upon the back of a chair. His face was not drawn or pale; he seemed to be considering other affairs than his own; his brain was never so alert nor its operations so accurate.

"Two hundred fifty thousand to pay," he mused aloud, "and not an investment I wish to disturb. I hate to crawl back and confess that I am a dub, but it is all in the game, and the sooner I get at it the better."

He looked up Nathan Meyer's home address and called him to the telephone. Nathan's voice indicated very little surprise at the unexpected call, and he immediately invited Phil to a conference. Nathan lived on Park Avenue, and as the distance was short, Phil decided to walk.

He first wrote a check for one hundred seventy-five thousand dollars, and sent it with a short note to Morgan, bidding him hold the cotton, and that he would cover in full on the following day. As soon as the messenger had started, Phil hurried in the direction of his late agent.

The nearer he came to Nathan's, the more slowly he walked. Beside him walked the personality which he had worn during the interview in which he had told Nathan of his intention to manage his own affairs. It was a flip-pant, crude, boastful personality, and he longed to throttle it and hide it forever from the sight of man. A man is really only free to brag after he has had much experience, and then wisdom has thoroughly removed all temptation in this direction.

Nathan admitted him with his usual kindly reserve, and

conducted him through a beautifully furnished hall into a quaint old library. Even in his nervous humility, Phil was keenly aware of the confident taste which dominated everything, the rugs, the paintings, the sympathy which prompted the elimination of hired service and bade Nathan, himself, open the door.

"I have long wished to welcome you to my home, Philip. I welcome you now with all my heart."

"I have come to talk business," said Phil bluntly.

Nathan smiled. "There are no walls which can shut it out nowadays. One goes to the opera and his enjoyment is marred by men talking business; one goes to the park for a breath of nature, and even there it crowds its way between the green grass and one's pleasure in it. Yet, you are my guest, and if your business will not wait until the morrow, we can talk over it now. Business has seldom been a topic, however, in my home."

"I have to raise two hundred fifty thousand dollars tomorrow, Mr. Meyer," confessed Phil.

Again Nathan smiled. "It is a fair sum, but certainly not one to embarrass you. It is not possible that you have already become so involved that it will be at all difficult to raise two hundred fifty thousand."

Phil keenly felt the accent upon the word already and the contempt laid upon the sum in question. "I have ample security," he responded, "but it is in a peculiar form, and I don't clearly understand how to borrow money."

"Some men have become wealthy because they knew how to borrow money, and some have become wealthy because they did not know how to borrow money," said Nathan enigmatically. "I rather think, Philip, that you are one

of those who will thrive best by not learning how to borrow. Can you not do without this loan?"

"It is to cover margins — Cotton."

"Oh, yes," said Nathan nodding his head. "All this day people have been hurrying to and fro trying to borrow money because cotton took an unexpected jump; but the people who work in the fields will never know of it, which is quite strange after all. And so, Philip, you were a bear? This, also, is very strange. Most beginners are bulls. You should have won; but then you are not alone. Tom Norton is in the same boat with you, to-night. He also does not now know how to borrow money; while a young man by the name of Scranton is receiving the congratulations, the envy, and the hate of the street, and is being hailed by the papers as the new Napoleon."

Phil made no reply. He saw as in a vision the patronizing manner in which he had chaffed Scranton about his diet, and the steady determination which had gleamed in the man's eyes.

"What are your securities?" asked Nathan.

Phil repeated them in a diffident voice.

"Twelve hundred and fifty thousand dollars," said Nathan after a slight pause, "and not one penny in securities which are listed in the open market. You certainly are a venturesome boy, Philip. I hardly know how to advise you."

"You lend money yourself, do you not?" demanded Phil.

Nathan shook his head. "Not on that sort of security," he answered decisively.

"Do you mean to tell me that you would not advance

two hundred and fifty thousand dollars on twelve hundred and fifty thousand dollars' security?"

"It is not the quantity of the security, it is the quality of it which determines in this case. I know nothing whatever about any of your holdings, except the Unicorn Developing Company, and really, Philip, there is no physical valuation there whatever. They do hold immense options, but the thing which they are capitalizing is the central scheme, which is right enough financing, but does not appeal to me at the present."

"Then you do not wish to advance the money?"

"Are you asking that from a purely business standpoint, or is there a trace of friendship in it?"

"What difference does it make?" demanded Phil haughtily.

"Simply this," answered Nathan blandly. "I would not advance two hundred fifty thousand dollars upon your securities, but I might lend that amount to a friend without security."

Phil meditated: there were responsibilities as well as privileges to friendship; he recalled that Nathan had a daughter; many embarrassing possibilities flashed before him, and his boyish, troubled face grew firm. "I made it entirely as a business proposition," he said, rising and examining a curious print.

"Then, I must reject it," responded Nathan. "Money is very tight just now, as you know, and there is an immense demand for call loans on gilt edge security. I think you will have little difficulty in getting what you wish; but in case you do not, you might come to me again as a last resort. My daughter has some private funds of her own,

which she manages for her own amusement. Her business ideals resemble your own more than mine do. It is possible that she would look with favor upon your securities, and she has been very successful in taking what I should consider risky chances."

"Thank you," said Phil. "And now, I think I must be going. I rather expect to leave town for a while, and shall say good-bye, as I may not see you again."

They shook hands and both men were sorry for the something which seemed to hold them apart. Nathan followed Phil to the door in silence. Things had not gone as he had wished, and yet he did not feel entirely at fault. Phil felt a certain contempt for Nathan at what he conceived to be a very bald bid for something which gentlemen did not sell. "I may wind up on the scrap heap," he muttered to himself, "but hanged if I'll be a ladder."

"I shall be at my office early to-morrow morning, in case you wish to see me," said Nathan.

"I expect to be busy all day to-morrow," said Phil, indicating that this would, of course, preclude any possibility of his calling upon his late agent.

"I am willing to lend you seventy-five thousand dollars upon your Wilson Public Service Stock, as a purely business proposition," suggested Nathan.

"Oh, there is no use splitting them up," answered Phil lightly. "I think I can borrow all I want on them at one place, and would prefer to do it that way. Don't feel that you have hurt me in any way, Mr. Meyer. I wanted you to look upon it as a purely business proposition, and, really, I am much obliged to you for giving me your unbiased opinion of my holdings. I also apologize for disturbing

116 THE KNIGHT-ERRANT

you with business at this time of night ; but I have been engaged all day and did not discover my needs until a few minutes ago. Good night."

Once out in the street, Philip Lytton gave himself up to the luxury of a demonstrative rage. He cast reason aside and said things to himself about Mr. Meyer, his ancestry, his progeny, and his race, which were quite inaccurate and quite improper. After the storm, he felt better and when he perceived the Belmont through the rising fog of his anger, he stepped inside to the telephone booths.

After a little difficulty, he found Colonel Edgerton and ordered him to come at once to the bar of the Knickerbocker Club. This demand was so unusual that the Colonel did not even question it, but acted upon the suggestion as though he were hypnotized. If you really want a thing done, telephone an order and then hang up the receiver before your whereabouts can be ascertained. After seating himself in a cab, Colonel Edgerton was incensed at the ease with which he had been inveigled from a peculiarly pleasant environment during a singularly pleasing streak of luck, and by the time he had reached the club, he was prepared to punish "the inexcusable impudence of the young whipper-snapper."

He was up to the boiling point and spluttering by the time he arrived ; but Phil paid no heed to him. He led him to a secluded spot and without leading up to his subject or even asking the usual question, demanded: "Colonel, have you two hundred fifty thousand dollars which are not working?"

"How much did you say?" asked the surprised Colonel, mechanically reaching for his bill book.

THE COLONEL HONORED 117

"Two hundred fifty thousand dollars," repeated Phil impatiently.

"What on earth do you want with two hundred and fifty thousand dollars?" exclaimed the Colonel.

Phil sighed. "We should never arrive anywhere at this rate," he said. "You go ahead and ask me the questions you want to, and after I have answered them, I shall once more ask the one which interests me."

"Well, you certainly have an exasperating way with you! I did not seek this interview, and I am not the one who is asking the favor. I was very contented where I was and if you feel—"

"Oh, this certainly is galling!" interrupted Phil. "I have never asked many favors of you, as you will, perhaps, recall; and I am not going to begin at this late date; but I find I shall have to leave town to-morrow and — to be brief, will you lend me that sum upon twelve hundred and fifty thousand in what I consider gilt edge security?"

Indirectly, Phil had caused many exasperating whirlpools in the placid flow of the Colonel's life, and a true diplomat would have approached him with more finesse; but Phil was Phil and he had never learned the gentle art of begging. He had an under-consciousness of justice, quite out of keeping with modern affairs, which made it agreeable to have favors done him because the favors themselves were right, and not because he himself was pleasing to the one who did the favor. Such an attitude can only flourish under enlightenment, and is a premature exotic under what is carelessly called "Civilization," and which is supposed by many to be actually worthy of commendation.

"Young man," said the Colonel ponderously, "you have

a very inadequate sense of values. Two hundred and fifty thousand dollars is a sum of money which is entitled to consideration. A business man —”

“I am not asking you for it! I am not attempting any sort of confidence game. I am offering you twelve hundred and fifty thousand dollars’ worth of security, and if a business man expects any more than this he is in need of a nerve depressant. I am not asking your advice; all I am asking for is a temporary loan, and if you do not wish to make it from a business standpoint all I can do is to apologize for having bothered you and to set you down wherever you wish to go.”

“If you are not anxious to get the money, why on earth did you disturb me at this time of night? I was enjoying myself; I was not worrying about an opportunity to make further investment; I was having a very pleasant evening and you intruded with your own affairs. Therefore I consider that I am perfectly justified —”

“You were perfectly justified to refuse the interview in the first place,” interrupted Phil. “This is not the supreme court and I did not subpoena you! If you do not wish to make the loan, all you need to do is to say so. It is neither necessary to defend your action nor to give me a lecture.”

The Colonel threw himself back in his chair and breathed rapidly; his lips moved, his tongue moistened them, but his brain refused to coin a remark which would do justice to the occasion. “I’ll not lend you the money,” he finally ejaculated, getting some comfort from the fierceness of his tone, but at the same time feeling that he was doing something to be ashamed of. “You refused to take my advice; you insisted upon trying to play another man’s game

without knowing a single thing about it; and now that you have gone broke, you have no one to blame but yourself."

"Gone broke!" exclaimed Phil. "You are certainly conservative. Why, even under the Roman Empire a man who could stick up twelve hundred and fifty thousand dollars was not broke."

The Colonel felt that he was not playing up to his usual form. "There is no use losing your temper about it, my boy," he said, as if surprised at Phil's outburst in comparison with his own gentlemanly deportment. "I feel that my position as your friend—I may say, your long-tried friend—in addition to my riper business experience, entitles me to a modicum of your confidence, when you come to me of your own accord and ask what is really a strain upon my own resources, a big strain."

"Strain? How could it strain a man in your position? You not only have an ample private fortune, but in addition have under your control the fortunes of Edith, your brother, and the Canal Boater's Haven. It is merely business, Colonel, and the only question is in regard to my securities."

"What are they?"

Phil repeated the list, and when he had finished, the Colonel sat and stared at him.

"Philip," he said soberly, "you are a most original boy. I would not risk one penny of the property under my control upon such securities; but I can raise that amount on my own resources, and if you will tell me what moonlight scheme is still in your brain, I think I shall let you have it. That is a most remarkable list."

Phil dropped his eyes in study; the Colonel was a kindly soul at heart, and to be trusted. It really was less humiliating to tell the purpose for which he wanted the money,

than it was to be ashamed to tell it, and a clean breast would probably make him feel free and strong once more.

"Cotton, Colonel, cotton," he said with an ease which was only a trifle forced. "I was bearing the market with forty thousand bales and they caught me with my back turned."

"Gambling, huh? Speculating on margins! Just exactly what I warned you against — and with forty thousand bales, too! Oh, this is precisely what —"

"Now what I want you to do," interposed Phil without regarding the Colonel, "is to take my securities and my options, and finish the deal any way you want to. It can't go much higher, and it will slide with the same speed that it scared. I am going west for a while, and you can do whatever you wish with the deal; but if I were you, I should follow it up. You are entitled to all you can make out of my stuff until I get back."

"Well, how long do you expect to be gone — hang it, Phil, I don't know any more about cotton than — than you do, and I don't want the responsibility. Why don't you stick to the wheel until this blow is over and then jump out of the game for good and go into partnership with me? Edith is all at sea already the way things —"

"Edith must not be told of my temporary embarrassment. You understand that, of course."

"Of course," replied the Colonel. They did not speak for a few moments, and then the Colonel resumed in even tones: "I accept this mission as a purely business transaction, Phil, although I do not approve of your investments. Still, I think they will be the making of you in the end. Don't worry a bit while you are away, and come back as soon as you can. These — these little obstacles are likely

THE COLONEL HONORED 121

to happen at the start of most successful careers in order to make a man cautious. Let's have a drink."

"This is mighty good of you, Colonel," said Phil with appreciation, as soon as the drink had been ordered, "but I think you take it too seriously. I only look upon myself as embarrassed, not bankrupt."

"Why are you going west?" asked the Colonel irrelevantly.

"I want to investigate that mine property."

"A little later, you will investigate property before, not after, you invest in it. Have you any inside information upon this Unicorn Investment thing?"

"Nothing new since I invested."

"You saw the rumor about it in to-day's paper, I suppose?"

"No; what was it?"

"Oh, I did not pay any attention to it. Some newspaper yarn, I suppose. You have not seen much of Edith lately. You will say good-bye before you leave, will you not?"

"I'll try to run in to-morrow, but I'll be very busy, and if I don't have time, I'll drop her a note from Denver. It is after midnight, now, or I'd run up and see her."

The two men stood up and shook hands with a firm, warm pressure, telling each other what their civilized lips refused to tell. This ancient heritage of blood messages will probably preserve our hearts during the present period of chilly conventions, which is a greater boon than we deserve. "Don't worry a minute, Phil. This will all blow over like a cloud."

The Colonel rode off in a cab very content with himself, while Phil walked up the avenue to his apartment

with an odd mixture of emotions. He was thankful for the Colonel's help, but resented the uncalled-for censure which had accompanied it; he was aware that he loved Edith more than ever, and yet he felt a pleasant satisfaction in the thought that he was going away without saying farewell to her; but over and above all his other feelings, was a vague, intangible sense of liberty. He was going away from it all, from it all; from the wasted youth, the wild scramble to redeem it, and the false sympathy of those who would secretly gloat over what they would consider his failure.

He realized that until some of his investments paid, and not for one second did he doubt their ability to do this as soon as they were firmly established, he would be forced to curtail his mode of living to such an extent that it would attract the attention of his entire list of friends, and there was beginning to stir within him a romantic impulse to swing out from it all in a quest, a genuine quest having no fixed object or ending, except to match his own untried prowess, unbraced by any of its former advantages, against the ancient cunning of the world.

Every hour of a man's life epitomizes the entire life into a miniature.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

PHIL BEGINS HIS QUEST

PHIL opened the door to his apartment as silently as possible, but Hereford heard him and leaned forward eagerly in the hope that he would be summoned for some service. Hereford's room was in the rear of the apartment, and it was understood that except upon very rare occasions, his employer would not expect any service of him when he returned late; but there was a pride in Hereford's self-respect which filled him with a desire to wait upon his present business partner with a finish additional to that which had graced his services through a long and oft tested enlistment. Hereford was a grateful creature with a simple, sincere sense of the practical in the manner of showing his gratitude.

But Phil did not ring for him. Instead, he went direct to his library and throwing his light coat aside, picked up the *Wall Street Journal*, and there he saw an item which brought him still more clearly face to face with himself. It was only a few lines, in which it was stated in plain, unvarnished language, that the Unicorn Developing Company, an English enterprise which had attracted millions of American capital, was likely to turn out but little more than a South Sea bubble; that the option upon which their entire exploitation depended had proven to be illegal, and that it was doubtful if the stock-holders, who had actually

made *bona fide* investment, would realize more than ten cents on the dollar, if anything at all.

"The Colonel knew this all the time," murmured Phil in an a..ed voice. "He knew it and yet he accepted my securities. For all either he or I know the gold mine may be merely a hole in a gravel bank. The Colonel is a great man, but I shall not let him be squeezed this way. Still, I don't see how I can help it. Perhaps Nathan Meyer also knew this — of course he did. Great Scott, it is no longer a choice with me; I'll have to leave town." Phil straightened and clenched his fist — "and I'll have to make good; I'll win back enough to clear myself before I return."

The knight-errant had found his object and had taken his vow. Now he must put his castle in order and hasten forth to find the dragons, the ogres, and the maidens in distress.

Then Phil touched his button. When Hereford entered, he found his employer with a white calm face, seated in a Turkish rocker and preparing to light a bulldog pipe.

"Hereford, I wish to straighten up my accounts as far as possible, and to leave on the early train for Denver. You will remain here and develop the Domestic Service Company."

There was never any introduction to Phil's plans: he merely said, "Hereford, I will leave on the early morning train for Denver," and it was Hereford's duty to provide the early morning train and see that Phil got aboard with sufficient clothing, and in plenty of time.

They fell to upon the accounts and in half an hour, Phil had signed checks which left him exactly five hundred dollars as weapons and armor for his quest. This, however,

PHIL BEGINS HIS QUEST 125

in his then frame of mind, seemed ample. Knights are queer folk who go about their preparations in a half daze, so engaged are they in anticipating the delights of battle.

"Now, Hereford," said Phil pleasantly, "take a cigar and resume your business man's deportment. I have been thinking things over this evening and have come to several conclusions. I have mining interests which require my attention in the West for some time, and it will be a splendid opportunity for you to put your plans into operation. It will be best for you to maintain this residence as your own, charging the corporation with half the running expenses and myself with the other half. When you have a particularly influential client, you can bring him here; in fact, it will add greatly to your standing to have such a place to which you can bring men of culture who temporarily lack an income sufficient to support the state they are fully capable of appreciating. I may only be gone for several months, and I may be gone for an entire year; but I only want one trunk and a hand bag. Hold all my mail, and if I write you, be ready to forward it promptly. To all inquirers, simply state that I am investigating mining prospects, and that you are not at liberty to reveal my whereabouts.

"That will be all, and now finish your packing as soon as possible and get some rest. I also want to tell you on this occasion, which may be the last one in which our old relation will continue, that you have added more to my pleasure and content than any other feature of my life; and I hope that your present venture will be entirely successful, and that you will be happy all the days of your life."

Hereford's eyes filled with tears and he twice said, "Ahem, ahem!" with quite unnecessary emphasis. Finally,

and with much effort, he managed to say: "Thank you, sir, I'll — I'll pack your trunk at once, sir."

"And now," said Phil briskly as soon as Hereford had left the room, "I shall get some sleep myself."

He dressed rapidly and slipped into bed. Hereford, in the next room, made almost no noise at all with his rapid, skillful packing, and in an incredibly short time he had switched off the light and Phil had not even this excuse for wakefulness; but during the ensuing half hour, he tried nine separate and distinct methods for invariably producing sleep — and then arose, slipped on a long, soft, cardinal robe and lighting a cigarette, strolled into his front room.

He seated himself upon the "Pirate's Chest," an evil-looking, brass-bound box which stood in a corner and which contained some of his choicest treasures. He sat on the chest in a very uncomfortable position until three cigarettes, many reminiscences, and several new thoughts were consumed.

"Of course, they will be able to put the correct construction upon it," he remarked in a conversational tone, waving his hand in a comprehensive gesture which included his entire list of acquaintances. "They will be able to stand entirely on the outside and tell to the last cipher just how many kinds of an idiot I have been and just how much I have lost and just why I pulled up stakes and slipped off between two days.

"I don't know the answers to any of these questions myself, but who am I? Merely the chief actor, and what are chief actors? Merely little puppets worked by strings and wires and in nowise capable of estimating or appreciating their own doings. Why am I going west? I should not know a gold mine from a blizzard, and I know that

ou, sir,

rd had

reford,

rapid,

ne had

excuse

ne tried

ducing

ardinal

room.

n evil-

which

on the

e ciga-

s were

ct con-

l tone,

cluded

able to

er just

st how

es and

estions

d what

strings

precia-

should

w that



“They will be able to tell just how many kinds of an idiot I have been and just how much I have lost and just why I pulled up stakes and slipped off between two days.”

PHIL BEGINS HIS QUEST 127

this is not the reason. I can't understand it at all: when I made the lover's leap into business, I gazed about this room and the tears splashed down on my heart until I feared I'd catch cold in it; but now — I suppose it's like the grace of death. We are in mortal terror of Death until he arrives in person; then we see through the false rumors about the old gentleman, and that he is a good sort after all, and that everything is all right.

"I wonder how and when I shall die; and as a last wonder, I wonder what on earth started me to wondering. This is not one of my ways. I have changed a lot during the last few weeks since we sat on that hill and she deviled me into business. I love her as much as I did but I do not need her as much. It has been over a week since I saw her and it may be quite a long time before I see her again. She is too good for me, but I'm not sure that she's any wiser than I am. It takes a lot of natures to make up a whole world: some of us are content with having, and some are filled with the itch of getting. No matter what they have, they are forced to get something more, even if it's only more of the same kind of stuff. Edith is one of the getters, while I'm content to sit down in peace and play with what I already have. Or, at least I was. Now, I have not the slightest idea what I shall develop into. This is what gives me a shake: I have very little regret at what I am leaving, and very little curiosity as to where I am going.

"I never had a boyish desire to run away. It is usually one of the stages in every boy's life; but I never had it — before. If I were in a position to judge, I should say that I have it now. It's a funny feeling, as though I had twisted a wire about part of my life and it were slowly get-

ting numb, while the circulation were developing a new set of veins in which to flow. Sensations — after all, that is all there is to life. We don't care anything about the football, but we do care a heap for the sensation it gives to advance the fool thing at the right time. The sensations of my old life were, on the whole, rather agreeable; but as they begin to grow dim, it seems to me that the new sensations promise an added richness."

He arose, crossed to the mantel and, after he had lighted a pipe, he seated himself in a comfortable chair with the thoughtful look still on his face. "I think I can see why they promise a new richness. I am going forth to *get* them. Edith is right; we must get the things which give us true joy; but she is also wrong; it is the getting, not the things, which counts, and she jumped at a false conclusion when she sicced me at business. Business is not my field. I dislike saying so, just at this time, for I fear I shall have to enter it in earnest in order to make enough to live decently until some of my ships come home. Even ten cents on the dollar would be something out of the Unicorn bubble, and I have every confidence in Wilson and Hereford, while there may be something in that gold mine for all I know.

"But I have a curious feeling that the sensations which I shall pick up on this trip will be entirely new. My life has been rather replete with sensations and it does not seem that there can be many entirely new ones left, and yet I do not see anything familiar in connection with this jaunt; everything is strange; enticing, but threatening; alluring, yet forbidding; it seems as though I were to be stripped to the skin and given the final test, the test of unsupported personality.

"I have been told that I had something of the psychic

PHIL BEGINS HIS QUEST 129

in my make-up; but now I wish I had studied up on it. There are visions just beyond my reach and I know that if I were able to work myself into one of these trance conditions, I could see something worth while. I don't care much, though; it will be all the more fun to just follow the winding road and never know what new thing is to pop out from behind the next curve.

"I hate to leave Edith without saying good-bye, and yet I could not stand it to say good-bye to her, now. Success, that is her only standard, and I'd hate to have her measure me with that, now. When, or rather, if, I win, I shall come back to her, and give her the credit for it; but if I fail utterly, why, I'll fail alone, and—she does not need me, any way. She is strong, she is far stronger than I, and I suppose I must have bored her a lot of times with my immature way of strolling through life with a smile. I wish I were worthy of her; and, I'm going to try to be worthy of her; but there is no good in advertising what one intends to do. If Columbus had not told where he was starting to, he might have gotten the credit for having scientifically calculated the whereabouts of America, instead of starting to India and merely blundering into a rather large obstacle in the shape of the Western Continent.

"Well, as long as neither I, nor anyone else has any idea where I am heading, no one can look wise and say that I failed to arrive. And now I am going to cut this soliloquy short, and commune a while with the old friends who still meet within this room."

He smoked his pipe slowly and let his eyes idly rest upon one curious gift after another. From time to time he would give voice to a reminiscent exclamation, but for the most part he sat in silence. The electric lights were

130 THE KNIGHT-ERRANT

switched off and in the soft candle beams, his face was very gentle, but at the same time stronger than usual. He was standing upon his old life, looking his new life squarely in the eyes, and this is a solemn moment in the development of any man.

Hereford found him asleep in his chair the next morning, and Hereford was struck with the tender sweetness of his smile; but then Hereford was a hero-worshipper, and had chosen Phil Lytton for his hero, so that his opinion was not quite to be classed with unprejudiced testimony.

CHAPTER TWELVE

A LACK OF ARMOR

EVEN Phil Lytton himself could never rightly understand the next few weeks. It took him but a few days to learn that the prospects of the Rosy Dawn mine partook largely of the nature of a cloudy sunset. The general opinion among experts was, that while the stuff was there beyond doubt, it would cost nearly as much to get it as it was worth, and that the Honor Bright mine, whose owners were guided by the second, rather than the first name, would gobble it up as soon as their legal limb had time to select the technicality which best suited him. The Honor Bright mine was in politics, which is explanation sufficient for anything, from the sublime to the ridiculous, in the sovereign state of Colorado.

The newspapers continued to comment flippantly upon the Unicorn Developing Company, and the notable extent to which its single horn differed from the proverbial horn of plenty, and Phil journeyed on to San Francisco with no other thought than to get as far as possible from the shearing floor where he had left his own contribution of lambs' wool. It is a depressing, smothering sensation when the soul of a physical man feels sore and beaten. If the Lords of High Finance had hired thugs to waylay him and drop him into the gutter with a good honest blow from a lead pipe, Phil would have seen through the game and would

have arranged a pleasant reception for the next gang of thugs; but this insidious attack found him with no more defence than an alchemist of the dark ages had against a cholera germ.

What a silly thing it is to think that an individual man is capable of taking care of himself amidst the enemies, natural and artificial, which constantly hang on the trail of the human race eager to tear down the stragglers. Nobody is ever entirely right, but everybody always is; and as soon as we learn that, socially the entire race is but a single organism with its own distinct life, and that men and women are merely individual cells of this organism, we shall begin to guard these small cells, to cherish them, because when they become diseased the disease spreads through the entire race. Selfishness is always an indication of intelligence. The rich die from over-eating; the poor from under-eating; whereas it is plainly evident that sufficient is quite enough.

Phil had nearly four hundred dollars when he arrived in San Francisco, and four hundred dollars is ample capital upon which to embark in quite a creditable list of enterprises — provided, of course, that one has selected a suitable ancestry. Phil did not even remotely suspect this; he looked upon four hundred dollars as about the right amount of change to take along to a week-end unless one expected to play a longer session of bridge than his own high animal spirits craved, but the idea of its being capital was preposterous.

It makes us feel proud and happy to say that in this land of the free there is equal opportunity for all. It is difficult to imagine any human trait more vicious than complacency. It is a narcotic drug which bids us sleep and dream sweet

dreams while the house burns about us. Would any reflecting person affirm that Phil's opportunities were the same as those of a Greek, or a Russian Jew, who had just arrived at Ellis Island with the same amount of money in his pockets? Hardly. An opportunity is always both objective and subjective.

It is not true to say that one time a Digger Indian had an opportunity to introduce "Civilization" into this country in order to squeeze its vast wealth into his own pockets before the white grafters arrived. Of course, there was, at that time, no law against crime on this wholesale, and strictly modern, scale; but only the objective half of opportunity was above the horizon. Subjectively, the Digger Indian knew as little about an opportunity worth crossing the street to kidnap, as a high school graduate knows about actual morality. The Digger Indian would have been just as much hurt if one had questioned his knowledge of opportunities, as the graduate would at the insinuation of his ignorance regarding morality. Merely a matter of education — and complacency.

Phil did not think these thoughts; he merely bumped his head against them and whimpered to himself over the pain. There was no large city in the country where he did not have friends, good, warm, trustworthy friends who would put him up for a night or a month, advance him whatever he thought he would need in the way of money, and give him an opening in any commercial pursuit which attracted him; but this occurred to him only as a possibility to be utterly avoided.

He possessed one of those large, aristocratic natures which delight in conferring favors, but suffer untold anguish when forced to beg them. When fully alive, we possess in-

instincts which whisper to us our actual wants. If we are ill, they indicate the kind of treatment most likely to restore us to health. Phil was fully alive and instinctively knew that to get out and, for the first time in his life, do his own hunting, eating nothing but game of his own killing, was the only course capable of restoring him to health and giving him strength to live the balance of his life with dignity; and it is much to his credit that he chose this harder way. Generally, when our instinct advises a fast, our feminine relatives begin to lure our appetites with fascinating foods, and we fall before the temptation and make a chronic disease out of what was merely an acute and disciplinary illness.

A grim and satirical humor impelled Phil to register at a second grade hotel under the name of Phil Little. From this obscurity, he ventured forth to beat the lairs of commerce. He hunted work with all the stealth and skill which a circus man, eager to enlarge his menagerie, would display if he held a band concert in an African jungle, under the belief that this would be the quickest, surest, and safest way to attract the wise, free beasts whose future career would consist in displaying their caged sorrow to his own profit and for the edification and degradation of innocent childhood, and mature vulgarity. A wild beast is not so easily trapped as a voter.

Phil would drop jauntily into an office, request an interview with the president, express a desire for a temporary opportunity to assist in the manipulation of vast enterprises, and lean back in his chair with a friendly smile of encouragement. His manners and assurance invariably gained him the interview, and invariably thwarted its aims. When a young man, wishing to become a bank clerk, dismounts

from a cab to tender his services, it is quite likely to awaken suspicion, and Phil was in no position to answer questions.

It is really painful to consider the customary questions which Phil was forced to face: his previous business experience was not a record to inspire confidence either in his veracity or his ability; he could furnish no references, for there was none to whom he could refer as a former employer, and he could not even reveal his name without striking the colors which, in a moment of chivalrous excitement, he had nailed to the mast.

He had always supposed that it would be utterly impossible for him to hide his identity, and yet he was never recognized, and only once did he see old friends. On this occasion his heart was very heavy and he took his first taste of the bitter waters which an outcast must learn to drink. He was passing a fashionable café when two friends of long standing alighted from a carriage in company with two beautiful girls; he drooped his head so that they would not recognize him; but they passed in through the glittering doors without a glance, and he felt that at last he was gazing at life entirely from the outside.

He was no longer fastidious in his toilet; he was beginning to read "want ads" with more than an impersonal interest; he was learning to pity the other members of his race who were forced to waste a shameful amount of energy in searching for a market where labor power could be sold for the means of sustaining it, and he was constantly hurrying with bowed head through the damp, gloomy shadow of untried loneliness. He did not think much of Edith during the day; but at night she always seemed to come to him, at times with a trace of pity in her eyes, but for the

most part she seemed to sneer, to taunt him with his incapacity and his failure, to hold before him the youth which he had wasted, the wealth which he had dissipated, and the weakness which prevented him from finding a profitable outlet for the strength which still remained.

Sometimes he would drive her from him with harsh words of defiance, and stalk forth into the night to walk and walk and walk until the weary body of him cried aloud for rest, and the still more weary mind could no longer harass him with the knotted whip of memory. He was beginning to long for the fellowship which is the gray compensation for those who have been crowded out of a higher class, and fall with the grin of despair into the morals and manners of a class below. He was beginning to gather a new, dim understanding of morality; to see that each little human is forced to make his own compromise with the arbitrary moral ideal which was given to him by the class into which he was born, and which sadly hampers him in his struggle to win whatever it is that circumstances had offered as his prize.

Of course, it was impossible for his unfocused intellect to understand it, but his more sensitive emotions could feel something of the impossibility of there being any real morals under an economic system which was itself flagrantly immoral, any more than it could be immoral for a tiger to leap from ambush upon the back of a drinking deer. It was a matter of business with the tiger, and also with the burglar. Neither helped to formulate the laws of their business, and both acted according to the unerring impulses of their respective characters; the tiger, being a creature entirely of nature, had no qualms of conscience, the burglar, being a compound of both nature and a thousand

centuries of complicated history, had, at odd moments, temporary periods of repentance to cloud his satisfaction.

Before long he fell into the habit of addressing a few remarks to the human detritus which drifted aimlessly along the Plaza in front of the Chinese Mission, or to the human wrecks which were thrown up out of the surf along Barbary Coast. They were shy with him, and were drawn to him only to the extent of his contributions to their petty graft. There was still the sleekness of cushions about him, and they were the alley cats of the race; living upon scraps and refuse but wearing neither chain nor ribbon, and free from both responsibility and worry.

He wrestled solely through his intuition; he kept no notes, and those which were burned into his memory, and made no attempt to classify, or seek the relationship among the facts which were thrust upon him. He rushed on through the jungle all about him instinctively, as the frightened buck plunges through a thicket, picking up mud and thorns without knowing or caring when or why.

The bitter pity in his heart turned him to useless almsgiving during the holidays, and after New Year's he began to sell his clothing and pawn his jewelry. Occasionally, in wondering at his carelessness toward what he would have once regarded as a disgraceful necessity, he called back his old mental processes, and during these complicated periods he paced the narrow limits of the cheaper room which he had taken, like a caged beast; but for the most part he underwent his change as we all do, unconsciously.

It was upon the morning in which, for the first time in his life, he found himself hungry and without a penny to buy food, that he first fully comprehended the complete

138 THE KNIGHT-ERRANT

readjustment which had taken place in him. He looked at himself in the cracked mirror, and smiled grimly at the reflection. He had saved the suit of clothes in which he had left New York, and this and his watch with a shoestring for chain, made up his entire assets. Even his trunk and bag had been sacrificed for food, coarse unappetizing food, and now he was hungry for more of it, and not a penny to pay.

Beyond a certain, consistent unkemptness, he had not changed a great deal on the surface. His body had not yet begun the cannibalistic feast wherein the cells which are vital to its future activity turn in and eat the cells of reserve energy, hollowing the cheeks and neck, throwing the bones to the surface, and stringing the taut muscles over them without regard to beauty. All this was still an untasted experience to Phil Lytton, and he could still look upon personal hunger as a joke, a rather grim joke to be sure, but still a joke.

This must have been toward the latter part of February, and he had long since given up finding a position, and had for several weeks been honestly searching for a job. A dreary, soul-testing labor it is, and, in attempting to weigh and measure Phil Lytton, it must not be forgotten that distasteful as was his mode of life, he was never once tempted to send forth the call of the wounded which would rally his friends about him. House pet though he was, he had chosen to go forth into life's wilderness to fight as the lone wolf, and like the lone wolf he met his fate in silence.

Of course there was work for him in San Francisco, plenty of work; there is not a spot of ground on earth which does not woo its worker; but always objective Opportunity was veiled, and always Phil Lytton lacked the subjective

knowledge which would have taught him how to embrace her. One day he would be offered a job, the conditions of which seemed more irksome than he could bear, until further search proved that he could do no better. He would return to accept the place, and find it taken by a man better able to fill it than himself, and he would take up his quest, sinking lower and lower in his estimate of himself and his demands in the matter of employment. In his planless search through the great city, he stumbled upon, without knowing it, all the facts which make political economy under Capitalism so fascinating a study, and so hellish a practice. He was not in a position to do either, and so he staggered on with his sensitive boy-nature vainly attempting to develop a callous which would protect it from the rough blows and scratches so freely given it.

At first with surprise and then with chagrin he discovered that it required either influence or organization to procure even the meanest job. He found labor unions cold and forbidding, he found the Society of Native Sons haughty and arrogant, and he found jobs which at one time he would have thought no white man would accept, reserved for the friend of a friend.

On the morning upon which hunger arrived to gloat over the fact that poverty was already in possession, he started forth with his mind fully resigned to accept any sort of work which offered. Edith would have said that the moustache upon his lip, the unbrushed condition of his clothing, and his soiled linen constituted the great change which had taken place in him since he went away without telling her good-bye; but Edith would have been wrong.

This simple acceptance of circumstances, and his grim determination to make the best of them without any reser-

140 THE KNIGHT-ERRANT

vation by his individual tastes and prejudices, marked the full and complete change which had taken place; and already his quest had brought him trophies whose value it would take him years to fully appreciate.

ed the
nd al-
lue it

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

THE LONE DAMSEL APPEARS

It is silly to be despondent: everything will receive expert attention as soon as we get around to it. Some day a sufficiently large ego will become so thoroughly disgusted with trying to make his meaning clear that he will seriously consider the collection of odds and ends which we call language. The result will be that language will be dragged into the laboratory for complete examination. There can be but one outcome to this; the revolutionary and scientific remodeling of the language into a smoothly-working whole which will be rigid and accurate.

In addition to the type which usually busies itself in the affairs of a written language, it would be well to have a mechanical engineer, an imaginative mathematician, and a chemist of high degree upon the board which is finally to give us a language fit to work with. The engineer would insist upon the greatest amount of energy from the smallest number of parts; the mathematician would be fitted to look after the orthography, as he would refuse to have more than one character for a sound, or more than one sound for a character; the chemist would know the danger of mixing discordant elements, and he could attend to packing only one meaning in each word, while the lexicographers could stand around and weep as they saw their curious relics melted into material for genuine words.

To-day, we sometimes crowd so many emotions into one word that it resembles a pocket book attempting to hold the weekly wash on its way to the laundry. Take the word "Love," for instance. What does love mean, all by itself and with nothing on but its skin? From the love of God to the love of a dog there are a good many descending steps, and we really need a word for each step. It is all right to mix metaphors if it is done in a spirit of semi-serious gaiety, but it is criminal to mix distinct emotions in one word.

Phil walked all that day with hunger gnawing at his vitals. There was no other word for it, and so he called it hunger. He had never before experienced such a gripping, haunting, spurring sensation; and yet he had lightly taken it for granted that all through his sunny, luxurious past, hunger had waited upon him three or four times each day with the suggestion that it was time to take a little nourishment.

All day as he walked, he seemed to be transmuting the social part of his person into that which was purely the product of nature. His senses became keener, his sensitiveness lost its edge; he no longer felt a repugnance for the filth of the cheap lunch rooms. Instead, the thought of the greasy food served there filled his mouth with water, and his mind with wild schemes for rushing in, seizing what he wanted, and knocking down all who dared to oppose him. Hunger knows no law, as political governments would do well to remember. To-day in every hovel and in every slum hunger is preaching the propaganda of industrial liberty, with convincing eloquence.

Phil crept to his room late that night without having tasted a bit of food all that day, and, to his surprise, he

promptly fell asleep. It was natural body-hunger which was besetting him, and not the nagging palate-whimpering which robs the dyspeptic of rest. If he dreamed, he did not know it, but twice during the night, he sprang from his bed and awakened to find himself crouching in the center of the room with clenched hands and set teeth, as though prepared to meet an enemy — or to leap upon his prey. Truly, hunger is a dangerous invader with the menacing trick of recruiting a following from among the very citizens who would, without his leadership, remain loyal and patriotic.

At dawn, Phil arose and again took up the ancient trail which leads its winding way back to the blood-smeared caves of our hairy ancestors. But there is still a competition among those who mop the floors, clean the spittoons, and polish the brasses in even the lowest saloons; and again, Phil passed the day without food. At every turn, voices would whisper, "Sell the watch, sell the watch, sell the watch"; but his father had carried the watch, and the few remaining threads which held him to any pretence of social responsibility were not threads of reason, but of sentiment.

When night fell, a strange, quiet fierceness took possession of him, and with unwearying footsteps, and bright, eager eyes he prowled about the darker streets with the oddly comforting conviction that in a short time he would fight; fight with a luxurious, brutal, absorbing rage, and that in some unreasonable way this would give him food. He did not attempt to make this obsession reasonable, he merely walked with light footfalls and kept his eyes alert.

It never occurred to him to beg; he had none of the pauper in his make-up, and while he was willing to work for food, and rather anxious to fight for it, there was no

germ with his nature to spring into life and bid him ask for it. It is hard to imagine a personality less fitted to carry through Phil Lytton's quest, than Phil Lytton himself.

It was nearly ten when he turned into Market Street from Larkin and walked aimlessly toward the bay. He entered the brilliantly lighted zone and asked himself what could possibly attract him there; but still he continued to keep a sharp watch, and still his muscles held that peculiar readiness, which must add so greatly to feline content.

Presently he noticed a woman gazing into a window of prints. She was well-dressed, of slender figure, auburn hair, and a slightly Jewish cast of countenance. The feminine lure meant nothing to Phil in his present state, and he was about to pass her without curiosity, when a flashily dressed man strolled up to the window. She did not glance at him, but from the quick start she gave, it was evident that he had spoken to her.

Phil reduced his pace instinctively, and saw her turn from the window and start in the direction of the Palace Hotel, with the man walking close to her and speaking in a low tone. There were other pedestrians near, but, as is usual in San Francisco, so intent upon their own pleasure that they wasted little attention upon those about them. Phil could not have explained his own feelings: he felt neither sympathy with the girl, nor hatred for the man; but there swelled within his breast a sudden passion to sink his fingers into the man's throat, to jerk him this way and that, to finally strangle him and hurl him to the pavement. He cared nothing for the result; the part of him which would have remained sane even in madness knew that his quarrel was with man, not a man, and that any other in-

THE LONE DAMSEL

145

dividual would have been offered with equal thankfulness in the sacrifice to hate.

With a quick, soft, beast-like leap, he reached the man's side, whirled him about by the shoulder and stared into his eyes, his hooked fingers on a level with his chest. The eyes of the flashily dressed man were hot with angry indignation, but when they met Phil's glittering orbs the defiance died from them and his face became pale and flabby. The man was not a conqueror with passions primitively free; he was merely an urban degenerate, and the lawless glare in Phil Lytton's eyes was the same flame which has, throughout the ages, burned paralyzing fantasies of fear into the head, the uneasy head, which wears the crown.

Phil's lips parted with a wolfish grin as he prepared to clutch the man's throat, but with a quick, firm movement, the girl laid her hand upon his wrist, and said in a low tone, "Do not make a scene. Let him go. Please do not make a scene!"

Phil looked into her eyes, bright, dark, and courageous. They were wonderfully beautiful eyes, and their magnetism penetrated his fury and called to his normal character. The response was slow; his atavistic paroxysm had taken Phil back to the age of fingernails and teeth, and primitive man was not a cavalier. He made a guttural noise of sullen compliance and let his fists fall to his sides, but still kept his eyes upon those of the frightened and embarrassed fop. "Don't say a word," growled Phil in a voice which he himself, failed to recognize; "but get out o' here as fast as you can."

The man turned and hurried away, in all probability to seek satisfaction for his wounded vanity by oppressing, beyond his usual degree, whatever silly weakling it was who

owed him allegiance; for thus it is that such creatures are accustomed to take revenge.

Phil watched the man's retreating back and felt that in some subtle way he had been robbed. This was not the anticipated fight which had cheered him during the evening, and yet he felt sure that it was meant to be, and that the girl had made him appear foolish.

"I want to thank you," she said and hesitated as she studied his face. "You have put me under many obligations, both in driving the creature off, and in doing so without making a scene."

Phil looked coldly into her face. "Three times you have used that expression and so you must mean it; but I rather wanted to make a scene. I wanted to throttle him, to trample him, to crush him. I have been hunting for him all the evening, and am disappointed to be turned from my purpose so easily."

At the sound of his voice the girl gave a perceptible start and her brows drew together in concentration as she tried to force her memory to recall the conditions under which she had heard that voice before; for she was almost certain she had heard it. Phil had not shaved for three days; he was wearing a rough flannel shirt and a battered soft hat, but, in answering her, his voice had resumed its wonted inflections, and its contrast with his disheveled garb did not escape her.

"And so it was merely a personal quarrel?" she said with a note of disappointment. "I gave you credit for being chivalrous; but I can, at least, thank you for intervening when you did."

"It was not a personal quarrel," said Phil gruffly. "I never saw him before and I doubt if I should know him if

we met again. I have a general quarrel with the world, and he seemed a fit object to receive the brunt of it."

Now, she knew that she had heard the voice before, and yet she was unable to remember when or where. Evidently this was a man who had seen better days, and it was probable that she had met him, perhaps in a business way, before he had commenced this "general quarrel with the world."

"I should like to prove my thankfulness in some substantial way, if there is any favor I can do for you."

Phil smiled: here was his supper, here was the nonsensical ending which his silly day dream had pictured as something worthy and picturesque. He had only to tell her that he was hungry and she would give him a dollar and he would go out of her life as abruptly as he had come in. No one would ever know of it, and she would receive ample value in the story she could tell her friends. It was quite simple; not one thing to hold him from satisfying the gnawing hunger, which had again awakened at the prospect of food; nothing, except that queer private code which tradition and training had given into his hands as the peculiar commission under which he must sail.

He shook his head. "I think there is, at present, no favor which you have the power to confer; but do not feel under the slightest obligations. It was merely an impulse on my part, and seeing his cowardly face change has been recompense enough."

Phil tried to say this lightly, but his deep-set, glittering eyes and gray pallor, now that the reaction had set in, did not lend themselves readily to the pretence of ease, and the girl felt that he was suffering; and then the truth dawned upon her — that he was hungry. This seemed to suggest a

simple way to pay her debt to him, and also an additional opportunity to learn where she had heard his voice before. She was a girl of fine courage and whimsical independence.

"I am a stranger in San Francisco, and I am curious to see the parts of it which an ordinary tourist does not see. I have a proposition which I should like to discuss with you; is there not a restaurant near where we can get something to eat and go into my plan? It would be a great kindness to me if you would agree to it."

Phil's code and his hunger threw themselves upon the suggestion at the same time. The code said, If it were not for your beastly appetite it would be a fine adventure. Hunger said, If it were not for the vanity of your standards you could dine very pleasantly; which proves that our various personalities are as inconsistent as our neighbors, and in many cases, even more of a bother. All of his old friends appeared before Phil's vision in a flash, and in the fraction of a flash he saw exactly how each would judge the situation, but all the time hunger was filling his mouth with warm saliva, and the stomach of him seemed like a jungle beast pacing its cage.

"It does not require a licensed guide to find a restaurant in this village," he answered at last, making a desperate effort to throw a veil over his needs; "and if you really wish it, I am at liberty to listen to your plans."

"Then come along," said the girl with blithe good fellowship.

"We shall have to compromise upon the selection," said Phil looking her squarely in the eyes and for the first time, smiling frankly. "There is no restaurant which would suit both our costumes, but there is an Italian place not

too far from here which is clean and queer, and where we shall not even be noticed."

They walked along in silence, each mind intent upon its own thoughts. Phil thought that he understood the girl's position well enough to play into her hand, give her an honest return for her money, and himself a pleasant incident upon which to look back after he had safely reached the promised land which each one of us believes lies just beyond our wilderness. He decided that she had read and studied much, had traveled considerably, and had been used to the society of men who had treated her with friendly consideration, instead of courtly condescension which is the best most women ever hope for. If he had not been so miserably and insistently hungry, the oddness of the situation would have impressed him more than it did.

His estimate of the girl was correct: she had read widely, studied deeply, and what is more important, had learned to reflect and meditate. She had well seasoned theories upon questions whose solution generally seems a matter of small moment to girls of her age and class. She was about twenty-five, and her large, dark eyes and auburn hair gave her a charm far above mere physical beauty. She felt that Phil must have committed a crime; there seemed no other explanation for a man of his type being in his present condition. She had her own attitude toward crime also, and the mere fact that a man was a criminal did not prejudice her against him; it rather increased her interest in him. She liked both Phil's voice and face.

Phil led the way down Market to Kearny, and up this to Pacific Avenue almost without speaking. He walked slowly so that she would not think him hungry; but all the

time he wanted to seize her by the arm and run, to pour out his remaining strength in an effort which would bring them the more quickly to where his brute hunger could be appeased. He was still filled with surprise at his own condition. He had always supposed that hunger brought weakness, but never had he felt so strong before.

He walked a short distance up Pacific, turned into a queer little street, and finally opened the door of what seemed to be a private dwelling. He had chanced upon it when his money was just beginning to run low and had found the atmosphere full of soothing companionship. There is almost no opportunity for impersonal giving in conventional society, but the ones who dined at this democratic table poured forth their mirth, melody, and serious criticism of public affairs with all the abstract generosity of a mountain spring. Also there were several little alcoves where one could draw the curtain and be entirely apart.

There were four men — as widely assorted as to type and age as the small number permitted — in earnest conversation with one girl who seemed to thoroughly enjoy her popularity and to keep up her share of the conversation with will and vigor. They were eating cakes and cheese and drinking Chianti; but they did not stare at the newcomers, merely an upward glance to see if they were to be joined by friends, and then they resumed their discussion with that admirable poise which can only be achieved through high breeding or natural simplicity.

Phil drew the curtain to one of the alcoves, and the girl entered with the light of adventure dancing in her eyes. He excused himself and went down the hall to the spick, span and immaculate kitchen. Enrico and Madame — it

was always Enrico and Madame—were playing a game of cards while waiting for their midnight guests. They gave Phil a pleasant welcome, and he ordered a repast which gave him a new standing with them, and then he begged the use of Enrico's razor. No request ever came as a surprise to this couple nor was one refused without overpowering reasons, and in a few moments Phil returned making a decidedly improved appearance. His hair and moustache were neatly combed and the rest of his face clean and smooth.

The girl looked at him critically, and she recognized him, with a little gasp of astonishment; she recognized him as Phil Lytton of New York; but with remarkable reserve, she merely nodded friendly approval of his improved appearance.

Luckily for Phil, the time consumed in shaving was equal to that necessary for the preparation of the first course, and scarcely had he returned before Madame arrived with the soup. He tried to eat with decent repression but the deep eyes of the girl twinkled with enjoyment as she saw his appetite straining at the leash of his restraint.

But she did not seem to notice him. Instead she ate her own thick soup with zest, and when the plate was emptied, raised her eyes to Phil's in frank friendliness, and said with a laugh. "What delicious soup, and how clean everything is here. I am too hungry to have any manners; so we'll busy ourselves with the food, and then talk in comfort."

"Utter heresy," protested Phil with returning spirit. "If thou wouldst have good digestion, eat slowly, laugh easily, but speak no word of business at table."

"Hunger knows no law," she retorted, as Madame brought in the next course.

In reflecting upon the baneful truth thus lightly spoken, Phil forgot entirely the presence of the speaker until he leaned back in his chair with a sigh of relief and mechanically felt in his pocket for a cigarette. All through the meal she had been watching him, but now her eyes were intent upon arranging a bit of cheese upon a piece of hard cracker. She glanced up in time to catch the movement; but did not speak until Phil had reached for his coffee.

"Won't you please smoke a cigarette?" she asked innocently. "They seem absolutely necessary to finish a dinner like this, and I have not acquired the art, myself."

"I have none with me," replied Phil, laying an un-deceiving accent upon the last two words.

"Well, you can get them here, can't you? And by the way, I wish that you would tend to the paying."

She deftly thrust her purse into his hand, and then clapped her own hands together with a quick, emotional gesture. "Oh, I have enjoyed this so much! All my life I have longed for an adventure, and this is the nearest I have ever come to one."

The touch of the purse was repulsive to Phil. It outraged his beloved vanity almost beyond endurance, but, as she had intended, the girl's words supplied him with the very argument needed; and his own body was returning such earnest thanks for the concessions he had already made that when Madame came to clear away the empty plates and bring fresh coffee, Phil ordered his favorite brand of Egyptians, and his delight at finding them in stock removed the last vestige of rebellion which his pride was attempting to arouse.

Man is the only animal which transforms eating into a religious rite, raises the cook to the dignity of a priest, and then spoils the full effect of his worship through lack of a fitting preparation for the ceremonial. In Phil's case the preparation had been ideal: for many days he had eaten sparingly and for over fifty hours he had eaten nothing at all, except the stored-up energy of his own body. When one is young, robust, and in good health, the eating of a skillfully prepared meal is the working of a miracle. The entire earth changes: dull grays become rosy, clanking discords resolve into tinkling silver melody, content seems the rightful heritage of all men, and morality the natural pathway for all feet.

In spite of ridicule, alchemy is a reality which deserves more attention than it receives. There is nothing more simple nor more practical than the distilling of patriotism, family affection, and brotherly love from the ordinary food stuffs which this land is able to raise by the shipload; and if governments have any claim whatever to a continued existence, it is their ability to see that no member of the race ever gets more than a day or so behind his appetite. No one ever heard of a fat anarchist.

"And now," said Phil, beaming down good naturedly upon the girl, "I am ready to hear your proposition."

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

AN UNUSUAL PROPOSITION

AGES of legalized authority has given the well-fed male human a feeling of superiority over the female, which assumption is accepted by them both as being not only logical but the predestined intention of their Creator. The cultivated man veils his condescension with flattery, and feels that he, at least, lives up to the onerous responsibilities of a gentleman.

This is all right, this is perfectly just. Liberty is a trophy and it would rob it of its chief value to degrade it into a gift. No liberty was ever given man: all that he now has he has taken by the right of might, and woman must follow the same stony road. She is entitled to all she can take and hold, but to not one thing more. She is beginning to understand this in a vague, diffident way; and, as invariably happens, the very thought of conquest has brought with it a new strength and a new courage.

All through the past, woman has come asking gifts, and holding out her body as a reciprocal offering. She has fed her hunger upon ideals, has heroically striven to be blind to the nasty things she should not see, has scourged herself with self-denial, has drugged herself with a stupefying, formal religion, and has tried with all her heart to make herself believe that maternity was the one and only means

AN UNUSUAL PROPOSITION 155

by which the feminine nature could justify its existence; but the complications of modern society have forced woman into the world as the master of her own person; subject, of course, to economic restrictions, by which man, the law-maker, has handicapped her, and she has found the world no place for a woman.

Her eyes are not yet seasoned to the fierce, raw light and many ancient things perplex and startle her. She is beginning to wonder why there should be one system of morality for poor men, and another for poor women; why there is still a different moral code for rich men, as well as a morality for rich women distinguishable from all the others. She has found that reasoning with her own brain is much more profitable than merely believing what one is told, and she is demanding facts, naked facts, and she is looking at them critically without feeling ashamed. The cheapness of her labor power as compared with man's, has thrust her into the world, and she will do one of two things — she will either become, like man, an un-moral creature, or else she will clean up the world and make of it a decent dwelling place. Whichever course she pursues, she promises to add much to masculine responsibilities.

The girl upon whom Phil Lytton, from the height of his well-fed content, was beaming good-naturedly, was a girl with an unusual mind and with unique opportunities for giving this mind an adequate outlet. She had received a man's education, she had been her father's only confidant, she had been permitted to independently exercise her own faculties, and she had managed her own large fortune for several years with a success which had given her confidence. A great change would have taken place in Phil's smile if he had known upon whom it was directed; for the girl who

sat across the table from him was Miriam Meyer, daughter of his former agent.

Nathan Meyer was a strong man: the very repose, which is invariably the habitual condition of great strength, deceived most of his acquaintances into thinking him rather a mild, harmless sort of person; but beneath his external calm the desires of his nature remained keen, alert, and powerful. He had longed for a son; but, instead, had been given a daughter who had cost the life of her mother, and had put Nathan into rebellion against Fate itself. He had loved his wife with all his heart, and there was no love left for the girl-child.

He provided her with every care, but for the first years of her life he felt toward her a species of resentment which at times was close to hatred. What she had eventually won in the matter of affection, had been won upon her own merit; and this held her to a high standard. She did not humbly beg for a love which was not hers; instead, she decided that the love of her father was well worth the winning; she studied him; at first with the shy secretiveness of a child, but later with the true spirit of investigation which draws its conclusions from experiment alone. In time she became Nathan's entire life; no act of his but made of her its center; i. e. everything, save in the small matter of sex, she was his son, without, however, losing for a moment the subtile charm of a daughter.

So fully did he trust her, so uniformly was this trust vindicated, that even the gap of years was obliterated between them and they were friends, companions, chums. He himself was not aware of the extent to which she had molded him to her younger, broader needs; he only knew that in her his youth had revived, had joined itself

AN UNUSUAL PROPOSITION 157

to the eternal youth of the race which finds its natural expression in progress, and in return for her part in deflecting the varied currents of life so that they again gushed through his being, he extended to her an absolute freedom which was contrary to both his traditions and theoretical convictions. He had renounced his religion, and was content to drink the wine of his own philosophy, pressed as it was from the grapes of history's fairest vineyards.

Miriam had not yet completed her individual philosophy: the young hear always the roving call, the call to conquest and adventure, before they retire within their innermost chambers and decide which, in their future scheme of things, is to be the truth and which the compromise. This was the girl upon whom Phil Lytton was smiling good-naturedly, encouragingly, complacently; for Phil was a man and, at least potentially, one of the world's regents.

"I have traveled extensively," said Miriam after a pause; "but always before, my excursions have been personally conducted. It is like the reading of books, the author is always pointing out what one must observe; and I am weary of it. I want to see for myself and think for myself, and am constantly discovering that these activities are not for the lone woman. Are you at present engaged in any form of business?"

She spoke in even, matter-of-fact tones which had much to do with putting Phil in a position to make an independent choice. This was a very important condition, for in spite of the humming content of his body, his pride was still growling at having been forced to accept money from a woman. He had always delighted in showering women with gifts and patronage, and had never suspected that there might, at times, be a humiliating phase to this in spite

of history's age-long endorsement of the plan. It is a fine thing for a man to be thrown flat on his back now and again. It gives him an entirely new viewpoint.

"No," he answered dryly, "I am not, at present, engaged in any form of business."

"What I wish," she resumed as impersonally as though she were hiring a cab, "is to secure the services of a man as an escort. It is a purely business proposition. You would think nothing of manufacturing articles for the exclusive use of women; if you were in the hotel or transportation business you would not hesitate to cater to them; but because my proposition is unusual, I am prepared to have you refuse it in disdain."

Phil did not reply: he was thinking rapidly, of the Wilson Public Service Company, the Hereford Private Service Company — and of his own lean days during which pride and independence had become but as the soiled finery flung to him from some happier estate.

The girl's voice was cool and distant; she could have no ulterior designs upon him; she was merely purchasing his services as he would have purchased the services of a barber or a valet. There was nothing disgraceful to him in the matter — and yet it seemed to be the surrender of his manhood.

"I did not expect you to jump at the chance," she said, looking into his eyes with an amused smile; "and yet I hope you will accept my offer. It is not a thing which one could ask of a friend, nor would it be easy to find a suitable man who could afford to engage in work which must, perforce, be of merely a temporary nature. Fate, in the person of a masculine flirt, seems to have thrown us together. At first, I did not think you would do; but since

AN UNUSUAL PROPOSITION 159

you have shaved I have decided that in case you are willing to agree to my terms, you will suit me exactly."

Since he had shaved — Phil felt as though he were seeking employment as a footman; but this was exactly as he would have it in case he decided to accept. Argument after argument, in favor of the proposition, came to him, and against them he had nothing to offer except sentiment. If one admitted the purchasing power of money in the first place, then why quibble at the things it purchased? A grim, impish cynicism, born of his recent experience, whispered with a grin that instead of hesitating at the sale of his services from traditional prejudice, he should thank fortune that he had a face which would bear shaving.

"I shall expect you to accompany me wherever I wish to go, to yield to my whims and fancies without question; but at the same time to act entirely as my equal while in the presence of others —" Phil smiled freely at the frank assurance of this remark — "to pay all the bills and make all the arrangements; in a word to become, while in my employ, just such an impersonal creature as I should create for my own convenience if I had the power. It will not be so very irksome for you, as you will never feel that you have to entertain or be considerate of me, as you would with a friend. I am a fair judge of character, and I feel that I do not overestimate your intelligence when I infer that you will understand exactly the relationship there will be between us."

"Intelligence —" It now seemed to him as though this word should be reserved for bird-dogs, horses, and similar creatures, and yet he could distinctly recall that when engaging the services of Wilson, he had taken comfort in the young man's apparent intelligence.

"What will you pay?" he demanded.

Not a flicker crossed the girl's face and yet a shout of triumph had gone forth from her heart. For years Phil Lytton had been her favorite dream: her dream but not her ideal, for he lacked the strength, the purpose, the concentration to be the ideal of a nature so full of ambition as her own. In her dreams, innocent and maidenly though they were, she had been always near to him, and one never gets quite on terms of intimacy with an ideal.

"I had not decided upon the minor details," she answered. "I want everything to be pleasant on both sides and am, therefore, willing to discuss the final arrangements freely. I shall, of course, pay all the expenses — and this must include whatever clothing you will need. As to wages, how would — say, twenty-five dollars a week, do?"

"For about how long would you want to hire me?" asked Phil, entering fully into the spirit of the situation.

"For a month at the very least."

"Would the clothes belong to me or to you, after you were through with my services?"

"Why, of course, they would belong to you."

"What part of the town do you wish to study?" he asked, as the thought flashed upon him that decently clothed he again ran the risk of embarrassment from the recognition of old friends.

"The rougher parts," she answered at once.

"Then I'll take the position," he replied, as he remembered how long he had been in San Francisco already without having been recognized, and what a change in his appearance his moustache had made.

"Where are you stopping?" she asked.

"I had given up stopping, entirely," he answered gayly.

AN UNUSUAL PROPOSITION 161

"My room rent ran out this morning, and I was not sure that I ever should stop again. Perhaps you did not notice it, but when I met you this evening, I was actually hungry."

"I did not notice it," she replied coldly. It must be made apparent at the very start that this was a purely formal arrangement, and that her friendship was in no way involved, nor his social qualities desired, except when others were present. She put all of this into her reply, and the red crept into Phil's face until it seemed to blister.

It requires especial training before one can meekly enjoy being put into one's place, even after one has become perfectly resigned to filling it.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

A SHADY BYPATH

THE frown deepened upon Phil's face as the blush receded; but before he had reached the point of scornfully refusing her employment, Miriam looked up with an eager smile, and asked, "Is there not some place we could go to-night? This has been very, very pleasant; but I want to observe life in the raw. I have many theories of my own which I wish to verify."

"Life in the raw," repeated Phil scornfully. "Have you any idea what life in the raw really is? What kind of theories do you wish to verify?"

"I have a very correct conception of what life in the raw, really is, I think," she replied firmly. "You need not worry about shocking me. I know that both men and women are inclined to be profane and obscene, and that a trace of vulgarity is a necessary part of every human being. With some of us it becomes chastened during childhood, but in many cases it develops to a dominating trait. I am studying society; I want to dissect it as I have already the human body in studying anatomy. Whatever is here, whatever is true, I wish to know. I am not so much interested in individual degeneracy, just now, as I am in the debauchery, which, under the guise of pleasure, seems to appeal to large numbers of my fellow creatures."

Phil was very ill at ease: he had never learned to talk

with women as with men, and he felt very like a little boy being told things he must not do. Phil was one of the kind who might at intervals yield to a sudden desire for mischievous amusement; but from his ordinary conversation, one would suppose that he was not aware that any form of licentiousness existed in the world, and if he should chance to discover any, he would immediately take steps to abolish it. This was not really hypocrisy; it was merely the result of polite breeding.

"There is a music hall just off Kearny Street on our way back. We might start in with that," he said in a tone which was intended to convey his disapproval in a manner entirely consistent with his peculiar position. Miriam appreciated this accurate discrimination and it afforded her much joy.

"That will do nicely. It is nearly midnight; pay the bill and let us hurry. By the way, what shall I call you?"

"Lenord Latham," replied Phil with no more hesitation than his apparent search for the purse seemed to occasion. "How do you wish me to address you?"

"Do you speak French?"

"Only under protest, and then not with much accuracy," replied Phil, opening the purse. A card fell from it and lay upon the table face down. Phil's hand started toward it, and then paused. The girl picked it up, hesitated a moment and handed it to him.

"You may call me that," she said.

The name on the card was, Mademoiselle Valerie Florian. Phil read it aloud in a low tone. "I think you can speak French quite well if you wish; and I think I shall make use of the accomplishment. Come, let us go," said Miriam rising.



MICROCOPY RESOLUTION TEST CHART

(ANSI and ISO TEST CHART No. 2)



4.5

5.0

5.6

6.3

7.1

8.0

9.0

10.0

11.2

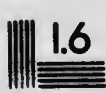
12.5

14.3

16.0

18.0

20.0



APPLIED IMAGE Inc

1653 East Main Street
Rochester, New York 14609 USA
(716) 482 - 0300 - Phone
(716) 288 - 5989 - Fax

Phil paid the bill and bestowed a tip which would give an added value to Enrico's razor, and then they went into the street. It was an entirely different Phil Lytton who stopped a moment as he closed the door, and drew a deep breath as his eyes swept the street in a hasty glance. They had been in the building an hour and a half, but it seemed as though he were returning from a long journey.

The girl at his side walked with firm, confident steps, the smile upon her lips indicating that there was no division in her forces; but Phil was sadly aware of his own warring members. There was a great, tingling, melodious peace within his natural body, the result of the ample meal which had given opportunities of expression to all his digestive, circulatory, and assimilative functions; but there was rebellion in his mind. Now that the hunger was gone completely, it did not seem that it could have ever spoken with the convincing arguments it had used to lure him into his present predicament, and, as his traditions and prejudices began to reproach him, he was tempted to give the girl a good scolding, take her to her hotel, and return to his search for work and food.

In all probability, Miriam had diagnosed his mental state with a woman's inherent intuition. She did not speak until they had turned into Kearny, and then she said with the quiet finality which makes difficult the reopening of a discussion: "I wish that you would replenish your wardrobe the first thing in the morning. I shall look for an apartment as I do not think the hotel will suit me during the rest of my stay here. What part of the city is the most desirable for residence at this season?"

"I do not really know very much about the residence part of the city," replied Phil, gratefully accepting the modi-

cum of comfort which cynicism offered him. "You see I have never resided here. I merely came here to see if the bracing climate would not stimulate my appetite."

She made no reply to this, and Phil bit his lip to think that he had again been tempted into giving a remark the garnish of easy conversation. It came across him suddenly that Edith was the one who was really responsible for all the discipline which Fate and this strange young lady were doling out to him; and he shot a very heated thought wave in the direction of New York City.

"Is there any reason why it is dangerous for you to be recognized?" asked Miriam after they had walked together in silence for a time.

"No danger to me," replied Phil shortly. He would expose himself to no more jerks if he could possibly avoid it.

"Then I wish that you would secure clothes adequate to every occasion."

"You said that you wished to see the parts where life was served in the raw," objected Phil. "It is not necessary to wear evening clothes to see places where the blood will follow the knife, both literally and figuratively. I do not wish to go where life is very likely to be done to a crisp."

"Still, you had better provide evening clothes in order to be prepared for every emergency. Life done to a crisp also has its attraction to the student."

"Nevertheless, you hired me as an escort to the underworld only," rejoined Phil sullenly. "Twenty-five dollars a week, ample wage though it be, has its limitations."

"Then I shall double it," said the girl promptly. "I like not limitations. I have no desire for the merely common-

place; so you will not often need the evening clothes; but I do not want to be hampered in any way, so I insist that you provide yourself with a complete outfit."

Phil had no reply at hand. He was not in a position to fit himself into the scheme of things and was therefore at a great disadvantage. The character of the work which he had agreed to do irritated him sorely; but he had accepted the position voluntarily and now that he had won his first strike, it seemed that he was bound, in some way by the rules of the game, to go on with it. He felt that having once entered the employ of the very eccentric and assured young lady at his side, he was under obligations to show her deference as long as he continued to fill the subordinate position; and he was also bound to fill the position as long as she lived up to her side of the contract. Inwardly he boiled with rage; but as he found it utterly impossible to focus this rage upon any one object, he endeavored to force his facial muscles into the cold, distant, hurt, humble, trustworthy, impersonal expression which he acknowledged to be among the incidental details included in the rental of a body.

It was putting quite a noticeable strain upon muscles which had heretofore been accustomed to purely consistent and automatic action; and though her own face was placid the heart of the young lady was singing an original *Jubilate*. Altogether it was a peculiar situation and one for which no former event in the lives of either had been to the smallest extent in the nature of a preparation. The poise of the female and the perturbation of the male adhered strictly to the parallels dictated by the psychology of sex.

There is a vitalizing stimulus in the night air of San

Francisco: the salt-laden breezes sweep in from their long voyages, which start in the far-off Orient, circle the queer, jumbled streets of the city, picking up the fragrance of love and the effluvium of passion, mingling all together and blowing it with careless mirth into the nostrils of the citizens. One may live for years in San Francisco without having a single adventure; but one cannot live there a day without feeling the nerves brace themselves in preparation for the adventure which seems to be awaiting at every turn.

No one has ever revealed what becomes of life after it leaves the body. We find no chemical differences between a live body and a dead one; and no scientist has ever succeeded in isolating life itself. Where does it go? We know of what the air is composed, and that it is filled with tiny organisms, each one possessed of a share of that elusive something we call life; but life in the abstract, life aside from its manifestations, is a thing we can only wonder about. Some localities there are which seem to feed upon the life of the inhabitants, leaving them flaccid and enæmic; while in others the air is surcharged with life and all who breathe it are filled with an exhilaration which is prone to resent the artificial interference of conventionality.

Phil and Miriam walked rapidly down the steep grade of the street; but as the noises, the smells, and the sights of the town, typical of this one town and of no other, were brought to them on the breeze, they drew deep breaths and in spite of the boy's resentment, there was something of the comrade spirit of associated adventurers between them.

"We turn here," said Phil, with the sullen precision of a pouting top-sergeant.

Miriam turned without reply and after going a few steps

168 THE KNIGHT-ERRANT

farther, Phi paused and said: "This is merely a common music hall, noisy and foul and cheap. Do you wish to enter?"

"Certainly," answered Miriam.

amon
h to

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

ANOTHER LONE DAMSEL

He shrugged his shoulders and held the door open for her to enter. The bare floor was covered with sawdust, the air was clouded with the stale reek of cheap tobacco, and the stench of spilled beer seemed like a warning voice bidding them stay where the air was clean and pure. The center of the room was filled with tables around which men and women were drinking; the sides of the room were made up of boxes, partially screened with tawdry curtains, while on the small stage at the rear, two men, who had tried to remove all racial characteristics by the liberal use of grease paint, were attempting to win the petty largess of an empty laugh. They were not artists and it requires an artist to portray a life which he hates, in a manner agreeable to his audience.

Miriam glanced curiously about the room; Phil kept his eyes on her face in a questioning gaze. When he saw that she was not shocked, he led the way to a table farthest from the stage and seated her with rather stilted formality. It was impossible for him to see anything either sensible or attractive in the proceeding.

The two low, not to say vulgar, comedians were immediately inspired to edify their audience with additional suggestiveness in honor of the newcomers. Miriam sat with her brows drawn into lines of concentrated attention, and

the eyes beneath them shining with the brilliancy of tropical stars. She was as aloof from her surroundings as though studying the animals in a zoölogical garden. Phil's back was to the stage and as he raised his eyes to those of the girl, a wave of warmth swept over him. She was beautiful with a dazzling individuality which made her seem foreign, and yet not in any degree a type of foreigner. Suddenly the thought struck him that she was foreign to the entire earth, the visitant of some other sphere, coming with the curiosity of health and the innocence of wisdom to examine into the ways of the queer creatures whose lives seemed so different from her own.

It was entirely natural that at the very moment when he expected to be honestly disgusted, he felt himself drawn to her with an unmistakable attraction. Her refinement, which was not threatened even in such an environment, her eager interest in all about her, and the appearance of sincere study which seemed, in a measure, to justify her presence, all interested him; but it was her beauty which drew Phil, and especially the stimulating warmth which hid away in the mysterious depths of her wonderful eyes. She seemed to know so often that she was not alone, and her gaze roamed freely about the room without ever once falling upon Phil.

"Can you see a single happy face?" she suddenly asked him.

"When you ask me such questions as that, do you want an honest, or merely a perfunctory, answer?"

"I want an honest answer, of course."

Phil looked slowly about the room, finally letting his eyes meet hers. "I can find only one happy face here," he said, a bit more seriously than he intended.

ANOTHER LONE DAMSEL 171

"Where is it?" she asked.

"I am looking at it now," he replied without dropping his eyes.

"Oh, that is silly," she exclaimed with genuine impatience. "You know that I really am trying to learn all I can of the cause and effect of modern revelry. All this drinking, music, laughter, and suggestiveness, is supposed to be undertaken for the sake of pleasure; and yet there is not a single happy face to be seen.

"Notice the lines about eyes and mouth; in some places it is the mouth which rebels, in others it is the eyes; but always it is apparent that either inherited traits resent being dragged down to such a level, or else that the delicate discrimination of a newly awakened soul is opposing the gratifying of inherited appetites. There is nothing natural about it, so that some part of the nature always feels outraged at being forced to content itself with such artificial excitement. In some of the faces, nature appears to have surrendered, and there is not much suffering written there, merely a dull resignation; and here and there are young men, little more than boys in fact, whose zest of life is so eager that they are able to lose themselves completely in this scene which, as they view it, is only half real, the rest being supplied by their own imaginations.

"It all comes from the terrible lack of balance in our lives — in all our lives. Some of us have to travel all day upon some variation of the treadmill, in order to provide the bare necessities of life; while some of us have to labor incessantly in order to dispose of our incomes and drown the monotony of existence. The people in this room are mostly engaged in physical toil through the day, dull, mechanical toil which smothers the emotional side of their

lives, and it is a struggle for existence, upon the part of the emotions, which brings them here.

"Our real life is found in our emotional expressions; every life should be a picture, having its lights and shades; every life should be a melody, having its deep notes and its trebles. The life that is nothing more than a dingy gray blur, is slowly dying; the life which drones forever on the single note of duty, is also dwindling away. There must be a variation; and these poor things are well within their rights when they come here. Their instincts guided them and the sorrowful part is the fact that, instead of finding friends to welcome them, they have been entertained by birds of prey. They honestly needed what they were seeking, the joyous lifting of their souls through social pleasure, the recreating of their strength and patience for the morrow's cares. It is exactly according to my theory."

Phil made no reply: he was not greatly interested in theories; things were just as they always had been, and he felt no call to attempt making any radical changes in them. He had really paid but little attention to the speech, so interested had he become in the speaker.

"Do you not think that the great fault lies with Society for not providing innocent forms of amusement?" persisted Miriam.

"The part of society with which I was most familiar," answered Phil slowly, "was much like the people about us to-night—they demanded amusement, they insisted upon it; but they did not seem to take much interest in the particular adjective used to qualify the amusement. The supply of amusement never is equal to the demand; and it makes no difference which portion of Society you are

ANOTHER LONE DAMSEL 173

catering to, you provide the amusement, and they will cheerfully accept the incident: 'risk to their innocence.'"

The two dreary comedians had withdrawn, before the candidly adverse criticism had taken the form of personal violence; and now a girl came upon the stage. The boisterous outburst which greeted her proved that she was a general favorite. Humans are humans, and the slight shades of differentiation are merely due to the quality and quantity of the early sensations furnished by the station of life into which Fate had rudely thrust them. A grand opera audience will offer up, during the same performance, libations of approval to the woman with the saintly brow and the girl with the naughty eyes, and the music hall, in its own peculiar way, is guilty of the same hearty and delightful inconsistency.

The girl upon the stage in this instance had a beautiful brow, bold, hard eyes, mouth a trifle, just a trifle, too full, and golden hair. It was her own hair, and it was golden because that was the way it grew. There was a great mass of it, and it caught the light like some wayward cloud in the upper sky catches a flood of glory after the sun has set. There was such a wealth of femininity in the spun gold with which Nature had crowned this girl that the undying ideal of woman in the abstract, which every man has hidden away in his bosom, came forth to do homage.

She sang one of those popular songs which first fill the author with the laughing-gas of genuine fame — and then make him seek to prove a fool. This particular one dealt with a wedding which was to take place when the harvest days were over, Jessie sang; and as the girl with the smooth white brow and the golden hair sang it, her

eyes grew soft and dreamy, and the lips, which were just a shade too full, looked as though they had been made for nothing but honest kisses.

There was no drinking done during the singing of the song; hardened wretches, who would have robbed an alms box without a tremor, leaned forward with their faces wrinkled into lines of anguish. They saw themselves as the deserving heroes in little agricultural dramas, and with their very souls, they yearned for the simple life—with this golden haired girl as one of the logical perquisites to which their patient toil entitled them. They saw these scenes with dazzling clearness, and it pained them to think that they were being kept out of their own.

Here and there girls with knowing faces leaned back in their chairs and sneered frankly at their unsophisticated escorts; but also, here and there, girls, still tender to the game, dropped their faces into the crooks of their elbows and sobbed, because the world was worse than they were.

"It is wonderful," murmured Miriam, after her glance had taken in the girl, wandered over the audience, and returned to finish her valuation of the girl at leisure.

"It is rotten," said Phil, whose back was toward the stage.

"Notice the effect it is having upon these people, and then see if you still think it, rotten," suggested Miriam.

"Pigs squeal with delight when the farmer brings them swill, but I am not able to enter into their enthusiasm," returned Phil, highly edified at an opportunity to be disagreeable without infringing upon his contract.

"I rather supposed that you would be one of the kind who judge without examination," said Miriam with a note of indignation which surprised Phil.

ANOTHER LONE DAMSEL 175

"My ears have examined, and they have passed judgment," he rejoined obstinately.

"It is less a question for the ears than for the heart," said Miriam, and then added thoughtfully: "but is more for the intellect than either, I presume. There is really a charm to the girl, and there must be a cause for everything."

Phil smiled with lofty cynicism.

"Is there any way that I could speak to that girl?" Miriam asked after a moment's silence during which her eyes had been intent upon the face of the singer.

"Tell the waiter to ask her down to have a drink," suggested Phil, with a grin. It was evident that being personal attendant to an eccentric young woman was not good for his disposition.

"I wish you to carry out the details," said Miriam, firmly, without looking at him.

Phil made a wry face and summoned a waiter. "If the girl wants to drink a bottle of wine with us as soon as she finishes, invite her, and bring the wine."

It was Phil's first order and the waiter struck an average between the suit and the face of his guest, and then looked at Miriam. It was not necessary for waiters to be subservile at the Elite; but after a quick, shrewd glance the man bowed deferentially, said: "Certainly, sir," and hastened away with the gliding dance step which every waiter practices in the hope that some day he will be entrusted with the order of a Chinese prince.

He soon returned with the champagne properly cooled, and asked Phil if he would not prefer to sit in one of the boxes. He glanced at Miriam; she nodded, the waiter tripped to one of the boxes, whispered a word to one of

the men inside; the man and his lady friend immediately left, Phil and Miriam followed the waiter to the box and were soon seated in a seclusion which seemed to intensify the noxious odors of the place.

"This is a perfect dream!" exclaimed Phil, gazing about in mock rapture.

Miriam did not reply, as she was watching the girl, who had finished the song for the second time, and was shaking her head, to the earnest demand that she repeat it once again.

Finally she left the stage, to give place to a mother and daughter who were laboriously dancing their way through life as the Divine Devney Sisters. The daughter was wan and haggard in spite of her paint, but the mother had learned to conserve her vitality, and had a roguish smile which was quite fetching — at that time of the morning.

Presently the girl with the golden hair entered their box from a narrow aisle which led from the stage along the rear of the boxes. She was not quite so prepossessing at close view; but still there was something in her face which made the appeal that artists yearn to depict.

"La Belle Fatima," said the waiter in introduction, as he started to fill the glasses.

Miriam shook hands with the girl, Phil bowed ostentatiously. "If you are not too proud," he said wickedly to the waiter, "get another glass and have a little something with us."

"Oh, we can't wait," said the girl, whose speaking voice was raw and hoarse. "I'm as dry as a boiled owl. If Chesty has been promoted to fizz, let him ring in on the next bottle. Here's to the merry who marry not, and to the not merry who marry."

ANOTHER LONE DAMSEL 177

"A beautiful toast!" exclaimed Phil, raising his glass with enthusiasm. "If it were not for the official bouncer, I should dash my glass to the floor after drinking it."

"Go as far as you like, dear; as long as you can pay the damage," encouraged La Belle Fatima.

Gleams of delighted mischief shot from Phil's eyes. "Thanks for the tip, girlie; but mother does not like a big noise," he said, giving the girl a broad wink and nodding his head toward Miriam.

"I'm not mad for the hard pedal, myself, during the first bottle," replied the girl, emptying her glass for the second time.

"What is your commission on the bar bill, little one?" asked Phil, touching the bell.

"I never talk shop at table," drawled the girl. "I have a weak mind and it won't stand too much stretching. When I drink extra dry, that is all I am able to do at that time."

"Another package of the prima donna's favorite gargling oil, Chesty," said Phil to the waiter, who now appeared.

Phil had entered fully into the spirit of the occasion, and had a wicked hope that it would develop into something which would remove his employer's desire to continue her present study of sociology.

All this time, Miriam had not spoken, but as soon as the waiter had filled the glasses and retired with an unusual but quite agreeable tip, she asked: "How long have you been singing on the stage?"

The voice was low and perfectly modulated; the girl turned and, for the first time, examined the face of the speaker. She found the dark eyes meeting her own with frank interest. She also noticed the freedom from conde-

scension and, without further analysis, she discontinued the flippant mood, and opened the way to the subtle intercourse of that mysterious friendliness which needs neither introduction, nor credentials.

"Hell," she replied with perfect candor, "I can't sing, and you know it; but this song meant all the world to me before ever it was written, and my heart sang it long before my voice had the nerve to try to. Me makin' the boobs weep with a harvest song is a scream of a joke, now; but I'm not yet able to crack my lips laughing about it."

"You mean that you once lived in the country and expected to marry a farmer?" asked Miriam.

"That is exactly the way it was billed; but you'd never guess it to see the pink silk sox I wear with my tailor-made."

"What broke it off?" asked Miriam gently.

"That's a hard one to guess, sister," replied the girl. "He was one of these steady ones who think the whole world runs as smooth as they do. He never would have found me out, and I doubt if he would have done much ranting if he had; but something inside made me play fair, after I had played false. Jim was off with a thresher outfit, and a fellow came to our neighborhood to give music lessons. I was his star pupil; yes, I was his darling starling and suchlike items. I could n't stay to see Jim, so I came down here and did house work for a time. I could not shake the memory of him off, while I was cooking and cleaning in somebody else's kitchen; and finally I had the nerve to take a plunge with my cultivated voice. I take my life in my hands every time I try to sing; but I happened to hear this Jessie one, and it gave me a complete inflation. I can put over this song and I'm getting my

thirty-five a week for it, and a lot of pick-ups; and if you know anything about the salaries they hang up in a dump like this, you know that thirty-five real ones every seventh night is just about keeping the ceiling free from cobwebs. I'm beginnin' to take myself seriously; and from peculiar sensations I've had lately, I rawther think I'm beginnin' to cut my ambition."

"You have a swell line of patter, kid," said Phil, who was actually enjoying himself by this time. "Where did you cop it?"

"Well, I gleaned most of it since I've been getting milk out of a bottle instead of out of a cow. It is n't having the stuff to tell, it's knowing how to keep 'em awake while you're tellin' it that boosts you up among the headliners. I'm going to train up a lot of high kickin' words for my own use, to help me along after my ambition's toughened up a little."

"What is your ambition, Jessie?" asked Miriam. "I prefer calling you Jessie to Fatima."

"Is that the way you speak it?" exclaimed the girl. "I've pronounced that fool word seven different ways, and according to you they were all wrong. I'll answer to Jessie all right—it really is more in my class than Fatima; but his Honor thought I ought to wear something romantic, and so I chose the present combination out of seven worse ones."

"And what is your ambition?" persisted Miriam.

"You've got ways of your own, all right," said the girl, looking at Miriam with renewed interest. "While we're asking questions, how did you happen to float into this joint; and how do you happen to be coupled up with the sport here? I'm not asking him any questions. When such a

face, suit, and roll of bills get into one combination, little Myrtle slips into a dark corner and refuses to play it; but when you are added for good measure, I'd drown in a sea of curiosity if I did n't flip you at least one quiz?"

"This," began Miriam in a hesitating tone, "is my cousin, and I'm—"

"That's enough," interrupted the girl with shrewd amusement. "You lie as skillfully as I sing. I was n't trying to pump you; but you are a new one to me and I'm one of the notice takers now days. My ambition is to be a regular headliner—and I'm willing to work for it. I am not a man-hunter"—she threw back her head and gave Miriam a steady look—"but I saw that your friend had the coin, that his voice did not match his clothes, and that song I am singing makes me as dry as the flames of hell. Then, I do get my rake-off from the bar, and I'm saving my money, every cent of it I can save."

"But you yourself admitted that you cannot sing," said Miriam.

"Yes, but I never admitted that I could not act. It takes some mighty high-grade acting to make even the push that comes in here think I can sing—and sometimes it is acting. Sometimes I get so tired and lonely that even the thoughts back of this song seem a thousand years away—and then I have to act; and I do act. I—I—. Did you ever feel the waves of a thousand eyes rolling up to you and into you and drawing something out of you and giving you something else in return? It's wonderful, it's—I suppose it's what has given the big ones the nerve to go through what they had to go through to land; and it is going to give me the same sort of nerve—as soon as I can forget Jim without soaking myself with booze."

ANOTHER LONE DAMSEL 181

"I should think that your memory of Jim would help you to give up drink," said Miriam, with just a trace of reprimand in her voice.

"Sure you would," replied the girl with good-natured sarcasm; "but then, you see, the real joke of life is, that things never do happen as we think they ought to. I know now that I loved Jim all the time, and yet I turned him down for a clothes model with vocal organs. You think you would n't hit the booze; but after you've tossed around night after night with a hundred devils jeering at you, you might get tired of thinking and take any road you could find, back to where you would just *feel* for a while."

"I must admit that there is some truth in what you say; and I am also surprised at the discriminating manner in which you have analyzed your own position."

"Almost human, was n't it?" returned the girl with less tempered sarcasm.

"I mean," explained Miriam, "that while your conduct, and some of your words, indicate recklessness, you really display a true depth of feeling."

"Oh, we have souls down here," replied the girl quietly, and in a voice which had lost all of its roughness, and which played in sympathetic vibrations upon the hearts of her listeners; "genuine souls, and sometimes they ache worse than respectable souls do. A boy never knows he has a reach until it begins to ache; and some of us are that way with our souls. I don't want to kill myself with drink; but I don't want to go insane with thinking either. What I am trying to do is to gather up the bits into which my life has smashed, and make something worth while out of them."

"I think that you can become a very great actress in time," said Miriam earnestly.

"Oh, but there is so much I have to do first!" cried the girl. "I have been listening to you to-night, and I can see the difference in the words you use and the way you pronounce them. I plow through books when I can, but it is hard for me."

"But you think if you had the chance you would care enough for success on the stage to work hard for it?" asked Miriam.

"I am working hard for it now, without much chance," replied the girl simply. "Next to cooking and washing dishes for Jim, it is the one thing in life which I want to do. It is a funny thing that I never knew how much I cared for him until I lost him," she added dreamily.

"Do you suppose he still cares for you?" asked Phil with interest. He had been listening to the girl with peculiar emotions. Every time she had spoken of Jim, he had thought of Edith.

"Jim was one of the slow, steady ones. He never cared much for any other girl but me; and he wouldn't try to forget me by taking up with a new girl. I know that he still cares for me as I used to be; but he would n't speak to me now."

"No, absence does not make the man's heart grow fonder. He probably hates even your memory by now," said Phil, brutally.

"You're as friendly as a boil, Mister," said the girl, shrugging her shoulders and resuming the coarse, raw tones of her voice; "but the actual truth is the best sort of comfort after all; so if you'll just push that button again, I'll drink your health to show there is no hard feeling."

ANOTHER LONE DAMSEL 183

"I think you have had enough," said Miriam.

"I hope you don't mean that I'm showing it, do you?"

"No, I can't say that you are; but still —"

"Oh, that's all right. Just register once again, Clarence; and then we'll all go home like good children. I won't think of myself much to-night, either. I'll try to study out a cause for you two bein' together."

"If you guess it within a month, I'll guarantee you success on the stage, or another chance to marry Jim; whichever you prefer," laughed Phil.

"Do you know — I don't like the name of Jim on your lips," said the girl, narrowing her eyes and looking fixedly at Phil. "I don't know where you started from, but there's a tone in your voice — and my ears are pretty sharp these days — which makes me willin' to bet that you're on even a steeper slide than I am, myself."

"Your ears are still working, if it is any comfort to you," replied Phil.

"I'll tell you something else, too," resumed the girl, whose eyes were bright from the wine: "You speak your words neater than Jim, but he was a man while you are still only a boy. I think I could give you one other tip if I wanted to; but I don't think I will."

Miriam was vexed to feel the blood rising to her face. The girl had not given the slightest hint; and yet she was sure that the suggestion which was not voiced concerned herself. "I think we had better go," she said to Phil.

"A motion to adjourn is always in order, a motion to go home is never in order; but as I am at present under orders, let us depart hence and be at rest."

"May I call upon you some time?" asked Miriam.

"Think not," replied the girl shortly. "I live in a ken-

nel; and you'd probably catch me sober and out of humor."

"I should like to help you."

"You're a good sort, not the goody-good sort, but the real thing; yet I don't think you could help me much. I'll plow along all right, and there'll be some kind of a harvest; but I'm afraid you'd do too much preaching—away from his nibs, here."

"Any way," said Miriam, shaking hands heartily, "I mean to see you again, and to help you if you will let me."

"Well, think of me in the morning and it will help your headache," said Phil.

"Good night, kid," said the girl, looking at him with steady eyes. "If I were you, I'd find out where the slide headed in at, before I got to goin' any faster. Let me whisper in your ear; I kind o' like you in spite of your ways." Phil leaned close to her, and she whispered, "If there is any other girl in the case, you had better let this one alone; for she is one of the through death and hell kind."

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

PHIL WINS A TILT

THE faint, elusive odor of dawn was in the air when they reached the sidewalk, although the night was at its darkest. They walked along silently for nearly three squares, and then Phil asked: "Well, did you get your money's worth?"

"Yes, in full measure; but I do wish I could help that girl."

"Don't brood over it. She had an unusually good line of talk; but it does not differ much from the regular professional jargon. They all have had a beautiful, romantic love affair, and they expose it afterward, for money; just as the men beggars expose the handmade sores on their limbs. This girl is unusually plausible; but the chances are that she was merely a weak, silly, perverted creature to begin with."

"You really think that there are such girls?" asked Miriam. "I mean, weak, silly, perverted creatures to begin with."

"Why, certainly."

"Then don't you think that some provision for their protection should be made? Most of our education, both religious and worldly, seems to give the impression that we are all much the same and can therefore all live comfortably if we just obey the general rules; but if some of us really are weak, silly, and perverted to begin with, it seems

as if there should be some special precautions taken for them."

"Oh, what's the odds? We all smash up one way or another, so let's be comfortable as long as possible. If some of us did not fall, think of all the holy joy we should take from those who have been propped up all their lives and yet glory in the fact that they have stood erect through their own spiritual strength."

Miriam made no reply: Phil had disappointed her sadly during the evening. He seemed to take such a flippant, shallow view of life, and she wondered if this was the real man; or if, after all, his present attitude were not the result of his present circumstances; while his real nature was more like that of the Phil Lytton whom she had idealized. A woman fights hard to retain her children, even the children of her imagination.

"Call the first cab we meet," she said after a minute. "I shall leave a message for you at the office of the Palace Hotel; but do not call for it until your outfit is complete. I am perfectly satisfied with your conduct toward me."

She spoke as mistress to servant; but the slight emphasis upon the pronoun which ended her remark was noticeable enough to cause Phil to study her face a moment; but all he said was, "I shall call for the message as soon as possible."

They did not see a cab until within a block of Market; and then Phil handed her into it, raised his hat, paid the driver, and stood on the curb and watched it whirl around the corner on its short, but profitable journey.

Then he tapped his chest with his hands and said aloud: "This is I: this is actually Philip Lytton, one time resident of New York City, one time a self-respecting vagabond of this quiet hamlet, and now — no, I think I shall not put it

into words. Any way, I am now Lenord Latham, who is quite a different individual and not subject to the same criticisms as Phil Lytton. I wonder if Valerie Florian is really the name of my peculiar employer. She is certainly an original character. I wonder how much money there really is in her purse."

He glanced about, and then, stepping to the shelter of a doorway, examined the contents of the purse. He counted over four hundred dollars, carelessly; and then slipping fifty into his trousers pocket, put the purse in his inside vest pocket and started toward Market.

"It will be daylight in an hour," he muttered, "but never did I have less appetite for sleep. I think I shall look around a bit."

After his fast, the food he had eaten had been digested with a completeness seldom enjoyed by civilized man, and the wine had merely stimulated him pleasantly. He waked up Market Street with easy swinging strides, and his face was eager and serene, like the face of a boy.

He turned in at the Café Royal, and after buying a drink and cigar, strolled back to a faro layout. Only two men were playing, and the dealer was yawning wearily.

"What is the limit?" asked Phil. He had not been much of a gambler, and was not very familiar with faro.

"I've about reached it, as far as sleep goes," said the dealer with a fine unconcern, "and only expect to stay here fifteen minutes longer; but you can play as high as you like until then."

"Fifteen minutes will be plenty long enough for me," said Phil, placing a ten-dollar bill on the board. "I play five out of this on the high card."

The high card turned up, and Phil put the coin which

the dealer paid him into his own pocket, leaving the bill on the table. "I play it all," he said.

When the fifteen minutes was up, Phil was exactly one hundred dollars ahead. "I have enjoyed myself very much, and will detain you no longer," he said courteously.

"You know when to stop, all right," sneered the dealer.

"I am only stopping on your account," replied Phil. "If you wish to continue, we shall keep right along."

"Anything but a quitter," sneered the man.

"For how long this time, sleepy man?" asked Phil with a smile.

"Ten minutes," growled the dealer.

"I have often wondered at the peculiar independence of the men in your profession," said Phil urbanely. He was in a very pleasant frame of mind, and was not even disconcerted when the man failed to reply.

At the end of ten minutes Phil was three hundred dollars ahead. He looked questioningly at the dealer, and nodded his head toward the clock.

"Five minutes more; and if I don't break your fool luck by that time, I'll have to wait and get you on the rebound," answered the man in tones which indicated a threat, and caused Phil to smile.

When the five minutes was up, Phil was five hundred and twenty-five dollars wealthier than when he had entered, and the dealer was easing his irritation by means of an earnest soliloquy which he delivered sub-vocally through set teeth.

"I am surprised," said the genial Philip in his most intimate voice. "I supposed that you could beat any single player; and it really gratifies me to learn that it is possible to win at this game."

"Course it's possible to win," grumbled the man, "but you come back and try it again some time — if you got any sportin' blood. I don't mind losin' so much as I hate to lose to a guy like you, who's got a ton o' money, and don't care what he does with it. Your old clothes did n't fool me a minute."

"You are an excellent judge of character. Good morning," said Phil, raising his hat in semi-salute, and strolling jauntily away.

It was in the cheerless gray of a cloudy morning that he stepped out upon the sidewalk; but a beaming warmth emanated from his face which brought an answering smile to all the eyes which met his. He was very much the old Phil Lytton, and felt an old, familiar curiosity as to what his next step would be.

This purely impersonal curiosity as to his own future activities was one of his distinguishing traits. He was never in so normal a condition as when betting against himself as to what his own next movement would be; and when he suddenly started in the direction of the exclusive St. Francis, all his joy bells were ringing, and the light of mischief danced in his eyes.

The light brightened perceptibly when the supercilious clerk eyed him askance and seemed to dare him to write his name upon the register. "A room and bawth," said Phil.

"We are very crowded," said the clerk.

"Is it a noisy crowd?" asked Phil solemnly.

"Certainly not. I can give you a very good room for three dollars."

"What is the rate by the week?"

"Seventeen fifty, in advance."

"In advance!" cried Phil in startled tones which almost verged upon horror.

"Have you any baggage?"

"Certainly; but it is so badly scattered, that I shall have to collect it myself — thank you."

"If you have no baggage, I shall have to insist that you pay in advance."

"Well, I don't care to parley any longer," said Phil, feeling carefully into one pocket after another, while a look of anxiety gathered upon his face, quite in contrast to the expression of triumph which wreathed the features of the clerk. Suddenly, with a smile of relief, Phil plunged his hand into his trousers pocket, and pulled out a handful of gold coins and bills of large dimension. "I knew I had some change with me," he said, while the eyes of the clerk grew big and round and his face grew long and narrow.

As soon as he reached his room, Phil placed his hands upon the shoulders of the boy who had conducted him, and gazing searchingly into his eyes, asked gravely, "My son, are you a boy of good habits?"

The boy examined the face of his questioner critically. The face was very sober, even to the eyes; but there was a fragrance to the breath which seemed to indicate good living, rather than good habits; and the boy was anxious to adjust himself to the present moment, in the manner most certain to lure a worth-while tip. "Betcher life," he replied, showing by the easy elasticity of his language, that he was a boy to be trusted with a commission of the utmost delicacy.

"Then," said Phil, holding up a nickel, "put this coin in the bank, and after you have saved up enough to buy

yourself a house and lot, spend all your evenings at your own fireside."

The lips of the boy curled into respectful contempt, and he pocketed the coin with mumbled incoherency.

"Did he give you a tip?" asked the clerk, as soon as he had returned to the office.

"Naw," answered the boy, holding out his hand, "he give me a nickel."

"I'll give you a quarter for it, just for a souvenir," said the clerk.

The boy looked at the coin, and saw that it was of gold. His face immediately lighted. "That's a smooth guy, all right," he said with enthusiasm. "It was a nickel he held in front of me while givin' me the country uncle talk about savin' my money. I'll slip you half I get if you turn him over to me exclusive."

Upstairs, Phil was rocking vigorously in a comfortable chair, and smoking a cigarette while his mind ran over the evening's incidents. "I wonder what her game is?" he said at last. "Any way, I am going to pay her back what she has advanced, and resign. I can't find any logic to prove that being a hired escort is not fully as honorable as beating a faro bank; but it is not as comfortable, and I have strong leanings toward comfort. I shall get as many of my own clothes as I can, and then go and tell her that I find it impossible to continue in her service. How I love that word service in this connection! Oh, Edith, Edith — you were able to start the strange machine; but who or what will stop it?"

"This Valerie Florian, or whatever her real name is, has a very strong personality, Edith, and you seem a long way off. I wonder if you could hold me against her, if she set

herself to win me. On the other hand, why should even La Belle Fatima, as curious a piece of work as either of you, why should even she want to win me? To tell you the truth," he said as he rose to his feet, "I don't think I could possibly cut out Jim's memory, even if I had the income of former days. This thing of running on one's own personality is not all it is cracked up to be. I can't understand why I am not sleepy; but thus it is, and so I shall take a regular bath and then go clothes-hunting. I wish I had some clean underwear—and who could imagine myself ever reaching the point of making such a wish with so much fervor. What a clean, beautiful thing a clean bathtub is, and how delightful is the melody of splashing water. I wish to glory I had some clean underwear. Oh, this is an odd little world!"

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

HE TENDERS HIS RESIGNATION

It required Mr. Lenord Latham, more widely known as Philip Lyton, two days to collect his "baggage"; but as he had been able to find many of his own things, which he had either sold or pawned, he felt very much himself when he called to resign his peculiar position, and return the money which had been entrusted to him. This would leave him only ninety dollars of his own as capital with which to face his destiny; so that a nature less altruistic than his own might have found some difficulty in explaining the smile of confidence which graced his features; but to Phil, himself, the future seemed to hold out rosy arms of welcome.

At the Palace Hotel, he found a note from Mlle. Florian, telling him that she had taken a house on Pacific Avenue, and asking him to call at his earliest convenience. It was well out toward the Presidio, but Phil decided to ride in state, so he called a cab and very much enjoyed the view of the beautiful bay. Phil shared with the lower animals a simplicity which made it possible for him to lose himself in a season of fleeting prosperity, without fretting because the wheel of fortune refused to stand still.

He found the address to be a small frame house standing upon the side of the avenue closer to the bay, and mounting the steps gaily, he rang the bell with a sigh of relief. The door was promptly opened by a bright-eyed Jap who

held out a silver tray, and smiled cautiously, as is the custom of those who have learned the value of a smile.

Phil was shown into a small parlor, furnished with excellent and original taste, and while he was considering the best form in which to offer his resignation, Miriam entered.

She was beautifully gowned and carried herself gracefully and without showing the slightest trace of embarrassment. Phil had arisen upon her entrance, but hardly knew whether to step forward to shake hands, or stand at attention like a footman. In spite of her poise, Miriam's conduct was something of a compromise. She did not offer her hand, but she did smile as though welcoming a friend. "Good evening, Mr. Latham," she said in pleasant, even tones. "I rather expected you last night. I am glad to see that you acceded to my request in the matter of evening dress."

"I have come to resign," said Phil bluntly.

Miriam seated herself and extended the privilege to Phil by a motion of the hand. "I suppose that since we parted, you have found that I have not lived up to my side of the contract; for I cannot believe that you would squarely back out after having carefully considered the matter, and after having asked, and been granted, an increase of wages. Or is this merely another strike for higher wages?"

"No, this is a sympathetic strike," answered Phil. "My will feels enough sympathy with my feelings to prompt me to absolutely refuse to continue in so distasteful a service."

"I regret to say that my judgment cannot sympathize with your methods," said Miriam with frank disapproval. "I have taken this house for a month upon your assurance that you would continue our contract at least that long.

I have no desire at all to remain in San Francisco a month, unless I can study the side of it which would ordinarily remain hidden."

Phil was disconcerted: he saw his own responsibility in the matter; and, as he was not in a position to assume the rent of the house, he could only soothe his vanity at the price of his justice.

"I have brought back your money," he began lamely, "but really I don't believe that I could go on with it. If you want to use me as janitor or cook, or something of the kind, I think I could stand that a month; but to be a — well, I hardly know what I feel like, when you give me a jerk, as you did several times last night."

"I suppose I should try to see the matter from your viewpoint; but really I am only able to see it from my own. I found you out of employment, and out of money, and yet, just exactly the type of man I needed to carry out a long-cherished plan. You agreed to the plan, and, as the men of my acquaintance have a custom of keeping their word, I made arrangements without expecting any further difficulties. There was no written contract; you are only held by a promise; and, therefore, if you choose to repudiate the agreement, there is nothing more to be said."

She looked into the grate where a small fire was burning. Conscious rectitude crowned her, and outraged trust was her ermine robe. Phil sat in frowning silence, and cursed most of his earlier friends, as he felt himself slipping back into the position from which he had thought himself relieved.

"As long as you feel this way about it," he said at last, "there is nothing for me to do but go on with it; but I hate it."

"Would you mind telling me what has so remarkably improved your fortunes in such a short time?" she asked.

"I won a little better than five hundred dollars playing faro."

"With my money?"

"No, with my money, which you had advanced on my first week's wages. I kept your money apart so that I could get the duds, if I lost my own money."

Miriam smiled. "That is right; always be strict in money matters."

"Now that I am once more in your employ, do you wish me to keep track of what I spend?"

"It will not be necessary. If it were merely a question of money, I should not insist for a minute, upon your carrying out your contract; but I cannot find another man who would suit me. You have the appearance of a gentleman, and yet, perhaps because you have at one time lived as a gentleman, you are able to maintain our peculiar relations without difficulty."

"At least, I am able to maintain them," grumbled Phil. "It is half-past nine; do we stir up the lower layer this evening?"

"Would it be possible for me to play faro, where you played?"

"It is not possible. You will have to learn that there are many things which even you cannot do; but if you wish to play faro, it can easily be arranged; and truth to tell, a collection of gamblers do not make a dull study. The self-conscious stupidity of a gambler, shielding as it does a shrewd alertness, is quite an interesting item—to one whose investigating spirit leads toward the abnormal. I shall arrange it for you to-morrow."

"Thank you, very much; and I should also like to see a dog fight—I mean a regular pit fight—a prize fight between men, and a cock fight."

"Certainly," acquiesced Phil with grave decorum. "No modern woman's education would be complete without these. They are so helpful in removing the feminine tendency to shrink from outer violence, which has wielded so large an influence in continuing woman's dependency upon man. I noticed an item in the evening's paper which indicated that there would be a hanging in the state within a month. A legal hanging is less picturesque than a lynching, especially if it takes the form of burning at the stake; but still it is helpful; and in the meantime, we might visit a few slaughter houses. I understand that getting accustomed to seeing lambs' throats cut has quite a beneficial effect in preparing one to take an active part in boosting civilization. Have you studied boxing and fencing, or did you omit the preliminaries and content yourself with jui juitsu?"

"Strange as it may seem to you, I can box, fence, practise jui juitsu, and am also a good shot with the revolver."

"I am surprised you did not give me a good shaking for intruding the other evening. Had I been more fully acquainted with you, I should have ordered an ambulance—to convey the remains of the masher to the nearest repair shop. I presume that you are more in step with the world than I am, but you seem like a foreigner to the terrestrial sphere; which statement is made merely as an observation and is not intended as derogatory criticism."

"And it is accepted in the impersonal spirit in which it was given," rejoined Miriam, entirely at ease and apparently enjoying herself. "But," she continued enthusi-

astically, "I do not feel that I am less a woman, because I am more a man. I can sew and cook, play harp, violin, and flute —"

"I was willing to bet that you would not include the feminine old piano," interrupted Phil.

"No, the piano is not feminine. Not one woman in a thousand is able to make piano-playing anything else but childish thumping. The piano is strictly a man's instrument; the violin, demanding as it does, grace and quick feeling, and delicate touch, is as strictly a woman's instrument; but what I wished to convey, was the fact that I did not enter man's domain until I had pretty thoroughly prepared myself to live as a woman. I can nurse, and take care of babies; I can swim and sail a boat,—"

"Excellent combinations, both," commended Phil.

"And I can do all kinds of fancy work. Life appeals to me; not merely some little phase of it, but life itself, the bigness of it, the scope of it, the endless variety of it. I am not morbid; I do not seek the tawdry cheapness of strained emotions; but I do want to find out whether different levels have different desires; or are merely forced to use different means to gratify the same desires. I have had wider advantages than most women, or men either, and yet my entire life is a compromise. I do not do what I wish to do; I do what I may; and that girl with the golden hair, and those poor creatures who made up her audience, do the same; and you"—rising to her feet and looking down upon Phil like an empress—"are doing the same. You played away your summer like the grasshopper, and now in your winter you are trying to hide beneath superciliousness and sarcasm, the hurt vanity which you have been forced to compromise. I am living my life more

fully than you ever lived yours; so be cautious, lest the slurs you cast upon the new woman do not rebound upon your own head."

"You read character remarkably well," said Phil, rather pleased at the mood which he had called forth. "If you will forget for the moment that I am a menial, I should like to say that I rather admire you, at long range. I can hardly imagine a man who would feel sufficiently a man to make love to you. I am speaking of you as a type, not as an individual."

"I rather think, myself," said Miriam shrewdly, "that you men of the present generation are to be congratulated. There are at present vested rights in the male sex which out-weigh superior personality in those of the opposite sex; but sooner or later, the test is to be one of personality, not of sex."

"There will likely be some modifications in the future; but I think it safe to assume that the question of sex will never be entirely eliminated from human affairs. In the meantime," he added, rising, "I am prepared to carry out suggestions as far as possible; and am becoming interested in them myself, which is quite additional to anything in our contract."

"You may call for me to-morrow evening at six, wearing evening dress, and prepared to escort me to one of the fashionable cafés for dinner. Good night."

She seated herself in a chair and Phil went to the door alone. He opened it, closed it, and returned to her. He knew that his only reason for returning was that he was loath to leave her; but he asked quite naturally, "Do your servants know of our relations, or shall I act like an ordinary visitor?"

200 THE KNIGHT-ERRANT

Miriam studied a moment. "Act like an intimate friend," she said, then added with slow distinctness, "when the servants are present."

She sat staring into the fire a long time after the door had closed behind him. Several times she sighed, and at last she arose and paced the floor.

"What a mystery personal attraction is!" she exclaimed. "I am able to see the shallowness of this boy's character; I am able to see how almost impossible it would be to stimulate him to the continuity of purpose necessary for a great action; I see through him, weigh and measure him without the slightest attempt at self-deception; and yet I love him as much now as when I first heard his voice. I loved him before I ever saw him, and now that I see him plainly, and estimate him perfectly, I love him still. And, I shall win him if I can."

CHAPTER NINETEEN

DISTURBING THEORIES

PHIL found the next three weeks quite a pleasant change from the previous months of leanness. He continued to live at the St. Francis, where he was regarded as an eccentric person of great wealth; he dropped into the Café Royal occasionally, for an early morning bout with faro, roulette, or poker, and he found it much less irksome to be a hired escort than he would have imagined possible.

It did not take many excursions to disgust Miriam with the perfectly raw life which Phil selected for this very purpose. She was forced to admit that even vice, arrayed in fine linen and graced with good manners, was not so repulsive as identically the same vice, filthy and loud, and reveling in its own brutality. She insisted that the one was as artificial and as affected as the other, and that neither was the "life in the raw" which she wanted to study; so she entered quite freely into his plan to invade Bohemia.

Phil had decided ideas upon the code of this much alluded to, but little understood, empire; and he made his selections with great care. He had a deep-rooted antipathy for dirt and disorder, and it required something more than chafing dish, art, cigarettes, and front names, to lift him into a state of real ecstasy; but he did enjoy an atmosphere wherein the kindly cynicism of age mingled with the optimistic eagerness of youth upon a playground just outside

the world, and where all the movements of the world were brought to be used as balls in the games of these children who scoffed at the jurisdiction of fussy old Father Time.

Having again come into his old time smile and winning ways, Phil found but little difficulty in securing an entrance to the circles which appealed to him, was at once accepted as being one of the good fellows from which friends are made, and was not asked to take an examination. Miriam's distinctive beauty contained the element of challenge; but she stood all tests and came from them with the stamp of approval placed upon the bits of life which she offered for their inspection.

By slow degrees, the formality between employer and employee had been dropped and Phil had grown very fond of her without, however, feeling love for her person, or awe of her learning and accomplishments. He tapped the storehouse of her knowledge without stint, but did not feel dependent upon her. In fact, he remained consistently boyish, and felt that he had done her much honor when he conceded that it had taken remarkable patience and will-power to produce so complex a culture; but he had never felt the woman of her so plainly as he had upon the first evening of their acquaintance; and Miriam realized this with the keenness of an open wound.

Either in spite of, or because of, their utter disregard of the conventional, there had never been a moment when their conduct had threatened the proprieties. During their visits to Bohemia, she had called him Lenord, and he had called her Valerie; but his hand had never pressed hers, and his eyes had never rested upon hers with that strange, intoxicating warmth which eyes know how to send. They had

risked their reputations without having availed themselves of an outlaw's privilege. It was akin to an artist defying signs, laws, and wardens, in order to get the coveted view of a peculiar coloring. They discussed every phase of life with perfect freedom; but because they stripped the prescribed of its pretence and sham, it also lost its mysterious charm, and the wall of frankness which had taken the place of the screen of conventionality between them, seemed so impassable that Miriam was harassed by a wistful longing which would not be soothed. She found herself in the mortifying position of a woman who feels no necessity of restraining the man whom she loves and who is upon terms of the utmost freedom and intimacy. She was forced to admit that with a man, or rather boy, like Phil, her method of attraction was a total failure.

"Whither to-night, your Highness?" asked Phil, coming into the little parlor and standing before Miriam with mock humility. He had fallen into the custom of addressing her in the stilted forms of stage royalty, and both of them found it pleasant and amusing. The room was lighted by candles under shades of soft pink, and as its walls were of Oriental tapestry in which red was the predominating color, both Phil and Miriam were at their best.

Miriam had been fretting before his arrival; but as the light from the grate fire danced across his face, it seemed to her as though her entire body was smiling. This was the normal effect of the normal Phil Lytton: few ever thought of asking him what he had done, or what he could do; it was enough that he be himself, and they warmed in his beams as in the beams of the sun. He knew nothing of this; but during the outer coldness of his search for work he had not secreted enough vitality for his own needs; and

it was the giving out of his surplus which had been his great joy in life, unconscious of it though he was.

"Why do we like and dislike?" asked Miriam, ignoring his question.

"For exactly the same reason that water seeks its level," replied Phil. "Are we going soon, or am I invited to remove my coat?"

"Oh, remove your coat, if you wish," said Miriam impatiently. "Why is that you always rebel against real thought? You generally reply with some trite saying which is quite likely to be irritating, and yet you have a mind if you care to use it."

"Some ancient sage said that the world was a comedy to those who thought, a tragedy to those who felt; but this has nothing to do with amateur thinkers of slight experience. I have been thrown beneath the harrow of an untried thinker too often to see the comedy of it. What's the use of so much thinking? When I am happy, I simply give way to it and enjoy myself. A thinker has to find out just what little, isolated item it is which produces the happiness, whether or not it is reasonable to be happy about so trivial an item, if it will be possible for the same item to produce the same condition in the future; and by this time he has raised the steam in his boilers to such a pitch that all the happiness has escaped through his safety valve. I don't really care if I am a machine, a chemical combination, a soul trying to discover itself, or what the Dickens. I am I, and half a dozen other personalities, and we live in a funny clay house which we call a body. When I formerly maintained an establishment, and a guest came to see me, I pointed out the tobacco and liquids, and waved my hands in a generous circle, to indicate that the castle

was his. You would have weighed him, measured him, examined his eyes for liver trouble, his throat for malignant germs, and his fingernails for signs of the times; but would he have remained long or repeated his visit? Not if he was worth while, and had sense enough to see it. If you will permit —”

“I’ll permit anything now,” interrupted Miriam, “for I have started you to thinking.”

“Yes, and you have reduced my happiness to just the amount of vitality it takes to run my thinker. I was about to say, that if you will excuse a little advice, you will find it more agreeable to welcome your emotions with faith, and not subject them to the discomfort of a complete identification. Emotions are shy.”

“I am surprised to find that you have any opinions in the matter.”

“You are no more surprised than I am. I did not have any until you pestered them into me a moment ago. I only think when driven to it.”

“Well, I’ll accept the responsibility of it this time,” said Miriam, smiling; but her smile was serious. She had found it hard to arouse the inner Phil Lytton, and rejoiced to see the real interest in his face. “We thinkers, if you have included me among them as your reproaches indicate, believe implicitly in cause and effect. To us nothing ever happens, joy and sorrow spring from certain realities, and we seek to find rules and reasons for every emotion — even for that very abnormal emotion we call love.”

Phil seated himself and looked into the fire. “Love is not abnormal,” he said seriously. “It is the most natural of all the emotions.”

“How can even an emotion remain natural when hedged

in by so many artificial restrictions? There is more of the reason of expediency, than the freedom of nature, in modern love."

"As a theory, perhaps," granted Phil, "but love itself refuses to abide by the restrictions. We speak lightly of a love story; but true love stories have never been written. To some of us, love means a pale, polite fondness; to others, it is a wild mania which destroys self-control and discretion; while to the chosen it is a great force which sweeps us from impersonal admiration to the heights of passion without ever for a moment hushing the true reverence we feel for the one we love."

"Have you ever felt this sort of love?" asked Miriam after a moment. Her voice was a little husky, but her face was perfectly calm.

"I thought so, for several years," answered Phil slowly. "Now, I hardly know."

A great bubble of joy seemed to burst within the bosom of the woman. It was this old love which had kept him from her; it was herself which now made him doubt. "What kind of woman was it?" she asked, with a primitive directness which perfectly matched the primitive feelings which were surging through her.

"She had a very strong character," answered Phil, his brow drawn as he attempted to visualize Edith. "I think it would be impossible for me to love any but a strong woman. The weak, silly, clinging—"

"I know," interjected Miriam impatiently. "The emotional, the impulsive, the intuitive in yourself reaches out for the logical, the calm, the reasoning. Tell me about her."

"Oh, the description of a woman, never is a description.

DISTURBING THEORIES 207

After I had told all I know of her, you would not see the woman that I see, nor could you understand why she meant so much to me."

"Partially true; but try it."

"I never attempted to analyze her; I only knew that I was happy with her, and lonely away from her. This was enough for me; but I was not enough for her. She insisted upon my taking an active part in life, a part for which I was utterly unfitted, and — well I proved to everyone's satisfaction that I was unfitted, which is why you found me as you found me."

"And you still love her?"

"I frequently ask myself the same question, although the disloyalty of it hurts me. I fear that in asking myself the question I also answer it — and yet she is still a part of me. I don't know."

"Was she able to help you after having urged you to try?"

"Not at all."

"What change in her did your failure make?"

"I did not wait to see. As soon as I hit the gravel, I started on the run, and have been running ever since."

"And she is still a part of you," murmured Miriam aloud, but speaking to herself.

"Yes," answered Phil, also largely to himself, "she is still a part of me. Many things I feel as she would feel them, rather than as I would have felt them without her. Sometimes I almost hate her, at other times I feel my unworthiness of her, and it makes me sorrowful and repentant, and I long for a new trial to prove that I am not the weakling I appear."

"I should say," stated Miriam as though diagnosing an

unusual symptom, "that you really did love her, but that she was not your true mate. I believe in mating, rather than indiscriminating marriage. It is as impossible to unite certain natures as to carry nitric acid in a silver vessel."

Phil nodded his head, and she continued: "And this brings us back to our original proposition, the whyfore of likes and dislikes. My theory is, that space is swept by hundreds of rays. Certain natures collect more of these rays than they need, others less. When a nature acts like a sun glass, in collecting rays and focusing them into a nature deficient in them, it produces a sensation of pleasure in this latter nature which we call liking, or love. If the combination is complete, this latter nature will also direct rays upon the former which the former has desired without having been able to collect. This is why some marriages fail and some succeed. It is not a question of justice or virtue or duty. This is the materialistic explanation of love, which is not abnormal as I said a moment ago; but which, in its perfection, is so unusual that it has the appearance of being abnormal. A marriage which does not bring strength and peace to both the man and the woman, is not a marriage at all; it is merely a mistake."

"You have an admirable way of setting aside an institution which is supposed to be the foundation of society."

"I have not set it aside," rejoined Miriam. "I have merely suggested that it be made to live up to a decent standard. Every day, Ignorance is married to Weakness, and the world raises a complacent finger and says ponderously, 'Whom God has joined together, let no man put asunder.' I insist that the truth, the whole truth, will

hurt no one, neither will it destroy nor frighten innocence; therefore I want matings to be investigated scientifically. When the right man mates the right woman, it does not require the bonds of matrimony to hold them together, nor can all the divorce courts in the world put them asunder. This is what I hoped to find proved conclusively when I asked you to show me life in the raw. I wanted to see if instinct alone was not enough to cause natural selection of mates; but the women are always too weak. Woman is not able to defy society."

"And the very ones who have strength sufficient, know the certainty of this so well that they do not attempt it," added Phil. "You may scoff at conventionality all you please; it is the very framework of Society."

"Framework!" repeated Miriam sarcastically. "This is what disgusts me so with conventionality; the few try to make the many believe that it actually is the framework, whereas it is merely the robe. Society wears conventions as the individual wears clothing. The individual wears clothing, not to protect modesty; but to arouse passion through curiosity; and Society, which is constantly striving to stifle the individual, establishes a convention, raises it to the dignity of a religious ceremony, and supplies with pretence whatever is lacking in fact. Until it is proved to me that all marriages are decent, I refuse to believe that the decency of any marriage is caused by the institution of marriage itself."

Phil had never quite outgrown an uncomfortable feeling whenever Miriam expressed herself freely upon subjects which had seldom been more than hinted at, by the women of his former life. "Any of these questions are easily

settled in the abstract," he said gravely, "but would you, yourself, dare to forego marriage and trust entirely to the man your instinct pointed out as your mate?"

"I would make no rules for my love," answered Miriam in a low tone. "I know the world; my mate would know the world; and we should have to live in the world. I should not ask him to suffer any form of pain for me which was not absolutely necessary; neither would he ask this of me. It is always painful to live in the world and not be of it; and so, unless there was some great reason against it, I should wish to marry; but if this reason were insurmountable, I should shut my ears to the world, and listen only to love."

Her voice thrilled with earnestness. It was a low-toned voice, mellow and musical, and the passionate melody of it entered the man's nature through his sense of hearing, played gently upon his other senses until all were swaying in rhythmic harmony. He breathed deeply and the air he drew in seemed to sweep through him like wine. Warm waves rolled over him, and he forgot the keen intellect of the woman beside him, and remembered only that she was a woman. For a long minute, he sat in silence.

"I am surprised at your depth of feeling," he said at last in as calm a voice as he could command. "I always thought that you were utterly cold."

"Cold?" she cried in a tone which caused him to sit erect with his eyes fixed upon hers. "I am cold, even as are the ashes which bank a bed of living coals. When I told you weeks ago that I had not invaded man's field until after I had fully developed the woman in me, I told you the simple truth. I am still a woman, a complete woman, a natural woman; and I have within me a woman's virgin

love, strong and passionate; but hidden away in a guarded inner chamber to await the master call of my mate."

Their eyes were clinging together in an embrace which seemed to draw them closer and closer. Phil could feel the blood leave his muscles and flow to the nerves of sensation in arms and chest and back; his lips yearned for hers; his whole body seemed to impel him with a force greater, and entirely apart, from his will, and yet he did not move.

Miriam's eyes burned into his, and she noted their growing brilliancy which matched the color which had swept to his face; but when he made no movement to come to her, she shrugged her shoulders with affected lightness, and said, "But alas, theories so often have to die as theories. I fear I should find it most difficult to discover the man I should consider my mate."

This was lightly spoken; but Phil felt the sting of it, even though he was not sure that any was intended for himself. Instantly he experienced a reaction, almost as great as though his proffered love had been refused with scorn, and he settled back in his chair, and rejoined with a lightness which was also affected: "If you wish a suggestion from one who has not made a study of love as you have, most men would be afraid of you. A man likes to feel that he is looked up to, and it would need a very strong man to hold out a helping hand to you."

"I sometimes doubt if my mate would be as strong a man as I am a woman," replied Miriam candidly; "but we have wasted nearly an entire evening in talk and have arrived at no definite conclusions."

"In order to get further light upon the subject of love," suggested Phil, "we might go to the Elite, and coax some ad-

ditional testimony from Mlle. La Belle Fatima. We have plenty of time for that, if you are not tired."

"Tired!" scoffed Miriam, springing to her feet. "Come, let us go. I am glad that you thought of it."

While she was putting on her wraps, Phil paced the floor in deep thought.

We have
"Come,
ced the

CHAPTER TWENTY.

EXIT THE GOLDEN-HAIRED GIRL

THEY rode on the street car to where it turned off from Pacific to Polk, and then, as it was much too early for the appearance of the girl with the golden hair, they alighted, and continued afoot. It was a delightful night, with no breeze, and so clear that the stars seemed almost neighborly.

Miriam was in a mood of brilliant gaiety, a mood which Phil had never before seen, and all his own buoyancy leaped forth to meet it. The strange waves which had suddenly drawn them together a few minutes before, had departed, and for almost the first time since their acquaintance, the child in one came forth to play with the child in the other. Miriam was the leader, even in this, and she made so many droll comments, quoted or improvised so many clever bits of semi-nonsensical verse, and so neatly caught and tossed back to him his own pleasantries, that Phil was completely captivated.

At last he stopped, doffed his hat, and bowing low, said to her; "Wonderful woman, permit me to do homage. In my folly, I had put a limit upon your endless and bewildering variety; but now that you evince a genuine wit and humor, the last graces of the complete woman, I withdraw all modifications and hail you as the unanswerable argument

in favor of any demands which the newest woman of them all may make."

There was much sincerity beneath his lightness, and Miriam drew a quick, sharp breath of joy. "I shall never again insist upon your thinking," she rejoined. "From now on rest upon your feelings in comfort, and let primal causes take care of themselves."

"It is vulgarly early," said Phil, after he had bowed his abject thanks, and they had resumed their walk. "Let us go and see what Madame has to eat to-night. It is now three weeks since she was the agent you made use of to save me from starvation, and it is well that we look upon it as an anniversary and celebrate accordingly."

"With all my heart," responded Miriam, and as they started on, their hands met, and for an instant clasped each other.

They had not been to the quaint little restaurant since the night of their meeting; but Madame recognized them as soon as they entered, and bustled up to welcome. The girl, who had been entertaining four men on the night of their former visit, was at her old place; but this time she was furnishing amusement for five men, and none of them had been in the group on the previous occasion. She had a merry, mischievous expression, and when she laughed, all the men joined her with unfeigned delight.

"I wish I knew that girl," said Miriam, after they had been seated in their former alcove, and Madame had received their choice of wine with approval, and had left them to themselves.

It was a pleasanter supper than the preceding one had been, even though Phil's appetite was more counsellor than master; and their conversation was light and playful. Phil

was wearing a Tuxedo, and Madame insisted that he step back to the kitchen to let Enrico view him in his natural and consistent grandeur.

When they returned to the street and started toward the music hall, they walked silently; but very close together. She did not take his arm; but when it rubbed against her shoulder they did not draw apart, and it was in the nature of a caress.

The Irishman, made up to look like a chimpanzee, and the tall thin man; disguised to resemble a variety-stage German, and nothing else under the shining sun, were attempting to keep the audience from more profitable meditation, when they entered the Elite.

Chesty's trained eye detected them upon the instant, and with the chastened abnegation of a modest hunter attempting to conceal his pride while exhibiting a treasured trophy, he conducted them to their former place in the box.

"You may bring us a pint, and a couple of the best Havana panetellas this opera house serves, Chesty," said Phil after they were settled, "just as a slight reward for being vigilant. After La Belle Fatima has finished her contribution to art, invite her here, and we shall try to supply you with more adequate exercise."

"Thank you, sir, thank you," replied the waiter, taking a mental note of Phil's raiment, and the redeemed diamond which shone upon his finger.

"How old are those men?" asked Miriam who had been examining the somber comedians intently.

"A question to turn the Sphinx green with envy!" ejaculated Phil. "Their jokes belong to the early Eocene; the human race has never at any time resembled either of these peculiar beings, and yet the real men may be any-

where from nineteen to ninety. They have the peculiar faculty of unlimited multiplication, and are doubtless doing this same thing on several thousand other stages at this same minute. We might invite them over for a friendly bottle as soon as they finish. I apprehend that their life is rather in the raw; and they will doubtless be glad to recount their — ah — romantic histories for your edification."

"Why did you not say, love affairs?" asked Miriam.

"I haven't an idea in the world," replied Phil; "but some way, it seemed for the moment a little caddish to take a fling at what may have been a soul tragedy. One never knows what the grease paint hides, and a mon's a mon for a' thot."

"I think that your heart is never that of a cad, Lenord," said Miriam softly; "but occasionally your manners are a trifle caddish. Affectation is always unreasonable, but especially so when the affected attitude is altogether undesirable."

Phil ignored the reproof in the words; and yielding to the coaxing lure of her voice, reached out his hand and covered hers as it lay in her lap. She did not move, or look at him; but he felt her tremble, and a great thrill ran through him. After a moment, he withdrew his hand, and they sat without speaking until La Belle Fatima appeared and the crowd proceeded to voice its clamorous welcome.

She was perfectly at ease and exchanged a few friendly pleasantries before she began to sing. Her voice was under better control than it had been on their former visit, and several of the notes were given quite correctly.

"She has been studying," whispered Miriam.

"If their appetites for this one song remain keen a few

months longer, she will actually learn to sing it," agreed Phil.

"Why do you never enter into a thing with heartiness?" asked Miriam impatiently.

"My enthusiasms have been so blunted that I am prompted to hurl my hat in the air, only upon rare and radiant occasions," answered Phil with a little half-sigh. "And, anyway, what is the use of bellows when the wind is blowing a gale?" he added, waving his hand toward the audience.

The slight motion caught the attention of the girl upon the stage, and from that on she glanced in their direction frequently.

"Several times after our first visit here, I tried to see her during the day," said Miriam; "but she flatly refused. I rather like her independence."

As she finished the last chorus for the last time the girl with the golden hair blew a kiss toward the box in which Phil and Miriam were sitting. Miriam merely continued to applaud; but Phil arose and blew a kiss to the singer as she tripped lightly from the stage.

As he started to seat himself again, he noticed a tall, stern young man arise in the center of the hall, and come toward him. Straight to the box he came, entered it, and pulled the curtain across the front. For a moment he stood looking down upon Phil with eyes in which burned the cold flame of deliberate hate. Phil returned the gaze with questioning hauteur.

"Are you the music teacher who taught her how to sing?" asked the tall young man, in a low deep voice which did not tremble.

"No, indeed," replied Phil in a composed, and slightly

amused voice; "but if you wish my opinion upon the subject, I would say that nature rather than art is responsible for her technique."

"I believe you're lying, and if I find you are, I'll kill you." The voice of the stranger was as calm as Phil's. His broad shoulders stooped a trifle from hard work, his powerful hands hung loosely at his sides, but the fingers opened and shut unconsciously.

"Very kind of you, I'm sure," replied Phil in his most irritating tone. "I was not aware that the penalty for lying was so severe, and I fear if it is universally enforced, the next census will be a bitter disappointment."

"I know you're him now. You got the same purty way o' talkin' they said he had, an' the same soft, sneakin' ways—and the same black heart; and I'm goin' to git you."

With the lithe suddenness of a panther, he leaped toward Phil with both hands outstretched to seize his throat. Phil was trained: with an equally rapid movement, he shot his right hand across his body, grasped the stranger's right wrist, jerked it aside and, as the man plunged by him, helped by his own momentum, Phil rose to his feet and stood at ease.

His adversary did not lose his balance, and in a second had turned to renew his attack; but in that second, Miriam had arisen and placed herself between them. "Are you Jim?" she asked.

The stranger paused in surprised defiance. "Yes, I'm Jim," he answered.

"She will be back here in a moment. You take a seat just outside the curtain and listen carefully to what is said. I think you will soon see that this is not the singing teacher,

and will also see that she has not forgotten you. We are her friends, and yours."

Miriam's eyes met his own steadily, and her tone was one to inspire confidence. For a moment the young man wavered, and then he said a little sullenly, "Well, you got the bulge on me, an' I'll try listenin' a while; but I won't stand for any sort o' foolishness."

He had scarcely left the box before the girl with the golden hair entered. There were lines of weariness in her face; but her eyes were full of pleased greeting. "Well, did I put it over to-night?" she asked breezily.

"You certainly made the hit of your life, to-night," answered Phil. "I have heard the imported song birds of Grand Opera; but I never saw a singer produce a more dramatic effect than you did a few moments ago."

"You make me blush; I'm sorry I took off the paint; but I never can tell when you're kidding, so I'm not going to expand too readily."

"You really did sing much better this evening than three weeks ago," said Miriam frankly. "Sit down; I want to have a serious talk with you."

"Not too serious," warned the girl. "I belong to that part of the poor old earth which has to borrow its mirth; and the good Lord knows that I have troubles enough of my own."

"Then you are not entirely satisfied with even the very marked success you have made with this song?" asked Miriam.

"Oh, it's a dog's life. I do a few tricks to amuse them and they toss me my bit; but as soon as this one song dies, I'll probably die with it. I have been trying to learn to read a new song ever since you first heard me; but it

sounds like the wail of a sick cat, and I'm disgusted. I can act all right if I get the chance; but it sometimes costs a lot for a girl to get a chance to act. I don't mean money cost."

"I know," said Miriam; "but I have several friends in the theatrical business, back east, and if you still think that you would like to give your ambition a chance, I think I can help you."

"I wonder if any of us ever do what we want to do?" asked the girl, her eyes fixed upon the table. "Something pushes us off the raft and we try to swim to the nearest shore. We did not want to be pushed off the raft, and the chances are ten to one that we do not wish to reach the shore toward which we swim; but what's the use? It takes a lot of practice to learn to enjoy drowning."

"You do not seem to take as cheerful a view of the future as you did three weeks ago," said Phil.

"Well, don't send any flowers yet," retorted the girl, tossing her head. "I've got a lot of dishes on my menu beside tender recollections and briny tears; but I'm tired to-night. I'm studying a lot of books and practising vocal kicks and trying to gesture without looking like a human flail; and to tell you the simple truth, Uncle, little Myrtle's garden had lain fallow too long to raise a bumper crop the season; but I am going to come through in spite of anything, and that's a tip on the one best bet."

"That sounds better," said Phil, who had not forgotten the tall, stern young man just outside the curtain. Phil was not averse to fighting; it seemed a peculiarly fitting outlet to some of his contrarities. He did not like to rush madly into combat; he wanted to feel himself to be in the

right, and then coolly make stilted speeches while exhibiting his skill, of which he possessed considerable.

"I am glad to hear you express a determination to continue," said Miriam, also speaking for Jim's benefit. "I am sure that you will succeed on the stage, and I feared you might become discouraged and go back to the hum-drum life on the farm."

"Hum-drum life on the farm," repeated the girl indignantly. "I suppose you honestly believe that an unnatural life like this is really better than a life in the open. Why, I used to see the sun rise every morning and my own soul used to rise with it; all day long the breezes brought new life to me which I used in making things to eat and wear, and in driving dirt away — doing something real — and then, when the twilight came to all the world, it also came to me and rested and soothed me. But what is my life now? There is no sunrise and no twilight and no life-bringing breeze in the part of this hell-hole where I live. Instead of the song of birds, and the whinny of my pony, and the mellow jingle of the bells as the cows come out of the woods, I hear curses and brawls and the rotten gossip of the under world."

The girl's voice was still low; but it was vibrant with feeling. She had the gift of passion, and the feelings which discriminate naturally, without asking why. After she would lose a little more of self, and gain a little more of art, she would find a royal welcome on the stage.

"And what am I trying to do?" she continued. "I am trying to learn how to forget to feel; so that I can pretend, for others, the emotions which used to be all my own. I went out to see the animals in the park once, just once; all

about their cages people were standing and waving their hands and saying, 'Boo' and 'Shoo,' and enjoying themselves in their own fool way; but did the beasts in the cages enjoy it? No, they never looked at the fool people; they kept their eyes fixed on the distance, and I knew what they saw, and smelled, and felt, and I was sister to them all! I've seen an eagle swinging away up in the blue and looking down on the world as if he knew that he was the king of birds and the symbol of this very country; and I've stood down below and looked up at him, and waved my hand to him, and something went out of me all the way up to him like a telephone wire, and he sent me back a message; and I went on with my work while a new song hummed in my heart. I knew what he felt, and I felt it, too. He was master of his own body, and I was master of mine, and we both flew into the heavens and looked down on all the world. And then I saw an eagle in a cage out in the park, sitting all humped up on a perch, with feathers sticking to the bars of the cage where he had tried to beat his way out, and filth all over the floor. Mothers called to their children, and said, "Oh, come and see the eagle"; but my own heart sat all humped up in my breast like the poor thing in the cage, and he looked at me; and I swear I think he knew that I knew. Oh, it's hell!"

She stopped and impulsively drew her hand across her eyes, but there were no tears in them. The noise of the hall came to them like the rolling of a surf, while from the stage a man and woman were trying to suggest passion, so that the circulation of the audience would be stimulated, and they would buy more drink. The strained, squeaky voices, the clinking of glasses, the shuffling of feet, and the ribald comments of the crowd, all seemed to come from

another world—a sodden world, an ill-made world, an under world, indeed.

“Yes,” said Phil; “but you chose to leave your former life, you know.”

“In the same way that the eagle chose to leave his. What did I know of life, that life or this? I was caught with a bait; and neither the innocence of a girl nor the innocence of an eagle can tell a bait from honest food. Why I’ve done more thinking since I came to this city than in all my life before; or in all the life I would have lived if I had stayed back there in the hills till I died of old age. Do you know what they tell me here—I don’t mean the girls who envy me, I mean the kind ones, the ones who feel sorry for me and friendly toward me, and who would like to help me? They tell me the value of my eyes, and hair, and the round form that came from a life outdoors with the other free things; and they say it is only a question of time anyhow, and I might as well cash in before I lose part of my capital. That is what they say. That is life; and we’re each in our cages now, the eagle and me. He has given up hope, and I am still beating against the bars; but I know it’s a cage now, and sooner or later—why, sooner or later, I’ll cash in.”

“Do you think you could really have been content with Jim?” asked Miriam.

“Course I’d ‘a’ been content. I knew what he was; but I had a lot of mischief in me; I was just like a pony Jim gave me once. The pony was a spoiled thing, and liked to have a fuss made over him. Sometimes I’d call him up to give him a feed o’ grain; and if he was downright hungry he’d come a-lopin’; but if he felt fine beyond common, he’d have to play a while first. He pretended

once too often; he ran and kicked, and fell in a hole and broke his leg and they had to shoot him. I never intended to run away from Jim. I was only playin'; but I did n't know myself as well as I knew men — and that's all there was of it. I'm not going to howl, and I am going to make a fight for it; but sometimes when I think o' what's before me I feel like just layin' down an' dyin' in my tracks."

"Don't any of them, back there — Jim or your relatives, or anyone — know where you are?" asked Phil.

"I've seen picture post cards from Europe an' Asia and Africa," replied the girl scornfully; "but I've never seen any from hell. There's some places folks don't want to write back from. Besides, all the relatives I have is one uncle, and if one of his dogs would wag his tail at a stranger, he'd drive it off the farm. No, when I dropped, I cut the rope and hit the bottom, and there's no way back for me."

"Do you suppose Jim would forgive you?" asked Miriam.

"I don't know who you are or what you are," replied the girl looking searchingly into Miriam's eyes; "but it is n't a question of forgiveness. Jim would n't harm me none if he had a chance to, though I rather think he'd handle that singin' teacher if he happened to meet up with him; but in those days I used to look down at Jim and tease him, and he liked it. Now, he'd have to stoop over and lift me up; and that calls out ail the heart of a woman; but it's not the way with men. The only thing they really want, is something no one else could win. I knew 'at Jim was worth a carload o' such trash as that singin' teacher;

but Jim was backward an' didn't have the smooth little ways."

"If you had your choice," asked Phil, who had begun to wonder if the tall young man were still in the hall, "which would you rather have, a big success on the stage, or Jim?"

"I'd rather have Jim," cried the girl impetuously.

The curtain was drawn aside and the stern young man entered. A queer mingling of expressions were fighting for mastery in a face which was not usually demonstrative; but one of these expressions was joy, and another was pride, and they stood out from the rest with the same distinction as would the young man himself in a crowd.

"Jim!" cried the girl, and buried her face in her arms.

He crossed awkwardly to her and put a big, tender hand on her shoulder. "Are you ready to come back with me, Jennie?" he asked in a voice which trembled a little.

"Oh, I can't, Jim, I can't," sobbed the girl.

"Were you married to him?"

"No."

"Then, why can't you?"

He was perfectly sincere. In his simplicity, he thought there must still be another reason which he did not know.

"That's the very reason I can't come; because I was not married to him."

"Pshaw, child," he said, with a deep, tender, comforting laugh which showed that tears of sympathy were flowing into his throat and making it ache with tightness.

"Why, I don't care anything about that. I never was even jealous. I knew exactly how it was, even before I heard you this evenin'. You never heard of me abusin' a colt

because it kicked up a little or run away, did ya? If you'd been already married to me, now, and had kicked over the traces, why, that would 'a' been a different thing; and you'd be the same as dead to me; but if I was to leave you now, I'd feel the same as if I'd left a little lamb to starve to death, as punishment for gettin' caught in a thorn bush. Don't be foolish, Jennie. There ain't none o' that stoopin' and pickin' up, 'at you was talkin' about a while ago. There has n't a thing changed in me, and I love you just as I always have."

"I'm afraid it ain't love, Jim. I'm afraid it's just pity."

He stroked her hair softly, combing bits of it through his fingers. "Pity's a curious thing, then," he murmured. "Your hair sends the same old jumpin' thrill through me it always sent. No, I love you, and I want you to go back with me and just face it squarely, and it won't last long. Back in the hills you'll soon get over talkin' so much about hell. I'm not squeamish; but I hate to hear you usin' those sort o' words, Jennie."

The girl gave a long, tremulous sigh and leaned her head against the man's hand. "And you really think it would turn out all right, Jim?"

"Well, if there's anything I can do to show you I mean it, why I'm ready to begin this minute. If you'd like to have me, I'll go out there to-night and bust open that damned cage they got the eagle in."

"Oh, that would n't do any good, Jim," said the girl, reaching up and taking his hand, raising her head a little and placing her cheek against his wrist. "You'd probably get into trouble, and they'd fix up the cage and put a new eagle there — and this one is already used to it. This

is the sad part of it: even if I do fly back to the hills, why, they'll catch another girl for my place."

"Well, we can't fix up the whole world, Jennie; but we can build a little one of our own, and you're going to come."

"If you want me, Jim, I have n't the strength to say no."

"Then that's settled," said Jim, breathing a deep breath of satisfaction. "I'm mightily obliged to you folks," he said, looking at Miriam, and then turning to Phil, continued: "and I'm sorry I jumped you the way I did."

"Oh, that's all right," said Phil, springing to his feet and holding out a hand which met Jim's in a hearty grip. "I like that sort of thing, you know; and I want to congratulate you from my heart. You are a real man, and you've won a girl whose heart's as pure gold as her hair."

"I think so myself," said Jim, becoming self-conscious for the first time, and consequently a little sheepish.

"And I wish you both every joy in the world," said Miriam, kissing the girl's full, white forehead. "Don't be too humble, Jennie," she whispered. "Men love smiles and playfulness better than tears and repentance."

"We won't have time to select a present, but I want you to take this and buy something you want," said Phil, emptying his pockets.

Jim refused at first, but was finally made to see that this was perfectly proper.

"I suppose you two are married," he said in parting, "and I hope it ain't taking any liberty to wish that you'll always be as happy as we intend to be."

Then Jim and Jenny went along the little alley back of the boxes and out into a beautiful new world of their own.

This

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

THE ENCHANTRESS

FOR some time the two left in the box sat without speaking or looking at each other. It seemed as though something cherished and familiar had been taken out of their own lives, and they were trying to adjust themselves to a new order.

"Chesty will never forgive us," said Phil at last in his most artificial tone, the more certainly to hide the depths to which he had been stirred; "but I think, I really think, that you have at least seen life in the raw."

"And it was just as I thought it would be," responded Miriam, her eyes bright with sincere enthusiasm. "I knew that somewhere in the world, instinct was still forcing human beings to do the right thing, even when it was necessary to trample down conventionality in the doing."

"But don't you see, dreamer of dreams, that the very fact, that you have had to search, and almost in vain, for the exception, has itself proved that conventionality is the only safe rule."

"I do not, and never did, object to conventionality as a garment. We have grown so accustomed to garments that it would shock us terribly to go without them. What I insist upon is, that the body beneath the garment be kept clean and healthy. To cover a well body does little harm; but to shut the air from a running sore is likely to poison

the entire blood ; and some of our conventions cover the running sores of Society."

"Do you belong to any kind of a movement?" asked Phil petulantly.

"Not any organized movement."

"Then for heaven's sake, relax. I seem perfectly able to live in this world, botched up though it is, in very fair comfort; but every time I settle back to take a grateful breath, somebody drags in a lot of unpleasant theories and dumps them on my lap, until I feel like a foundling asylum for all the waifs of the world."

"Were you living in very fair comfort, when I first met you?"

"That is part of the regular ceremony: I am forever being dragged by the ears to a confessional and made to examine my heart faithfully to see if there is not some real reason why I should not be happy, when I really am happy and ready to enjoy myself. I am now going to touch this button and let Chesty touch that portion of your wealth which is now in my keeping."

"You understand, of course, that what you gave to Jennie, comes under the head of legitimate expenses?"

"No," replied Phil emphatically, "that was my gift, and I intend to enjoy the memory of it."

"I insist," said Miriam, with a slight return to their earlier relation.

"When you get quite through insisting, kindly let me know," rejoined Phil, with his head thrown back. "I do not intend to resume the humped-up attitude of that eagle at the park, and you may as well understand it, at once."

Miriam did not reply. Instead, she engaged in thorough analysis. What had caused this new independence in the

man of first importance to her? Was he tiring of her, or was he beginning to love her? She well knew that either of these feelings, widely opposed though they were, was ample cause for a new spirit of independence and assurance. She quickly reviewed his looks and actions during the early part of the evening, and decided that it was love; and the decision gave her face added color and beauty.

In the meantime Chesty had arrived, had been dispatched for a quart of wine and three glasses, and had returned to find his peculiar customers all sitting in composed silence. As they appeared to be free from either ill humor or embarrassment, Chesty decided that they were married to each other, and they straight way fell considerably in his estimation. Chesty had a whole-souled admiration for what he called a true sport.

"Chesty," said Phil solemnly, "I have some bad news for you; La Belle Matona will sing here no longer. She is a daughter of one of the uncrowned kings of America and has let here to enter into her reward. What is a good wind to his insinuation, is a good wind to her; so for none, I bid you lay aside your commercial spirit, and drink to her happiness."

"Do you mean she's quit?" asked Chesty, aghast.

"It is even so," replied Phil with intense sadness.

"I always said she was one of 'em," said Chesty, wagging his head. "Why, I've seen her turn down a wine agent, just 'cause he tried to kiss her. Well, this is a knock-out!"

After drinking the wine, Phil and Miriam left the place slowly. Each was busy with his own thoughts, and both felt the new something which had come between them;

but whether or not it drew them together or repelled them, neither could be quite sure, and so they walked silently and a little diffidently.

They secured a cab and drove to the house on Pacific Avenue. Phil helped Miriam to alight, went up the steps with her, and unlocked the door. "It has been an unusual evening," he said with a voice not quite under control. "Good night."

"It has been so wonderful an evening that I should like to talk it over," responded Miriam, in a perfectly steady voice. "Won't you come in a while?"

"Shall I dismiss the cab?" asked Phil.

"Yes," she answered.

The house stood some distance back from the street, and Phil walked very slowly down to the cab. The blood was pounding through his veins, but his head was unusually clear. He did not attempt to deceive himself; on the contrary, he examined himself thoroughly, looked into his past, considered his present, and attempted to call up all the potential modifications this night might have upon his future — and then he dismissed the cab, the driver of which pocketed the fee and tip with a congratulatory wink.

Phil returned to the house more rapidly and this time he attempted to shut out all speculation. He was not sure that the woman waiting for him was in any way different from the one to whom he had become accustomed during the last three weeks. She was complex, intellectual, deep; and in all probability, she only wished to tear his own emotions to pieces in order to see what she was composed of, and did not intend to be deceived. He was not ent

ing the outcome; but he was fully conscious of an eagerness to meet the woman who was still his employer, and he had never felt this eagerness prior to this evening.

When he reached the door, he found that she had already entered the house and he also entered and hung his coat upon the rack in the hall. She was seated before the fire, and did not move when he came and stood beside her. For one brief instant he was upon the point of seizing her in his arms; not clasping her, but seizing her roughly, throwing aside the forms of the ages, and regarding her daintiness no more than primitive man regarded the whims of the female he captured from ambush, and whose heart he won by the right of might.

Had she held out a hand in warning, or had she held out a hand in invitation, he would have thrown off all restraint, but as she continued to sit gazing into the fire, he became convinced that curiosity, not love, was her motive, and the fear of being ridiculous caused him to seat himself without speaking, upon a low, broad divan in the corner of the room.

"When you shook hands with Jim, to-night, you lived up to yourself; but at first I thought you were going to spoil everything," said Miriam without turning her head.

"Really you amuse me at times," replied Phil coolly. "You have rather an extraordinary mind, for a woman; but I am not entirely convinced that you are infallible. I had no other intention except to bring them together, and make him value her as much as possible. I do not float amidst clouds of basic principles and primal causes; but I have had quite an extended acquaintance with human beings."

"If your diplomacy was diplomacy, it was certainly suc-

cessful. I wish I could follow up their lives and see how they turn out."

"It is really a shame that you cannot have access to the books of the Recording Angel. Nothing short of this will ever soothe your yearning to share the emotions of others. You are the one exception, the rest of the men and women are only actors, as William said; but you are audience, critic, and censor. Does your brain never get fagged?"

Instead of being irritated, she found a strange pleasure in being taunted by him. "Yes," she replied simply, "my brain often gets fagged, and my heart, and my entire body. I have in me a capacity for love and service, and great, deep living; but there is no fate more wearing than to know that one has power, and yet to be forced to wait in patience for an opportunity which may never come."

"That is tough," admitted Phil with real sympathy. "I have had to eat the other side of the rind. I was thrown into a sea of opportunity, but had not the power to swim."

"It is only a phase of the old, old satire of life," said Miriam with a bitter laugh. "We are but the halves of a glorious super-man; and yet, divided, we are useless to ourselves and to the race."

"Rather a sad state of affairs, it must be confessed; but I do not see how we can remedy the mistakes of Providence."

"Providence," repeated Miriam, scornfully, and then rising and facing him with brilliant eyes, she continued: "If I were a man and you were a woman, I would know how to solve the problem which Fate has set before us."

"So you also are one of those if-I-were-a-man women, are you?" asked Phil, smiling easily up at her from the divan.

"No, I am not. I am all woman. I do not wish to be a man; but man is woman's greatest opportunity, and I do want opportunity."

"Then ambition and not love would prompt your selection of a mate?"

"A woman's ambition is like the silk and cords of a balloon, but her love is the gas which inflates and lifts it."

"And man?" asked Phil.

"Man," said Miriam, her brows drawn together to force the simile, "man is the air in which she floats."

"And some of us are surprised at the increase in divorce," said Phil with the intended irrelevancy which is not intended to turn away wrath.

She came to the divan and sat beside him; he drew to the wall but did not sit up. "Would you marry me?" she asked.

A spontaneous, boyish smile came to his face. "Honestly, you know, I hate to say it," he apologized; "but really, this is so sudden."

"Not so very sudden: you have had a chance to know me better than you ever knew any woman before; you started in, prejudiced against me; you have discussed most of the complexities of life with me—you know me, and since early this evening you have felt me, as I have felt you. You are merely pretending this lightness. I have asked you a question, would you marry me?"

"A purely academic question, I presume," answered Phil, still affecting amusement, but aware that a desire for her was stirring within him. "Well, I shall reply in spirit: I have never met any other woman whom I admire as much as I do you, with one possible exception; but my feeling

for this one other woman made me long to marry her, while I am not sure that I should wish to marry you."

"Would you marry me if it were not for this other woman?"

"Marriage is a deuced serious business, Valerie," said Phil, sitting up and speaking in earnest. "If I were to marry you I should want to know something of your past, something of your family, something of my own future, and a lot of other things, which I am sure are quite incompatible with your idea of the marriage instinct."

"I am wealthy in my own right and shall be quite wealthy through inheritance; there is not a stain on my past; I am willing to be examined by any physician you wish; and I can give you a future such as you never dreamed of. You are not a weakling; I have studied you; you are merely a mass of raw steel and I can shape and temper you. I can give you a career which will call out your very best and appeal to you with all the zest of a game; and it will be you who will act, your very self; while I—I shall be to you what all women, but no one woman, has been before. I shall be playful and tender and passionate to match whatever mood you feel; and you will never have to pretend with me, for you know that I am strong enough for any truth, and that nothing but the truth will ever satisfy me. I shall ask for nothing which I cannot win, and all the women in the world could not make me jealous. Will you marry me?"

"No, I do not wish to marry you," answered Phil.

"Why not?"

"There is no reason for what is passively negative; cold is merely the absence of heat. I do not love you."

"You were not cold toward me early this evening."

"Neither did I love you."

"Would you marry me if you loved me?"

"I suppose I would if I could," answered Phil. He did not feel at ease, and yet he was surprised to see how natural the unusual situation was beginning to appear.

Miriam sat leaning forward, elbow on knee, and chin in hand. Phil sat beside her and they remained without speaking for several minutes. The incidents of the evening furnished the basis of their thoughts.

"I would rather be Jennie, going back to face the gossip of a country neighborhood, than to continue as I am," said Miriam.

"Well, I don't want to be Jim."

"It was not necessary to say that."

"I did not mean it that way, Valerie; you know I did not," said Phil, impulsively taking her hand. "I only meant that, badly as I've been fozzled so far, I would not trade my personality for that of any other living man's. I have grown used to myself, and find I can stand it."

"You can stand it, Lenord; but you cannot understand it. There is great power in your nature; if you would only learn to use it." Suddenly she turned and threw an arm about his neck. "If you are afraid to marry me, will you live with me for a month without marriage? If you can leave me then I shall not want you to stay. I do not want your name; I want your love. If I cannot win that in a month, I am not your mate, and shall not want to hold you. There is no risk for you in this: a man has no trouble in living up to the moral code which men have made for man."

He felt the fire of her, now: against his will his blood streamed up to meet hers and he pressed his cheek against

ning."

He did
natural

chin in
t speak-
ing fur-

e gossip
n," said

w I did
I only
uld not
an's. I

tand it.
ld only
an arm
will you
ou can
ot want
at in a
ld you.
uble in
man."
s blood
against



August 13, 1916

"I shall be to you what all women, but no one woman has been before."
See page 255

U. W. O. LIBRARY

U. W. O. LIBRARY

her hair; but he did not answer. He was fully aware of her beauty and her accomplishments; but back of it all was the high valuation which he had unconsciously put upon himself, and which he had not lost even in the days of his fasting. But the voices of his body were clamoring, and the fragrance of her hair was the coaxing narcotic of a drug. He knew that he could not long resist her, even if the desire to resist her still remained.

"Is it that other woman, who is between us?" she demanded, looking into his eyes.

The spell was broken: "that other woman" was Edith; and she suddenly seemed to enter the room and stand before him. Quietly she stood, but she did not look at him; she looked at the woman beside him, the woman whose arm was still about his neck. He also turned and looked at her, and as he looked, he saw her as Edith would have seen her. He did not reason, he did not judge, he did not question; he merely felt toward her as Edith would have felt, and in that instant the sensuous charm of the Oriental colors in the room, the subtle stimulation of the rosy lights, and the voluptuous pleading of Miriam's warm body as it rested against his, were all blown away as the wind dissipates a fog, and he became as he had been on that day long, long ago when he had picked up Edith's glove as they had sat upon the hill overlooking the Sound, and had started forth upon the quest which had led him so many winding turns.

Miriam's eyes were fastened upon his, and as she saw the flame of passion die away to give place to the coolness of frank pity, a fury seized her and she pushed him from her and sprang to her feet. "Ohh, Ohhh!" she cried in hoarse gutturals. "To think that I have been refused! I had

not thought there was a man in all the world who could refuse me on the terms I offered you."

"I still doubt if any man could long refuse you," replied Phil gently. "It was the terms I refused, rather than you. It is not like a woman to offer such a bargain; and be he good or bad, weak or strong, a man likes to win the love he wears, even though he wears it for a day only. If you want a man to love you, don't fill him with thoughts."

"I see what you mean," she replied, turning from him and pacing the small room like a caged tiger. "Man has never been forced to climb up from his original brute level. A union is never more than a union of the flesh, to him. Man is still but a brute, and yet he has been so spoiled by the ages of woman's slavery, that even his passions have lost their natural accuracy. At a word, a thought, or a fleeting doubt, they fade away and he becomes cold and cautious. It is well for the race that its future lies with woman; and," she continued with rising voice, "it does lie with woman. We cannot forgive man his weakness, his sin, and his sloth; but we are strong enough to accept these also as part of our burden, in order that the race may advance to the high destiny which awaits it."

She was no longer speaking to Phil alone; she was standing in the center of the room, drawn to her full height, head thrown back with pride, and with her wonderful, dark eyes uplifted as though to a distant mountain; she was speaking, with the fervor and faith of a prophetess, to all the men and women of the world.

"Man's very selfishness will yet be his own undoing," she continued. "Every law, every religion, every moral precept he invents, are merely for the purpose of making

his own life easy through special privileges, until by now he is so propped and braced that he does not have to use his own strength. But woman has been forced to discipline her nature, she has been forced to climb the barriers which man has raised against her, until, through the enforced exercise of her own faculties, she has become strong. The woman of to-day is not as the woman of yesterday, for she has dared to probe the shallow depths of man's pretensions. The children of the future will belong to the mothers of the future. What are a father's rights in a child; what pain did he have to suffer that he presumes to dictate? No, the mother of the future will not go into the valley of death to give life to a child, shield it through its infancy, and then turn it adrift in the wild jungle which men have made of the world. Maternity will not always stop fearfully at the threshold of the home; the future mothers of the race will protect the race from the cradle to the grave, and the standard of morality will be adjusted to real men and women, not hypocritical men and women adjusted to an impossible standard of morality."

"As the only representative of the sex present," said Phil, after Miriam had paused, and seated herself once more in front of the fire, "I feel called upon to say that I think there is much truth in what you say; but the future to which you refer, is a distant future, not your future or mine, and I do not feel called upon to adjust myself to it, any more than do millions of women who are of the type which I respect most and care for most."

"You have spoken from the very spirit which I condemn. All the future of the race must be indebted to me, to me personally; even as I am indebted to all the past. We cannot live unto ourselves, and those who attempt it

are of the dying, not the living. It is from living unto himself that man has lost his grasp of opportunity."

Phil was uncomfortable: he wanted to leave, yet scarcely knew how; he wanted to reply, but every remark sounded so trite in his own mind, that he dared not voice it. Never was man less enthusiastic about the new woman, than was Phil at this moment. Finally, he rose to his feet, and said sincerely: "I am honestly, mighty sorry for what has happened this evening; but I am sure that after you have had time to think it over, you will rejoice that it has turned out as it has. Theories are all right, but they do not work out in practice, and you—"

Miriam's smile stopped him. It was a scornful smile, but carried no personal reproach to himself. "Go on," she said almost lightly, "preach to me, priest of the obvious, preach to me. Surely it is a situation for imps and satyrs, when a modern bachelor preaches virtue to a virgin. No, you do not understand, and I cannot, therefore, blame you."

"I can understand this much, having seen it tried often enough; any woman who does what you have tried, lowers herself, and all the theories in the world are of no avail."

"And I know quite the contrary," said Miriam. "The ordinary woman yields under temptation and violates her own standards. No matter what the absolute effect of this, the effect upon herself is, that she feels that she has fallen, and is willing, even anxious, to undergo the penance of segregation from those who still conform to rule; but not so with me; I do not accept your savage standard of morality, I should never yield to temptation—and this is my great strength—I should merely express my life in the way which best suited it, and in harmony with my own convictions. There is no use discussing it further. We have

twice seen life in the raw to-night. Once it was successful, once it was not. In the successful case, both man and woman were simple and honest; with us there was no simplicity upon either side; and so I shall look upon the first case as the more reliable. At any rate, it need make no difference in our peculiar relations as employer and employee."

"On the other hand, it has made a continuance of these relations utterly impossible," said Phil steadily.

"Your month is not up."

"Very well, if you wish to hold me upon my spoken word, you can; but I assure you that it will not be pleasant." Phil's normal independence had returned at what he considered an injustice, and he eyed Miriam steadily.

"No, I shall not hold you," she said tenderly. "I think, after all, I love you more as a son than as a lover. The love of a well rounded woman is made up of all the emotions which women can feel. You have the capacity to be my mate, but have not yet had sufficient development. There is much in you that is fine and clean and strong; and I regret that I did not have the patience to wait another week. This other woman must have character also, yet twice this night did she nearly lose her throne. Go your way, study life as it sweeps by you; and if the time ever comes when you need me, I shall be ready to help you, as you truly have helped me during the last three weeks. Advertise for me in the personal columns of the *New York Herald*, and no matter where you are, or where I am, I shall give you the help you need. There can never again be embarrassment between us, for within the realm of truth no pretence is allowed, and we have been perfectly frank. Good-bye."

She held out a strong, steady hand which Phil took in a

firm clasp and their eyes rested upon each other in perfect confidence. "I shall dispose of my duds as soon as possible, and send you the money," was the best remark that came to Phil, and like the hero he was, he made it.

"What a boy, what a perfect boy, you are," she said, laughing softly. "Money has worth only to them who lack it. Without doing one thing to add to the world's wealth I am richer now than when I met you. I really wish that you would accept a reasonable loan from me, and take another try at the game, although it really is not for you."

Phil shook his head. "I know you mean it," he said, "and it is mighty kind of you, but I can't do it. I'll just have to flounder on in my own way until I land in my own groove; but I want you to know that I shall always respect you, and admire you, and —"

"Yes, I know," interrupted Miriam; "but do not distress yourself by thinking that I am an object of pity. The blood of prophets and priests and kings, flows in my veins, and I want no pity — not even the pity of God. I knew the game I was playing, and had I not been able to lose the game without losing my dignity, I should never have played it. Good-bye, and the best of luck to you."

She placed her hands on his shoulders; he stooped, and they kissed. For a long time their lips were pressed together, and then Phil turned and hurried from the house, his coat thrown over his arm.

For a full minute after the door had closed, Miriam stood calmly in the center of the room, then she sank to the floor, and with her face pillowed in her arm gave way to hard, dry sobs: while the pale morning twilight crept in to take the place of the candles, which flickered out one by one.

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

PHIL IS DIRECTED

PHIL was surprised to see that while he had lost himself in the emotions which had swirled about him, Nature's ministers had gone calmly on with their regular routine. Just before reaching the sidewalk he paused to put on his overcoat, and as he was thus engaged a well dressed man who looked as if he might belong to one of the professions, came from the east, and a working man bearing a dinner pail came from the west. They passed directly in front of him, and, to prove humanity's inherent decency, each tossed him a knowing grin, and went on his way, rejoicing that the world was still young enough to be up to its old tricks.

Phil walked slowly along, and as he walked he tried to take his bearings. He had given 's entire cash, with the exception of a little small change, as Jennie's wedding present, and he had left Miriam's purse upon the table in her parlor. The sale of his clothing and the pawning of his jewelry, would leave him about one hundred dollars, after his bill at the St. Francis was paid.

"Well," he said aloud, "I can't see that I could have acted in any other way, but I shall certainly have to move to a cheap room at once, and take up the hunt for work just where I left it."

He turned to look at the bay, which was as beautiful as the Bay of Naples this morning. There was not a cloud

in the sky, and the hills, which made up the restful shoreline, were touched with all the colors the artists loved while the bay itself mirrored them and blended them with the sky above. It was a picture to lift one above the petty worries of mere existence, and Phil's emotions gushed forth in one of those wordless prayers which are always answered.

The undoubted belief that he had been right in his conduct with Miriam, had not given him any satisfaction. He had felt that in some way he had been neither a saint nor a hero; but only ridiculous with the immature unreason of a boy. But now, as he stood watching the colors of the landscape gather and swell and split into shades before his eyes, a feeling of comfort came to him.

It was not the strange, wonderful woman, foreign to all the world, whom he loved; it was Edith, and he was never so sure of it as he was this moment. Edith was strong, intellectual, full of new thoughts and old ambitions; but there were things this other woman would dare to do, which Edith would not even dare to contemplate; and Phil heaved a restful sigh to think that he was still free, and still able to return to Edith and look into her eyes without flinching.

Phil's spirit was quite like a balloon: it always rose as high as circumstances would permit, and with this new thought of being one with Edith once more, it soared up into the blue, and he caught the first car on its way down town and arrived at the St. Francis smiling and debonair.

All that day he was busy selling and pawning and finding a new room. This time he chose a room over a grocery-saloon on the corner of Larkin and Gary, and that night he was so weary that he fell asleep in the lull of

that peaceful quiet which intervenes between the labors of the day and the pleasures of the night.

Next morning he awakened early, and gazed about his room in surprise. An arc light on the corner furnished ample illumination to show clearly all its contrasts with the room he had lately occupied at the St. Francis, and in spite of himself, Phil's heart turned to the fleshpots of Egypt. There was no place in his future for Edith; he lacked the peculiar something which achieves success, and, without a certain success, he never could, and he never would, face Edith again. Valerie Florian had offered him everything that any man could ask, and he had been a fool to refuse her.

He thus lay in perfect physical comfort, and painstakingly provided himself with mental discomfort until the sun rose and pointed out that he was hungry. As there was no financial reason for bothering with hunger, he arose and began to dress. His volatile spirits arose with him, and as he dressed he sang snatches of songs. By the time he sallied forth, wearing the same suit he had worn when he had met Miriam, and the only one he had saved, he was in smiling good humor and dropped into the first restaurant for a hearty breakfast.

After breakfast he sauntered down town and prepared to establish personal relations with actual toil. He was willing to work, he was anxious to work; but he was not even upon speaking terms with work and knew not how to get an introduction. He felt the lack of harmony between his hands and his clothes, for the former were in perfect order, while the latter were rather frayed. Yet he walked all day, and, according to his nature, hoped that some mysterious incident would occur which would find himself to

be the right man in the right place at the right time. As this perfectly plausible situation failed to materialize, he walked down to the wharfs and sat upon a heavy timber, watching a gang of men at work. He watched carefully, studiously, for some time and then struck his palm with his fist. "I shall buy a suit of over-alls to-day, and I shall not wash for a week; and then I shall try this sort of work," he exclaimed. "I am big enough for it, and after a little training, I shall be strong enough for it, and it will beat loafing and starving all hollow."

This was Phil's first move in what was to be a long, hard fight. He bought the over-alls, he practised exercises night and morning, he soiled his hands, and he finally got a job. He worked hard; but he was not popular with either men or boss, and he could not hold a job long. He tried, he honestly did try; but it seemed as though his misfortunes were too consistent to be merely the result of natural awkwardness, and after a time, he laid it all to luck and gave up.

For a week he loafed in his room, reading the papers in the hope that he would find something which would call to him, and devoting the rest of the day to the blank lethargy of a prisoner. At the end of the week, he surrendered, and one evening went to the house on Pacific Avenue.

A maid came to the door in answer to his ring, told him that Mlle. Florian had left the week previous for Los Angeles, and offered to get him her address if he wished it; but Phil had accepted this as a sign, and turned away gloomily. She had waited a month to see if he would relent, and had then given up and gone away. All right, he would go to work again. After all he was glad to have

it settled by Fate. When it was apparent that some mysterious outer force was back of an event, it relieved him of personal responsibility, and saved him from the irritating reproof of that still, small voice. With his simple mysticism, his illusions and delusions, his rigid, inconsistent code of honor, and the courage with which he battled imaginary wind-mills and real giants, Phil was a knightly soul, indeed; but was in the perplexing situation of a castaway tossed up from the waves of mediævalism upon the rocky shores of our present industrial era. He was willing, even eager, to fight; but he knew not the ways of the land, and his foes were all in ambush.

For the next month or six weeks, he floated with the tide. Some days his naturally sunny temperament would assert itself and he would make friends with street children or stray dogs; but for the most part he was silent and gloomy. The most depressing part of this period was its utter loneliness: all day and all night, there was the empty void near his heart which betokens loss. Sometimes he wondered if it was caused by his separation from Miriam; but for the most part he was sure that it was Edith for whom he yearned, Edith and clean linen and good cigars, and healthy recreation, and all the commonplace trifles which made up his old life.

He gradually fell into the habit of roaming the streets at night and sleeping late into the morning, eating whenever appetite demanded food in unmistakable tones. His eyes became the eyes of the night-prowler, but he was never able to establish friendly terms with any of the other nocturnal wanderers. They always regarded him with suspicion and this was doubly hard, in contrast with the old days when all eyes waved answering signals in

response to the beams of his own greeting. He did not fit, from the highest to the lowest; there was none to meet him upon the common ground of mutual interest; there was none who could harmonize his manners and his appearance, and, throwing suspicion to the wind, offer him the hearty grip of fellowship.

One night he counted his money, and found that he had thirty-five dollars left. As it lay spread out upon the rickety stand, it suggested the Café Royal with its generous democracy; and with a sudden uplift of the spirits, he thrust the money into his pocket and hurried toward Market Street.

"You have thirty-five dollars to play for to-night, friend," he said lightly to the dealer, who had recognized him with a surly grin.

"Every little bit helps," responded the man.

Twenty minutes later, Phil left the place without a dime to remind him of the hidden source of all evil; but for the recompense, which is never lacking, if we search closely enough, the resolution to find work had returned to him after a long absence.

He walked around to the Plaza on Kearny and sat on the low stone wall. This was a favorite spot with him now: he had learned to tell from the different stare in the eyes which passed him, whether their owners smoked hop, lived on cheap wine, or had lost their minds from brooding over failure. These aliens, who lived in a world more unreal than even his, often sat beside him and told him wonderful stories in which truth and error walked arm in arm and each thought the other his twin. There was no companionship in this, for the eyes of the speakers stared into Phil's without seeing him, and the speakers themselves

would suddenly stop and shamble hurriedly away in the midst of an impending climax; but a morbid fascination drew Phil there night after night.

This night he walked lightly and rapidly, his eyes watching keenly for prey. At night the whole world is a jungle, and all who roam it are either of the hunting or the hunted. He knew not what he expected, but he was always conscious of two things, his empty loneliness, and that chance opportunity which would put him back into the world of men again.

It was midnight when he reached the Plaza, and scarce had he seated himself before a dirty man staggered up the street and stopped in front of him. The man was tall and lanky and — but dirty is the only adjective which comprehensively describes his utterly forlorn appearance; and yet the creature was on pleasure bent.

"Ain't this a hell of a town?" he asked Phil with enthusiasm.

"I am inclined to answer that it is," replied Phil.

"Inclined to answer," repeated the man with delight. "Inclined to answer. Here is one who is inclined to answer. Most witnesses decline to answer, but here is one inclined to answer. You are a find, son, you are a gift from the gods, you are refreshing to a dry man in a hot desert. I have asked this same question six hundred times before this evening, and you are the first one who was inclined to answer. You must have been either a lawyer or a newspaper man before you stepped out of your balloon and started down in the parachute. You would not think to look at me — but let that go; the autobiographical market is not at present insisting upon a contribution from Arnold Nelson Padgett, and if you will accept a very

excellent cigar, I am inclined to perch beside you and listen to who you are and why you are inclined to answer that this is a hell of a town."

The man's voice was musical and it suggested platform training. "Oh, I am nothing of interest," answered Phil, feeling a restful happiness as his nature reached outward and met a fellow, somewhere beyond the dirt and the darkness. "I had my little fling, lost everything but my appetite, and here I am without the price of a breakfast, or the gift of begging."

"Oh — ho, as if that was all of your story! Why, I can read more than that in the new lines in your face; but never mind. The very fact that you neither tell your own story nor fake a better one proves that you have been down among us long enough to develop a callous, and yet not long enough to learn how to use it. You would not suspect, just to look at my outer accumulations, that I once refused a cabinet portfolio simply because I could not have the one I wanted; but such is the romantic truth. And so you have not yet solved the perplexity of breakfast. Well, touch my hump, boy. I just pulled out a nice little prize from the Mex Lot, and I hope that this time I die before I get sober again. Do you really want to work?"

"That is not the question. I really have to."

"Oh, I am glad I met you!" exclaimed the dirty man. "Do you know, that the one thing I continue to miss, is conversation? Yes, sir, conversation. That is why your, inclined to answer, form had such an effect on me. Down here in the slime, they growl and snarl and make signs; but they never converse. I am simply oozing out all over you with the joy of finding someone who knows the difference between an endive salad and a preposition. I'll

give you a job and my blessing both; but I have to hold a little conversation with you first. Will you join me in a bottle of wine and some simple food?"

"Thank you, I should be delighted," replied Phil; "but only for the sake of your company, as I am not really hungry."

"A perfectly proper reply, perfectly proper. The reply of a gentleman, and not the brutal spring upon alms which a mendicant gives. I dislike mendicants; they rob even charity, that divine old word, of all its significance. Come, let us hasten. I have over three hundred dollars in my pocket, and we shall make a night of it."

Phil followed his strange companion to a barrel shop, where they seated themselves at one of the tables, and where the old man displayed a knowledge, and a taste in wine which was not a necessary accomplishment in the underworld.

"Before we begin," suggested Phil courteously, but discreetly, "I wish that you would tell me about this work. We may be separated, you know, and I would feel relieved to have something definite to look forward to."

"Why, my boy, you have no excuse for being down and out. You certainly are canny enough to live on the sweat of another's brow; but I like the trait, I like the trait. In fact, I like the trait better than you will like the work I hereby offer you. Until this evening, I have been bed-maker in a boarding house near the Union Iron Works. I have held this responsible position for three months — and I hope I die before I become sober again. It makes no difference where I go, I shall enjoy the change. I propose to turn the job over to you before Mrs. Clancy knows that I have folded my tents like the Arabs. Mrs. Clancy

would not know an Arab from a tent, but she is a good woman — and after you have seen her, you can probably guess why."

"A bed-maker," repeated Phil with falling inflection.

"Yes, my boy. I was once regarded as an able constitutional lawyer; but for the past three months, I have made beds for the filthiest, beastliest, dirtiest — well, look at me! What you see is part of the muck which adhered in the process of tidying up the apartments of a swarm of two-legged brutes who have not touched water, internally or externally, since it was discovered that none of the anthropoid apes could swim. If you throw a chair at Mrs. Clancy the first time she curses you, you will get along with her nicely; but if you respond with a soft answer, she will bite you, and her bite is poison. Oh, it's not so bad; I stood it three months; but if I live to get sober this time, I intend to see if a man of my age can swim to China. I'll die clean, anyway; and that is more than any man can say who expires while making beds for Mrs. Clancy. No one boards with her who can get in anywhere else. If you wish to cut off some flesh, her table will suit you first rate, otherwise — But, come, flat wine is like an unsought kiss."

Phil drank his wine without interest. His mind was busy upon the business opening which confronted him. Should he become Mrs. Clancy's bed-maker, through force or cunning; or should he assist the dirty man to dispose of the wealth which the Mexican Lottery had granted him, and then join him in the swim to China? Phil had become a little hardened to the idea of suicide since having become a night-prowler. Out alone in the jungle, one is not bothered much by abstract morals. One is offered the

proposition of living or not, and one considers from a physical standpoint, and without being greatly agitated over what some book or some man may have to say upon the subject.

This time, Phil shook himself vigorously, and decided to be a bed-maker. If this step, also, was required to prepare him for some future test, he would take it with what dignity he could; so he sounded the dirty man to his lowest depths — from a professional standpoint. The dirty man had shaken off his old life like the shell of a larva, and was no longer greatly interested in it, preferring to sing out his short, real life joyously in the cheering sunshine; but he accommodated Phil with full details, and then ordered another bottle of wine and began to quote poetry. He had a happy way with poetry, a freedom, a familiarity, which enabled him to swing out on one poet and back on another without losing a single beat in the rhythm, although it must be confessed that occasionally the theme was served in the form of hash, a la Mrs. Clancy.

"Which portfolio were you offered?" asked Phil, recalling an earlier remark made by his host.

"Secretary of State," replied the dirty man scornfully. "Yes, sir, Secretary of State. Why, I should as soon have been professor of mathematics in a girls' college. I did not even answer the President's letter; never wrote to him again, and we were boyhood friends; I saved his life twice."

"What portfolio did you want?" asked Phil, much impressed.

"I wanted to be Secretary of Female Distribution," replied the dirty man in tones of the utmost profundity.

In Phil's condition, the effect of the second bottle of

wine was quite perceptible; but still he felt certain that no such office was then in existence. "I was not aware that we had such a department," he rejoined.

"We have not," replied the dirty man in a tone of triumphant vindication. "I proposed to create it, and it would have been the crowning achievement of man's progress during the nineteenth century. There are in this world two distinct kinds of women; one belongs in the harem, the other in the kitchen. During her earthly existence, Mrs. Clancy belongs in a kitchen; and her future will also be spent amidst flames and broilers — but this is merely an item. Now, you understand that in making these two large divisions, I have merely suggested, generalized, brought a large thought before you in a nutshell. The harem women are those of beauty, charm, accomplishments and so forth; the kitchen women are those who clean up the world, cook its meals, make its clothing and tend to the lower, but none the less honorable, phases of existence. During my happier days, I was frequently disturbed by having my meals prepared by harem women, while I was forced to attempt the entertainment of a dismal female whose brain-cells were so badly scattered that no two of them touched each other. I made inquiries and discovered that my experiences were the rule rather than the exception. Being a thorough patriot, I determined to devote my life to the study of woman with a view to the earliest possible classification, so that no useless education would be wasted upon a single individual. Man did not come into this world at his own request; but now that he is here he must make the best of it. He can't afford to have his hours of ease turned into torment, any more than he can afford to have the raw materials of a worthy meal

sacrificed to the wandering thoughts of a woman who is perfectly capable of wearing a low-necked dress and playing on a harp."

"You seem to have looked at life entirely from the masculine standpoint," said Phil, amused beyond the influence of his own private troubles.

"There is no other standpoint," said the dirty man, after the manner of one who seals a discussion against any possible reopening; "woman herself accepts life from the man's standpoint, and then reproaches man for every discomfort she brings upon herself. The wheedling sex has such an endless variety of excuses, that it never feels the need of reason. I know more about woman than any other man ever did. Beyond doubt, Solomon's latter cynicism was due to the fact that his harem was filled with kitchen women, and his amateurish attempts to rectify earlier mistakes, by adding what might be called a harem-annex, led him to believe that it was utterly impossible for woman to add anything but sorrow to the life of man. He was wrong: quantity is not the aim—I mean numbers, rather than quantity. If a man were married to all the women in the world, he would not be content; no, indeed. He would find less of feminine charm than if he were married to just the one right woman. That is the secret; that is what I intended to prove through my department."

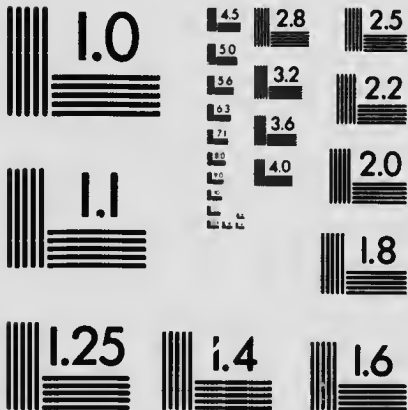
"Were you ever married?" asked Phil.

A worried expression came to the old man's face and he rested his brow upon his hand for a moment. "That is the one thing I can never remember," he explained with childish pathos. "I remember that at one time my life was round and full; and there was one I called Mary, but I cannot place her; I cannot tell where she ended and my



MICROCOPY RESOLUTION TEST CHART

(ANSI and ISO TEST CHART No. 2)



APPLIED IMAGE Inc

1653 East Main Street
Rochester, New York 14609 USA
(716) 482 - 0300 - Phone
(716) 288 - 5989 - Fax

happiness began. When I try to think of the happiness, I see her, and when I try to see her, I only feel a great, soft, wonderful happiness, like a pipe organ, when the old, white haired organist thinks he is alone in the church and his soul weaves a ladder of melody up to the Throne. I can see the millions of other women, and Mrs. Clancy, I can see her now — but I hope that the fishes eat my eyes before I get sober enough to see her again in the flesh — and she has mountains of it. I wish Satan would put her in his harem, and then the human race would have a revenge worth talking about. And so you are inclined to answer that this is a hell of a town?"

Phil tried to get the old man to go to a hotel; but it was useless. He did not become intoxicated; he merely continued to drink and talk, sometimes with shrewdness, sometimes merely babbling; and when the dawn drew near, Phil left him and started for the boarding house of Mrs. Clancy, although by this time he doubted that it had any existence outside the old man's fancy.

U. W. O. LIBRARY

U. W. O. LIBRARY

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

A WIDE DETOUR

It was seven o'clock by the time Phil reached the house to which the dirty man had directed him; and as he stood outside and viewed its dilapidated visage, he forgave the dirty man his appearance, and had to grip his will tightly to keep from turning back. With a last desperate effort, he raised his hand and knocked upon the door.

Almost immediately a door banged at the far end of the hall, and he heard heavy footfalls coming rapidly toward him. The door was thrown back and he found himself looking down into the angry face of a short woman of quite unique breadth. Her sleeves were rolled above her elbows, and as Phil looked at her mammoth forearms, he wondered how any cuffs could ever be stretched to encompass them. The woman's face was hard and fierce, and Phil speculated upon the appearance of a finger which had been caught between the strong, yellow teeth which her snarling lip exposed.

"What d'ya want?" she demanded.

"Can you tell me where Mrs. Clancy lives?" asked Phil suavely.

"Mrs. Clancy don't live, she exists; I am Mrs. Clancy. What d'ya want?"

"It would require a month for me to give you an unbridged list of my wants," responded Phil. "What I wish

to see you about, is the position of bed-maker, which understand is now vacant."

The woman stared at him a moment, and then broke into a loud guffaw. "Will, glory be!" she exclaimed. "You're as much at home as a snake in Ireland. Divil y' iver make a bid?"

Now, strange as it may seem, a kindly twinkle had peeked out through one of the fierce woman's wrinkles, and something in Phil's nature had given it joyous response. "I don't think I ever did make a bed," replied Phil soberly, "but I once knew a man who did, and I think I could learn."

"Aw, don't bother wid such work as that, boiy," said Mrs. Clancy in a motherly tone. "Sure this is a sty of a hole at the bisht, and a lad loike ye, can git a good job at good wages. Besides which, I hov a crazy owld idiot here now who's doin' the work fer me, albeit he's off now on his monthly drunk, the day. Poor owld soul, he ain't able to do a man's work, but you can do annything you wish; and don't ye bother wid bid-makin'."

"Your other bed-maker has quit, and he sent me after the place," said Phil.

"Oh, he quits ivery day in the week; and at the ind ov ivery month goes off vowin' to drown himself in order to blacken me riputation wid the divil; but he always comes back as soon as he goes broke."

"Well, let me try it until he returns," said Phil.

"I don't think you could stand it a day; but as long as you're here, come on in an' get your breakfast, and you can try it till Skinny comes back. He was braggin' about winnin' in the lottery; an' whiniver he wins annything he allus starts to have an interview wid Ginerall Grant; but he's

niver got beyond the city limits yit. Oi have a hard crowd ov foreigners here, and you niver could stand 'em. Would yaz iver think, now, that Oi used to be called the colleen bawn?"

Phil looked at her steadily, and replied: "I would not."

"You're an honest lad," said Mrs. Clancy, nodding her head. "There was a toime whin there was n't enough flattery in the world to sooth me taste fer ut; but if you'd 'a' give me any blarney to the question Oi jist asked, Oi'd 'a' knocked yaz down wid me fist. Oi've been a widdy twinty years, and Oi've worked loike a slave gang an' Oi've fought wid ivery sort uv a monkey-faced foreigner there is in the world. It's tough luck, not nature, that hammers us up the way we are; and Skinny's iverlastin' blab about harem women an' kitchen women, is all drivel. Come on in, and have a cup uv coffee; yer eyes look loike a pair ov spoiled oysters."

Skinny did not return, and Phil kept the place a month, a month during which he seemed to be climbing in the darkness, a hill of slipping, sliding, creeping sand. He had one fight with Mrs. Clancy, and one with each one of her boarders; and when the month was up, and he was handed fifteen dollars in gold as his share of the world's production of wealth during the previous thirty days, he knew not whether to laugh or to cut his throat.

He stood looking at the two coins in his palm, and thought of the dirty blankets he had shaken and straightened and tucked, the foul basins he had cleaned, the filthy floors he had swept, and the dirty, beastlike men who had sneered at him in words he could not understand; and to match these thoughts and make their significance complete, came clear, vivid pictures of balls and week-ends, rides in

the park, evenings in his own apartment, and all the sights, sounds, and perfumes which made up his old, happy life.

He raised his eyes to Mrs. Clancy's, and found them fixed sympathetically upon him. He also found that Edith seemed to be standing back of her and regarding him with disgust.

"That's all I iver pay, lad," said Mrs. Clancy. "It takes a lot o' scrapin' fer me to kape ahid; but if you need a little extra, Oi 'll advance ut, or if yaz need ut bad, Oi 'll give it to ya."

"No," said Phil, "this is exactly the amount I needed; but I think that as soon as you can find someone to replace me, I shall resign."

"Oi don't blame ya a bit, although Oi've grown to have a loikin' fer ya; but you can aisy foind a real man's work somewhere. Oi've been watchin' yaz purty close this month, and ya remind me uv what Oi've often said — If the's anny doubt about me stickin' in Heaven afther Oi once git there, Oi hope Oi'll be sint to Hill direct. It's koind o' toirsome to climb; but it don't hurt loike fallin'. Oi 'll have a bid-maker here be the morrow; so ya can go whiniver yaz loike, an' good luck to ya. Oi've wanted to mother ya a bit, lad; but yer not my koind, an' Oi could n't reach ya."

To Phil, there was something more in his farewell to Mrs. Clancy than the mere form of it. It seemed as a symbol of the weakness and futility of human endeavor. Here was a woman who had once been beautiful; who had once thrilled to love; who had once looked down with lofty scorn upon the sorrows and the bitterness of life; who had once been called the colleen bawn; and who had recognized in him something of the fellowship which one

fallen monarch might feel for another; and had yet found no way to point out the pitfalls in his path or cheer him on his way; just a wave of the hand to him through the gloom, and a wordless call swallowed up in the swirling wind.

And so Phil Lytton wandered back to his old haunts, weakly searching for work during the day, craftily searching for prey, vague, intangible, but alluring, during the night. He hoped that he might find the dirty man whose post as bed-maker he had taken; but he never found him, or any who could give word of him. When the wolf can no longer make his kill, he creeps out of the pack to die alone, and thus it is in the artificial jungle which man has made of the world. An obituary notice is not a human heritage; it is as much a reservation as a Pullman berth. Some horses receive an obituary notice, some humans do not; for even Death, which comes to all, is forced to conform to the etiquette which vanity and greed have established, and "Skinny" had slipped quietly away, to see if a man of his age could swim to China, and was now rocking peacefully to and fro some fathoms beneath the surface of the bay, where he had at last found his exact level.

During his nightly wanderings at this period, it was Fate's whim to throw Phil into contact with those whose minds were turned toward suicide. He met several who had tried and failed and meant to try again; he met several whose minds were fully made up, but who did not intend to fail, and were engaged in investigating the various methods, in order to choose the most comfortable and the most certain. A fine distinction is shown in the selection of the precise window from which one is to jump from the prison of life, and the gruesome details of the different

262 THE KNIGHT-ERRANT

methods, and the morbid arguments in justification of them, held session in Phil's imagination after he had crept back to his room and would be yearning for sleep; and mingled in his dreams after he had finally crossed the thin line of consciousness.

He had a deep-rooted prejudice against employment agencies; but he forced himself to enter them during the second week after he had left Mrs. Clancy's. The foul air near stifled him. The agency was in a basement, the men lounged there smoked black pipes whose fumes did their best to hide the odors of dry sweat; but there was a sickening, repulsive, personal insult to his nostrils in every breath he took, and Phil could not remain in the room long enough to read the list of jobs posted upon the blackboards.

He walked to the next agency, breathing deeply, and determined to overcome his squeamishness; but it required all his will power to force him to enter. He read the list of jobs here, and found that any man with a trade was to be envied. There were plenty of places for men who knew how to do things; but there was scant welcome for the man who merely desired work to enable him to make an existence which was of no particular interest to anyone else, or at least to any of those who have become owners and controllers of the world's work, and therefore arbiters of final resort to the workers. The man who could milk twenty cows was guaranteed a pleasant home and a steady job; the mucker was informed that he would be "shipped" to the muck, and was advised to bring his own blankets if he cared for such luxuries.

At the third agency, Phil came upon an item of com-

D. W. O. LIBRARY

D. W. O. LIBRARY

manding interest: The New Hygia Quicksilver Company desired furnace men with such an uncontrollable desire that they were willing to pay two dollars a day in wages, and furnish sleeping quarters. It was the right hand of fellowship; it was a royal welcome and Phil trembled as he hurried to the clerk's window, for fear some luckier man would beat him in making application.

The clerk, pasty faced and flabby fleshed from spending his days shut off from the cleansing sunshine, leered at the eagerness with which Phil inquired into the duties and privileges of a furnace man. A furnace man worked from ten to twenty minutes out of the hour; board was five dollars a week; the company advanced stage fare and checked it off completely if applicant stayed a month; applicant would have to furnish his own blankets, but the other instruments of civilized life would be found by the company. It sounded very pleasant to Phil and set him to instant calculation, five from twelve left seven dollars net a week, in fifteen weeks he could have a hundred dollars, in a year, at least three hundred dollars, in three years of scrimping and working extra, a thousand dollars, and then he could return to New York and make a call on Edith. He paid the clerk a dollar as fee, and felt like shaking hands with him.

He bought a second hand, or rather third hand, army blanket for one dollar that evening, and next day left on a branch of the Southern Pacific, with ninety-five cents in his pocket and a boundless hope in his heart. Arriving at Tres Pinos, he discovered that the stage did not leave until five the next morning; so he omitted the evening meal, and slept under a shed, rolled in his army blanket and dream-

ing wonderful dreams. It was July and soft and pleasant. He rose with the sun, and every prospect was pleasing, while for a brief period, not even man was vile.

The slip from the employment agency granted him a ride to the mines, and he clambered into the ancient Rockaway, and jolted up the mountain trail on its stiff leathern springs, very joyously. It was a sixty-mile ride, and Phil was forced to spend twenty-five cents at noon for a meal, and ate until his self-respect compelled him to halt. The driver had examined Phil on his entrance, had decided that he lacked the qualities of a companion, and from that on had reserved his own expressions for the horses, and the regular inhabitants whose personal tastes and histories appeared to be familiar to the smallest detail. He had a happy and original way of talking to the horses, twelve of which were used in three relays, and each had a distinct name and individuality.

The driver used the whip constantly, as a conversational threat; but he did not apply the lash during the entire journey which was mostly upgrade and wearisome. If one of the horses evinced a tendency to shirk, the driver would reproach him, tell the other horses what kind of a shirk he really was and how disgracefully immoral his ancestors and relatives had been until that horse would shake his head, bow his neck, and try to pull the entire load. Then the driver would laugh with his shoulders, and hum a curious medley which suggested all the tunes anyone had ever heard. Phil wanted to establish friendly relations with him; but recognized the barrier, and so shook about in the rear seat, and wondered if he was getting as dusty inside as outside.

The valley coming into the mining camp was cool and pleasant, supper was ready, and as Phil sat down to it, he felt that once again, the world was beginning to smile upon him. After supper, he was shown the sleeping quarters. They did not entirely gratify his sense of the good, the true, and the beautiful, even in his then mood of easy standards. They were in shacks made of rough slabs which had probably been upon intimate terms at some earlier age, but were now warped and shrunk into selfish isolation. Each shack had four rooms on a side while the roofs projected four feet, making rude porches.

The watchman took Phil to the last shack and opened the door to the last room. The room was filled with the strenuous odor of chloride of lime; the only other occupant was a rough wooden bunk. The chloride of lime rushed forth to welcome Phil, but the bunk continued to maintain a sullen reserve.

"Is — is this the only choice?" asked Phil.

"'Smatter 'ith this?" returned the watchman a little resentfully.

"There seems to be too much odor, and too little of anything else," replied Phil.

"You didn't send any orders ahead as to how you wanted the room furnished, did ya?" asked the watchman, who prided himself upon his wit.

"No, I did n't," replied Phil haughtily; "but neither did I send any orders ahead to have my stall saturated with disinfectants."

"This here is the cleanest room in this county," replied the watchman confidentially; "no bugs nor nothin'—man committed suicide here 'bout a week ago — cut his throat

266 THE KNIGHT-ERRANT

— brain had blown up — Dago he was. If ”— with stately emphasis — “ If you ain’t afeared of ghosts, you ’d better flop right in here.”

“ Is n’t there any mattress for the bunk?” asked Phil, determined that the watchman would have no grounds for supposing that the ghost of an insane Dago could have any effect upon his choice of apartments.

“ Well, truth to tell,” answered the watchman with a sedate twinkle in his eye, “ we’re just a wee mite short on mattresses at this season; but if you bum the stable boss to-morrow, he ’ll probably let you have some barley bags and hay.”

Phil stepped into the room and laid his blanket upon the bare bunk; the watchman seated himself in the doorway, and proceeded to bolster up the impression which had been so inadequately received. “ The’s been a dozen fellers refuse this room already,” he said somberly. “ I’m free to own that I would n’t want to sleep here myself — not that I believe in ghosts, mind you; but jest cause it would be lonesome, count o’ what I saw. You did n’t see it, so the chances are five even, that you ’ll pound your ear like a top; but, by ginger whizz, I can see the feller right now! He cut his throat with a razor, ya see; and when I arrived, he was lyin’ right there inside the door” — rising, backing away, and pointing dramatically at a dark blot on the rough boards — “ lyin’ there, but not lyin’ quiet, not by a jugful. He was a-floppin’ around on his back like a fish out o’ water, a-holdin’ on to his cheeks with his hands, while the blood was a-spoutin’ out of his neck in little jets like a fountain. Gosh, it was gruesome! Git down here clost an’ you can see the spot where the puddle o’ blood stood. It’s been washed an’ scraped, but the’ ain’t no

way to remove suicide blood until the soul gets peace, is what some say, an' I reckon the's a heap o' truth in it. His windpipe was a-stickin' out through a gash in his throat, an' he made the horriddest squawkin' noise you ever heard; suthin' like this —"

The watchman had gained quite a reputation for his realistic reproduction of the last sounds of the departed; it was his greatest victory in the field of art, and had stimulated him to perfect his powers of expression. The raucus squawks, the aspirated groans, the staring eyeballs, the lolling tongue, and the nervous hands which seized his own cheeks, all contributed to an ensemble of ghastly vividness. Phil stepped out-doors and drew a deep breath, and the watchman, noting the lines of horror in his victim's face, went on his way with the spiritual uplift of one who has thoroughly exploited an opportunity.

After the watchman had retired, Phil returned to the bunk and sat upon it, while genuine homesickness clutched his solar plexus, shutting off the forces of digestion, stopping all the peace-giving functions of the body, and exposing it to an attack of bitter, morbid loneliness. This is homesickness, and it is not a joke; and neither is it so common as many believe. Sometimes it kills a dog, and sometimes it reforms a man; but it is one of the gray angels, and not to be lightly called.

Phil possessed a strong imagination which was totally undisciplined, and the watchman's story had made a deep impression. It entered his being and found companionship with the black-robed memories which the other night-prowlers had left with him as they candidly discussed the methods and the ethics of resigning life's commission. Suicide had always seemed a cowardly, indefensible act

to Phil, until lately; but now he was beginning to look upon it from a new angle: if man possesses free will at all, why not the right to choose between life and death? As he sat alone, without even a candle to cheer him, the spirit of the suicide seemed less hostile than the world of living men; but he was not a physical coward, and he was thoroughly weary, so he soon spread his blanket and after taking off his outer garments, fell asleep, with his door standing wide open. The histrionic watchman visited him several times during the night and was humanly disappointed to find his slumber profound and unbroken.

After breakfasting next morning on fat pork, raw bread, a strong, greasy paste, arbitrarily called butter, and a dirty liquid, spoken of as bootleg and used as a substitute for coffee, he was set to work upon the crusher. The mere toil of shoveling would have been too severe for him, after his enervating months of idleness; while the burning sun and the stinging dust made it a heart-breaking job indeed. At noon, he ate a crust of bread and a piece of pie, washing them down with the morose bootleg.

After this simple meal, he returned to his labors and, in spite of his blistering hands and aching back, he tried to keep pace with the two Spaniards who were working with him. They were good-hearted fellows and worked with increased rapidity, in order that he might have time to break in gradually; but Phil's silly vanity prompted him to keep pace with them, for he felt a slight contempt for the small, dark men, which he did not entirely conceal. Vanity has been a crown for the race, but a cross for the individual.

That night he was too tired to sleep. It is a customary thing for the writer of fiction to send his hero to the field

B. W. O. LIBRARY

B. W. O. LIBRARY

of applied manual labor, to have him cured of every fault from imperialism to dyspepsia; but that night Phil could have ably presented the con side of the question. He would have used the slang phrase of the term, and would have pronounced the whole theory of roughing it for the development of manhood, as "con" from beginning to end.

His supper had consisted of evaporated pears which tasted like the air from a register, and two bowls of the cup that jeers but does not stimulate. It was impossible to assume a position which did not torture his back, that strong, oft-tried back which had won him many a laurel on the athletic field; while his pride moaned piteously, as he compared his own bulk with that of the swarthy, thin-limbed Spaniards. A cool breeze sprang up toward morning, and his aching consciousness slipped away on it; but the voyage was but a short one, rudely brought to an end by the hoarse scoffing of the rising-whistle. Phil had at last reached the level where human actions are regulated by steam, and those who live on this level gain much comfort when their sensibilities slough off, and they learn to think and feel, after the manner of cogs.

The superintendent was away and the assistant was a man of much earlier date in the world's history. He would have shone with a brighter luster had the men under him been wearing iron collars about their necks. He was a small-natured man, whose peaked, wizened character expressed itself in a perpetual sneer. He had formerly been superintendent of a small gold mine, for his wife's family was rich in mines; but he had so badly botched things, that he had been put under Blake at the New Hygia-- Blake was a man. Merton, the assistant, was a sneaking, crafty creature who could not tell a day's work from an

270 THE KNIGHT-ERRANT

hour's; and relied upon his ability to surprise the men from ambush. His shrunken soul gloated over the possession of a pair of field glasses, through which he would spy upon the men from behind a clump of bushes, and if he caught them idle, he would bully them roundly and dock their pay on the rolls. The men knew his past record, his parasitic position, and his puny personality and they called him Old Sleuth or Uncle Billy, and made him appear ridiculous in the eyes of Blake as often as possible, which was not infrequent. The man who toils with his hands, occasionally has a startling sense of correct valuation, and simple sincerity is the smoothest road that ever was traveled, probably because it is not used often enough to be worn into ruts.

But poor old Phil learned slowly. In pronouncing the word gentleman, he was wont to accent the first syllable and slur the rest. The last syllable was ample for that locality, and if Phil had simply given one of his old, frank smiles, and thrown himself upon the mercy of his fellow-workers, they would have fitted him into his environment with rough kindness. It is not customary, however, for a knight to throw himself upon anyone's mercy, and never forget that Philip Lytton was a knight en quest, and bound to win by the sword or to ride home in state upon his shield. Logic nor advice nor kindly sympathy is for such; but even a coat of mail will not shut out a heartache, and many a time Phil had the taste of tears in his throat without knowing what caused its strange tightness.

He was still eager to fight; but he was still beaten down by enemies whom he could not see; and at night he would creep to his rough bunk to roll and toss, and think and plan, only a lonely waif, in the world's big, gloomy garret.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

LAZV BILL ADVISES

EVEN in the old days, when Chivalry was the industry of chief importance, and therefore thoroughly braced and bolstered by the formal tenets of a complicated ethical code, the knights, even after adjusting their steel cravettes with prayer and fasting, experienced considerable difficulty in ridding themselves of hampering feminine influence.

They would sally forth, their brows glistening in the white light of a solemn vow to perform some selfless deed of worship, their eyes fixed upon the passionless blue above them, and their hearts filled with the strange, sweet strains of peace; but if there were bookmakers in those days, it is safe to assume that the juiciest odds were offered on the bet that the first adventure Sir Goodif Possible would meet, would have a woman's subtile charm as its basic principle.

The typical knight was a young man of sound physique which his athletic, outdoor life kept at a high degree of efficiency, and when one of these professes to be a profound woman-hater, it is permissible to turn the head slightly, and wink the eye farthest from the deponent. When Sir Goodif would return from his journey with several new dents in his outer garments, and several new scars in his cuticle, he would solemnly spin a gorgeous

tale dealing with the intimate relations he had established with iron-clad dragons, ferocious giants, and blood-thirsty ogres, since deceased; but he would lightly skip any mention of the opposite sex, save to recount incidentally the names of a few high-born damsels whom he had rescued, and restored, with promptness and dispatch, to the peace of their own family circles.

This was before the time that what is technically known as the fish story, had come into vogue; but the world has always been cursed with skeptics, and some there were even then who made it their business to supply the picturesque portions of these interesting narratives, which the good knights themselves had carefully expurgated; and so we of to-day have reason to believe that quests, like camp-meetings, had their esoteric as well as their ecumenical sides.

In spite of the fact that the foregoing preamble has wantonly violated several rigid rules of construction, it is no more than is due the introduction of so distinctive and distinguished a character as the Lady Barber of New Hygia. The Lady Barber was the lawfully wedded wife of a male person with a Roman nose and a job as stableman. The stableman looked like a sure enough hero; but the thoughts which spilled from him were on the intellectual level of a child's primer, and as chastely moral as the conversation at an Indian love-dance. The high, serene character of the Lady Barber found a beautiful expression in her ability to conceal the contempt she felt for the husband whom Fate had fastened upon her, and the tact with which she prevented him from exaggerating the folly which Nature had fastened upon him. Her own simple life was an unanswerable argument in favor of

woman suffrage and nine other social reforms which we have not the time to specify at this writing. She was no longer beautiful, but no man who looked into her eyes would ever thereafter believe this, in spite of all the artistic testimony in the world; for her eyes were the eyes of a woman who has been forced to stand upon her own ideals in order to reach the knowledge which passeth all understanding.

Children had been denied her, which, considering the risk they would have run of having inherited some of her husband's disposition, was not altogether a bad thing for the human race; but the great, unquenchable mother-spirit of her was thus forced to find every remaining outlet, and this was an unmixed blessing to the male babies of mature years who had drifted into that locality. She mothered them all, and only those who have dwelt in a men's camp will be able to form any conception of what a noble task for love this was.

The dust from cinnabar ore has an evil tendency to penetrate the skin with an itchy irritation most discomforting, and the men used to line up in front of her rude shop to have their faces cleaned, not knowing that in a large majority of cases, she cleaned their soiled little souls at the same time. At all times, the rubbing of soft, foamy lather into obstructed pores is a grateful process; but as a general rule the animal side of a male human is the one most likely to respond to gentle treatment, and when this happened the Lady Barber, who accepted life as it really was, would use the palm of her strong hand as first aid to the uncivilized, and go on with her task, as unconcerned as though bathing her own child in her own nursery. A natural woman she was, filled with charm but

free from coquetry; and every man who became her steady customer received a post graduate course in the difficult art of thinking decently, which is quite a necessary adjunct to the blessing of liberty.

Phil had his own razor; but letting his beard grow was naturally the first thought that occurred to him after having appraised the social requirements of the New Hygiene Mining Camp. Very few beards were worn there, and these by the mechanics, but shaving was a bother, so he gave up shaving and had just that much more time to contemplate his own peculiar troubles.

By the time his beard had attained the first ragged week of its growth, his skin felt like the door mat in front of a Sunday School. A full beard, neatly laid on after the manner of shingles, may, for purposes of argument, be regarded as a measure of protection; but a beard during the earlier stages of construction is an unmixed horror, and no pessimistic cynic has yet been able to find a kind word to say for one. During odd moments of abstraction, Phil busied himself in scratching the cinnabar dust still deeper into his outer layer, and it might be said in passing that Phil's fingernails had also seen better days.

By this time, Phil's state of being would have filled his bitterest enemy with a deep and abiding content. He had been out of condition on his arrival; the work had been of straining and debasing character; the food had filled him with a repulsion which he could not throw off, and the solemn idiocy which prompted him to isolate himself and brood over his afflictions, had put the cap upon what was really a monument to the late Philip Lytton. His eyes looked from their haggard depths like twin ghosts

haunting a ruin, and sorrowing for the glad hours of its former greatness.

It was Lazy Bill who advised him to shave. Lazy Bill was a red haired scamp who had found the world entirely to his liking, and who had utterly refused to take it seriously. He was tall and slender, and everlastingly and always self-possessed. If the chronology of birthdays can be associated with his mischievous contempt of the ways and demeanor of maturity, he was thirty years old; but the viewpoint of twenty had suited him so exactly, that he had entrenched himself there and defied Time and his legions to dislodge him. He accepted William Merton, the assistant superintendent, as a gift of the gods, and treated him with all the enthusiastic disrespect which he had formerly showered upon a college faculty; for Lazy Bill was a college man. He had not graduated from college; but he had attended an Indiana university as long as the nerves of the faculty could stand the strain, and he possessed all the graces of a fraternity education.

Lazy Bill was friendly, not with the shy diffidence which awaits a few kind words and a pleasant smile. Not at all: his friendliness was wont to tackle below the knees and hold his man down until there was nothing between them except a few irrevocable items, such as racial prejudices, conflicting codes, and ingrained tastes. He scattered entertainment, adverse criticism, and sober advice with the free hand and the untroubled conscience of a reigning monarch, and one could always tell where he was spending the evening, because his group would be the noisiest one in camp. His title had not been lightly won, nor was it lightly worn. His laziness was not in the least a passive failing; it demonstrated continuity of

purpose which, in any worthy cause, would have won him the respect of the respectable, whereas exercised in the direction which he had chosen, it merely won him the admiration of the undesirable. He would scheme and plan, and draw upon his fund of surplus energy, in order to avoid doing the work he was supposed to do, in so flagrant a manner that it would arouse the resentment of the assistant superintendent.

Phil's beard was a week old before Larry Bill found leisure to prove the correctness of the report which had been given him concerning the new arrival. Phil was sitting in his own doorway smoking a corncob pipe in gloomy silence when Bill arrived to an invigorating marching tune which he whistled with unusual skill.

"What can you furnish for me to sit on?" asked Bill, stopping his tune and his steps directly in front of Phil.

"There is n't a thing in this hole of a place to sit on, unless you wish to go inside and sit on the bunk," replied Phil with reserve. He was in his worst mood.

"I'd sooner go into a furnace and sit on a red hot coal," responded Bill. "Why don't you make yourself some stools? Come over to my dump some evening, and let me show you how to grow old gracefully. I tell you what you need: you need a shave, a shampoo, a couple of large pills, and some sort of excitement, to make you forget yourself. Start in with the shave; I never saw a human who needed one worse."

Phil considered Bill to be lacking in dignity and entirely too familiar upon short acquaintance. This proves how thoroughly out of condition Phil was. "I do not see any good in shaving up here where there is no place to go, and no one to see," he answered.

"So you are one of them, huh?" commented Bill. "You regard this delightful community as a penal camp, and are trying to bear your afflictions with noble fortitude. Well, who sentenced you to come here, and how long is your term?"

"I came here because I wanted work."

"Lucky man!" exclaimed Bill. "You have found your chief desire. There is lots of it here, and it is not coy and retiring, either. Now, I came here because I did not want work; and I am as busy as a hen in a garden, trying to dodge it. Wait until I go swipe a stool; I want to talk with you, and I'm afraid to stand lest I grow taller."

He returned in a few moments, and examined Phil critically before seating himself upon the backed chair which had been made of a box and a board. "You have not moved since I was here," he said accusingly. "You have not swung your foot or whistled or flipped a stone — you have not done a single thing but sit there and settle down on yourself like a fog. This is no way to act. If you can't stand the pricks and arrows of outrageous fortune, why don't you return, confess your sins, and throw yourself on the mercy of the court? The chances are that after you have been roasted to a turn, they will reinstate you in your old familiar niche, slaughter the fatted calf, and drape a purple robe about you. You are in a deplorable condition. I am a scientist and I can tell exactly what you used to be, just in the same way that a biology shark could reconstruct a dinosauros out of a fossil footprint; but I never could understand the philosophy of sitting in a losing game, unless one enjoyed playing that particular game. What?"

"Might as well be here as anywhere," grumbled Phil. "I'm sick of it all."

"If it were feasible to interview all," rejoined Bill, "we'd probably find that the feeling was mutual. It's all right for a sea turtle to remain on his back after being thrown there, because that is due to an architectural defect; but when a human emulates this worthy creature, his attention should be directed to the flea whose energetic ambition enables him to triumph over an environment which at first sight appears to be hopelessly depressing. What just grounds have you for refusing to be shaved?"

"I don't see why it is necessary for me to have any grounds except a lack of desire," answered Phil, smiling in spite of himself, but still holding aloof.

"Where is your tobacco?" asked Bill; accepted the proffered sack and, as he filled his pipe, continued: "It is a bad plan to smoke amidst the fumes of mercury, and you are foolish to do it, not only for your own sake, but also because you set temptation in the path of your fellows. If you are a hardened wretch and cannot live without tobacco, chew it, and it will take you a few days longer to be salivated. Getting shaved, however, is an important matter. The longer you put it off the harder it will be; and you will find a hair shirt a more agreeable penance on this job than a hairy skin, if that is your motive. The Lady Barber will shave you for fifteen cents, and if you are cash shortened, she will hang up your name until payday."

"Are you one of her agents?" asked Phil with the perverted wit of a spoiled child.

Phil's remark continued to repeat itself in the mind of its author, while Lazy Bill leaned back in his chair and

smoked in placid silence. It was not a remark to improve with repetition.

"There, I have counted a hundred," said Bill at last, "and now I forgive you freely. I am not one of her agents; but I am one of her admirers. In this case, however, I was thinking only of you. You would feel heaps better after a shave, old man, and I still urge you to get one. I'll tell you one other tip, which you can reflect on at leisure. In absolute sincerity, I advise you to go to the company store—which is a robbing scheme on the part of the company, but where your credit is good—and buy all the molasses candy you can eat at one time. Gorge yourself on it, eat it until you feel sticky all the way through, and it will do you good. This and a shave will arouse you to a new zest for life; but until you take a little more interest in your own welfare, I shall be too busy to bother with you. Any time I can help you in any way, wave me a wiggle and I am at your service; but my private opinion is, that you are your own worst enemy, and will not be happy until you desert yourself for more congenial company. Good night."

Lazy Bill floated over to the Mexican contingent, took the first guitar he saw, and proceeded to sing, and banter his hosts, until it was cool enough to sleep.

Phil was so heartily ashamed of his scurvy reception of what he afterward saw had been a friendly call, that before he fell asleep, he resolved to buy the candy and the shave, as the true amende honorable.

The theatric watchman had taken a deep interest in Phil, and could generally tell to the minute the exact instant at which he had fallen asleep. He had predicted that something dire would happen to the man who attempted to

make use of that room before its late occupant had given up full possession; and Phil's restlessness during the night, and steadily growing haggardness had been accepted by him as a complete vindication of his powers of prophecy.

It was shortly after two that Phil had fallen into a troubled doze; and a few moments later the watchman stepped from the deep shadow at the end of the shack and stood listening at the open door. He gave an involuntary shudder when Phil began to mutter incoherently.

"I'll be shaved, I'll be shaved," said Phil presently, in clear tones which fell with startling distinctness upon the surrounding stillness.

"Ah-ha," said the watchman to himself as he stole away with several cautious glances over his shoulder, "this is the way ghosts work, is it? That blame viper of a Dago is back there suggestin' that this young buck cut his throat the same as he did; and the poor devil thinks that it is nothin' but a shave he means. Well, I ain't no regular bettin' man; but I'm goin' to place a piece o' money on the chance that another throat gets cut in that same room, before another new moon gets old. And some there is, as sez there ain't no bad luck sleepin' in a haunted room."

B. M. O. LIBRARY

B. M. O. LIBRARY

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

A STRICTLY NEW LADY

PHIL did not even enter the dining-room the next evening. As soon as he stopped work, through the permission granted by the six o'clock whistle, he hurried to the company store and purchased five pounds of molasses which he started to eat as soon as he left the store. It tasted exactly as its appearance led him to believe it would, thus establishing a new record at the Camp. He ate it rapidly, and he continued to eat, and drink water, until he felt distended to the last fraction; and then he hurried around to the shop of the Lady Barber.

He felt strangely shy as he entered, and was soberly sorry that he had not asked his eccentric visitor of the preceding night what system of etiquette was in vogue in a Lady Barber's shop. The Barbaress was in the habit of eating an early supper herself, and leaving that of her lord and master ready to be placed upon the table at his own convenience.

Phil opened the screen door and saw her sitting near the side window, reading a week-old paper. At his step she looked up pleasantly. She had a wholesome face, a thoroughly wholesome face; and yet there was something back of it. He instantly recalled the peculiar effect the Mona Lisa had had upon him, but when he compared the two faces there was no resemblance. There was a secret

gloating in the face of Da Vinci's woman, a secret sorrow in the face of the living woman before him, and yet something told him that these two, separated by the years, by the waves of a great ocean, and by social barriers, had each looked unflinchingly into the secret chamber of life, and had each caught much the same vision.

"Could you — could I be shaved here?" faltered Phil.

The woman looked at him with a smile. "Not painlessly, nor hurriedly," she replied; "but I think that it can be done, if you have sufficient patience."

Phil seated himself with a sigh of content. The relaxing quality of the candy was resting his taut nerves, and the comfortable lines of the homemade chair eased the muscles of his back.

"Have n't been here long, have you?" asked the Lady Barber.

"Eight centuries," replied Phil.

A twinkle came to the woman's eyes. "Were you clean-shaven when you came?" she asked.

"My memory gave out three centuries ago; but as I dimly recollect it, I possessed many of the normally human qualities upon my arrival, and was, therefore, in all likelihood, clean-shaven," replied Phil, a warm delight stealing over him. It was like coming through a smoke-choked hall into the fresh air, to give response to the human touch again. Like many another man who does not know it, Phil was unable to exist without a woman's influence. When alone, he drooped like a flower in the dark; when brought into the rays of another woman, he quickly revived, and in reviving, his old love for Edith filled out into a blossom again. As the Lady Barber began to rub the lather into his beard, Phil closed his eyes and thought of

Edith. It was a most incongruous thought, for Edith would as soon have thought of bathing a hippopotamus, as shaving a man; but incongruity, also, has the courage to rush in where logic fears to tread.

Softening a week-old beard, thoroughly encrusted with cinnabar dust, is not an instantaneous process when one has a tender regard for one's razor, and the Lady Barber soaked and rubbed away busily while Phil's thoughts flitted from Edith to Miriam. Herbert Spencer tried to make out that the human being was an empire; but he missed several thousand centuries of making good. A human being is a Democracy, a perfect Democracy with the Initiative and Referendum so absolutely accepted that they are no longer intrusive with the exaggerated importance of an experiment.

One may be filled with an earnest desire to master pragmatism; but if he happen to strike his ankle upon the sharp end of a rocker, the ankle initiates a demand for the entire resources of the body, and the body immediately votes as much of the surplus to the imperative needs of the ankle as can be spared from the constant requirements of the vital organs. This is Democracy. If the body were a Republic, the ankle would have to hold an election, send a delegate, who might be bribed to vote the surplus to the use of the alcoholic appetite; if it were an Empire, it would have an iron band put about the ankle to prevent its clamor from irritating the more imposing members of the body.

Phil wished his thoughts to turn ever toward Edith; they veered about to Miriam in spite of him; and as the Lady Barber continued to rub the lather into his skin, her light, skillful touch began to evince some of the qualities

of a caress. His eyes looked into her face and found it attractive, and presently her eyes met his with the pleasant shock of personal contact. She found the eyes looking into hers to be the eyes of a boy, and continued to look into them with an encouraging smile.

"How on earth did you happen to float to New Hygia?" she asked.

"There are causes, but not reasons for floating," answered Phil.

The woman thought over this for a moment. She had become very fond of Lazy Bill because he had furnished her starving mind with much food for thought, and now she rejoiced in Phil, for the same reason. Phil saw the gleam of joy, and, snob that he was, he misinterpreted it.

"Causes but not reasons," repeated the woman. "I guess that pretty much tells the whole story of life, does n't it?"

"No," replied Phil, who was by now aroused to the pleasure of mental exertion, "it is merely the basic plot of life; the story of it is not nearly so simple."

"I can also see the truth of that," responded the Lady Barber, who had the gift, rare in a woman, of arguing for the solution of a question rather than for the sake of her own vanity. "I live much like a shipwrecked sailor on a tiny island; but I have lots of time for thinking, and it is surprising how many queer bits of life are thrown up on the beach of my little island. Where did you use to live?"

"New York," replied Phil, with that inexplicable pride which a New Yorker, no matter how colossal his failure or miserable his lot in that maelstrom, always manages to instill into his answer to this question.

"I have never been out of California," she rejoined with simple humility.

"You would find New York to be quite a change," said Phil loftily.

"I have not found the people from there so very different," she said, stropping her razor. "All people are quite different, and all people are very much alike. I doubt if anyone from Chicago had seen you come into my shop, they would have known that you were a New Yorker."

"Did nothing suggest to you that I was different from your ordinary customers?"

"Oh, yes," she admitted; "your talk is quite different. I feed ideas to most of my customers; you have fed ideas to me; but I have read novels of New York people, and I seem able to feel their reasons for doing the things they do, just as easily as I feel the reasons of the people I used to know when I was a girl."

"Did you live in a city, or in the country?" asked Phil.

The woman closed her eyes for a moment, and when she opened them, they held the far away look of a yearning memory. "I lived in the hills," she said, "in sight of old Shasta. There seems to be plenty of mountains around here; but it seems to me that I lost all my girlhood dreams, when I lost sight of old Shasta."

"There must be a wonderful fascination in spending one's childhood in the mountains," said Phil thoughtfully.

"You remind me of a girl I met in San Francisco."

"What kind of a girl was she?"

"A mighty fine kind of a girl. Her name was Jernie, and she had the most wonderful golden hair I ever saw."

A quick change came to the woman's face: at first she seemed about to ask a frank question, and then she fell to

stopping the razor, which seemed to demand her entire attention. "What was her other name?" she asked. "I like to know all the particulars; I hear so little up here."

"I do not know what her other name was," replied Phil.

The woman now fell to shaving him rapidly and skillfully. "What was your business in San Francisco?" she asked.

"I made beds," replied Phil gravely.

The woman looked at his hands. They plainly told a tale of having been recently thrust into unaccustomed labor in a rude and painful manner. She thought that Phil meant that he had been a wood or brass worker, and she also thought that he was lying.

The shop was beginning to fill with her other customers; and with a little catchy sigh, she resumed her task, and finished Phil without further conversation. "I hope you'll call again," she said.

Phil felt of his clean, smooth chin. "I certainly shall," he replied; "but I'll have to ask you to charge this until payday."

"Who to?"

"Lenord Latham."

"All right," she replied. "Next."

That night Phil took a long walk, and enjoyed a sound sleep.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

A HARD FALL

THE rat-wisdom of the stableman was fully aware of the peculiar effect his wife's touch had upon the men she shaved. He was also perfectly aware that it was self-respect, and not love for himself, which lifted her above any evil thoughts which might arise in the minds of her customers. Knowing all these things, it amused the stableman to suggest craftily false hopes to the new arrivals, and upon the evening following Phil's first shave he carelessly strolled by Phil's room and paused for a bit of conversation.

"Ever been bothered by the ghost?" he asked.

"Not yet," replied Phil.

"The watchman believes that this room is haunted, and he is trying to get a bet that you will meet a violent end if you live in it a month."

"I would n't mind taking a little of that bet myself," rejoined Phil. He disliked the stableman, and yet it would have been hard for him to have analyzed his dislike.

"Well, a man's death is less important than his life, any way," said the stableman, sighing as a man does when he wishes it known that there is something sad back of his remark. "It's his life that counts, and most of us find enough trouble here not to care much how we escape it."

"Is that so?" asked Phil, coldly.

"You bet it's so. I would n't shed a tear if I knew I was going to be shot through the heart before morning."

"Neither would I," said Phil enigmatically.

"What you got to trouble you?" asked the man. "You ain't married, are you?"

"No, are you?" asked Phil.

"Yes, I'm sorry to say, I am. My wife is the barber. I don't want her to do it; it gives us both a bad name; but I can't do anything with her."

Phil looked at his guest with new interest. And so this man, with sham and pretence written all over him, was the husband of that remarkable woman who had shaved him back into something like a normal frame of mind. "Oh, is she your wife?" he asked, unconsciously accenting the possessive.

"According to law," answered the man, "but we don't get along very well. I don't know a thing against her for certain, but I don't trust her. Not that I'd care a hang what she did now; for when a man loses his trust in a woman, he can't care for her any more."

"I suppose that is so," agreed Phil, sarcastically. "It seems to me that a man ought to be granted a divorce for losing his trust in his wife."

"Yes," chimed the stableman; "but he can't get one. She's made me jealous often enough; but she never gets caught in anything which would give me a cinch on her. That's all I'm waitin' for. I would n't bear no malice against the man — fact is, I'd feel friendly toward him, because he'd be the means of freein' me from her; but as long as she's smooth enough to fool me, why, I'll have to live with her."

"Well, she does not cost you much," said Phil.

"No," said the man. "I suppose by rights, I ought to collect what she earns, but I ain't mean natured enough."

"No, your best plan is to let her keep it," said Phil, positive that the creature before him was a charity boarder on his wife's bounty. "She will probably elope some day, and this will be playing right into your hands."

The stableman looked intently at Phil, who was gazing calmly in the direction of the furnace, where the black smoke was rising straight into the air in the vain search for a breeze to waft it away. "Well, I guess I'll have to be going," he said, starting on. The stableman was not quite at ease. There was something in Phil's eyes which suggested that under certain conditions, he, himself, would be quite capable of an elopement; and the stableman was not at all desirous of losing his chief source of income.

That evening, Phil took another long walk. During the walk, he again tried to test his love for Edith; he again reviewed his experience with the woman who called herself Valerie Florian, and he returned from the walk thinking of the Lady Barber, and the trivial appendage known as her husband. Phil would have liked to assist in freeing her, and he was no longer sure as to his attitude toward even so respectable a convention as the convention of marriage.

He knew that he could not long exist at the work he was then doing. The crusher was at the very top of the furnace; the dump cars ran down the incline, dumped automatically, and ran back, leaving him breathing the pungent dust; the hot sun beat down upon him with intolerable fierceness after his sheltered life in cool San Francisco, and his unbalanced diet prevented his muscles from hardening. There appeared to be no future for him, and as he crept back through the silent camp to his lonely room, it

seemed to him that there was no longer any code or laws to regulate his conduct.

"I might as well snap my fingers, and slide," he muttered as he stumbled across the doorway and threw himself on the bunk.

The watchman had been waiting for some time in a clump of bushes opposite the shack. "I should n't be a mite surprised if he did it to-night," he said to himself as he shook his head ominously. "It must be dreadful to have a Dago ghost everlastingly whisperin' in a feller's ear about how fine it feels to have yer throat cut. It seems quiet enough in the camp to-night; I think I'll stick around here, so as to be on hand when it happens."

The following evening, Phil again omitted supper, bought the molasses candy and hurried around to the barber shop.

"It won't be such a job this time," said the Lady Barber, as Phil took his seat.

"We are both to be congratulated," replied Phil, with a contented relaxation, "which is more than can be said of most marriages."

"That is true enough," agreed the woman, in what was plainly intended to be a general concurrence. "Tell me some more about that golden haired girl you knew in San Francisco."

"Oh, I do not know a great deal about her," answered Phil.

"Is it possible that you did not fall in love with her?" she asked.

"Not a bit," replied Phil. "My attention was taken up by another woman of quite a different type. The golden haired girl was singing in a music hall."

"Poor girl! Is she still singing there?"

"No; she married and went back to the mountains."

"Who did she marry?" asked the woman, busily stroping her razor.

"A tall young man, by the name of Jim," answered Phil.

"Is that honest?" cried the woman excitedly. "Did Jim Scott actually go after her and marry her?"

"Well, I don't know that his name was Scott," replied Phil in surprise, "but I do know that a young man by the name of Jim took her back to the mountains to marry her. He thought I was the music teacher who enticed her away, and was disposed to make all the preliminary arrangements for my funeral."

"Yes, that would be Jim's way. I thought that you were the singin' teacher, myself."

"What in the world do you know about it?" asked Phil, his astonishment increasing.

"That was Jennie Edgerton, my second cousin; and her uncle wrote me a letter after Jennie left. Well, you've told me the best news I've heard for a mighty long time." The Lady Barber looked frankly into Phil's face, and her eyes were beaming with tenderness. Phil's heart warmed in response.

"Seems funny that we should know someone in common," said Phil. "Edgerton is a very familiar name to me, too."

"I am lots older than Jennie," said the Lady Barber. "Her father was the strangest man I ever knew. He was a kind man, but never did much talking. Jennie's mother died when Jennie was born, and her father tried to take the place of both. He was an educated man, a great reader.

He started me to readin', but Jennie never cared for it much."

"This is a funny world," murmured Phil. "What was Jennie's father's name?"

"Elbert," replied the woman. "He had a lot of curious sayings. I recall some of them yet, and some of them I am only just beginning to understand."

"How many arms did he have?" asked Phil, trying to conceal his growing interest.

"That's a funny question," said the woman looking at him curiously, "but the truth is, he only had one arm."

In spite of the dangerous proximity of the razor, Phil suddenly sat erect. "Jennie's uncle back east was one of my best friends!" he exclaimed. "Well, this is a climax."

"Jennie was only ten years old when her father died. He left a paper saying that he had it in his power to make her rich; but he didn't believe in riches, and hoped that she would always be contented and happy. He always said that his own life was ruined by having everything he wanted when he was a boy, and that he had never felt like a man until he had turned his back on the old, easy ways, and had gone into the world to make a new place for himself. He left Jennie a little plot of ground, and she was a mighty happy and contented girl—until that music teacher came."

"Her father was right," said Phil soberly.

"I kind o' thought that you had been used to asking for things most of your life," said the woman shrewdly. "What kind of a man is Jennie's uncle back east; would he take any interest in Jennie, do you suppose?"

"Why, she'll lift a mill-stone from his neck," said Phil,

"but I can't give you his address. I am going to tell him myself, some time; and you had better not say anything about it to Jennie, if you write to her, either. If you were to tell her that you saw me working here at the mines, she would not believe you."

"Well, there is a lot of mystery about it; but I have none of the inside; so I can't do anything but wait to see how it turns out."

She finished shaving Phil and he left the shop more impressed with her personality than ever; but beginning to have a doubt as to her reputation—as suggested by her husband. Her eyes were so steady and open, that he found it impossible to believe her a woman of easy virtue. However, instead of this turning his thoughts from her, it rather impelled them toward her. Her husband had no claim upon her after his remarks of the preceding evening; she could not care for such a man; he, himself, was living outside the pale, and responsible for his actions to no one. Virtue might be its own reward, but just at that time he could recall no specific incidents from real life to prove it. Dozens of successful men, men of note, men held in high respect, appeared before his mental vision, and sneered at masculine chastity. Before he fell asleep that night, Phil was determined that if the Lady Barber remained true to her vows, it would not be his fault. He felt that his month as a bed-maker for Mrs. Clancy had been an especial punishment for his folly in turning aside the proposition of Valerie Florian.

During the next week, Phil was filled with an eager restlessness which still further drained his nervous force, until his frame became gaunt, his eyes hollow caverns from which gleamed two live coals, and his skin pale and drawn.

Finally, one evening, he went to the barber shop, his mind fully made up to put the Lady Barber to the test.

"Don't you get tired to death of it up here?" he asked. They were upon easy terms by this time, and the woman was full of pity for him and had advised him to leave before his health was undermined. In his unreason, he had supposed that something was hidden in her tenderness toward him and the fervor with which she urged him to leave.

"Oh, I get tired, of course," she replied thoughtfully, "but from what I have noticed in the way of equalizin' the loads, those who are able to bear a lot, have a lot to bear, and all women have the power to bear a lot. I can stand it."

"Sort of a pack-mule viewpoint of life, eh?" suggested Phil sarcastically.

"Pretty much," replied the woman, "except that a pack-mule does not deliberately estimate what chances he has to benefit by a change before he decides to just stand what he has to without kickin'."

"So you have considered a change, have you?" asked Phil.

"Well, I don't suppose that you would believe me if I said I had found all the life up here that I could use; so I'll admit that I have looked ahead as far as I could see — and then decided to stick right here."

"It is just woman's willingness to put up with things, that makes man heap burdens upon her," said Phil, affecting a superior air.

"And it is just because men turn women down, as the singin' teacher turned Jennie down, that keeps a lot of other women from being silly."

"Well, a woman who has nothing but fear to keep her straight, is not very securely anchored," scoffed Phil.

"That is about all that a good many women do have," replied the Lady Barber calmly, "and the strange part of it is, that we feel an honest contempt for the very thing we fear. I have thought it all out. I have thought it all out for myself. If I ever found a man I could both love and trust, I don't think I'd feel bound to put up any longer with what I am putting up with."

Phil did not answer for a moment. The disconcerting candor of the Lady Barber had removed his desire for her; but he was too much of a boy to allow so trivial a thing as a loss of desire interfere with a deliberately chosen plan of action. Also he had faith that in due time the desire would return with renewed vigor.

"Do you think you could love me?" he asked. He felt ashamed to his very heart as he asked the question, an unreasoning shame made up of many tangled threads.

The woman smiled. "Even supposing that I could love you, it is not possible that I could trust you," she replied.

"Why could n't you trust me?" demanded Phil in a hurt tone.

"You are a good boy," replied the woman sincerely; "you have so much genuine goodness in you that you find it impossible to be as bad as you want to be sometimes. A lot of people have an idea that being good or bad is entirely a question of choice; but this is far from the truth. It is more like a taste for tobacco or olives: you can cultivate a taste for either, but neither is quite natural. A man who is very fond of tobacco, cannot turn to olives and get the same amount of enjoyment from them; neither can a man who has formed habits of decency, thoroughly

enjoy being indecent. A boy can force himself to swallow indecency and lick his lips afterward; but this is because he finds himself among those who have cultivated indecency until the taste for it has become a habit. Now, you could not love me unless we were lost on a desert island from which there was no escape; and if that were the case, I should certainly trust you; but to sneak off into the world with you would be like leaving a raft to swim ashore on your back. As soon as you began to weaken, you would throw me off and continue alone. You have good stuff in you, Lenord, and some day you'll go back to where you came from. I hope you'll have sense enough not to have anyone on your back when you decide to swim towards home."

She had been shaving him while talking, and she found a secret pleasure in watching the dull red mottle his skin. The great recompense in her dry life was her knowledge of men, and her freedom to treat them as children for their own good. She had a distinct, albeit a motherly, fondness for Phil, and did not wish to hurt him more than enough to recall his better self; but Phil was stung in that most sensitive center, his false pride; and when he left the chair, he took the woman's hand.

It was a soft, well-formed hand, and the touch of it kindled a flame within him. "You admit that you do not care anything for your husband," he said huskily, his face close to hers; "wouldn't you like to go walking with me tonight and see if we can't forget this whole damned mess for a while?"

The woman did not withdraw her hand; but the bantering light left her eyes and was replaced by a simple dignity. "Yes, perhaps I did admit that, in a way," she replied;

"but I did not admit that I had no respect for myself. Now, you go quietly away, take a long walk, and think over what I have said. You have no temptation whatever to offer me, and I want to be your true friend; so never be silly again. I wish you would leave here and return where you belong."

Phil slapped his battered hat on his head and hurried from the shop, reviling himself at every step. There was none of the elation which had come to him after his last night with Valerie Florian, and all the bitterness of his nature, which had been gathering for months, now struck against him with the frenzy of a mob. He ground his teeth, clenched his fist, and cursed beneath his breath. After having withstood a woman of beauty and culture and wealth, to be scorned by a female barber, a common woman of the hills, a married woman whose husband wished to be rid of her! He raved without restraint, expressing his wounded vanity in the weak forms with which his former existence had provided him. With the assumption, common to conventionality, for even at this stage Phil was still instinctively conventional, he utterly disregarded the character of the Lady Barber, and the true basis of his wrath rested upon the theorem that her position made her inferior to him.

It was not until he had worn himself into a state of enervation so complete that he tottered in his walk, that Phil began to deposit any of the blame at his own door. Once started, however, his impulsive nature forced him to recognize the beauty of the woman's treatment of him, and from that on, his self-hatred ravaged his nature for tender spots and rubbed acid into them. It was not Fate, it was not luck; it was his own weak, cowardly, selfishness

which had brought all the trouble upon him, of which his silly, conceited attempt earlier in the evening, was merely the last straw. He could never again look the woman in the face; he did not see how he could ever again look anyone in the face. Undermined as he was by the nervous strain of the past few weeks, he found that it required his entire strength to enable him to walk painfully back to his lonely room, the room which would have been still more lonely, if it were not for a queer companionship he seemed to have formed with its previous occupant.

"No more sunrise for you, old boy," said the watchman, sympathy for one about to take the long journey, and anticipated joy in his coming vindication mingling in his tone. "You've put up a good fight; but you can't stand much more o' this. I bet a cookie, you cut it before morning."

The watchman started away, and then came to an abrupt stop. "I wonder if he has a razor?" he asked himself with conscience-stricken doubt, and then continued with a sigh; "Well, if he ain't, I'll lend him one to-morrow."

CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

PHIL REBELS

SOGGY bread, fat side-meat, and muddy coffee composed Phil's breakfast on the following morning, and as he climbed the hill to the furnace, and afterward climbed the stairs to the draw, Phil had the feeling of a lost soul, and the appearance of a hopeless slave.

Each shovelful of ore he scooped, seemed like clods thrown upon the grave of his lost youth. The sun beat down upon him with sinister mirth, as though it took a fiendish delight in sapping the few drops of life which remained to him. His memory refused to go back farther than the preceding night; his imagination refused to picture any other future except an eternity spent in scooping molten cinnabar ore into a bottomless pit; and when, just before noon, a stroke, jagged and startling as a flash of lightning, smote him in the heart, he felt a queer sensation of relief. He dropped his shovel and reeled against the side of the bin, his left hand pressed to his side. For several minutes, he gave himself up to the exquisite pain which seemed to be tearing his heart asunder, and when it left him as suddenly as it came, it was followed by a sickening weakness which made his knees tremble; but, what was still more noticeable, was the feeling of keen disappointment that Death had refused him, and that he must still face the bitterness of existence.

He stood leaning against the side of the bin, his head dizzy and his breath coming in short gasps. He was trying to find that queer something in his head with which he had formerly thought. He knew that it must still be there and it worried him to reach out for it in the dark, and to find nothing but emptiness. He had never wanted to think so badly before; he wanted to consider why it was that he was there, and if there really was any reason for his continuing to remain and grind out his vitality for what was not even a living, for what would have been punishment for any crime. He knew that there must be answers to these questions, if only he could think.

"Hist," said one of the Spaniards, as he and his fellow increased their speed.

Phil vaguely recognized the signal, but it did not interest him. He knew that it meant that the assistant superintendent was approaching; but he was no longer interested in Uncle Billy; he was only interested in that thinking thing which the hot sun had melted. He raised his eyes to the sky, and they met those of Merton, who was standing on the edge of the bin, near the track down which the dump cars came.

"I trust that you are enjoying your visit with us, Mr. Latham," said Merton with the sneering smile which so perfectly expressed his withered little soul.

Phil looked at him with dumb curiosity. What had this man to do with him? His eyes remained upon Merton's face while he tried to concentrate his attention, in order to discover if there was really anything in Merton's appearance to explain the air of mastery he assumed. He could see nothing, and so he dropped his eyes to the ore, and pressed his hand against his side in an attempt to recall the

agony to his heart. The ecstasy of this purely physical anguish, had been a delightful relief from the mental tortures he had suffered before he had lost that thing with which he thought.

He could not arouse his heart to pain; so he took off his hat and felt of the upper part of his head. He found the spot just back of the dome of his skull. It felt sore to his touch, but the soreness was not unpleasant; it was the numbness as of broken wires which tormented him. He concentrated all his attention upon the question, Why do I stay here; and sent it along the wire to this point—and here it simply shot off into space. He could not contemplate two ideas with sufficient clearness to decide upon their association. He knew that this was a serious condition; but for some peculiar reason, or rather lack of reason, it did not seem serious to him. It seemed rather amusing to think that he, Philip Lytton, should lose part of his brain, shoveling cinnabar ore at two dollars a day.

He could not quite recall the distinctive features which lifted Philip Lytton above the general herd; but his egotism was of that sublime type which takes its worth for granted, and is never again troubled with doubts or suspicions. He knew that he was superior to the mob, he did not know why, he did not care why; it was enough that he was a personage of quality, born to the purple, fitted to rule a province, lifted by birth and breeding above the petty envy and jealousy which sting those who are forced to struggle for position; and as he pressed the sore spot in the back part of his head, he suddenly laughed aloud, a clear, mellow laugh.

Uncle Billy Merton was astonished; he had quickly perceived and recognized the deposit which better days had

left upon Phil, that ingrained, intricate, complicated entity, which, like the waterline along the scarp of a mountain, is more easily observed as a whole, than would be any small fraction. That Phil had at one time lived, looked, and acted like a gentleman, without ever being forced to proclaim himself a gentleman — a humiliating process frequently experienced by would-be gentlemen — was so apparent to Merton that it had aroused from the very first a bitter resentment which spurred his crabbed nature to the invention of countless nasty gibes.

The simplicity with which Phil had received them had been delightful. He had at once taken it for granted that Merton was a cad with a corrugated soul, that some frivolous joke of fortune had tossed him into a position of authority, that his own subordinate position carried with it an obligation to endure the small tyranny of this petty overling, and that therefore the proper course was simply to ignore the disgusting satire of the forms, but to carry out the instructions as fully as possible. The outcome was that he never appeared to hear Merton except when a direct question had been asked or a command given, and the assistant superintendent, who preferred to see his victims squirm, had gradually developed a personal hatred for Phil, and had pestered him to the full extent of his power; but always before, Phil had worked beyond his strength under the goad, while now Merton experienced some of the wistful discontent which must occasionally come to a dog whose exaggerated ego impels him to issue orders, as of one having authority, to the moon. When Phil laughed, Merton scowled. It was not successful repartee, but the situation was unique.

"Why do you not come up here and sit down, Mr. Latham? There is a pleasant breeze; the view is much better, and you would not be in the way of the men who wish to work."

Phil nodded his puzzled head seriously. He could not quite reason about it, but it sounded plausible; so he climbed the ladder fastened to the side of the bin. It was a slow, wearing process, and after reaching the top, he swayed dizzily for a moment as he seated himself. He felt the breeze caress his fevered cheeks; he rested his eyes upon the blues and purples of the distant mountains, and he nodded approval.

"Would you like a cigar, Mr. Latham?" asked Merton, proffering one.

"No, thank you," replied Phil; "I do not feel like smoking."

"That is right, Mr. Latham. I am glad that you feel at home. It would pain me deeply if you were to do anything which violated your natural desires."

This remark did not seem to demand an answer, so Phil merely bowed decorously and continued to gaze upon the undulating scenery, and to wonder if he would ever again be able to think clearly. He did not worry about it; he merely wondered.

"How much longer do you intend to loaf on this job?" demanded Merton with a sudden, savage gust of temper.

"I don't know," replied Phil simply. "I do not seem able to think clearly just now."

"I don't care a damn about your thinking," retorted Merton, "but if you don't intend to begin working from this minute, you call at the office for your time."

Phil bowed, and Merton climbed down from the side of the bin and hastened down the slope toward his own cottage.

Phil continued to sit looking down at the roofs of the buildings far below. Even the rough shacks were given a soft, hazy gray by the distance, and pleased his sense of sight and aroused a faint trace of the home feeling. It would be restful to throw himself upon the hard bunk in the corner room of that distant shack, and just forget; he had forgotten so many things, that he yearned to also forget that he had forgotten how to think. The world was no longer a place for men; it was the abode of a gruesome monster called a quicksilver furnace, which lived upon men, which ground them up and swallowed them; but which first sucked out their brains so that they could not think as men thought, for if men could think, they would no longer stay in such a place.

It was perfectly clear, and yet he could not see it; because he was one soon to be swallowed; and already his brain had been sucked away. He looked over toward the new furnace which was nearing completion. The bricks of it were clean and it seemed gentle and kind in the bright sunshine; and then he looked up at the smoke coming from the flume of the old furnace beneath the crusher bin upon which he sat. The stench of the fumes came to him with a shift of the breeze, and he shuddered and spat. "It has a rotten breath," he muttered. The furnace had become a living monster, a sly, cruel being with the scheming intellect of a man, and the soulless, filthy appetite of a vampire. The new furnace looked clean and harmless, because it was still on a milk diet. After a time it would

outgrow its cub innocence and feed upon men as ravenously as the old furnace.

"He gone?" asked the soft voice of the youngest Spaniard.

Phil looked down in surprise. "No," he replied, thinking of the furnace, "it is not a he, it is a vicious old she, and she just blew her foul breath in my face. She will never go away as long as there are men to eat."

The Spaniards exchanged glances and the elder touched his forehead with a lean, eloquent forefinger. The younger one climbed the ladder and looked over the edge of the bin at Merton's retreating form. "Sun too hot for you," he said gently. "Why you not stop this job? You hired for furnace work; this not furnace work. Why you no make 'em give you furnace work?"

"She'll eat me any way," said Phil wisely. "It makes no difference what I do, she'll get me sooner or later."

At this moment the noon whistle blurted its summons with clarion insistence. There was no act of conscious will upon Phil's part; mechanically he clambered down from the edge of the bin to the slope, which was nearly on a level with the crusher bin. It was now time to go to the mess hall; his desire for food had nothing to do with it; the whistle was the coarse voice of the monster who possessed him, and it was not his to reason why.

"Don't say I told you," called the younger Spaniard; "but you tell Old Billy that you no work here any more."

Phil turned and waved his hand politely, but the words meant little to him; and yet they kept repeating themselves monotonously. He wondered if Merton really did have power over the monster, or if he, too, was a slave; and then

he wondered why he was able to wonder, when he was no longer able to think.

Down in the valley where the buildings stood, it was a little cooler; and when he reached the brook which ran through the camp, he clambered down its bank and stuck his head into the water. It was refreshing; it was so refreshing that he gave a little incoherent coo of delight. He put head and face into the water once more, opening his lips and sucking some of its sweetness into his parched throat.

"Old Devil, Old Devil!" he cried, straightening to his knees and shaking his fist at the furnace. "There is one thing you can't control; you can't control the water" — he laughed with childish glee — "you can't control the water; it is just as clean and cooling as ever — you dirty old beast!"

He moved a short distance down stream to where the bank flattened and made a smooth stretch, part of which was shaded by a dead tree, another victim of the poisonous fumes. He lay at full length by the tree, putting his head under water frequently and holding it there as long as possible.

"I can now think a little," he said aloud after a few moments. "I am now able to see that if I do not hurry, I shall get no pie, and that is all they have here that I can swallow without forcing myself. I must hurry."

He arose with nervous haste and hurried to the mess hall. From the number of curious eyes raised to scrutinize him, it was apparent that the news of his trouble had spread among the men. Men who live in groups away from the influence of good women develop certain distinct traits. They become coarse in speech; but on the other hand they frequently display an orderly neatness, and almost always

a tenderness for the weak, which seems feminine rather than masculine. Ask the mascot of a ship, or a troupe, or a fire company, if men are cruel, and you will find that they are in reality overflowing with a yearning to pet and fondle which flows forth whenever opportunity offers. The stronger a normal man is, the more he delights in being imposed upon by weakness.

The cold water had done much to restore Phil's circulation; but his face still held a sickly pallor, and he still walked with the unconfidence of extreme weakness.

Vermicelli soup, as usual, was the first item offered at dinner, and Phil gave a shiver of disgust as he tried to eat it. The sanitary conditions of the commissary department were scarcely an exposition of modernism, and occasionally there were very obvious indications that the soup had qualified literally for its suggestive title. Still it was possible to eat soup, even when one was not hungry; while it frequently happened that Phil found it impossible to swallow the fried insult which was used as a substitute for meat. He had forgotten how real coffee tasted, and was thus unable to get genuine comfort from the muddy caricature which was served three times a day. Alas, Phil had spent so much time at the brook that the pie had all been eaten, and when he discovered this, it was all he could do to hold his tears. He wanted to weep and wail like a child; he did not wish to repress his feelings, and he could find no expression for them in the words of men, so he drew deep, gasping breaths and gave way to a self-pity so intense that even Phil, himself, lost track of its ridiculous cause; and dumbly attributed his woe to the monster who had selected and marked him as the next sacrifice.

The men had watched him as he ate, had actually given

up a portion of their precious nooning, to gaze upon him with a dumb pity they knew not how to express; and now as he arose and walked outside, they gathered around him and advised him to go on sick report and rest up.

"Yes," said Phil, "I am not going to work in the sun this afternoon. I am a furnace man, and I am going to work inside."

"You won't last long inside," said one of the men with rude kindness. "Your teeth would loosen up in about a week, on the furnace."

"I don't need them any more," replied Phil soberly. He was thinking of his recent meal, but did not even know the insidious stealth with which the mercury fumes crept in with the furnace-man's breath, to salivate him.

The men shook their heads and left him.

When the one o'clock whistle blew, Phil started with the rest, and then stopped. "I won't work in the sun," he said as though in argument.

Merton, who had been watching to see that the men started to work promptly, saw his dearest victim sitting upon the bench in front of the blacksmith shop.

"Ah, Mr. Latham," said Merton, who had regained his normal attitude of deliberate cruelty, "I see that you are still enjoying your rest."

Phil did not even glance at his persecutor. He continued to sit with half-closed eyes, looking at the brook which babbled mirthfully as it danced by the shop.

"Did you hear what I said?" demanded Merton. Phil nodded his head. "Then why don't you answer me?"

"You did not ask me a question," explained Phil, looking at Merton without interest. He hated this man with all his heart; but it was not a personal hatred. It was like the

feeling he would have held for some unknown tormentor who pestered him anonymously. When one receives orders from a steam whistle, one accepts official superiority as a matter of course.

"Since you are so precise, Mr. Latham, I now ask you what you propose doing during the remainder of your visit here?"

"I am going to work in the furnace," replied Phil. "I shall not again work in the sun."

"You're gettin' too fresh!" exclaimed Merton, agitated beyond affectation. "When I need your assistance in the management of these works, I'll let you know. Now, you hustle up to that crusher and get to work. You can't play sick with me."

Phil looked at him curiously. "No," he said, shaking his head with childish emphasis, "I am not going to work in the sun. I am a furnace man."

Merton took several threatening steps toward him. "I'll make you work in the sun," he growled.

"If you do, I'll kill you," said Phil in even tones.

Merton looked into his eyes. They were hard and peaceful, like the eyes of a child engaged in tearing the wings from a butterfly. A chill went through Merton. He saw that Phil was in earnest, and the fear of insanity, latent in all human breasts, sprang into being. "What's the matter with you?" he asked.

"I don't know," replied Phil. "Something melted in my head this morning, and I can not think clearly. It is coming back to me again; but if I went to work in the sun, I might lose it for good. I shall not work in the sun."

"You come with me," said Merton, "and I'll give you

some medicine, and then you go to your room and sleep. To-morrow, if you feel able, start in at the furnace."

The human anatomy is not designed to stand more than a few weeks' work in a quicksilver furnace, and no man who signs for a furnace job is ever discharged. Phil took the medicine, went to his room, and tied a wet towel about his head. He slept all afternoon and when he awoke, felt normal again, but the towel recalled something of his morning's discomfort, and he wet it once more and sat on his doorstep to catch the faint breeze.

The night watchman had just eaten breakfast, and was picking his teeth as thoroughly as the elastic equality of his lips would permit, when he noticed Phil with his head bandaged. "My God!" exclaimed the watchman halting abruptly. "He's failed."

Phil sat with his weary head leaning against the door frame, and the watchman, after studying him a moment, approached gingerly. "How did it happen?" he asked, referring to Phil's apparent lack of success in the matter of suicide.

"The sun, I think," answered Phil. "I began to slip cogs this morning, and I am not quite right yet."

"You're devilled too much of nights," said the watchman didactically.

"I don't sleep very well," agreed Phil.

"Do you hear whisperings?" asked the watchman.

"No, snores," answered Phil. "Every sound in this shack seems to find its way to my room."

"Do you have dreams?" asked the watchman who was not deeply interested in commonplace earth noises.

"Yes, I dream a good deal; but can't remember them."

"It is just as well, it is just as well," said the watchman

solemnly. He felt a genuine sympathy for Phil; but he also felt the futility of interfering with what was plainly the design of Fate. "I heard you talkin' in your sleep once—about gettin' shaved. Do you remember that dream?"

Suddenly his experience with the Lady Barber struck Phil like a blow and the taunting accusations of his now thoroughly aroused memory, caused him to wince perceptibly. The watchman noted and a thrill of elation shot through him. It was all perfectly plain to him: Phil was being hounded by the ghost of the suicide to follow his baleful example.

"Have you a razor?" asked the watchman. If it was predestined for Phil to cut his throat, he stood ready to provide whatever instruments were necessary. There was no cruelty in this; he had a high sense of duty, and a superstitious reverence for the occult.

"Yes, I have a razor of my own," replied Phil. He was surprised at the watchman's friendly interest; but any companionship was grateful at this time.

"You have? Well! I didn't suppose you had one. Have you left a letter to your friends, in case you should—well, in case you should meet with an accident?"

"Yes, I have a letter in my coat pocket," replied Phil, smiling wanly.

The watchman nodded approval. "It has been mighty hot to-day," he said, weighing the conversational anchor. "Well, I guess I must be movin' along. That blood stain shows plainer to-day than usual, don't it? And I swear I can see him lyin' there on the floor as plain this minute, as I can see you. Well, good luck."

As the watchman had pointed with tragic finger, a shud-

der passed over Phil, and for a moment he too could see the form on the floor; and even after the watchman had gone his cheery way, the description which he had given to Phil upon his first evening remained and repeated itself in the tangled mess of Phil's memory.

After a hasty supper, Phil returned to his room. He sat upon his bunk in the darkness and berated his folly for having cut him off from the friendship of the Lady Barber; but stronger than anything else, was the presence which lay upon the floor, which writhed in torment, which made gurgling, horrid noises, which seemed to jeer at him for continuing in a world where every moment of joy must be paid for by a week of sorrow; and again it was after midnight before he fell into a troubled doze.

"He's put it off again," said the watchman from the shadow by his door.

d see
n had
given
itself

He
folly
Lady
sence
which
t him
must
after

n the

CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

CLOSE TO THE BRINK

THE next morning Phil started to work on the "draw." It was Sunday morning; but when a distinct day each week was reserved for rest, life was quite a simple matter; and the complexities of modern industry were so completely overlooked, that modern industrialists have, as a reciprocal courtesy, concluded to completely overlook the commandment which placed a limit upon toil.

Some academic authorities insist that under the old dispensation, Saturday was a day of rest; while under the new, Sunday is a day of religious service and that there is no revelation that the Deity is in favor of anyone's seeking rest or recreation upon this day. These authorities seem a bit skeptical in regard to the benefit a manual toiler derives from a day of rest, and therefore, in numerous instances, the fourth commandment is given a purely spiritual interpretation. The wording of the fourth commandment is very beautiful; it is full of fatherly sympathy — No, fatherly is too limited a qualification, for it does not stop at the children but reaches tenderly down through the men servants and the maid servants even unto the cattle and the stranger within the gates. It is much to be regretted that Divine Providence has not seen fit to offer some modern suggestions in order that this loving law may be fitted to the use of those of us who handle

the engines, the telegraph keys, and the cookstoves which have been instituted since this law was traced by an infinite finger upon a tablet of stone. Perhaps, this is not done because both the need is obvious and the method comes within the scope of human reason. This must indeed be the answer, for it is not conceivable that He who could devise such a law, could ever hold industrial profits above human welfare. It sometimes seems that our expert spiritual interpretations have been made in the wrong spirit.

A quicksilver furnace is a simple arrangement; the one at New Hygia especially so; the ore was dug in the mountain back of the furnace; gravity hauled the cars to the dump at the head of the steep slope and one mule could haul back three empty cars; gravity carried the ore down to the crusher bin, and as the full car went down, it pulled up the empty one — all the way through, the process was as simple as a child's toy sand-mill. The crushed ore flowed over the steam-heated surface of the condenser to small hand-cars which were dumped into the charge by a man who was forced to inhale mercury fumes during the process. The effect of the fumes upon the man was not simple; but this was merely an item. After the mercury had been cooked from the ore, the tailings were drawn from the bowels of the furnace into a steel car by another man who pushed the car out over rails to a dump, and the only remaining step was to gather the pure mercury as it congealed and flowed into vats, and to scrape the soot from the sides of the condenser and grind it. The man who did this filled his bones with mercury and for the remainder of his days he had advance warning of all changes in the weather. It was knowledge, however, which was seldom put to a good use, for the man him-

self would be so taken up with a selfish, personal interest in his own aches and pains, that he rarely classified the phenomena in order to perceive just what brand of weather a specific twinge foretold; and usually contented himself with profane incoherency, instead of prophesying a shower or a blizzard. Men are so materialistic that a life of excessive drudgery frequently makes them positively self-centered.

Phil was placed upon the charge. There was very little labor in this, only ten minutes out of the hour; but, next to grinding soot, it was the most poisonous work at the furnace. All he had to do was to open the cut-off, let the crushed ore pour into his car, push it to the maw of the furnace, open this, incidentally freeing the fumes, dump his car, and return to his seat on the ground floor. There was so little work that Phil wondered what prompted a corporation to pay two dollars for one hour and forty minutes work. It was not business, it was philanthropy, and Phil could not see through it.

The men were at first inclined to fraternize with Phil after his attack in the crusher; but with the return of memory, Phil fell to brooding over his crass rudeness to the Lady Barber; and the men, not being in a position to know, voted him a surly snob, and left him to his own devices. Most of the men wore sponges over mouth and nose; but as the company's practical spirit prompted it to charge fifty cents for a ten cent sponge, Phil stated the locality where it could go as far as he was concerned, and breathed the fumes without any check whatever. Philip Lytton economizing in the matter of a necessary sponge was enough to make an imp of darkness hysterical.

By the end of the week his mouth was raw; he was con-

stantly nauseated; every one of his bodily scouts were sending in word that his vital forces were losing all along the line; and that if he desired a continuance of internal adjustment to external conditions, commonly called life, it would be necessary for him to beat a prompt retreat. His head was dull and clouded, and he did not take much interest in his future; but the furnace boss knew the symptoms, and ordered Phil to go to the draw when he began his second week. The day and the night shifts, alternated at weekly intervals; so Phil began his labors on the draw at night.

The work on the draw was really less poisonous, although it looked more so. It consisted in drawing red, blue, green, and white hot tailings from the bottom of the furnace with a twelve-foot hoe. The hoe was of steel and seemed heavier than Phil by this time, while each had about the same amount of fat and the same assortment of beautiful curves.

It was like a dream of Hell: weird figures formed in the burning gases above the molten ore, figures of fantastic shape and coloring which danced with jeering mirth before him, kicking up toes, and sticking out tongues at him; while the sickening, overpowering, strangling fumes appeared bent upon throttling him. These fumes were less dangerous than those of the draw, but more tormenting.

Driven the round of his actual treadmill by the demon of his undisciplined imagination, Phil had lost all semblance of his former self. He was worn to a bone, the skin was drawn over his cheeks as tight as parchment, and his eyes stared out of his corpse-like face with the desperate indecision of madness; but worst of all, the

black form which belonged on the floor close to the door of his room, had begun to follow him. He saw it lurking in the wavering shadows thrown by the glare of the furnace; he came upon it waiting in the gloom for him; sometimes, he even caught the gibbering chatter of its laugh.

Once or twice during the evening, Merton would drop in to watch Phil do his task. It was none of Merton's business, as the furnace boss was supreme in the furnace, and would have paid no more attention to one of Merton's suggestions than he would have paid to a bat's squeak; but the mock aristocracy in Merton's thin blood had declared war upon the genuine aristocracy in Phil's blood, and the assistant was not any more a free-will agent than are the rest of us. Poor Phil had forgotten that he had ever regarded himself as an aristocrat, and would have traded pedigree, culture, and manners for one meal which tasted like food, and the hearty grip of a friendly hand. The Mexican who was on the draw with him finished in from ten to fifteen minutes, and was at peace with himself. It took Phil from twenty to thirty minutes to do the same work, and this added to his abasement.

He would tremble all through his body as he balanced the heavy hoe and thrust it back of the ore, and by the time he had completed his task, he would be panting for air and dripping with sweat.

"Don't be afraid of the hoe, Mr. Latham," Merton's voice would say out of the darkness. "When you wear it out, the company will get you another. You waste a lot of fuel when you leave the doors open so long. Why don't you work as rapidly as Juan who is not nearly your size?"

Phil never replied. Sometimes he bit his lip until the

blood ran; but never answered, and the furies themselves could have devised no better way to irritate Merton. He had a dozen pat insults for the man whom he had goaded into talking back; but the actual limitations put upon his power by Blake did not offer him much opportunity to persecute those who ignored him.

During the day the sun poured down on the shack and Phil found it almost impossible to sleep; but the only certainty in life, is the certainty of change, and after an age of centuries, the week finally crumbled away to its last bitter second; and he had a feeling of relief as though he had really accomplished something of moment.

He had not shaved since the night he had disgraced himself in the shop of the Lady Barber; but this morning after washing his underwear in the brook, he shaved himself painfully, and felt much cleaner afterward. He left his razor lying upon the arts-and-crafts table he had made of a soap box and four rough sticks; and after dinner returned to work at the furnace, for it was in this manner that the change from the day to the night shift was made.

The furnace men are of sufficient importance to have some care taken with their meals; somewhat in the same spirit that a condemned murderer is supplied with culinary luxuries as his debt becomes due. Phil ate a fair meal and strolled around to his shack, hoping that the night would bring him rest and peace. He saw the watchman looking in through his open door; but he did not see the dawn of victory in the watchman's eyes, nor was he aware that the watchman mistrusted the cupidity of Phil's neighbors, and was in reality guarding the razor which had been carelessly left upon the table.

"You ortent to leave valuables lyin' about loose like that," said the watchman reprovingly.

"Oh, I think that no one would steal it," rejoined Phil.

"It looks like a good one to me; and that there foldin' mirror beats anything I ever saw. How are you feelin'?"

"I have just about lost the power to feel anything," replied Phil with sorrowful levity.

"Yes, I suppose it does take that turn toward the end," replied the watchman thoughtfully. "It's what my old grandmother used to call the dyin' grace. Is the' anything you'd like to have me do?"

Phil saw that the man's sympathy was real, even though his attempt to express it did not have a tendency to increase his gaiety. "No," he replied. "I really expect to get a good, long sleep, to-night."

"Well, good luck to ya," said the watchman. He half held out his hand; but as Phil did not notice it, he turned and walked away. "A good, long sleep," quoted the watchman to himself. "He's goin' to do it to-night. The's somethin' about that boy that draws me to him, an' yet he's a most onsociable cuss. I've a durn good mind to stop him, an' yet I don't know — It might switch the doom over to me. That Dago is bound to have company, and I ain't ready to die. Well, death ain't no stranger: than life."

Candles cost eight cents each at the company store; so Phil expressed his opinion of this skimming both sides of the milk, by sitting in the darkness and smoking pipe after pipe of cheap tobacco. He was not sleepy, and the misery of a body tortured by sleep-hunger, and yet not able to sleep, was upon him.

Neither could he think; but sat in a daze while dis-

sociated ideas floated before him like the uncanny forms we see through the crystal of a dream. A strange company it was, which paraded before the lonely boy seated upon the rough bunk in the darkness, which was made all the more dense by the occasional glow from his pipe: Colonel Edgerton, Hereford, Miriam Meyer, whom he had known as Valerie, Jennie with the golden hair, old college mates, and faces which he did not recognize; but which peered at him from the hazy background of an indistinct crowd, with curious, questioning eyes; and last of all came Edith.

The old, well-bred sneer was upon her lips, the old child of disapproval was in her eyes as she stood looking down upon him with disdain. What right had she to reproach him; what had her own life been but meek submission to precedent, mechanical acceptance of the formal, childish refusal to answer the great calls which Life made to her. It was easy enough to condemn another; but what had she herself ever done, or what had she ever sacrificed?

"I hate you, I hate you," Phil cried fiercely, leaping to his feet and glaring into the darkness.

"It is getting close to the end, now," said the watchman as he drew still farther into the shielding shadow.

D. W. O. LIBRARY

y forms
ge com-
y seated
made all
is pipe:
hom he
hair, old
ize; but
of an in-
d last of

old chill
ng down
reproach
ission to
childish
e to her?
had she
?
eaping to

atchman,



"I hate you, I hate you," Phil cried fiercely.

U. W. O. LIBRARY

U. W. O. LIBRARY

CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE

THE GRIM GRAY VALLEY

The watchman was uncertain exactly what his duty would require of him if he should happen to be present when the intended began the operation which was to result in his coming to the late lamented; and so with the consistent human dread of responsibility, and the equally consistent human reluctance to miss the slightest detail of a sensation, he decided to make one round as hastily as possible, and then hurry back and observe from the clump of bushes opposite Phil's door.

The watchman was also a deputy sheriff; and before he had finished his round Merton had found him and sent him to arrest the Mexican who had survived a heated debate in the little saloon town in the valley. The watchman was torn to emotional shreds; but he could discover no adequate excuse which would not force him to expose the doom of Fate, and so he hastened to take up the trail of the Mexican, who had fled into the mountains with a fine disregard for the watchman's temperament and circumstance.

There were no men about the shack; but if there had been, Phil would not have noticed it. He was not about the shack himself; he was upon a tiny, bobbing raft called the Earth, and the only other survivor was Edith, who

stood facing him. He spoke to her in low tense tone which came most often between set teeth:

"You sit in sheltered ease while the gifts of all the ages are brought and piled at your feet; but what have you done for the ages yet to come; what payment to the future have you made to square your debt to the past? The women of the past did not demand success as part of the capital with which to begin marriage. She was willing to be a help-mate, not the idle pet of a man's leisure.

"Look back for a moment at these women of the past — your ancestors as well as mine — they have skinned wild beasts, they have woven baskets, boats, and homes, they have spun, they have gone forth into the unknown wilderness, they have tilled the soil; shoulder to shoulder with man they have fought the battle which wrested the very Earth from the tyranny of Nature and turned it into a garden and a home; but you, and your type, like to sit beneath a canopy while a man brings the laurel wreath he has won, and tosses it into your hands.

"You take no chances yourself; but you are very courageous to urge a man to risk everything for the worthless bauble of your cautious love. Love? Bah, you are too conventional, too discreet to love! You kiss and fondle and caress according to the etiquette in vogue; but there is no bargaining in real love, and your entire life is but a succession of bargains. What is the cold, formal ritualism you call religion, but a polished bargaining with God Himself, for the peace of your own soul? You go to church by rote, thinking that in some mysterious way the discomfort you suffer by being bored on earth will pay your rent for a mansion in the sky."

Phil did not know what he was saying; he was in the

nervous ecstasy of fanaticism; the emotions which had gathered in his heart for months were now forcing their own expression, and he was the listener, rather than the speaker—as have been all the great extemporaneous preachers, and as were all those exceptional beings who arose from the common levels, flamed across the zenith like a star, and drew their fellows after them in unquestioning faith, by a wonderful, unreasoning and unreasonable magnetism. Phil's mind was not able to retain his words or his logic; but was concentrated into focusing its entire strength upon the creative feat of emotional expression.

“You think yourself a type of supremacy,” he continued, still talking to the woman he saw plainly before him, “but you are a type of failure. The kings, the captains, and the men of wealth throughout history, strove to wall in their own blood and dam back the rush of human desires; but their ambition always turned to folly, and the ones they tried to disinherit have always laughed them to scorn. Inheritance is a single chain, but every link of it is an individual link with the full completeness of a circle. A child cannot start where his parents stopped; he must live through every age of the race, and then, if he be of those who lead the van, he must launch out into the unknown, to risk his unearned ease in the battles which must still be fought.

“I have failed; I am ready to stand at the fountain and in the market place, and shout aloud to all the world that I have failed; but you have never even tried; and you are like a stone which never has felt life, while I am like the spent body of a starving wolf. My very failure has given me the sensations of victory, even as freezing gives the

sensation of warmth; while you are as devoid of genuine sensations as an image of wood or clay. No, I do not hate you, I despise you!"

Phil put all his remaining strength into this last remark, spoken though it was in a hoarse guttural, and then sank to the bunk, his folded arms resting upon the rough table, his face in the crook of his elbow. He was weak and spent with his effort, and for a time his consciousness faded away into a stupor.

A slight breeze had been blowing during the afternoon but when men had raised their eyes from the shadow of the valley to the splendid purples of twilight upon the peaks, the gorgeous banners of departing day, the sun had set, and the breeze had died with the sun. The heavy suffocating smoke from the furnace had settled into the little pocket where the shacks stood; and perhaps it was only the gases in this smoke which had given Phil the power to express himself with an eloquence of which normally he was utterly incapable. Now, in his stupor the smoke was binding his chest as with a band of steel and his breath came in gasps.

When Phil once more came into contact with reality, the men had gathered into little groups. Carefree and unsensitive as most of them were, the smoke was not able to overcome them, and they laughed, told stories, or sang to the mellow tinkling of Juan's guitar; but Phil continued to sit by himself, smoking the corn-cob pipe, until the moon floated into the sky, and the mountain peaks above the bank of dun, sulphurous smoke were crested with beautiful, dazzling silver.

The men retired early according to their custom; but the fever which had returned to Phil's blood seemed bur-

ing the very brain with which he tried to think. His skin was dry and parched, and the tepid water did not allay his thirst, while his constant drinking of it only added to his misery. If, for only five minutes he could become cool, he could fall asleep; but the dazed wakefulness of insanity was upon him, and he sat staring into the moonlight with eyes which glittered like the eyes of a tiger at bay.

The moonlight flowed in through his open door, touched the hard furniture of his room with magic, softening the rough lines and turning them into shimmering outlines of beauty — but Phil saw none of this. His face was in the shadow; but the top of his little table — almost the only thing in the world which he had made with his own hands — lay exposed to the full brilliancy of the moonlight; and as his eyes fell upon it, they rested with dull inattention upon the razor he had neglected to put away.

There was one spot on the back of the closed blade which tossed out scintillations like a flawless diamond, and his gaze was drawn to this spot and held, but still without arousing his interest. He was weakly yielding to the moaning loneliness of his empty room which seemed the fit symbol of his empty life, and the razor, as a razor, offered no suggestion. But the spot of living light continued to hold his gaze, and after a time he opened the razor to see what the effect would be upon the more highly polished surface which was hidden by the handle.

The moonlight cast a pale reflection from the razor into the dark shadows, and he flashed it about the room childishly. The fitfulness of fever soon destroyed the novelty, and he laid the open razor upon the table and sighed. The next time his glance fell upon the razor, he was

struck by the delicious coolness of its appearance. He raised it and pressed it to his dry cheek; it was cool, thrillingly cool. He turned the other side and laid it against his other cheek. As he did so a thought ran through him with an electric shock—It was with a razor that the former occupant of this room had ended it all. Why not himself?

He tried to thrust the thought from him; he tried to recall all of his own former contempt for the suicide; he pleaded with himself to see that, excuse it as we will, suicide is simply a disorderly retreat, a cowardly admission that future existence is too fearsome to be encountered; but ever in answer to his fervid arguments, came the cold silent suggestion—one quick, painless stroke across his throat, and he would be free, free from loneliness, free from responsibility, free from reproaches—free from it all.

He glanced down at the floor, and there, close to the threshold, lay the black, still form. Partly in the moonlight, partly in the shadow it lay, just as it had lain all these weeks; but now there was no distorted agony in the pose. Instead there was a beautiful peacefulness, such as he remembered having seen in the face of a sleeping baby.

When the wires of the brain become tangled and crossed, weird, uncanny things are sure to happen. Phil had never seen the features of this black, still form before; but he saw them plainly now. They were refined, delicate, sensitive; they seemed for music and art and luxurious surroundings, rather than for the rough ways of a mining camp; and Phil wondered what had driven this boy from far off Italy to a land where they would call

THE GRIM GRAY VALLEY 327

him Dago when his homesick heart was eating itself out for the glance of familiar friendship beaming from a comrade's eyes; where the warm emotions of his nature would be frozen by western flippancy, where Life would hold him off with cold hands, until at last he sought the warmer embrace of Death. Phil closed his eyelids tight to shut out the face and to shut in the tears, for he felt himself bound to this boy by the chains of a kindred misery.

Phil shuddered as he caught his fingers upon the throbbing pulse in his neck; he clenched his hands in desperation as the thought stole insidiously into his mind, that a deep cut was no more painful than a shallow one, and that bleeding to death gave back the same sensations as gently falling asleep. All the weird knowledge he had learned from the waifs on the Plaza in front of the Chinese Mission, returned to reassure him; while in opposition, there was no voice except the code of his former life, the life which had utterly cast out and forgotten him.

Trembling nervously, he leaned his elbows upon the table and clasped his forehead. Was this to be the end of it? After a boyhood filled with boyish victories, was this to be the best fruit of his manhood? He had no desire to live; he had no fear of death; but suicide, sneaking from the field before the battle was done; was this to be his choice, was this to be the end of it all?

He had never thought deeply about religion, his mother having died when he was very young, and his father having been a careless man who had used dissipation's by-path to avoid the deeper questions of the soul. It was from no fear of hell that he hesitated; but he did dread the verdict of the world — as it would be expressed in the

scornful smile of a girl; for he felt that this would be Edith's tribute to his memory.

He had heard of self hypnosis; and as a last resort, he fixed his gaze upon the dazzling spot on the blade and held his eyes steadily upon it while he tried with all his might to will sleep. Minute after minute he sat without moving; but constantly conscious of the mighty combat between the desire to live and the desire to die. He felt himself growing calmer, and then the hot, lazy breeze which had arisen, blew some of the poisonous smoke into his face with what seemed a deliberate insult. It was the last straw; he saw an endless chain of to-morrow's in that hell-like furnace; and suddenly stretching out his hand, he seized the razor, and held its heel under the curve of his jaw to give a long, sliding stroke. "I do not blame you the slightest bit," he whispered. "Throughout eternity, I take it all upon myself."

And with his head thrown back, he drew the razor across his throat with a deep, firm stroke.

CHAPTER THIRTY

OUTSIDE THE WORLD

It was all very different from what Phil had expected. He had rather looked for the cutting to be comparatively painless; but had anticipated a last terrible agony when the soul actually left the body. There had been none. It had been as the woman with the sore upon her lip had told him it was — she had tried but they had found her in time and were able to save her life because her hand had been too weak to sever the larger veins; but she had fainted from loss of blood, and knew just how it would have been if they had not thought it best to make her taste constant death upon the street, instead of having done with it once and for all.

She had assured him that it was just like falling asleep, and so it had been. Not fighting for sleep as he had been forced to do of late; but just drifting peacefully away on a cloud, as he used to do during the rounded days of his youth; but the fact which surprised him most, was that he had lost consciousness for only the briefest instant. And oh, the joy of coming into that new consciousness!

All the heat and weariness had left him and as he drew a deep, full breath, it seemed to go into every cleft and crevice of his lungs and through every vein of his being, tingling and giving new life, as it rushed in a joyous surge

to the uttermost parts of his body. His body? He had no body.

That broken and useless shell leaning against the bun had once been his body; and it was the freedom from the old, torturing burden which gave him such an ecstatic sense of strength and buoyancy. He examined himself carefully and was rejoiced to see that while he had no material composition, he possessed a filmy, cloudlike form very similar to his old Earth shape.

This made him very happy; because he recalled a theory which claimed that, having no use for members or functions, all spirits would be spherical, and it would have been quite difficult to distinguish one sphere from another. Moreover, in spite of the trouble which his body had been to him, he had formed a peculiar liking for lines and curves. In his joy of his spirit body, the thought of all spirits being spheres seemed very amusing and he laughed his old free laugh; but his laughter made no sound.

He was above his body, that is above the old, outgrown shell, and looking down upon it; but as he raised his eyes to see if there was anything else within the range of his vision, he found himself in the midst of a great, green meadow, bordered by trees and traversed by a beautiful winding stream. The deep green grass was like the most beautiful of carpets, and it was joy unutterable merely to walk upon it with feet which fell as light as thistle down yet bearing him onward with a motion which resembled floating. It was cool, delightfully cool, that wonderful coolness which invigorates without chilling.

He walked, or rather floated, along the bank of the stream until he came to the edge of the forest, where

threw himself upon the velvety bank and listened to the rich melody of the birds which were whistling and singing as if they too, had just come into a wonderful new life. Presently he fell to wondering why there was no other human spirit to give him company.

While speculating thus, a long procession came out of the forest near where he was sitting, lads and lasses, little children and elderly seniors, strong men and beautiful women; some playing upon musical instruments, some dancing, some singing, but all joyful, all radiant, all full to overflowing with a vast, exuberant content.

As they came up to Phil, they called upon him joyfully to join them. Phil rose and feeling the spirit of their joy upon him, he also broke into a glad song of thanksgiving, as spontaneous and as tuneful as the song of the birds.

The procession wound slowly along the bank of the stream, and as they walked the spirits gathered beautiful flowers and wove them into wreaths and garlands which they hung about one another's shoulders.

After they had crossed the meadow and had started to enter the forest upon the opposite side, Phil felt some irresistible force holding him back. With all his might, he longed to go forward; but for all his efforts, he could go no farther.

"Where are you going?" he finally asked a tall, graceful maiden. "And why cannot I go with you?"

"We are going to the Beautiful Cour . . . , where the prayers have become flowers and the hymns have become birds, where the palaces and the choirs are, where hope changes into joy, and where there is naught but love forever and ever."

"But why cannot I go with you?" pleaded Phil like a little child.

"That I do not know," replied the maiden gravely, as she passed on with the others, leaving him lonely and sorrowful in the midst of the great green meadow, beside the flowing stream.

He wandered along the edge of the forest for a period; but he saw no more spirits, and so turned sadly away to cross the meadow once more. Just as he turned away, a great, gray form came bounding out of the forest. He soon saw that it was a dog, which, on coming closer to him, gave wild barks of joy, and leaped high into the air. His skin shone like burnished satin and his gleeful bounds were the most graceful movements which Phil had ever seen.

Just before the dog reached him, Phil recognized him as the Great Dane he had bought from the Uncle Tom's Cabin troupe, the dog he had sent to Edith, the dog he had cared for in his lavish, impulsive way, and who had died in his own room, a rough paw lying contentedly in his hand. A feeling of tears, tears of relief and joy, came to Phil's eyes, and he exclaimed with a delight which surprised even himself as indicating how lonely he was beginning to feel; "Why, Simon! do you know me, do you know me?"

The dog bounded to him and stood with upraised head and the entire length of his graceful body, swaying to and fro with the movement of his expressive tail. Phil stooped and took the dog's head between his two hands, pressing his own cheek against the satin cheek of the dog, and mumbling the incoherent tenderness which is the only

expression for those rare occasions when joy startles us with its unexpected bounty.

But after caressing the dog for a space, he stood erect and looked at him sadly. "I suppose that you will not stay with me either," he said wistfully. However, when he started across the meadow, the great Dane walked at his side, or ran far ahead and then galloped back to him; until Phil caught some of the dog's enthusiasm and began to hope for better things.

As they neared the opposite side of the meadow, a tall form robed in black and bearing a heavy burden, came out of the forest. When Phil drew near he laid his burden upon the rich grass and asked in a calm, deep voice, "Philip, what is it you wish to know?"

"Well, in the first place, I want to know why I cannot go on to the Beautiful Country, and in the second, how long may I keep this dog?"

After asking these questions, Phil could not help but feel that they were exceedingly trivial; but the black-robed figure seemed to see nothing unusual in them, and answered in the same even voice; "You cannot go on to the Beautiful Country because this is your punishment for having been a coward and a deserter. You would not wait for the trumpet to sound recall; but like a craven you threw down your arms and fled from the midst of battle. Think not that I speak with harshness, for I too was a deserter, even as you were. For a period you may stay in this peaceful meadow and mingle with those who pass through on their way to the Beautiful Country. You cannot return whence they came, neither can you go on whither they are journeying; but here in this meadow you may hold

communion with them, so that the remembrance of the joy may strengthen you to the fulfillment of your duty.

"For after a time, you will wish to take up your grievous and detestable burden and pay your penalty, even I am paying mine. That beautiful body which was given you for your Earth life, you did not prize; but allowed to become weak and unclean, and finally with a wanton hand did you destroy it. Now, for this great sin, that same body must become the most loathsome part of your burden until the time of your fulfillment you must always bear it with you; save only that when you do some service for another, you are permitted to lay your own burden upon the ground. This also was your recompense in the Earth life which you so lightly tossed aside before your lessons were half learned. This is one of the saddest truths I have learned of my own former folly, that selfishness, instead of bringing me pleasure, was in reality the greatest of my burdens.

"When you begin your labors, your sins and your broken body will be your burden, and your deeds of kindness will form a mystical pad for your shoulder. As you progress, your burden will become lighter while you will become stronger; until at last it will fade away entirely and you will stand forth, free and upright to take up your journey into the Beautiful Country.

"As for the dog, you may keep him as long as you wish. It is a good thing for the soul of a man when the soul of a dumb creature remembers him gratefully. You were a comfort to him; and he will be a comfort to you. As in that former life you were master of your own actions, so in this. When you are sure that you are ready to be in your service, come to this spot and call, Earnius, and

shall come; but remember, that when you once take up your burden you must bear it, even unto the end."

The black-robed figure took up its burden and returned into the forest, leaving Phil with his hand resting upon the head of the gray dog, whose soft, sorrowful eyes were filled with tender sympathy.

And what a comfort the dog was to him; always at his side, always loving, always eager to cheer him by every means in a dog's power. They stayed in the meadow for a period, but whether it was long or short, Phil could not tell; for there was neither the glare of moon nor the darkness of night, but always a soft, pleasant light, like the twilight of a perfect day.

Many white-robed processions passed through on their way to the Beautiful Country. In one was an aged woman—beautiful with a transfiguring beauty; which, while it in no way obscured her identity, made her as perfect and satisfying to his artistic sense, as were the young ones and the maidens.

She greeted him with every mark of love and gratitude, and it suddenly dawned upon him that this beautiful spirit had been the old apple woman who had benefited by another of his acts, as impulsive and unreasonable as the one which had given the dog a taste of what the whole world will be when its inhabitants are ruled by love.

She was filled with sorrow when he told her of his condition, and she stepped from the procession and said that she too would stay with him to comfort him, for he had been a great comfort to her through the storms of the last winter, and that her boy had taken charge of the stand and would get along in a way he could never have done without Phil's kindness. Phil felt ashamed to think of

the little he had done for her, and urged her to go on into the reward she had so honestly earned; but she shook her head with a smile which scattered over him some of that divine love which passes understanding.

But even as he could not go on with her, neither could she stay to comfort him. Each had chosen his own lot, and each must abide by the decision. When she felt a force drawing her on, she urged Phil to begin his service at once, and finish as quickly and as bravely as possible. As she vanished into the depths of the forest, she turned and waved her hand, and after that the meadow did not look so green or beautiful.

This was the only spirit which he recognized, and as he looked back at his wasted life, he wondered if all of its activities had been hollow and meaningless except these two impulsive acts of charity, of charity which was a giving not of money alone, but of himself as well.

After this, the meadow, at first so beautiful, grew very wearisome and he longed for release. He knew that the longer he postponed it the harder it would be; but the thought of bearing that ghastly carcass wherever he went was too horrible, and he would shudder and turn away.

Ah, how he longed for one more chance on the old Earth. With the whole world to choose from, he had wasted his manhood in idleness, folly, and futile endeavor; and then with his own hand had sentenced his memory to disgrace and his soul to torment.

At last he could stand it no longer, and going to the edge of the forest, he called in a loud, clear voice, "Earnius, Earnius."

Instantly from out the forest came the form of the black-robed Earnius with a tender smile upon his lips; and as

N. W. O. LIBRARY

E. W. O. LIBRARY

Phil looked closely, he saw that the burden which he bore had become smaller.

"Are you ready, Philip?" asked Earnius gravely.

"Yes," answered Phil as bravely as possible, "I am ready."

They gazed long into each other's faces. The eyes of Earnius were infinitely sad, not with resentment against persecution; but with that deeper sadness which enters heartily into the spirit and meaning of penitence and which expresses an outpouring love for the hand which administers the punishment and appreciation for the tender love which yearns for the period of probation to be over. The eyes were the eyes of a martyr looking out through the gloom of temporary bitterness to the glory of eternal reward. They reminded Phil of the moonlight, splashing the mountain peaks above the bank of smoke; and the humble but undoubting confidence in them inspired Phil with hope.

They set off together on a small dreary path through the forest, Earnius, Philip, and the great gray dog. After a long journey they came to a place so ghastly and ghoulish, that Phil became faint and closed his eyes to ease their torture. His right hand clutched the robe of his guide, his left hand rested upon the head of the dog, and thus he stumbled painfully through the chaotic wreckage of a rebellious world. When he opened his eyes, he found himself in a gloomy, roaring cave; and there, on a slimy shelf of stone, lay his old, broken body.

It was a sickening sight, and Phil felt that come what would, he could not touch it, let alone add it to the burden of his sins; and he drew back trembling and sobbing. Earnius stood silent and unmoved, waiting for Phil to

gain control of himself; but in his face was a strength which launched itself forth freely and without stint. The dog, his eyes filled with that wonderful trust which only a dog's eyes can show, stood with his head on one side, waiting with perfect confidence for Phil to do that which would, of course, be the right thing to do; and this it was which gave him strength.

A black robe, such as Earnius wore was hanging beside the shelf, a piece of black leather fitted with thongs was folded beside the hideous object which had once been his body, and Phil knew that he must wrap this body in the leather with his own hands; must touch it, fold the rotting members, bind it into a pack, and take it upon his shoulder; and the thought repulsed him and made him turn shuddering away.

But again the sight of the calm, silent Earnius, and the patient, trustful dog, stimulated his courage; and tearing down and trampling upon his weakness, he started forward, reached forth his hand to the body; and then paused as a blinding flash smote him in the eyes.

CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE

INITIAL STEPS

For a long time Phil Lytton sat without moving, a wondering unbelief in his eyes. He felt no doubt with regard to Earnius or the great gray dog; but he was unable to comprehend the material world upon which he was gazing as though for the first time.

He was back in the little shack in the mountains and it had been the first rays of the rising sun which had caressed his head, causing him to look upward at the very sun itself. He was still sitting at the little table upon which lay the razor, smooth and bright as when he had pressed it against his cheek. The fever which had been raging in his blood had burned itself out, leaving his mind clear with that disinfecting cleanliness akin to new birth. He dared not move for fear some of the familiar pain and dullness would return; and so he sat and looked through his open door at a world he had never before seen.

A breeze had swept all the smoke from the valley, and in the modesty of its morning bath in the gentle sunshine, it was beautiful and charming. A great flood of thankfulness was in Phil's heart, and a friendliness so high and pure that he could not only include all those whom he had ever known, in a warm, impersonal embrace; but could even sympathize with, and forgive, the man he had formerly been.

"Philip Lytton," he said soberly, as one man to another, "you committed suicide last night as surely as a man ever did; and you must pay your debt as fully as you would have had to, had your vision been true. In beginning a new life, your old past with its wasted hours and slighted opportunities, must hang about your neck; until, through deeds of service to others, it will fall from you little by little, and you can continue your journey, perhaps — perhaps even on to the Beautiful Country. Oh," — breaking forth in spontaneous expression — "I am thankful, I am thankful!"

He arose and shook himself; but it brought no return of pain or weakness, and he went to the little stream and took a cold, invigorating plunge. After putting on the clean clothes he had washed the day before, he ate his breakfast and called at the office for his time. He had been at work for more than a month and had thirty-one dollars coming to him after his debts had been subtracted.

He slipped the check into his pocket with a feeling of comfort, rolled his few belongings in his blanket, and sat on his bunk to think what he should do next. He saw the men in a new light now, he saw that they had made advances to him, had honestly wanted to be friendly with him; but that it had been his own snobbishness which had insisted upon exclusion; and now he wanted to go to them, shake hands heartily, thank them for what they had tried to do, and let them see that it was not his true self which had repulsed them, but an artificial barrier composed of fever, weakness, and the remnants of his own former life of heartless trivialities. And he also wanted to say farewell to the Lady Barber.

It took him some time to consider all this, and noon had

come before he was ready; so he ate one more meal with them, and told them, as frankly as one speaks to well-tried friends, that he had not been himself before; but that he did appreciate their kindness; and the warm hearts beneath the soiled shirts grew soft, the eyes which beamed into his glistened with shy affection, and one and all wished that they had done more for him. As Phil shook hands with the few who had been thrown with him most, the remainder whispered among themselves that he was a blame good "feller" after all; and there was much love in the rough mining camp of New Hygia.

Just as Phil passed the blacksmith shop on his way to the Lady Barber, he came face to face with Merton. The change in Phil's face should have been apparent to even a human mosquito like Merton; but the assistant superintendent stopped directly in front of him and said in his narrow, jeering way, "Good afternoon, Mister Latham. I understand that we are to lose the pleasure of your company. It will grieve us deeply; but as I presume you will soon be associating with other gentlemen of leisure, we shall try to rejoice in your good fortune."

Phil looked at Merton gravely. He was disappointed that a cloud had come into his clear sky, and at first he tried to walk around Merton without speaking; but the Assistant Superintendent was not to be robbed of his last opportunity to irritate one who had offended him by actually possessing the very development which he himself pretended; so he again stepped in front of Phil.

A large group of workmen were gathered near the blacksmith shop, and it suddenly occurred to Phil, that here was a debt he honestly owed, not only on his own account, but

also on the account of every man working there, and a stern light came into his eyes.

"Merton," he said sharply. "I don't want to touch your nasty body with my hands; but if you don't shut up and get out of my way, I'll throw you out."

Phil tried to keep his temper down and speak conservatively; but he had unconsciously absorbed a large amount of vivid profanity during his term at the mines; and beautifully garnished phrases leaped ready-framed to his lips so that he had to bite his words off with a snap to keep from throwing restraint to the winds and cursing the man before him to his fourth generation.

Enough of this flamed in Phil's eyes to goad Merton to fury, and when Phil tried once more to pass him, Merton thrust him roughly back; and then the two men stood and glared into each other's eyes.

In good condition Phil was the larger; but now he was so emaciated that he seemed to be a slender weakling. He was down to a wire edge, Merton was fat; there was thus but little choice as far as condition was concerned but Phil was one of those exceptions which the Sunday School books so methodically ignore, an indolent young man with ample training and the temperament of a boxer-fighter.

The longer he looked into Merton's eyes the fiercer he became; until the ultimate stage was reached, and then a warm flush of purely animal joy swept into his pallid face, his lips broke into a free smile, and he reached out and slapped Merton on the cheek with a resounding whack. Stepping back out of reach he clenched his fists, leaving them hang loosely at his sides, and said with a roguish glint

in his eyes, "If you can't possibly get along without it, Uncle Billy, why, come and help yourself."

Merton hesitated a moment, but Phil's features were so haggard, that there did not seem to be a fight in him, and he went for him with a rush. It was very simple; Phil merely straightened out a stiffened arm and Merton's head went back with a jar and his body toppled into a ludicrous sitting posture.

Phil had not moved from his tracks; he put his arms akimbo, and gazed down with mock seriousness upon the assistant superintendent. "If you are entirely through, Uncle Billy, I shall bid you adieu; but if you wish to continue this exercise you will have to stand up; I do not know how to fight sitting down."

Merton had not been hurt so much as surprised; he still thought that he could handle Phil without difficulty; and a ripple of suppressed comment from the interested audience, caused him to leap to his feet and rush at Phil with a curse and his arm upraised and drawn back for the unskilled blow of rage.

This time Phil swayed to the left with a neat crouch, and presented his recent employer with a jolt below the ear. All the bones in Phil's arm had been bound end to end by the stiffened muscles; and Merton had scant time to enjoy the shower of stars before the total eclipse began.

When Phil saw that it was all over, he felt dizzy and weak, and was drawing deep, resting breaths when Lazy Bill rushed from the crowd with a whoop and began to pump his right arm. "Beautiful, beautiful!" cried that worthy with joyous enthusiasm. "Oh, goodly, gurgly,

gorgeous! You can't leave us, old man; we need you. Why if you had been in twenty per cent. condition, you'd have knocked his head entirely off. As it is, I think, and hope, that you unjointed his neck."

A sudden fear struck a chill to Phil's heart and he knelt by the prostrate man; but when he rolled him upon his back, Merton began to groan; so once more waving farewell to the men, all friends and comrades now, Phil went on to the shop of the Lady Barber. Whipping Merton had not been the way he had expected to begin his regeneration; but nothing else could have given him so complete a joy, and nothing else could so clearly have indicated that in spite of his wan face and weak legs, he was again normal, as the unhampered freedom with which he revelled in this joy.

His mind was busy with pleasant thoughts of Edith Hampton when he entered the shop. Recalled to his present by sight of the Lady Barber, herself, Phil's face again reddened beneath its pallor and its tan. "I am going away," he said simply, "and I wanted to tell you that I was not myself the other night, and that I sincerely respect and admire you."

Then the Lady Barber did a silly thing; she permitted two tears to escape and roll down her cheeks. "I did not bear you any ill will," she said. "I know men, and I knew you. You were just lonely for the girl, and you were homesick and wanted to be naughty, that was all. All your life you will be but a child," she continued with wistful tenderness, which Phil could not have understood "and for this reason, women will forgive you many things. You will not be good from a sense of duty, but you will

never be bad for very long at a time. We might have been good friends, and I have missed you. I am sorry you are going away."

"It is mighty good of you to take it so," said Phil sincerely. "The men have been good to me also; but I have not been myself until to-day. I have honestly been in miserable shape up here; but to-day, I am actually sorry that I am going to leave."

"Are you going back home?"

"No, oh, no; I'm just going on to see if I can't find a hole somewhere that a peg of my shape will just fit into. I am pretty useless, one way or another."

"I wish you the best of luck," said the woman, "and I shall often think of you. If you find your place, or if you don't, drop me a line once in a while to let me know. It does get lonesome up here sometimes."

There was a yearning back of this which touched Phil's heart. "I shall think of you often," he promised, "and I'll try to write once in a while. What is Jennie's address? I want to let her uncle know, some time; but not soon."

"Jim used to get his mail at Edgewood, and I suppose he'll settle down there. He has a little place up in the hills. I have not written to Jennie yet; but I expect to soon, and I'll tell her I saw you."

"Yes, give her my best wishes, too; but don't say anything about her uncle, for nothing may come of it; and it is better not to set her dreaming. And now, good-bye; you're doing a lot of good up here, and I hope you'll get your share of happiness."

The woman took his hand in a firm clasp. "I am

mighty glad you came to say good-bye, and I'm sure that you'll find your place some time. Don't be foolish; there is a lot of good in you."

As Phil walked away to get his blanket, he was full of a warm content. All the world was kind to him, kinder than he deserved. He recalled that Valerie, also, had said that there was good in him; and he determined to find some way to use whatever good there was in service to others.

When he neared his room, he saw the watchman, hands on hips, regarding his rolled blanket with fixed displeasure. "A pleasant day," said Phil cheerily.

The watchman whirled with a start, and looked searchingly into Phil's face without making reply. The expression of surprise gradually faded into one of reproach, and at last the watchman said accusingly: "Well, by gosh you're the last feller in the world I expected to see today."

Phil recalled the power of deputy sheriff which the watchman held, and at once supposed that Merton had ordered his arrest. "Why?" he asked.

"How did you sleep last night?" rejoined the watchman, ignoring the question.

Phil sighed with relief. "I hardly slept at all. I was in a fever and I had a most unusual vision. I thought I was dead."

"Ah, ha," exclaimed the watchman. "What had you died of?"

"It sounds silly in the light of day," replied Phil; "but I thought I had cut my own throat." He did not reply lightly. He saw the refined features of the boy upon the floor, as he had seen them last night, and his own face became very sober.

"And now you 're goin' away, I suppose," said the watchman, not without a trace of gloom in his voice.

"Yes, I am going away," replied Phil, holding out his hand.

"Well, I hope you get along all right," said the watchman ominously, as he shook Phil's hand.

Phil put his rolled blanket over his shoulder and started for the road which led down the mountain, leaving the watchman gazing after him. "I wish I'd 'a' run my finger along his spine to get some of his luck," muttered the watchman to himself; "but the' ain't no assurance that he's through with it yet. I'd be willin' to bet two bits that that Dago hounds him around the world but what he finally gits him. If he don't do that, he'll get the next one that uses this room; and if he tries that, I bet I don't go huntin' for no Mexican on the night he tries to finish things up. That was n't no vision he seen, I bet two bits on that. Whatever it was, most of it was real; and I wish I'd made him tell me of it. Gee, I have rotten luck!"

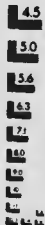
Phil walked past the dining shack and the office toward the opening of the canyon, and every step seemed to give him new strength. Constitutions like his do not disintegrate without making a mighty effort, and when the reaction of health once begins, its progress is remarkably rapid.

As he walked down through the deep, cool canyon away from the camp, Phil's mind dwelt upon his fight with Merton, and his farewell to the Lady Barber; and, according to his new code, he felt that he had actually made a start. He tried to disapprove of fighting; but he felt that the memory of that last blow would remain with Merton as a salutary check upon his treatment of the men.



MICROCOPY RESOLUTION TEST CHART

(ANSI and ISO TEST CHART No. 2)



APPLIED IMAGE Inc

1653 East Main Street
Rochester, New York 14609 USA
(716) 482 - 0300 - Phone
(716) 288 - 5989 - Fax

The sun was well screened by the leafy boughs, the burden on his shoulder was not heavy, and he was filled with a new purpose which acted like a stimulant. He had no idea where he was going; but knew that, in some vague way, he had enlisted to fight upon the side of right as he saw it, and the prospect pleased him. Much of the old Phil Lytton had been used in making the new; but part of the new had never been in the old.

His steps were short and it required some attention to maintain his balance; but he did not feel lonely, or quite alone, as he walked between the high walls of the canyon. The birds were singing, as they had sung in the forest beside the great, green meadow; sometimes it almost seemed that he had caught a glimpse of a graceful, gray form darting about the curve of the path ahead of him, and occasionally he would shift the rolled blanket containing his few belongings upon his shoulder, and draw a deep breath, as he thought that he had already taken up the burden of his old life to begin the period of service which should at last lead him, even unto the Beautiful Country.

CHAPTER THIRTY-TWO

A PEACEFUL PAUSE

AT no time during the world's history have there been enough adventures to supply the demand. At all ages men have become dissatisfied with the brand of adventures which the home market offered, and have gone forth under the common delusion that anything of foreign make, even an adventure, would be of unquestionable supremacy. It was because of this lack of real adventures that the good knights were forced to slaughter such hordes of dragons, in season and out.

And so now with Phil Lytton. With all the freshness of a new vow upon him, he might well be expected to achieve something akin to distinction, if only external circumstance worthy to call forth his best were offered; but instead, his trip of a week down the mountain road did nothing except give him back much wasted tissue, and consume four dollars and fifty cents of his money, which was as much as a ride in the stage would have cost.

At Tres Pinos, he stepped into a small general store to purchase some cheese and crackers, and was waited upon by a fresh-faced girl. He sat upon a box to eat his simple meal, and from the conversation between the girl and the next customer, he learned that the girl's father had injured his back and could not work for some time, and that a clerk to assist in conducting the store was both

needed and desired; so Phil made application to the girl, and was by her directed to the small, neat house in which her father was spending his time in a vain endeavor to refrain from expressing his real sentiments regarding his luck.

The old man had a pleasant face, but deep-set eyes which seemed able to see into the heart of things. He asked Phil many questions, and Phil, feeling that at last he was free to be independent, answered frankly, telling what he chose truthfully, but stating that he did not wish to say anything definite about his earlier life. The old man was satisfied, and hired Phil, who still elected to be called Lenord Latham.

There were no adventures here; it was a small eddy, far from the current of life, and Phil could not have chosen a better place to recuperate. He found a lively content in the variety of his labors, and also in the people with whom he soon grew acquainted. There was no condescension about Phil now; he made an effort to please, and his effort was fully appreciated.

The old man owned a plot of land which he had set out in fruit trees; but which was badly in need of care. Phil arranged with the girl to tend the store while he put in as much time as possible upon the plot of ground under the advice of the old man and his neighbors. He ate at the house and slept in a small room off the store, and the days flowed past him pleasantly, but with such smoothness that he scarcely noticed them. No mention had been made of wages; but when the second week was finished, the old man told Phil that in addition to his board and room, he could draw six dollars per week in money, and Phil was honestly thankful.

There was at all times a wistful seriousness in Phil's face now; but much of his old gaiety had returned, and the girl found him a wonderful addition to her tiny circle. She was quiet and reserved, with large dark eyes which rested steadily upon whoever was speaking to her, and her laugh was low and musical, such a laugh as begins in the heart with only its outer ripples reaching the lips; and it was the laugh of complete understanding. Phil liked to hear her laugh and studied her to learn her trends and fancies. He told her much of the big outer world; but carefully avoided making it sufficiently attractive to rob her present of its simple joys.

In all his life, Phil had never been so normal. He had lost nearly all of the supercilious complacency which had formerly been a characteristic trait; he had learned to see through manners and morals into the fierce struggle which each individual soul was making to rise above the crush of circumstances; and the earnest purpose with which he had picked up the burden of his old life with its failures continued to influence him, and gradually placed a new ideal of success before him.

He no longer yearned for a triumph which would vindicate him in the eyes of his former friends; but made himself ruler of his own personality, made this new ideal the constitution under which he governed himself, and this ideal was the lasting beauty, the living truth, and the certain satisfaction of unselfish service. He did not sit and wait for a great opportunity, he did not weigh effects; he merely helped all whom he could help, in the simplest and most natural way possible; and his face, brown and rosy now, became strong and gentle.

"I must love her," he said to himself one evening, as

he rested a moment before starting the return of a long walk. "I certainly must love her. She forced me out of my former life; I have tried to hate her; I know that she would look upon my present work as a foolish waste of time; and yet in some unreasonable way, all that I do, I seem to be doing for her. Oh, Edith, we have not one thought in common, and yet you seem closer to me to-night than you ever were before."

August and September passed, and October found Phil a business man at last. The old man had been able to get to the store by the middle of September; but he had found the new clerk so diligent that he had not taken the reins from him, but had been content to aid the new activity which Phil had inaugurated. The little store had formerly waited for customers, and had then waited on them; but Phil had studied them, had learned some of the skill of salesmanship, had taken orders for large amounts at low profits from the more pretentious ranches, and had greatly increased a trade which the old man had supposed to be as unresponsive to set effort as the wind or the rain.

"You pay yourself ten dollars a week," said the old man, "and I reckon that before long we'll have to come to some arrangement about sharing profits. I'm gettin' old and it takes young blood in business."

No other words in his entire life had given Phil such a thrill, and he had gone into his new plans with increased zest. So satisfying was the content he felt in his full, active life, that he was beginning to look upon it as his destiny. He saw many ways in which he could branch out, and the stimulant of actually being in control and also useful, had aroused his ambition to daring flights.

And then he was forced to take up his blind quest once

more. It was upon the tenth of October that he first perceived the need of going away, and it took him several days to completely try the case and render his decision. Mary, the daughter, had been gradually losing her perfect freedom with him; but engrossed as he was in his new plans, he had not noticed. At last, however, he surprised a tender warmth in her eyes, and in spite of his boyish modesty, which was still honest and unspoiled, he was forced to admit that she was beginning to love him.

He thought it out carefully; he was fond of her and truly appreciated the sheltered purity and sweet simplicity of her character; but he did not love her and he could not love her. He was sorry; for he would have been perfectly content to make his real start in life in the little general store, living each day as it came and building each step securely before going on to the next; but the more he thought of Mary, the more clearly he saw Edith, and Edith stood the test, even against his reason.

He did not think that Mary was conscious of her own feelings for him; and he decided to leave before they made themselves manifest. It was with a mutual wrench that they parted; but Phil forced himself to be cheerful, told them that it would be necessary for him to return East, and that they would probably never meet again. Mary felt a dull ache in her heart, but she knew not the symptoms of love, and she was young and eager for what the years held in store; so that Phil's promptness in leaving saved her from any lasting regret.

Phil started away with ninety dollars, perfect health, a well-ordered mind, an active ambition, and high hopes; but although he had learned much of himself, he was still ignorant of the world, and he drifted along the San Jose

valley toward San Francisco with nothing more definite in his mind than the hope that he would chance upon another general store with a disabled owner, and without a girl whose dark, soft eyes rested steadily upon whoever was speaking to her.

Something warned him away from San Francisco; and, as the peculiar combination he had in mind seemed elusive, he turned off to Stockton and the first of November found him in Sacramento wondering what he should do through the winter to preserve the seventy dollars which remained to him.

He could find no work, and casually drifted down to the railroad to see the trains coming in from the East; the far off East, for which he was beginning to yearn. He had become lonely again, and loneliness always caused the fibers of his will to loosen. As he sat in the bright sunshine, repenting, according to his wont, that he had obeyed his own behest in leaving the little store at Tres Pinos, a bright-eyed boy strolled up, looked at him a moment, and asked: "Say, Jack, got any tobacco?"

U. W. O. LIBRARY

CHAPTER THIRTY-THREE

A NEW COMRADE

PHIL regarded the boy with a smile of amusement. He was an independent chap, sturdy and self-possessed, and Phil felt his own pent-up friendliness reaching out to the boy with a soothing sense of relief. He took out a sack of the cheap tobacco he had learned to smoke at the mines, and held it in his hand while he regarded his inquisitor seriously. "What do you want with it?" he asked.

"I have n't any soap and I want to wash me hands," replied the boy with withering sarcasm. "If there is any left we'll make some tea, and tell fortunes with the grounds."

Phil warmed his hands at the boy's rough wit, and from that moment they were comrades. After each had lighted his pipe, they settled themselves comfortably and proceeded to the few details necessary for friendly understanding.

"What is your name?" asked Phil.

"Maumee Mat," replied the boy with conscious pride.

"What do you answer to?"

"Lenord," replied Phil. "Do you live here?"

"What?" exclaimed the insulted youth. "Me live in this burg? The' don't anybody live here. This is one o' the places they store dead folks until the angels get time to identify 'em. I live on the road. Which way you headin'?"

"I'm headin' East," replied Phil, with inward amusement. "Which way are you headin'?"

"Oh, nowhere in particular. I'm lookin' for a cozy place to plant myself through the winter. The regular bos have crowded all the warm spots and I'm goin' to saunter back east until I find a hotel or something that wants to feed me until the blue birds twitter."

"How old are you?"

The boy looked at him coldly. It was plain that this was not a proper question. If "kid" had been tacked on the end, it would have altered it completely; but without it, Maumee Mat experienced a disappointing shortcoming in his new acquaintance, a crassness, a lack of finish, and from that on he became a little condescending. "I'm fifteen," he replied; "how old are you?"

"I think I am thirty, but I am no longer sure," replied Phil.

"Got any graft?" asked Mat.

Phil shook his head.

"How you travelin'?"

"I have been walking lately," replied Phil with a smile.

The boy gave an eloquent whistle. "You must hate your feet," he rejoined. "What the deuce a man wants to walk for with all the railroads we have in this country, is more 'n I can see. What do you call east, Nevada?"

"I came from New York," answered Phil, in self-defence.

The boy looked at Phil's shoes, and gave another whistle, which brought a smile to Phil's lips.

"Got any cush?" asked the boy.

"A little," replied Phil, correctly inferring that reference had been made to the medium of exchange.

R. W. B. CURRY

E. W. O. LIBRARY

"Give me two bits and I'll go get the makin's for a cook-up, and then we'll lay for a fruit car and ride over the hill in comfort. It'll be cold out doors from now on."

Phil handed the boy a quarter, and in a short time he returned with coffee, eggs, bacon, potatoes, bread and onions. "I would not make much of an effort to secure your trade," said Phil.

The boy winked solemnly as he pulled forth a sack of tobacco. "I never would steal from a friend," he said candidly, "but the' ain't none o' these rummy storekeepers friends o' mine. Do you want the change, or shall I keep it?"

"You keep it this time," answered Phil, trying to speak reprovingly, "but in the future, I prefer to have you pay for what you get."

"I'd do it in a minute," answered the boy calmly, "if the' was any chance that I'd get what I paid for. Don't worry about me; I've never been pinched yet."

When the meal was cooked, upon a broken skillet and in a large tomato can, Phil was surprised to see that the scruples which he had honestly felt, were not influencing his appetite in the least, and he ate with zest.

"Do you know how to beat a train?" asked the boy, as soon as his pipe was lighted.

"I never tried it," answered Phil modestly.

"And you think," remarked Maumee Mat from a great height. "Well, you look pretty handy, and I guess I can steer you; but you're the worst hog for walkin' I ever did see. Have you got the nerve to put up a scrap if the shacks try to ditch you?"

"If you are asking me I would fight a train crew, rather

than get off when ordered," replied Phil, "I don't think I would."

"Oh gee! Haven't you got anything to fight with?"

"Not a thing."

"Great Scott!" The boy's simple surprise was quite genuine. He produced a small revolver, a razor, two large taps, and a slungshot. "When anyone tries to take a train away from me, he's got to show a better title," he said, shaking his head.

"You would not shoot a man in the discharge of his duty, would you?" asked Phil.

"He can discharge his duty all he wants to; but if he tries to discharge me when the train is hittin' her up through the desert, why I'll have to discharge this. I don't weigh enough to stall the blamed old kettle, do I? Well, then, what does he want to make me hit the gravel for?"

"I know, but he would be acting under orders."

"Orders—humph! A man has to protect his own life on the road, orders or no orders."

"What started you on the road?"

"My stepfather. I was sellin' papers 'n' doin' odd jobs, an' me an' the old woman was gettin' on, when a foolish streak hit her, and she married a dub who was the worst stiff you ever piped. I told her just what he was but she would go on—she owned her own home, such as it was. That was three years ago. I stood it a year, and then I dug. I went back a year ago and tried it again; but she died; so I came back to the road."

"Don't you intend to go to work some time?" asked Phil.

"I work whenever I get anything that suits me. I'd

rather do decent work than bum; but neither one of 'em pays extra heavy. I suppose I'll settle down some time. Why don't you find yourself at work, right now?"

"I wish I was," replied Phil soberly. "I was perfectly satisfied with my last work; but I had to leave it, and now I shall take the first job I can find."

"Listen to me," said Maumee Mat, with the assurance of an oracle. "The most unhappy guys I see, are the ones looking for work; and the most contented ones are the stiffs who try to hide from it. What's the use?"

"Would n't you like to be educated?"

"Oh, sure; I'd like to be a lawyer or a banker or a senator; but a feller has to get into the right groove to head into an easy berth, and my luck don't run that way. Here 'a our train."

Maumee Mat took complete control of Phil during the month which followed. He showed him how to ride trains, how to keep warm, and how to live on nothing to speak of. Both found work in the same eating house in Ogden, and stayed there two weeks. At Rawlins, Wyoming, they had their first quarrel; they had come upon an intoxicated man asleep; the boy immediately confiscated two dollars, and Phil as instantly seized him by the collar and dragged him up to the man. "Put it back," said Phil sternly.

"You ain't bossin' me," replied the boy defiantly.

"Put it back," repeated Phil.

The boy tried to squirm out of his hands and in the scuffle which ensued, the man awakened and took the boy's part. Phil explained that his companion had taken two dollars from the man, and the man's wrath was turned upon the boy, whom he slapped with his open palm. Phil

360 THE KNIGHT-ERRANT

immediately knocked the man down, and while the man was considering the peculiar contrasts of life, Phil forced the boy to return the two dollars.

The boy was deeply insulted at Phil's unethical procedure in returning what he considered perfectly legitimate spoils, but was highly elated at the neatness with which Phil had knocked the man down. On the whole, Phil had raised himself decidedly in the boy's opinion; but Maumee Mat was not one to forego punishment after it had been honestly earned, and for the balance of the day he either sulked, or scolded Phil for being too tender for life on the road.

Phil had tried to awaken the boy's better nature during the weeks they had spent together, and in the process had grown very fond of him, and had also awakened his affection; but the oddly distinctive egotism of Maumee Mat had prevented him from giving much expression to a sentiment, which he regarded as an effeminate weakness, and Phil felt genuine sorrow at what he considered a complete failure.

So close had they grown during their intimate association, however, that their first real quarrel hurt and perturbed them to such an extent that they forgot to eat a noon meal. It was bright, clear weather, but bitterly cold at that high altitude; and about three in the afternoon, Mat moodily prodded the soft coal fire near which they were lounging, and said reproachfully: "If you had n't been such a sissy about those two dollars, we'd 'a' had a cook-up to dream about. You're the first stiff I ever saw on the road who thought a drunk had any claim to money. Why don't you go back to your Mama, and get your old job, teachin' Sunday School?"

Phil made no reply, but held two dollars out to the boy. "I guess you know where you can stick those two dol-

lars," flashed the boy angrily. "I was n't beggin' you, and I don't intend to sponge off o' you any longer. We're quits. I started this fire with me own match."

"I suppose," said Phil slowly, "that what I really ought to do is to give you your needin's."

A glow of pleasure came to the boy's heart. After having seen Phil in action, Mat had measured him critically, had put a just estimate upon his companion's strength and speed, and had secretly offered up to him all the eager hero-worship for which his peculiar nature had a large capacity and his narrow life offered but few outlets. Nothing would have given him greater satisfaction than a good "licking" from Phil.

"You just try it if you dare," he returned defiantly, his right hand ostentatiously reaching for his revolver.

Phil's hand shot forth and seized the boy's wrist, slowly squeezed the bones of his arm, until Mat's face was wrinkled with pain, and then released it. "I have n't the heart to hurt you, Mat," he said.

"You have n't the heart to do anything except preach, and you can cut it out with me from this on. I know some twists, and you'd find your hands full tryin' to give me my needin's."

"You're as fierce as a rat terrier," rejoined Phil. "Here, take two bits and go get the makin's. You've made me hungry."

"You'll do your own rustlin' from now on. I'm goin' on to Hanna and get a job at the mines for the rest o' the winter; and you don't need to tag along, neither."

"Well, then I'll go up town and get some stuff," said Phil.

When he returned the boy was gone, and Phil made

coffee and fried half of the bacon. His heart was depressed and lonely as he ate in the early twilight. It seemed that he was doomed to lose whomever he became fond of, and for a moment, the regret swept through him that he had not finished it all that moonlight night at the mines.

He lighted his pipe and sat brooding over the fire. It suddenly occurred to him that he was not such a great way from Denver, and with the thought came a curiosity to learn what had become of his investments. He had not read the papers for months; he had skimmed through the news occasionally, but had not once thought of examining the market reports to see if there was any word of his eccentric investments; and now he was eager to see just what had befallen him when he had run amuck those last few weeks in New York.

New York — that was it; he was going to New York. He had never permitted this thought to actually enter his inner field of reflection, although he had caught its vague form occasionally; but now he knew that when he had left Tres Pinos, he had started straight for New York, and a fierce yearning seized him to be once more upon its streets, to hear the old sounds, see the old sights, and know just what had happened to the world since he himself had dropped out of it over a year before.

Then his thoughts turned again to Mat, and he placed the remaining food more conspicuously; so that the boy would see it if he returned after Phil had left; for Phil had resigned himself to his bereavement, and was convinced that Mat would not be friendly with him again.

All this time, the boy was enjoying his own punishment of himself. He admitted in his inmost heart that Phil was right, and all the time that Phil had been eating and brood-

U. W. O. LIBRARY

U. W. O. LIBRARY

ing, the boy had been watching him in shivering isolation through the partly open door of an empty box car. The cold and the hunger had become the hair shirt which Mat was wearing in penitence; but he was also enjoying the loneliness which he knew that Phil was feeling. It is not rare for a human to punish himself and others, when a little frank affection would be much the simpler way.

A solid fruit train started sullenly out of the yard on its long journey east, and Phil decided to ride it to Cheyenne and then drop down to Denver. Just before the train came up to them, Mat jumped from his car and walked over to the fire. "I'm goin' to ride this train, and I don't want you to tag me. Do you understand?"

"You had better slip this food into your pocket, Mat," said Phil kindly. "I am going to ride this train too, as far as Cheyenne; but you need not be friendly unless you wish."

"If you ride it, I don't," replied the boy, his mind fully made up to stick to Phil as long as possible. "I want to get to Hanna, as soon as I can, for I'm so hungry now, my feet are cold; but if you ride this train, I wait for the next."

"Then you ride this train, and I shall wait for the next," said Phil, seating himself by the fire again.

Mat stood with his back to the blaze until half the train had passed, and then he walked away from the light of the fire and crouching low, ran in to catch a side ladder. The few minutes at the fire had merely accentuated his chill; his hand slipped, there was a smothered scream, and Phil's heart itself seemed to be under the wheels as he saw through the darkness a writhing form close to the track.

He rushed forward, caught up the boy and ran back to

the fire. Mat was groaning incoherently, and Phil unconsciously echoed the groans as he gently made an examination. The left leg was severed just above the ankle.

"Is the foot plum gone, Len?" asked Mat through his teeth.

"Yes," replied Phil as steadily as he could. "Lie down on your back and breathe deep, and relax as much as possible. Drift off if you can, old chap. This is tough; but it might be a lot worse. I'll twist something about it to stop the blood, and then I'll go and find a place for you."

"I did n't intend to leave you, Len," said the boy. "I was only going to play smart Alec, and pretend to be thrown; so that we could be pals again. Oh, gee, but that pain was a devil!"

"Have you seen any heavy twine about here?" asked Phil.

"There is some in that empty. I was hidin' there all the time, watchin' you eat. UMMM! Sometimes it shoots like fire, but mostly it's just dead and numb."

Phil ran and procured the heavy twine, small rope in fact, several pieces of which lay upon the car floor. He tied it loosely about the boy's leg, found the main artery, slipped a handkerchief under the twine above it, and twisted the twine so tightly with a stick that there was but little danger from hemorrhage. The crushing on the car wheel had not produced as great a flow of blood as a cleaner cut would have done; and after taking off his suit of overalls and wrapping it about the boy, Phil started to remove his coat also.

"If you take that off to put over me," cried Mat, who was still shivering from cold and shock, "blamed if I don't get up and run."

"I'll run all the way," argued Phil, "and that will keep me warm. Don't be silly."

"I want to be cold," said the boy, his eyes full of tears. "I wish the damn train had killed me, for treatin' you the way I did. I won't stay if you take off your coat."

"All right," said Phil, as he replenished the fire which had been built behind a shelter. "You lie as still as you can, and I'll hurry."

The first doctor he found was a young fellow who did not regard tramps as human beings; but when Phil agreed to pay fifty dollars to start on and the rest of the bill as soon as he could, the doctor thought it would be possible to get Mat into the hospital.

Phil watched the amputation himself, waited until the boy had come out from the anesthetic, and had then taken the rough little hand as it lay upon the unaccustomed sheet. The boy, tried his best to keep from sobbing, but his breath would insist upon coming in gasps. "I wish I had been killed for callin' you a Sunday School teacher," he said at last. "You're the whitest guy I ever knew."

Just at daybreak, Phil slipped the boy his last ten-dollar bill, promised to get some more as soon as possible, stood by the cot a long moment, tempted to kiss the wrinkled little forehead; but not having quite enough courage, gave the brown hand a grasp which told many things — and hurried back to the road.

CHAPTER THIRTY-FOUR

THE WHEEL OF FATE

PHIL had ninety-five cents left when he reached Denver two days later. He first tried to find out what the Rosy Dawn mine had been doing since he had contributed so liberally to its start in life; but his raiment was not of a character to arouse the cupidity, or politeness, of those having mining stock to sell, and it was not until the second day that he was told, rather gruffly, that the Rosy Dawn had been absorbed by the Honor Bright. Phil had expected no better news, and so he began his search for work.

There was no work for him in which he could earn money. He picked up a few odd jobs which provided him with food, and he slept in the sand house at the railroad; but he needed a hundred dollars to insure the best of care for Mat, and a chance to earn money was denied him.

Phil was no longer the lone wolf; he had a weakling to protect; and the world would be taking chances if it crowded him into too tight a corner. On the day before Christmas, he bought some meat and coffee, and went up the track to cook it. After eating, he smoked and faced the truth which had been eluding him all his life.

Back in the past, he had taken it for granted that it was entirely a matter of choice whether a man made a decent living at honest toil, or begged, or stole. Then, after having tried it in San Francisco, he had revised his opinion to

THE WHEEL OF FATE 367

the extent of believing that there were a few exceptions who were individually so incompetent that it was almost impossible for them to make a living—and sadly admitted that he was one of the exceptions. Now, after his success in the little store at Tres Pinos, and his present failure, when he was eager for work, and able to work, a strange fierceness came to him, as he saw the truth—that it was not the individual who was at fault, but Society.

“Very well,” he growled, shaking his fist at the city. “You have the right to refuse me work; but if you choose to do it, don’t, for heaven’s sake, preach to me about morality. I am going to send that boy some money; I am willing, and able, to work for it; I want to work for it; but how I get it is not the important thing. The important thing is that little Mat needs it, and I am going to send it. I hereby declare war upon you—and all is fair in war.”

This dramatic explosion brought Phil a modicum of comfort, and he returned to the city with the look of the prowler once more in his eyes; but with a strange, calm faith in his heart. He did not want trouble, he was willing to accept any opportunity which was offered, he had given his will unto the mystic side of his nature, and regarded himself merely as an instrument in the hand of Fate.

As he walked the streets, his lips were curved in a serious smile. He had not a cent in his pocket, nor a doubt in his heart. Something was about to happen through his agency which would provide him with money to send to his little friend back at Rawlins. He was not to reason about morals or methods; whatever promised money was the sign that his silent prayer had been answered, and he was to do what there was to do, send the money to Mat, and then

368 THE KNIGHT-ERRANT

pay for any damage he might have done to the forms of things.

As the darkness fell, he wandered toward the shopping district, drawn by the brilliantly lighted show windows, and the luxury and comfort they seemed to suggest. He gazed for a long time into a jeweler's window, in the center of which the scintillations from a magnificent diamond seemed to smile and beckon to him.

He sighed as he thought of the diamond he had given to Edith two years before; and then he sighed again as he thought of the extreme difficulty one would have in stealing this diamond without getting caught.

The premonition that he was soon to engage in some desperate act pressed closely upon him, and he became convinced that in accomplishing this act, which was to be done entirely for Mat's sake, he would lose his own life. The thought made him happy. It seemed to remove all trace of selfishness; it seemed to give him the very license he desired; it would turn crime, if crime were to be the way, into sacrifice, and it was in sacrifice that he longed to pour out the life which seemed of so little use to either the world or himself.

His face in the light of the jeweler's window was calm and serious, but it also beamed with an inner light; and never knight awaited the call to enter the lists more eagerly than Phil awaited the sign which was to come to him. He hoped that it might be the stopping of a runaway, the saving of a child in a fire, or some other deed which would not violate his earlier traditions; but it was not his to make selection; it was merely his to do promptly and fearlessly whatever was offered, and he turned away from the window filled with the surpassing content of one who has re-

U. W. O. LIBRARY

U. W. O. LIBRARY

THE WHEEL OF FATE 369

signed his tiny bit of life into the keeping of the Master of all life.

As he turned away, his foot struck a small object which slid along the pavement. Looking down, he recognized a five-dollar gold piece; and so overwhelmed was he at the chance meeting, that he felt like raising his hat to it; but on second thought, he stooped and picked it up. With hands in pockets, he stood for a moment seeking to interpret the meaning of this mysterious gift. Perhaps willingness to do whatever might be demanded of him had been all the test required. If so, his absolute readiness had been recognized and this coin had been sent for a specific purpose. Five dollars, merely as five dollars, was of small benefit to him, and so it was plain that he was to use this in such a way that it would supply Mat with the hundred dollars necessary. It became clear to him in a moment, and without further hesitation he hurried to that part of town where men play to win, and win to lose.

He entered a gambling house and walked up to the roulette table. He was wearing the overalls outside his woolen clothes; but he was so self-possessed that those who were not playing made room for him to get to the table, which was well covered with the chips of the players. "This is the twenty-fourth," said Phil aloud with decision. "I'll play it."

He placed his money upon the twenty-four, around went the lazy wheel, the little marble racing like mad; but when it stopped, it rested in the twenty-four, and Phil was worth one hundred seventy dollars. He was sure that this amount could not have been responsible for all the queer feelings he had been having that day; perhaps it was intended for him to win enough to buy a little store, and give

370 THE KNIGHT-ERRANT

Mat a fair chance to become an able man. "What is your limit?" he asked.

"The ceiling," replied the croupier.

Phil put the original coin into his vest pocket, and played his winnings upon twenty-five. When the marble stopped t. at time, Phil had five thousand, seven hundred seventy-five dollars. The crowd jostled about him, men crowded up to touch his shoulder for luck, others whispered to him to stop; but the thought had occurred to Phil that perhaps it was intended for him to win enough to go back to New York decently, and suddenly the face of Edith came before him.

He was perfectly cool which is usual with the instruments of Fate. "What is your bank worth?" he asked pleasantly.

"The Earth," answered the croupier gruffly.

"I play it all on twenty-six," said Phil.

All over the room the news had spread that a plunger was testing the bank, and the silence was so complete, that the whirr of the marble might be heard. It finally rolled into pocket number nine, and Phil had five dollars; but they were safe in the single coin in his pocket.

Not a shade crossed his face. "I went too far," he said to himself. "It was all right for me to try for the little store; but Edith is not for me;" and he turned and walked quietly out of the door, wondering if it was intended for him to play again, or if he had strained the luck which had been sent him for the use of little Mat.

He stood outside the door thinking: men had whims, why not coins; it might be that the coin preferred faro to roulette. Very well, he would give it a chance and make

U. W. D. LIBRARY

U. W. O. LIBRARY

THE WHEEL OF FATE 371

his own limit in advance. He would put the little coin back in his pocket at the first winning, he would put the first hundred away for Mat, the second hundred for himself, and then play for a thousand which would be enough to start a little store.

With this perfectly simple plan agreed to, he reentered the room and went to a faro table. He played nothing but the high card, either open or coppered; and at one time he was six hundred dollars ahead. When he stopped a little after eight, he had the original coin in his right pocket, Mat's hundred in his left trouser pocket, and his own in the right. It had not been intended that he should get the little store just then; but this was his right and he was content. Probably he would need the little store. Once more the thought came to him that he would not be asked to play the game of life much longer.

He walked to the jewelry store in whose window the diamond ring was still sparkling, entered and asked to have a hole bored through the five-dollar coin, in a voice which so illy matched his garb that the clerk looked at him in surprise. Phil thought that he did not understand, and said, "I want this made into a fob."

This time his voice was even less respectful of bib overalls with the blouse tucked inside; but he was perfectly poised was it that the clerk bowed deferentially and handed the coin to the man at the bench. As the man began to drill, he gave a surprised chuckle and looking up at Phil with a smile exclaimed, "Well, that's a pretty neat job!"

Phil asked what he meant and learned that his lucky coin was only a plated nickle of that coinage which mimicked the five-dollar piece. He merely smiled and when

the fob was finished, handed his treasured and guarded watch to the clerk, who was still further impressed, and charged him a much larger sum than he had intended; but which Phil paid in good money and without the slightest hesitation.

As he passed the window again after leaving the store, the diamond waved him a friendly flash, and again the wave of an impending crisis swept over him. Suddenly he paused: could it be possible that Edith was at that very moment in Denver, and that it was her life he was to save by giving up his own? He raised his eyes to the clear sky, "I beseech thee to grant it, good Lord!" he murmured reverently.

He walked on aimlessly, or rather questioningly; and as he was passing the door of the Palace, a lady hurried out to take a cab. Phil paused with a start of surprise, and she entered the cab, the door was slammed, her grips were tossed to the driver, and she had driven away before he recovered. It was Miriam Meyer, whom he knew as Valerie Florian, and whose influence was still large in his life.

He hastened to the porter. "Where was that lady going?" he demanded peremptorily.

The man looked at him haughtily; Phil passed him a dollar; and as this is a credential which is never questioned, the porter's attitude changed immediately. "She was going to the station," he replied; "but unless she has the best luck in the world, she'll miss her train."

"If she returns, tell her — but never mind. That is all. I am much obliged."

Phil strolled on with the porter's eyes following. Pres-

THE WHEEL OF FATE 373

ently the porter examined the coin which he still held in his hand.

"I'll give you to the first man that tells me the sort o' clothes that sport is wearin' under those overalls," he said, addressing the silver dollar.

CHAPTER THIRTY-FIVE

AN IDEAL FEAST

"UNDER my agreement, I shall have to marry her if I can," said Phil to himself; "but I still think that it is only my life, not my name which is forfeit."

He walked on until his own reflection recalled his peculiar appearance, and he gave a shrug. "I'll be deuced if I go to the morgue looking like that," he said to the reflection. "I am going to clean up."

He purchased a pearl felt hat and gloves, a pair of the best shoes and a suit of the best underwear he could find, and with these and new linen, he sought a barber shop. After a shave, haircut, and shampoo, he finished off with Turkish bath. The soiled and tattered suit in which he had left home had been pressed, cleaned, and repaired while he was in the bath, and when he emerged upon the street he looked, acted, and felt, a gentleman — unless one were rude enough to scrutinize the suit, which was quite beyond the possibility of complete rejuvenation.

His next step was to send Mat his hundred dollars in an express order; and now the lighter side of his nature insisted upon taking the reins for a time. He walked jauntily along the street, his overalls rolled in a neat package. The first man who begged him complained of the cold, and Phil gave him a quarter to warm him, and the

overalls to conserve the warmth as long as possible. Ah, it was joy to be able to give again!

He became hungry and registered at a cheap hotel. After enjoying a hearty supper, he went up to his room; but found that sleep was entirely out of the question; so he descended, purchased some cigars, and started for a stroll. Warm and snug in his new underwear, he smiled at the men who hurried by him, as they drew into their overcoats to shut out the chill.

"Even being a tramp has its compensations," he reflected. "Every man his own heating plant is the rule of the road, and a fair good one. I wonder if anything really is going to happen to me to-night."

Phil fairly beamed in his bodily comfort, and no hand was stretched out to him in vain. He passed several stray dogs and some mournful cats on his way, and stopped and talked to the dogs; but only found one cat, a lean and dirty gray, who would come to him. "They do not know that I am one of them," he said a little wistfully. "I wish I could give them all one square meal. I cannot see how God Himself can stand the sorrows of the world!"

It was nearly midnight before his rambling finally wore out his seasoned muscles and keen zest, and then he started for his hotel. Coming through a dark street, he saw a slender form crouching against an alley wall. He picked it up and found it to be a tiny toy terrier in a scarlet blanket embroidered with the name, "Patcy." The poor little thing was half dead with cold and he slipped it into his coat and started on. He purchased a bottle of milk and some fried oysters at a restaurant, and went up to his room, where he heated them, and fed the terrier out of his washbowl, tilted to suit Patcy's diminutive stature. All the time that

376 THE KNIGHT-ERRANT

the terrier was eating, Phil talked loving nonsense to him in a tender tone which told in the strongest manner possible, how utterly lonely he was on this night when all the world feels entitled to good cheer and fellowship.

"I wonder who is lonely for you, Patcy Boy," said Phil seating himself in a well-worn rocker and taking the terrier in his lap. "I wonder if it is some little child who has found a bit of real life wrapped up in your satin skin; or if it is some half-woman who has tried to hush the crying of her mother-instinct, by getting foolish enough over you to rob you of the natural rights of self-respecting doghood. I wish, Patcy, that there was some way for us to communicate more definitely than with pats and wags, comforting though these are. You must have found much the same sort of wor'd this evening, that I found a year ago, even if your struggle with it did not last as long. It is a cold world to splash into with nothing on but a dress suit, or a scarlet blanket, is n't it, little chap?"

"Did you notice the alley cats and the stray dogs this evening, or did you spend all your time sorrowing over your own ill luck? I have a great respect for an alley cat, Patcy; an alley cat has solved some very difficult problems and when you see one with clean fur and bright eyes, you should bow your head a trifle, for you are gazing upon a strong character. There is so much sorrowful yearning in the eyes of a stray dog, a genuine stray dog, not a lost dog like you, but one whose misfit body and timid humility seem to herald the fact that he was doomed from the beginning of time to be a stray dog, that I always ache a little when I see one. Of course they do not suffer as you and I did; but I'll tell you a great secret, Patcy, to show my confidence in your refinement; there is a very real com-

pensation in the cross of sorrow, and no life is complete which has not borne this cross up at least one sandy hill."

Phil sat a long time in silence, stroking the tiny terrier and rocking to and fro in restful meditation. "I'll tell you how we'll celebrate Christmas, old man; we'll give a party!" he suddenly exclaimed. "We'll give the finest party ever given; we shall not even wait for the respectable guests to send their regrets, and then go into the highways and byways to invite hunger to consume what opulence refused. We'll start our Christmas party in the Christmas spirit, and invite all the alley cats and the stray dogs of Denver to hold festival with us. How is that for a scheme, Patcy Boy? Oh, don't be alarmed, they will not all come. Charity has become so much an object of disgust and suspicion since it has been organized, that we shall have to catch our guests by stealth; but the most fun of all will be to give them such a surprisingly good time that they can never after be sure that it was not all a dream. I think that this will be my last Christmas, Patcy; I have not been able to adjust myself to the world; but I have reached the point where I am able to renounce it without a sigh, and I am convinced that this is the last lesson we have to learn, so I can enter into the spirit of our party with an abounding grace. And now, little chap, we'll go to bed."

Phil Lytton undressed, opened wide the window and drank a deep draught of the sweet Christmas air which rolled down from the peaks, turned out the light and stretched himself upon the bed with the toy terrier snuggled into the crook of his arm. "I am not accustomed to beds, Patcy," he said drowsily; "so if I do anything not in good form, I trust you will pardon me. Good night, and merry Christmas, to you — and all the world."

Phil was awakened next morning by an odd sensation at the tip of his nose, and opened his eyes to find that it was caused by the moist tongue of his little guest. "The same to you, and many of them," replied Phil with tender good nature. He played with the terrier for several minutes, but beneath his gaiety there lurked a faraway seriousness, as though his soul was reaching back from a great distance to take gentle farewell of a world which had not quite understood him, but for which he bore nothing but goodwill.

"It's milk and oysters for yours again this morning, Patcy; so if you have any decided taste in the breakfast menu, it will be well to apply severe discipline to it."

Leaving the terrier to eat alone, Phil descended, ate his own breakfast, and then took Patcy for a walk. The dog followed daintily in Phil's footsteps, showing no disposition to return to his former friends; and Phil began to wonder as to the ultimate fate of this new responsibility.

"I am not a permanent fixture, Patcy Lad, and you would have done well to attach yourself to one more firmly rooted to life than myself; but while we're together, let us take a sip of eternity by forgetting time entirely and enjoying each other's company to the full. There is something about you which gives me great joy, and I can not account for this; because, speaking in general terms, you understand, you are not exactly my kind of a dog.

"Well, the room is yours," he said a little later. "Be as comfortable as you can while I go hunt a place for our party."

Phil knew nothing about Denver, but all cities have family resemblances; and just in the neighborhood he expected to find it, he came upon a sign in a window which

read, "Furnished rooms to rent." He rang the bell and presently the door was opened by one of those coarse, repelling Jewesses who cause one to marvel that their race with its poetry, its intelligence, its patient courage, and its deeply chiseled history, could produce such repulsive individuals.

"I want a room on the ground floor," said Phil, "perhaps for a night, perhaps for a week, perhaps for a century. I shall pay each week in advance, and do not want the room entered no matter what sort of noise you hear. Have you such a room?"

"Yess, I haf sooch a room. You vant in id a bet, I subbose," replied the woman with a leer.

"Yes, I want a bed and a stove if possible."

"Vell, I haf dot kint of a room. Id vill pe ten tollars a week."

"Would you make any reduction if I took it by the year?" asked Phil with mock seriousness.

"Woult you bay in atvance?" asked the woman with sincere seriousness.

"Well, let me see the room first," said Phil after a moment's hesitation.

It was just the room he wanted, and after an examination, he said, "I'll not take it by the year, but ten dollars a week seems exorbitant."

"Ah, you can vell affort to bay. I can see dot old suit of yours vas made py a good dailor. Ven you vant to look like a poor mans, you vear always a dirty guffs unt gollars. I see not anything vat goes on in dis room; bud still I runs me a risk mit you young sports. Ten tollars a veek is cheap enough."

Phil was pleased by the woman's flattery, though why

he should have been, no logical being could say; and he paid her and took his keys. He bought an alcohol stove and pan at a second hand store, some cheese, beer, crackers and condiments at a grocery, and after placing them in his room, examined the neighborhood for potential guests and then returned for Patcy.

Patcy seemed pleased with the new quarters, and Phil passed the afternoon, sipping in very truth, the blessed peace of eternity. He had an inner consciousness that he and his destiny were rapidly drawing together, even as some far off sun may at this moment be rushing through space to destroy our solar system, but the matter was entirely out of his hands, and he was absolutely free from worry.

When night came he began to procure the guests for whom he had provided entertainment in the shape of meat and milk. It was a task requiring finesse, especially so in the case of the alley cats; but he finally had three gaunt cats, one in each of the three drawers of his battered bureau, and four stray dogs tied to door knobs and bed corners. He made one more effort, but after a half hour of vain search, he decided that he would be forced to content himself with the number already assembled, and returned to his room, whistling blithely.

After entering he closed his door and stood with his back against it surveying the dogs with friendly eyes. Five tails wagged with varying degrees of hopeful confidence, and Phil's heart was glad. Patcy stood on the bed and attempted to express a wide range of emotions in a series of soprano yips. He did not entirely approve of the mixed company, but was enjoying the excitement. One of the dogs had inherited certain characteristics of the

bull, but the other three had completely escaped any suggestion of specific ancestry. Beyond doubt they were dogs, and beyond doubt this was as definite a description as their own mothers could have given.

Phil untied the bulldog and proceeded to make a Welsh rarebit. He talked incessantly, and his mellow voice had a soothing effect upon the dogs. The bulldog sniffed at his fellows, wagging his stumpy tail the while to assure them that he bore no malice, and presently Phil untied them all.

Introducing the cats was a far more formal proceeding, and he was in several delicate situations before he made it plain that genteel behavior was expected of all. He placed pans about the room at safe intervals and filled them with milk, standing in the center of the room to see that no infringement of etiquette was attempted.

His rarebit was finished at about the same time the milk was, and he filled the pans with bits of raw meat and lovely, glistening bones before he sat down to his own feast. Patcy insisted on eating on the bed, and Phil drank the first toast to him. At first there was considerable deep and guttural rumblings, as the guests remarked one to another as to the probable outcome of any attempt to rob them of this mysterious Christmas cheer; but when they saw that even the marvellous appetites with which they had come to the feast, would not be able to meet the demands put upon them, they subsided to a more dignified enjoyment of the bounty.

"What a queer world this is," said Phil philosophically. "I only recall one other Christmas which cost me as little as this; but I cannot recall any which gave me the same amount of satisfaction. As far as that goes, this did not

cost me anything. Fate gave me a counterfeit coin, chance multiplied the gift forty times, and you, my respected guests, have given me the enjoyment without robbing yourselves in the slightest degree. I hope little Mat has had a good Christmas, and I wish he were here to-night. I was willing to work hard to earn money to send him; but no one would let me work, yet someone must have worked to produce the things we have been enjoying this evening. I am not able to see a grain of sense in the arrangement of things; but I do see a lot of sense in the hearty way in which you avail yourselves of a streak of good luck; wherefore I conclude that our intellectual planes are very much on a level, while the ordinary human plane is far above, or far below, ours. It makes no difference which, so I stand to drink to your very good health.

As Phil seated himself, one of the pans, which had been provided in the expectation of a longer list of guests, fell to the floor with a bang. The cats instantly vanished from sight, the four dogs threw themselves into attitudes of immediate defence, Phil leaped to his feet with his fist clenched, and Patcy stood on the bed barking complacently and wagging his tail.

"That tells a lot of past history," said Phil seating himself. "Patcy is the only one of us who has implicit faith in the righteousness of his position. The rest of us are waifs and outlaws; but he is an aristocrat. He does not expect to be questioned, he concludes that the soft places are his by law and justice, and he resents any interruption to the established order. Well, on with the feast, let joy be unconfined!"

As soon as the cats had achieved the last possible gastronomic feat, they became restless and began to mew

plaintively. Phil quietly opened a window and reseated himself. "No formalities are necessary, friends," he said. "I am a super-host. I want my guests to be so much at home that any parting convention would be quite superfluous. I wish you joy for the rest of your journey."

The cats soon departed, each one giving a low chirp of relief as it leaped from the window.

"You are perfectly welcome to stay, and there will be ample breakfast in the morning," he said politely to the dogs, "but do not let me interfere with any previous engagements."

He held the door open and all the dogs but the near-bull, slouched through it wagging their tails doubtfully, as if they half expected to be awakened from a pleasant dream by a brutal kick.

Phil stood a moment in the outer doorway. A spirit of religious fervor was upon him but he knew no way to express it. He looked up at the stars, but they were far away and in their calm brilliancy seemed sufficient unto themselves. Then he thought of all those who had helped provide his feast, tending the beef cattle and the milch cows, brewing the beer, building the shelter, mining the fuel, baking the crackers and making the cheese; and throwing his arms wide, he said in a low, reverent tone, "I thank you all for giving me this perfect day; and I wish you all a Happy New Year."

CHAPTER THIRTY-SIX

A FEAST-IDYL

NEXT morning, he gave Patcy and the bulldog the remains of the feast, and, leaving the stray in the street to finish the scraps at his leisure, spent the remainder of the morning in taking a long walk followed by the toy terrier who seemed to feel no yearning for his former friends. "Three days more of this week," murmured Phil, his mind still on the crisis he felt was impending, "and seven days more of this year. I wonder when it will happen."

That afternoon he wrote a short note asking the finder to take care of Patcy, and if any money remained after the cheapest possible funeral for himself, to send it to Mat at the hospital in Rawlins. After which he played with Patcy who now volunteered the information that he was a trick dog, and displayed quite a repertoire.

"Evidently someone has spent a deal of care on you, Patcy," said Phil. "I suppose that you will have small difficulty in finding a home. You have the look of the especially favored, and I rejoice in your good fortune."

As evening approached, Phil became restless; he had eaten a hearty lunch; but something akin to hunger was gnawing at him, and as he surveyed himself in the dingy glass it was made manifest. It was not for food alone that he was hungry; it was for damask, cut glass, and a

waiter who would lean deferentially forward to take his order. He examined himself doubtfully: his cuffs and bosom were unmarked, and he had bought an extra collar that morning; but his suit was decidedly tattered, in spite of the mending it had received, and he shook his head. But the desire would not die, and taking the razor from his vest pocket and adjusting the folding glass, he proceeded to shave and make the best toilet possible. He whistled merrily as he dressed, and when the last touch had been applied to his tie, he surveyed himself again. He knew just the points where his suit showed the most wear and was discouraged; but when he raised his eyes to the reflection of his face, he was pleased. It was a good face to look into; and striking his palm with his fist, he exclaimed, "By George, I'll do it!"

"I'll be back as soon as possible, Patcy," he said as he drew on his gloves, "but don't wait up for me."

"I wonder if Valeric caught her train," he said to himself as he closed the door behind him. "I believe that whatever is to happen will happen this evening. Well, I am as ready for it as I can be, whatever it is."

He passed several of the higher class cafés without feeling any desire to enter; but at last turned into the most imposing of all. There was no lack of confidence, no hesitancy; going up to the head waiter who had just seated a group near the entrance, he touched him on the arm, and said in a low tone, "Show me into a private room."

The voice, the manner, the linen, and the set of the suit all spoke in convincing arguments to the head waiter, who would have been occupying some other sphere of usefulness if he had not been a judge of character.

"Certainly, sir," he replied, leading the way to a small

room daintily furnished, while the "sir" hummed pleasantly in Phil's ears.

As soon as he was seated, Phil proffered a dollar quite incidentally, which the head waiter accepted with such polished nonchalance, that he seemed to be kindly covering a breach of etiquette which had been brought about through Phil's absent mindedness. "Now watch closely," said Phil; "and if a tall man of military appearance, with white moustaches and imperial, and wearing a long gray ulster comes in with a lady in a blue traveling cloak, conduct them directly to me, but let no others intrude. But send a waiter to take my order at once, for I shall not wait for them."

"I suppose I should order gently so as to leave more for Mat," thought Phil while he waited; but the music from the larger room came to him with soft seductiveness, and when the waiter also came, his appearance suggested that he had been selected to take a liberal order, and Phil did not find it in his heart to disappoint him.

"What's the use?" he asked himself after the waiter had left to start the order and get the cocktail. "It may be that after all I am not going to be transferred to another world, but am only doomed to marry Valerie. I hope that this is not true; but if it is, I shall be able to send Mat to college, and this night, I simply must expand a little. I am sick and tired of being an alley cat; I have agreed to do whatever Fate ordered, and I am entitled to a little genuine relaxation. I bear no one any ill will; I am clean to-night, inside and out, and I intend to eat freely and with thankful appreciation of the appetite which has been vouchsafed me."

He had scattered his order rather fancifully along the

menu, and by the time he had reached the best cigar in the house, he was in that state of mellow content which pours itself generously into space for the use of psychics who have learned how to direct invigorating waves into their solar plexus, and can thus, in a measure, escape the terrors emanating from the cost of living high.

He handed the waiter a double eagle and when his change was returned was on the point of telling him to keep it; but remembering that his future, both in quantity and quality, was quite uncertain, he left two dollars upon the little tray and let the remaining six lie carelessly upon the damask, the immaculate, satiny damask which had been newly laid for his especial edification.

The cigar was the crowning touch, and he leaned back luxuriously and let the smoke waft gently through his system, lulling every worry to rest and setting the nerves to harmonious melody. His past had been lived, there was no use dwelling upon it; his future had been taken out of his own hands, there was no call to consider it; this one evening had been given to him as a token that neither nature nor the individual is responsible for suffering, and he blew a ring of smoke to the ceiling and with the smoke, sent up a pledge that he would enjoy it to the full extent of his capacity.

The ring had just begun to twist into a dozen graceful forms, when the head waiter, pompous with importance, opened the door, and to Phil's consternation said to someone outside, "This is the gentleman, sir. Just step in."

Phil turned his face away from the door and cudgelled his brain for an explanation which would give them no offence, nor make them doubt his sanity. He turned, and saw a tall man with white moustaches and imperial, wearing

a long gray ulster and accompanied by a lady wearing a blue traveling cloak. Phil saw these things in a blur, and then he rose to his feet, prepared to make the best of it.

He forced a smile of apologetic candor to his lips as he rose—and then he looked squarely into the eyes of the lady in the blue traveling cloak. “Edith!” he gasped; “Phil!” she exclaimed; and they threw themselves into each other’s arms.

Colonel Edgerton’s mouth stood agape with astonishment, and then he said with undoubted earnestness, “Well, this is very remarkable; this is certainly most extraordinary!” The head waiter gave a broad wink to the portrait of a pointer which adorned one of the walls and softly closed the door, while thoughts concerning the responsibilities of his position and his genius in meeting them, gurgled pleasantly through a head which had instantly expanded to make room for them.

After a time, the two who held the center of the stage drew apart and gazed at each other in growing shyness. The manner of his leaving had dawned upon them both at the same time—there had been no leavetaking or explanations, and he had not once written to her. She looked into his eyes and the warm light in them reassured her. “Phil,” she said irrelevantly, reproachfully, tenderly, “what on earth are you wearing such soiled clothes for?”

“Who—me?” rejoined Phil, glancing down at his suit in amazement, and spurring his imagination to adequate action. “Why I— you see— Well, I was under my motor car fixing it, you know—I have always fixed it myself since you let me know you liked to have me do it; and it started and I was wound around in the cogs a little. Now”—waving his hand as though his entire past had

been laid bare—"Lay aside your wraps and take seats. I'm wild to hear—"

"What a fortunate thing you were not killed!" cried Edith, sympathy causing her brow to wrinkle in an expression of apprehensive dread. "Were you not hurt at all?"

"Not at all, not the least bit. Forget all about me and sit down and tell me the news."

Colonel Edgerton, however, had a well-known tenacity for getting to the bottom of things. "Why, man alive, Phil," he demurred, "you could never have got your clothes marked up like this, without your linen even getting soiled."

Phil swallowed his opinion of the Colonel and took another jump. He was in an ecstasy of excitement at meeting Edith, at finding her more beautiful than ever, at feeling all his doubts vanish, and the fibers of his being reach out and twine about her; and he cared nothing whatever for the truth. All he wished was to suppress bothersome questions.

"Certainly not, Colonel, certainly not," he rejoined, as if surprised that the Colonel's imagination could not supply the unimportant details which were lacking, "but I happened to have a change of linen with me, and simply stepped in here and made the change. And now, will you please be seated?"

The Colonel, with a persistence worthy of a better cause, examined the floor of the room. "Where is the soiled linen?" he asked skeptically.

"Colonel," said Phil slowly, and with exaggerated and slightly exasperated frankness, "if you insist upon knowing the ridiculous truth, I am wearing these soiled duds

to pay an election bet. Perfectly silly and all that; but then one has to be game, you know. Now, then, let's change the subject. Just imagine that I am in evening dress, or anything else you like, and tell me what good luck brought you here.

"It was not good luck, it was bad," began Edith, but paused at the crestfallen expression which leaped to Phil's face.

Colonel Edgerton's scruples were not yet satisfied. "What election?" he asked. "There was no presidential election this fall."

"No? No, oh, no, of course not. No, it was n't a political election at all," said Phil, cursing his luck for not having kept posted. He could not at that instant recall the name of anyone who had been elected since Lincoln; but under the present circumstance, promptness was the soul of success; so he smiled into the Colonel's eyes and explained, "It was in our church, you see. A great friend of mine wanted to be Senior Warden, and it looked like a sure thing; but it was n't. Now that is finally settled, and if you can possibly forget my raiment for a few moments, I wish that you would remove your wraps and dine with me. I am crazy to hear all the news, and I have a bad toothache which makes talking painful, so I'll just sit and —"

"Making freak bets upon the election of a church warden is the farthest north in idiocy," snapped the Colonel. "Lytton, you don't really mean —"

"It does sound queer, does n't it; but this is the way they do things out here. I'm sorry you're not going to stay longer so you could meet some of my friends. Now, Edith, tell me what you are doing out this way, how long

you intend to stay, and what changes have taken place since I became engrossed in mining." Phil had no idea what explanation he would make, but had faith in himself if he could only get the others talking and have a few moments in which to think.

"We were on our way to Los Angeles, and I got off the train to take Patcy for a walk —"

"Patcy?" exclaimed Phil.

"Yes, my toy terrier. The Colonel gave him to me a year ago this Christmas, and he grew tired of riding in the basket —"

"Well, that beats anything I could make up," interrupted Phil. "Why Patcy is a great friend of mine. We were joint hosts at a perfectly corking party last night. Patcy is all right. He is over at my — ah — apartment now."

"Why, Phil, what ever in the world can you mean?" demanded Edith. He did not reply, he merely looked at her and was glad. She seemed younger than when they had parted, she seemed less confident in herself, she seemed to have developed something of the clinging vine; and Phil felt himself swell with strength and confidence. This was no time for reason, and so he entirely overlooked his financial resources and prospects, and settled to the now comfortable level of intrinsic personality.

But all this was foreign to Colonel Edgerton's mental processes. "Now, see here, Lytton," he said with the irritating generosity which locks all the doors and then offers its victim the choice of any avenue of escape which suits his whim, "I'll be hanged if I believe that you are the kind of a fellow who would make a freak bet upon the election of a church warden — it is preposterous! Of course if you wish to conceal something, that is none of my

affair; but the more you explain the less plausible you become."

Poor Phil; he had hoped to enjoy one more evening with Edith, and then, if circumstances forced them to part forever, to give her a fictitious explanation which would satisfy her without arousing her pity for him. He well knew how she despised the failures among men, and he also knew that his own pride would prevent his accepting anything in the nature of bounty; but as there appeared no way, short of personal violence, in which he could suppress the Colonel's restless spirit of investigation, he decided to make a clean breast of it, say farewell for all time, and drop out of their lives as gracefully as possible.

He heaved a sigh, and then he squared his shoulders and looked the Colonel in the eyes. His own eyes were clear, his skin was smooth and tanned, there was no suggestion of weakness in the poise of his head, and Edith almost forgot to listen to his words, so great was her joy in merely looking at him.

"No, Colonel Edgerton," he said in low, even tones, neither of apology nor defiance, but of simple and sincere affirmation, "all I have said has been false. If you insist upon dragging the truth from me, I am wearing this suit because it is the only one I possess. If you examine more closely, you will perceive that it is the identical one I was wearing when I left you that night in New York. Since then I have lived as a roustabout or a tramp. Day before yesterday I found a counterfeit five-dollar gold piece,"—unconsciously touching his fob and calling their attention to its adornment—"and bought some new shoes and gloves, linen, hat, and underwear. This dinner is the first

one I have had worthy of the name, for a year. Now, you have the whole truth, and I hope you are satisfied."

There was nothing in life that the Colonel admired above truth — except, of course, in the single exception of his own peculiar real estate business — and he carefully examined the array of dishes, the champagne bottle, and the change lying upon the table.

"I feel that we are entitled to better treatment than this," he said stiffly. "If you have purchased all these things and still had six dollars in change left from a counterfeit five-dollar gold piece, it is a shame that you did not find a good one, so that you might have invested in a row of office buildings. You are certainly under no obligations to me to explain yourself; but I feel that under the circumstances, I am justified in believing that you have not told the truth because the truth would not bear telling, and I shall ask my ward to withdraw to another room until I have time to settle a few business matters with yourself. Edith."

Edith had long since been of age, and even before that had domineered the Colonel shamefully; but, probably upon this very account, his sudden stand of dignified sternness swept away her own independence utterly. She raised her eyes to Phil's; but although his face was red, he stood as if turned to stone, looking over her head and into the Colonel's eyes, and his expression promised a stormy scene at their private interview.

She arose and walked to the door in a slow, hesitating manner, like one dazed by a blow. She passed through the door, but before the Colonel could close it, she hurried back. "No," she cried, "I must find out — I must know

what he meant when he — when he said that he gave a party with Patcy.”

She finished rather lamely, as a subterfuge must always appear as a substitute for frankness. She felt this herself, and putting her hands on Phil's shoulders, and looking into his face said brokenly, “Oh, Phil, tell me what — tell me what it all means. I know that at first — I know you were glad to see me when I first came in. Tell me there is no reason, no real reason why —”

Phil stood rigid with his hands at his sides; and she could not finish. She turned from him, threw herself into a chair, buried her face in her arms, and without caring what anyone thought of her, gave way to sobs. Critical moments have this unpleasant habit of stripping formality from us and leaving our souls naked and our inmost emotions bare to all the world.

She had not known how much she had loved him until he had gone away, and in losing him she had found herself, and in finding herself she had been able to see clearly many phases of life which had formerly been dim and vague.

Her love for him had grown stronger with the months of silence, each day of which seemed to make it the more hopeless; and now that she had found him again it was too late, for when his arms refused to clasp her, she accepted it as a sign that some insurmountable barrier held them apart. She did not care that he had been a tramp and a failure; her new love did not demand achievement; all it asked was clean, pure love in return; but even this was denied her, and when her head sank upon the table, she wished it might continue on to the center of the earth.

Phil placed his hand upon the back of her chair and said



HANSON DUFFIN

Critical moments have this unpleasant habit of stripping formality from us and leaving our souls naked and our inmost emotions bare to all the world.

W. O. LIBRARY

W. O. LIBRARY

in a tremulous voice, heavy with the tenderness of love and the sadness of farewell, "Edith, I do love you. Not a day has passed since I have been a wanderer, but what my heart has cried out for you. Whatever my other failures have been, my love for you has not failed—even though I admit that I have tried to tear it out by the roots, time and again. I knew how you despised men who failed, and I could not face you after going to smash back in New York; and since then I have found that I am not able even to take care of myself. I am not fit to be depended on in any emergency, I can not even tell a true friend from a false."

Here Phil darted the Colonel a savage look, and continued in a softer tone, a tone in which sorrow and disappointment were fused into trust, the twilight voice of a little child, confessing the shortcomings of his wayward day, so that the maternal arms might clasp him freely while he slipped off into the strange forgetfulness of sleep. Phil could not remember his own mother, and all his life the lonely-child part of him had been reaching out to other women for that earlier comfort of which he had been deprived. "You have always been so strong and competent yourself, Edith, that I could not come to you with my broken life, and so I left you—and so I must leave you again. It is not all due to a lack of ambition, it is not all because I give up too easily, it is not all recklessness; some of us seem doomed to be failures, and I am one of the doomed. I acted like a baby in leaving you as I did; but I knew myself, and I know myself still better now. It will be impossible for me to fight back to you; and this is the only way that I could come back; so you must just forget me.

"My last statement was true; I did find a counterfeit five-dollar gold piece, gambled with it, and won a little money. Patcy really is over at my room now; and as soon as I bring him to you, we shall say farewell and this night will fade away like a dream." He paused, and then added passionately, "No, it never can do that: in sorrow, in trial, in disappointment, I shall remember the perfect trust in your eyes to-night when you kissed me, and it will keep me strong. I never can do the large things you are entitled to; but I am going to struggle to do the small things well, and you may know, wherever you are and whatever you do, that your memory is helping me. Honestly, Edith, all I possess in this world, is that change upon the table and a few gold pieces in my pocket. I don't want you to worry about me; because I have learned to run a little store and expect to get hold of one soon; but just now, I am nothing but a tramp; so shake hands —"

"And it serves you right too!" interrupted the perturbed Colonel. "I am glad that you have been punished for your idiotic foolishness in running away and leaving me with your gambling schemes on my hands."

"I don't care a pin what happened to you," said Phil fiercely, rejoicing in a legitimate outlet for his emotions. "You have brought all this about through your infernal insistence upon making me confess; while your own —"

"Hushhh," said the Colonel holding up his hand before Phil could make any allusion to his fictitious activities in genuine real estate. "Do you recall the stocks you left in my hands?"

"Yes, and at that time they were worth enough to pay my margins. If you hurg on until they were wiped out, you get no sympathy from me."

"I never before knew how many kinds of a fool you were, Phil," said the Colonel, forgetting that he had formerly intimated that Phil was all the kinds of fool possible. "Everything you touched turned to gold: the rubber stock is worth twice what you paid for it; Wilson and Hereford are absolutely honest and rapidly becoming independently rich; even that fool gold mine closed at a hundred per cent. profit; and I'm ashamed to say how much you made on that cotton deal, simply because I could not find out how to drop it until after the market had swung around again in your favor. You — well, I'm not quite sure exactly what you are worth; but you can afford to buy a new country store every day in the week, if that really is what you want to do."

Edith's tears had stopped flowing and she had raised her head until she could see the look of amazement upon Phil's face give way to one of unbounded joy. When his eyes dropped to hers they met in a clinging caress.

"O Edith," he said putting his arms about her. She only sighed, but it was beyond doubt the correct answer.

"We can be married to-morrow, can't we?" he asked.

"Why, no, Phil," she answered, smiling rosy red, "I have n't any clothes."

"Have n't any clothes?" echoed Phil, whose recent experience made for literal interpretation.

"I mean wedding clothes, of course, goosie," answered Edith laughing softly.

"I'm glad I ran away from you," said Phil, in response to the laugh which seemed to tingle through him. "You — some way you seem so much closer and — and warmer than you used to."

"I think I'm glad you ran away, now, myself," replied

398 THE KNIGHT-ERRANT

Edith. "The lines in your face are so much stronger than they used to be."

"I'm mighty glad you like the lines, sweetheart," said Phil, who had forgotten the existence of Colonel Edgerton. "It was heaps of bother getting them chiseled in; but if they suit you, why, we'll let them stay."

"Is there going to be much more of this?" demanded the Colonel, as Phil and Edith realized the weakness of language and availed themselves of more comprehensive expression.

"Oh, by the way, Colonel," said Phil, "I have found the missing heir, and she is a most deserving girl with golden hair."

"What heir?" asked the Colonel.

"Golden hair?" questioned Edith.

"Certainly," replied Phil. "Now, you can freeze out the ex-canalboaters and reorganize your real-estate business along more profitable lines; but I have become hungry again, and you are still hungry; so for pity's sake, sit down and let me show you how to order a regular meal, and then I'll go get Patcy. This is a great day for Maumee Mat! Oh, I have a lot to tell you; sit down."

THE END

man

aid

on.

if

ded

an-

ex-

the

den

out

ness

gain,

d let

I'll

Oh,

