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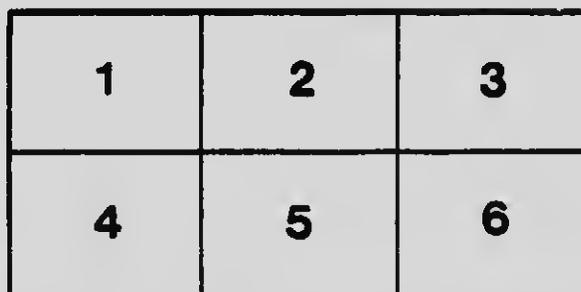
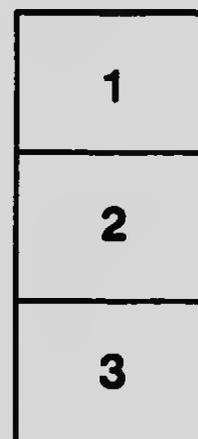
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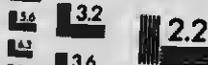
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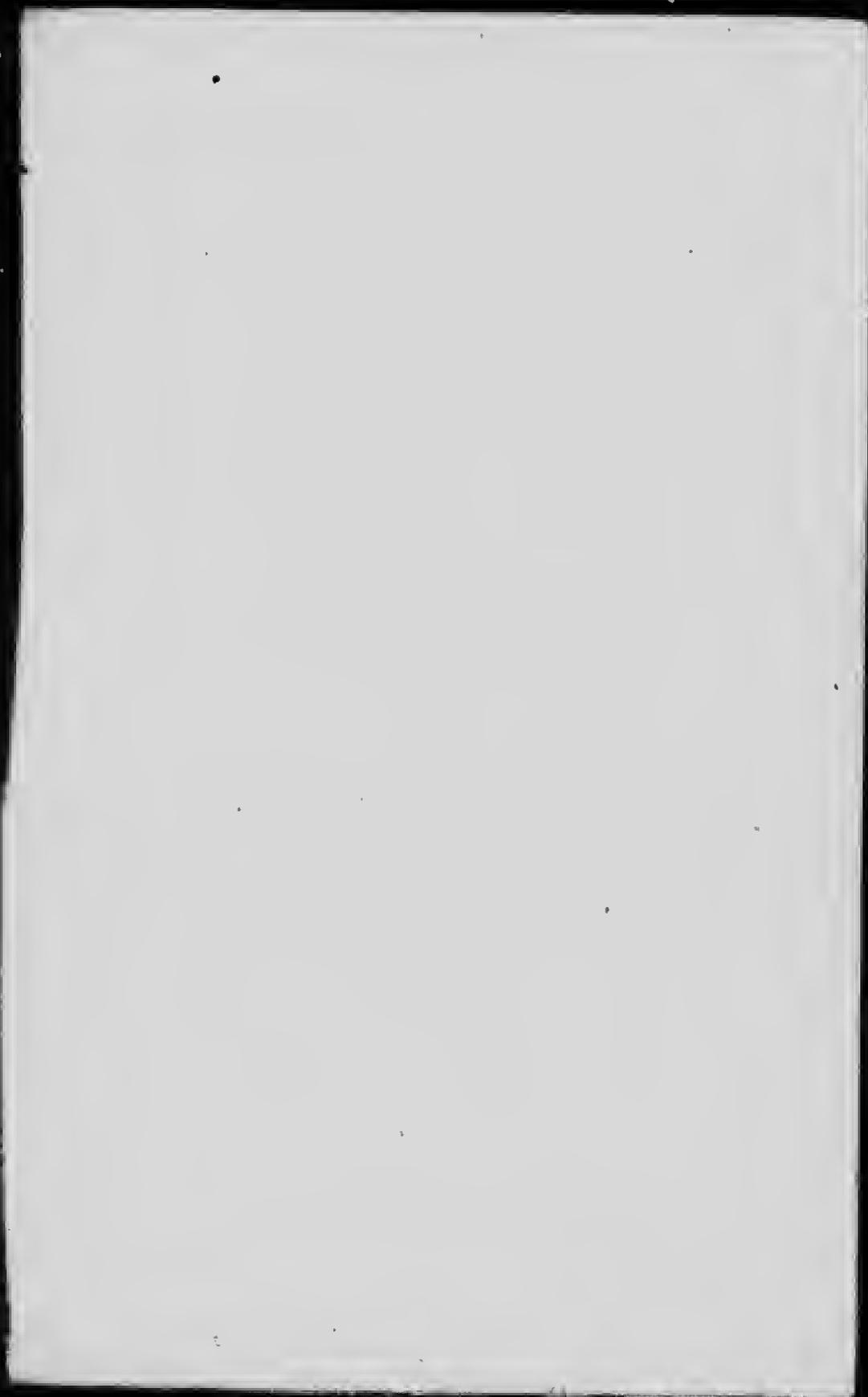


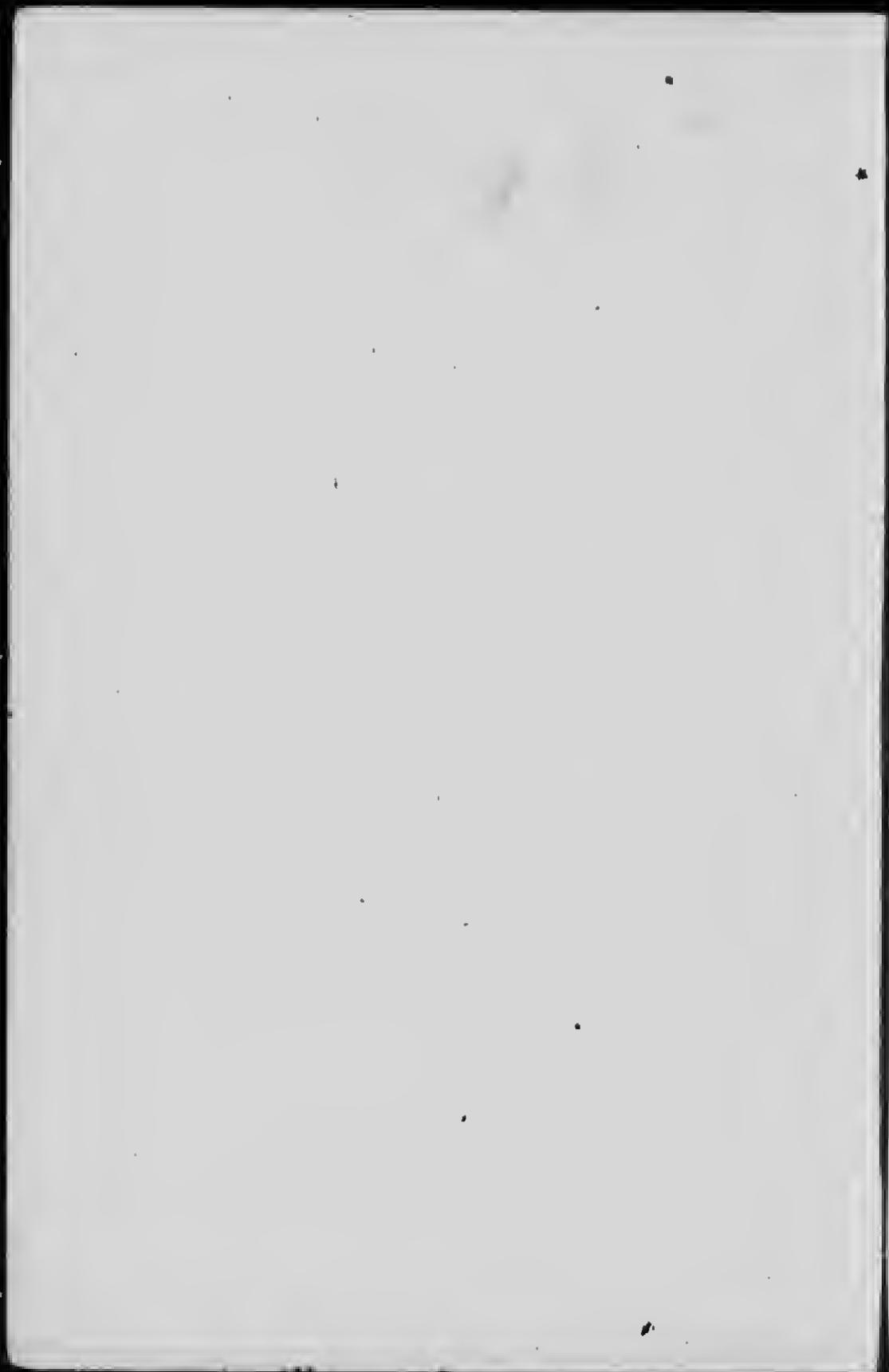
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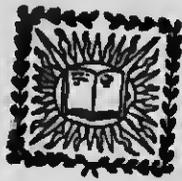


SILENT SAM
AND OTHER STORIES OF
OUR DAY

By

HARVEY J. O'HIGGINS

Author of "The Smoke Eaters,"
"Don-a-Dreams" Etc.



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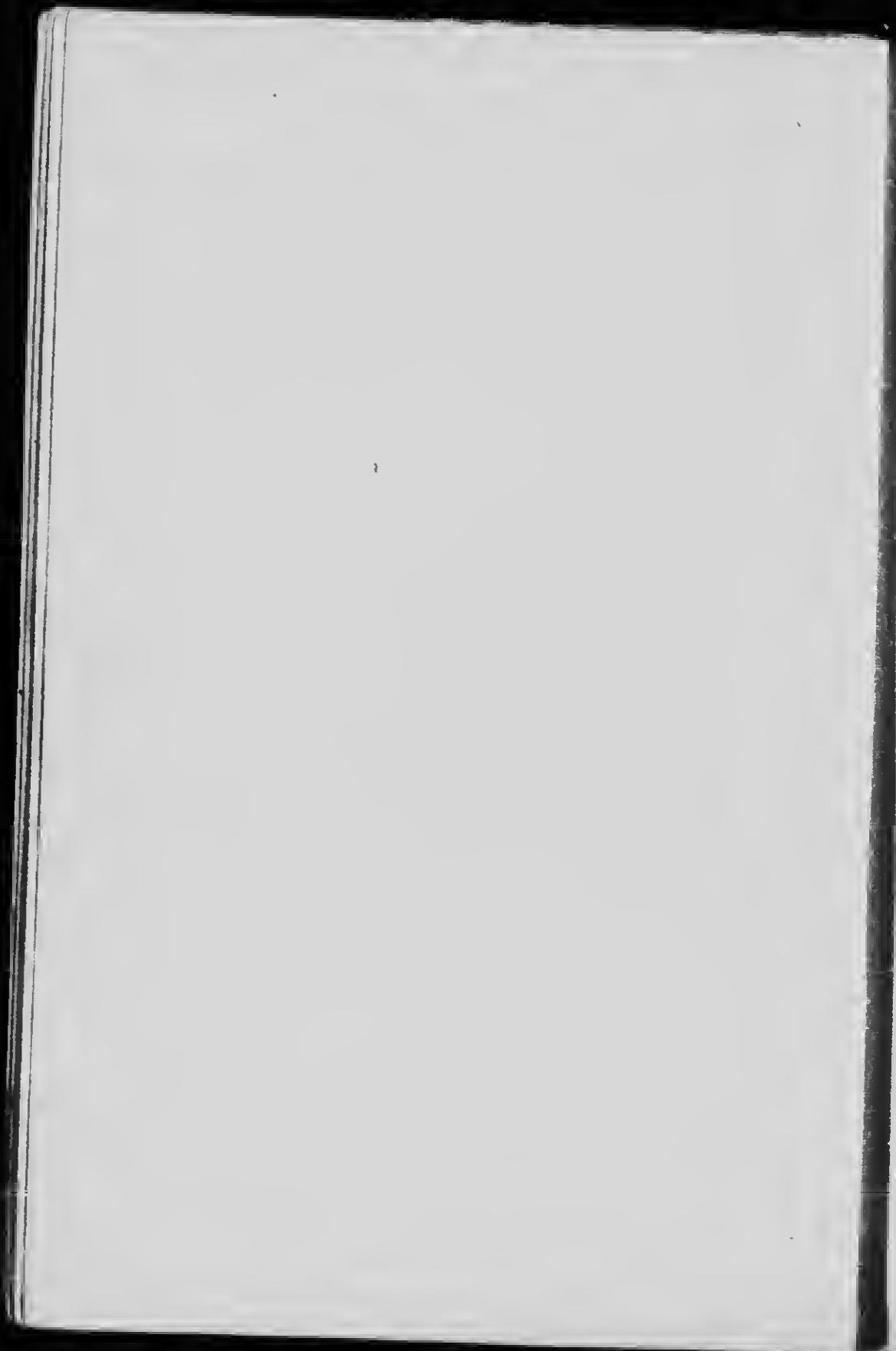
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TO
JOHN O'HARA COSGRAVE
WITH THE
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS OF GRATITUDE



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SILENT SAM



SILENT SAM

I

THE deputy sheriff who brought Sam from the county jail to the state penitentiary came always with one prisoner at a time, because he traveled on a railway pass and charged the state with mileage and expenses for each trip. He would have preferred to bring several prisoners together and make fewer trips, but this would have reduced his profits. He had a wife and two daughters to provide for; and though the trips were a weariness, he sacrificed himself for his family.

He was a bald and genial Welshman of the name of Johns, unhealthy looking, flat in the chest and flabbily heavy-waisted, as if the weight of his flesh had settled down toward the seat of the office-chair in which he spent so much of his time. He had a native genius for gossip — interesting human gossip, particularly of little political scandals and partisan intrigues. It was one of the jokes of his circle that he had been “born to wear a Mother Hubbard and gabble over a back-yard fence.” He would talk to a prisoner as insistently as to a judge, with all the democracy of garrulousness, on the same terms of common human frailty, in a loud

cheerfulness, with a cynical humor, protruding his tongue when he laughed. He was generally regarded as a comic character, but "no such fool as you'd think."

He had found it impossible to get any reply from his prisoner, or even any attention. Sam sat dumb, staring at the red plush of the seat before him, with his black eyebrows raised and his forehead wrinkled. It was not that he ignored Johns, but, evidently, that he did not hear him.

The deputy decided, first, that Sam was "a sulky tramp."

As a tramp he was typical—collarless, in a dirty linen shirt, with a leather belt supporting trousers spotted with oil stains, his shoes looking as if they had been worn in a lime-pit, his straw hat soiled and stained, his beard rusty. And yet his face, in a painting, would have drawn the eyes of an art gallery. It was full of the record of life, of things seen and suffered, though perhaps not understood. His mild blue eyes were set in a vacancy of thought. The lifted eyebrows of his frown suggested a mute groping.

He had been found guilty of train-wrecking—of causing the deaths of thirty-two passengers on the "D. & C." railway, by loosening a rail on the bridge across the Little Sandy near Golden Gorge. And he had been sentenced to imprisonment for life.

This shocking fact did not affect the deputy at all. Professionally, he had no more interest in the reason for the man's imprisonment than a "funeral director"

has in the cause of death; it was enough for him that "the body of Samuel Daneen" was in his hands for delivery to its living tomb. He had had sufficient cynical experience of the courts of his state to know that innocence was sometimes convicted and that guilt often went free; but this was a matter that was not on his "beat," as he would say; he could not help the innocent any more than he could impede the guilty.

He was only anxious, at the moment, to know whether or not Sam was a bachelor — for it was one of his theories of life that marriage preserved a man to virtue, whereas bachelorhood led through dissipation to disease, shiftlessness, the poor farm, or a penal institution. His own wife, he held, had made a man of him.

He wished to preach to Sam from some such text, and it piqued him that Sam rejected his friendly overtures of conversation. He bounced himself impatiently on the springs of his seat, or he turned suddenly to look back over his shoulder at the car; and each time he contrived, as if accidentally, to give a twisting wrench to the bare wrist that was chained to his handcuff. At last Sam, without a change of his blank look, uttered a low, moaning groan that came as if it had worked its way up from the very depths of inarticulate distress.

It gave Johns a chill. He said to himself: "He's bug! He's crazy!" And, sitting very quiet, he watched his prisoner warily, askance.

Sam showed no further sign of life, having now

sunken upon himself in a staring collapse. The deputy could not even see the blinking of an eyelid. "He's got an eye like a fish," he said to himself, contemptuously. "He's a dope fiend."

"He's dotty," he concluded later. "He's just a half-witted bum."

But though he was reassured, he remained watchful, with a sense of something uncanny beside him — and a nervousness that was not relieved till their train slowed down at the little muddy mountain town that made a railway station for "the Pen."

Sam rose to the pull of the handcuff, like a man drugged, and followed out to the station platform in a shambling daze. Johns turned him up the cement sidewalk of the hillside street, shuffling along beside his prisoner flat-footedly. The deputy's insteps had fallen in his days of police duty. Whenever he was accused of any political obliquity, he would admit, "Well, my feet don't track good"—with a humorous air of conceding the one fault of which he could be justly suspected.

To a man who has been condemned to prison for life, there may be something momentous in his arrival at the gates of doom; but to the little world that receives him, the event is commonplace and routinary. In Sam's case, his coming was only an incident in the arrival of Johns, whose visits were always welcome; and, to the officials who received him, the prisoner remained as inconspicuous as a boy led by the hand to make a call with his parent.

Handcuffed to the deputy, he was drawn up the stone steps of the administration building, in the cheerful sunlight, and led into the coolness of a white-tiled hall that echoed at once with Johns's "Well, boys, how are you? How are you?" There was a note of eager escape from silence in the exuberance of his voice. He turned Sam into a receiving office and held him standing before a wooden railing while he gave a clerk the *mittimus* from the judge who had passed sentence.

"All right," the clerk said. "I'll give it to you on your way out"—referring to the receipt for the prisoner. He was busy making up his quarry accounts for the warden's annual report. "How are your feet?" he asked, with his pen across his teeth, grinning.

"Still steppin' heavenward, little one," the deputy replied from the doorway. "Be good."

He took Sam down the tiled hall to its farther end, where a turnkey sat in a cage made of two ceiling-high gratings across the passageway and two grated doors in the sidewalls. Johns greeted him jovially. He nodded in reply, with a slow smile, but he did not speak.

He had a manner of being unwilling that he should be distracted by conversation from his attention to his life-work of opening and closing four grated doors so as to have only one door at a time unlocked. He did not even glance at the new prisoner in reply to Johns's genial, "Brought y' another ol' bachelor, Jake." When they had entered his cage he locked the door behind them, spoke softly into a telephone on the wall,

and then unlocked another door, in the side of his cage, to let in an official in a blue uniform whom the loquacious Johns greeted as "Cap'n."

"Here's the noisiest bum I ever seen," Johns said, as he released Sam from his handcuffs. "He's about as chatty as a load o' lumber."

Sam stared past them at nothing.

"He's a terror to think," Johns said. "You can see that."

They looked at him for the first time, and there was something in the sadness of his set eyes that abated all but Johns. The captain, with the brusqueness of a man who had blundered upon the scene of a private emotion, immediately signed to the turnkey, who noiselessly opened the third door. The captain hurried Sam through it, holding him by the upper arm, and led him down the hall to a large arch that opened on the prison courtyard. A guard, sitting in a steel cage above them, with a pump-gun across his knees, looked down watchfully on their backs as they stepped into the graveled court. And Sam was "in the Pen."

Here, between the gray stone ramparts of the outer walls, stood a gray stone quadrangle of cell-houses, work-shops, and barrack-like buildings, guarded by sentries with rifles in watch-towers, or by men at grated doors with loaded canes and concealed revolvers. These men wore blue uniforms. Their sole work in life was to watch over seven hundred other men, in striped yellow-and-black uniforms, so as to prevent them from escaping from the little granite hell to which they had

been condemned for transgressing those commandments of society which we call, proudly, "laws."

The sunlight that had shone on Sam as he mounted the entrance steps to the administration building shone on him again as he crossed the quadrangle to the hospital building, where he would be numbered, photographed, bathed and shaved, and photographed a second time in his stripes. But the difference between the sun in the courtyard and the sun on the steps was this: no matter how long Sam might live to see the sun shining in the courtyard, he would never again see the sun shining on the steps.

II

Johns went at once to "talk politics" in the warden's office, where he was as welcome as a country peddler who brings all the neighborhood news. And he was still there — his hat pushed back from his bald forehead, his hands clasped pudgily across the bulge of his waist — when the day captain returned from entering Sam according to the prescribed formalities, and stood frowning at a paper in his hand till the warden should recognize him.

Warden Zug was merely a political henchman thriving in a political office. It was his business to make easy the fulfilment of prison contracts by faithful partisans, without public scandal — to collect his own graft on supplies and not be too greedy of the larger profits of the contractors — to find places on the prison staff for the lesser parasites of the party and see that in their

grafting on the prisoners they stopped short of oppression — in short, to manage the prison (and its annual appropriations) for his political friends, while carefully preserving the appearance of administering it as a penal institution. He was a small, sandy-haired, wrinkled man, who had been known to his home district as "Foxy Zug."

"We've got a pris'ner here," the day captain said, "that don't answer questions. I think he's kind o' dotty. I've filled this out the best I can." He put his paper on the warden's desk and held it with a forefinger pointing. "Sam Daneen's the name on the *mittimus*. He looks about thirty-five, now he's cleaned up. But I can't get his religion — ner whether he's married."

"Ol' bach'ler," Johns put in, authoritatively. "He's an ol' bach'ler. They always are."

"What's the matter?" the warden asked. "Sulky?"

The day captain rubbed his forehead. "No-o. He don't seem to hear you. I don' know but what he's simple. When you prod him, he jus' looks round at you an' sort o' don't see you. Jim had to strip him — an' do everything else fer him. Mebbe he's sick. I don' know."

"What's he in fer?"

Johns interposed: "Say, Warden, don't you remember the wreck on the Little Sandy — down by the Gorge — on the D. & C.? Judge Purvis gave him life fer it."

Warden Zug had begun to dip his pen. He looked up at Johns with a quick craftiness, stirring his pen around in the shallow ink-well. "Judge Purvis?" he said. "A 'D. & C.' case?"

And Johns, without releasing a muscle of his fat impassivity, dropped a solemn, sly wink of guile at him.

Zug scrutinized his pen-nib a moment and then returned to the paper before him. "'Unmarried,'" he said, scribbling it in on a blank line. "Daneen, eh? Huh. 'R. C.' Let it go at that. Where've you put him?"

"Number one cell-house, Warden — till I find out where he's goin' to work."

"Uh-huh." The warden thought it over. He said, absent-mindedly: "That'll be all right, I guess," and held out the paper to the captain.

The man took it with an air of official indifference, but he had noticed the passage of looks between Johns and Zug, and he resented his exclusion from the secret. When the door had closed behind him, Johns hitched his chair up closer to the desk and said under his voice: "I did n't see the trial, Warden. I was off to the convention. But I remember when he was arrested. Gertter found him asleep 'n under a tree near the track, an' run him in on the chance."

"How many was killed?"

"About thirty, mebbe. I forget."

"Huh!" Zug nodded shrewdly. "What was it? Spread rails?"

Johns looked as wise as a joss — to conceal his igno-

rance. "Warden," he said, "that 'D. & C.' road-bed ain't safe fer a hand-car, half its time." He insinuated: "*You know what Purvis is.*"

He was, in fact, trying to draw out information under the pretense of imparting it. He knew almost nothing of Daneen's case; he had scarcely given it a thought. But Zug's face of suspicion had started the hint of a judicial scandal for him, and he was smoking it out.

"The 'D. & C.' backed Purvis's nomination with twenty thousand," Zug said. "Gave it to us flat, fer the campaign in our distric', the night we put him on the ticket. He's been doin' their dirty work ever since. There ain't been a cent o' damages collected from 'em in his court since he went on the bench."

"Well," Johns hazarded, "they'd 've had some damages to pay on that Little Sandy wreck if they had n't hung it on this poor hobo. Him wreck a train!" He lay back and laughed shrilly — venting the pleasure he felt in having caught his scandal. "Why, the poor mutt ain't got spunk enough to derail a jack rabbit."

Zug said suddenly: "I want to see him."

Johns rose with ingratiating alacrity. "He's in number one."

The warden merely growled: "Tell 'em to bring him in here."

As a politician, he knew, of course, that he could not meddle with any decree of injustice that had been inspired by the great "D. & C." It made the governors; it picked the legislatures; it nominated the supreme

court of his state. But in forcing Judge Purvis on the district bench it had crowded aside Zug's favorite son-in-law, in Zug's own district, and humiliated him in the home of his friends. By their subsequent reward of that humiliation the "D. & C. people" had only served to justify his resentment in his own eyes, though he had come to feel less bitterness toward the "D. & C." than toward Purvis. He wished — humanly enough — to despise Purvis, to look down on him, to find him guilty of some act that should make him contemptible; for Zug was not so small in mind that he could be satisfied with a mere resentment.

He waited, frowning darkly.

He was disappointed in Daneen's appearance when the guard led him in to the office. The convict was no longer a possibly innocent man; he had been made into a criminal. His head had become the sinister cropped skull of dishonor. Stripped of his beard, his face below the eyes had a wrinkled, unwholesome, repellent pallor. His ill-fitting prison stripes disfigured him as much as they degraded. He stumbled in his clumsy convict shoes. He looked ridiculous, odious, evil. There remained only the dignity of pathos in his mute eyes.

Zug, without rising, dismissed the guard with a jerk of the head toward the door, and said to Sam, in a kindly gruffness: "Come over here."

Sam did not move. He stood with his arms hanging, his head drooped. Johns took him by the sleeve and drew him up beside the warden's table-desk. His

prison cap lay on the carpet where he had been standing.

"He's dotty, Warden," Johns apologized. "He's doped."

Zug replied, in an undertone, impatiently: "Leave him alone." He was absorbed in his scrutiny of the heavy, slanted sag of the mouth, the perplexed corrugation of the forehead, the sightless, wrinkled stare of the blue eyes. "Look at me," he said. "Here." He rose and put his hand to Sam's chin, and turned the face toward him.

For a moment the eyes did not even see him. They looked through him, beyond him. When at last the pupils focused on him, it was with the empty dullness of the gaze of a sick animal.

"What've they been doin' to you?" Zug asked.

If he had been holding a cowed collie dog by the muzzle to speak to it, it might have watched him so — not looking at his lips when they moved, as even an intelligent child would, but at his whole face in a large, meaningless, dumb regard.

"You never wrecked that train, did you?"

It seemed as if he were about to answer. His eyebrows twitched and contracted. The muscles trembled in his lips with a fluttering that accompanied a clicking of his teeth. His eyes wavered irresolutely, but with a light of intelligence. And then suddenly the eyebrows went up in their plaintive frown again. His gaze set on the distance. His lips sagged back into their loose droop. And Zug felt that he had been heard

and, after some sort of despairing consideration, ignored.

He sat down and drummed thoughtfully on his blotter-pad. "I suppose," he said. "I suppose."

He summed it up to Johns: "He's got *his*, an' I guess he knows it." There was contempt in his pity — the natural contempt of such a man as he for the victim of those conditions of society over which he himself had triumphed. "Tell them to take him back," he ordered. "Tell them to ask the steward to give him work in the kitchen."

Johns had been watching and listening in an eager silence. He took Sam by the elbow, now, with the air of an old woman who has shared in a scene of family scandal and who conceals, in an expression of decent deprecation, her relish of the gossip in which she is to delight. He even stopped sympathetically to pick up Sam's prison cap as they passed it; and he gave the warden's instructions to the guard in the corridor, confidentially, in the manner of a loyal friend of the family who could be depended on to be discreet. ("I wonder what the hell's up?" the guard asked the turnkey, and they both stared at the mysterious Sam.)

"Well, Warden," Johns said, after an awkward pause of lingering, "I guess I'll toddle along."

Zug grunted indifferently and the deputy sheriff hurried away as fast as he could shuffle, to pursue the truth about Sam where he knew he could find it — in the sheriff's office.

III

It was a week later that he returned to the penitentiary (with a young burglar who whistled rag-time sibilantly through his teeth all the time, to show his courage). And in the meantime Daneen had become "Silent Sam" to the whole prison. He had been put among the dish-washers in the kitchen, and no one had been able to get a word out of him. For two days he had held back the line by the fumbling slowness of his movements, which seemed blindly automatic rather than guided by any attentive intelligence; and because dish-washing is a rushed and hasty affair, particularly in the evening when the kitchen squad are the last to reach their beds, the men harried him with muttered imprecations, tried to jostle him into greater activity, and complained of him to the "trusty" who was their foreman.

On the morning of the third day, Sam dropped his arms into the dish-water without even rolling up his sleeves. When the trusty came to remonstrate, he seemed unable to control his hands, staring at them like an idiot when the tin dishes slipped through his fingers and clattered on the stone flagging of the floor. The steward finally took him away and put him with the men who sat all day peeling the potatoes that were boiled for the prisoners by the barrel.

Here he did better for a time, hunched on a stool, scraping away mechanically at the big Western tubers with a dull knife, in fits of industry that alternated

with intervals of a frowning and motionless vacuity from which he had to be wakened with a shake. Then he began to have trouble with his eyes — an inflammation, apparently. It kept them always blurred with a moisture that overflowed on his cheeks, as if he were peeling onions instead of potatoes. He seemed no longer able to see what he was doing, and he cut ruinous slices from the vegetables instead of merely peeling them.

The prison doctor found him suffering from a nervous affection of the tear ducts; they had so contracted that they were unable to drain the eyes. For want of a better place, he was given a cell in the hospital annex, where the feeble-minded were confined. They had the freedom of the corridor of their cell-house during certain hours of the day, and Sam walked there incessantly, with his head down, or rested, squatting on his heels in a corner, blinking his wet eyes.

When Deputy-Sheriff Johns had turned over his young burglar to the prison, he found the doctor in the warden's office reporting on Sam's condition. And the doctor was saying: "There's nothing to prevent him from talking if he wants to. I thought he'd been hurt in the head, perhaps — a brain lesion. No such thing. It is n't that he won't talk because he's insane, but he's probably going insane because he won't talk. We can't do anything for him, except keep him quiet and give him a chance."

Johns contained himself in silence — as a sort of proof to himself that he *could* be silent, for he had

been talking to a newspaper reporter about Sam, and he knew that he had been indiscreet. Not until the door had closed on the doctor's departure did he draw his chair up beside the warden's desk and whisper eagerly: "I found out all about him, Warden. He was jobbed — Daneen. One o' the boys down 'n our office was onto the whole gamo, an' he 's tellin' about it. He talks too much, that boy. He 'll get himself into trouble. But he was jobbed — Daneen. He was jobbed."

The warden nodded, sat back from Johns's excited whisper, lit a cigar, and said indifferently: "Sure. That 's what I told you."

"He was jobbed. Gerter found 'im asleep 'n under a tree, when he went down to look over the wreck, an' he woke him up, an' he said he had n't heard nothin', an' they gathered him in on suspicion. Then some fellow named Gahn, that nobody never seen round here before, got into the case an' swore he 'd seen Sam foolin' round the bridge an' kickin' the rails, an' they had the damnedest jury you ever seen — a reg'lar lot o' courthouse bums, with that crook Dietz fer foreman — an' them an' Purvis soaked him. Gahn's lit out since." He dropped his voice still lower. "The track-walker told one o' the boys — he was up fer a witness — an' he told him Gahn was a railroad detective he 'd knowed back East. He 'd made out he was a ranch-hand — Gahn did — walkin' from Sandy City to Big Golden lookin' fer work. He done it to get the reward. An' they soaked Daneen."

"Sure," the warden said dispassionately. "That's what I told you."

"Daneen 'd got a-hold of a shyster lawyer that took a twenty-dollar bill he 'd carried sewed up in his shirt — an' then let him get it in the neck. He did n't have nothin' to say fer himself, till Purvis ast him from the bench, an' then he started a long spiel about his wife havin' consumption an' shippin' her off to California, an' him startin' to walk from Pittsburg after her, doin' odd jobs an' bein' six months on the road — 'cause he 'd give her all his money an' sends her half he makes — but Purvis cuts him short an' gives him life — so 's the road would n't have to pay damages."

"Sure. Sure. That's Purvis." The warden stood up with a sour smile.

"He ain't opened his mouth since," Johns added. "They could n't get a word out o' him in the jail. He did n't even write to his wife about it."

Zug had reached the door. "Lot o' good *that* 'd 'a' done him," he grumbled. "I got to get my report out." He left Johns without any apology.

Johns found himself resentfully pleased that he had talked to the reporter. That reporter recognized a good "story" when he heard it.

Johns was "no such fool as you 'd think." Though he could make a joke at his own expense, he was not a meek man. He had his vanity. And he could be secretly and poiscnously malicious in his enmities. He could "tell a thing or two," if he chose, about almost any one who crossed him. He was not above telling

what he knew even about the Powers that befriended him — and then denying that he had opened his loyal and protesting mouth. The reporter to whom he had been talking, worked for the independent "labor journal" that was leading the new political revolt against the railway control of the government of the state; he had had more than one scandal "tipped off" to him by Johns.

"I'm right in the game with the rest o' them," Johns would tell him. "I got to be — to keep my job. But I would n't weep any salt tears if the whole bunch was blown to blazes. They make me work for *my* bread an' butter — an' *they* get all the cake."

He had concluded his account of the jobbing of Daneen: "An' him a decent married man! A decent married man!" He was sincere on that point. It had touched his sympathy. It might have excused him to himself for "leaking" to the newspaperman, if he had had any scruples about it. As a matter of fact, he had recently persuaded himself that he was a man of independence who did political "dirty work for the higher-ups" because he had to earn his living under them, but who secretly preserved himself clean of any loyalty to them, in their sculduggery, by criticizing them behind their backs to any one who was not of their following.

IV

Silent Sam's story was published to the state under a startling three-column head "Innocent Man Condemned?" — with the saving question-mark as an in-

insurance against libel. Judge Purvis was handled with a sarcastic courtesy that could not be prosecuted for contempt of court. Four "professional jurors," who had sat on the case, were ringingly denounced, but not by name. The witness Gahn was "alleged" to be everything suspicious. The whole article, written to make a charge of criminality against the railway, was ingeniously worded to give the effect of making the charge, without actually making it, so that the sovereign D. & C. might not have the opportunity of defending itself in its own courts, before its own judges, with a jury picked to find it innocent.

Sam's case, in fact, was carried to that almighty court of ultimate appeal in the democracy — the people. And they began to sit on it.

They were assisted by the ironic editorials of the little labor journal and by the dignified exterior of silence preserved by the "kept" newspapers of the ruling powers. The D. & C. refused, of course, to come into any such court. The case began to go against the railway by default. Deputy Johns carried himself with such circumspection that he refused to recognize the reporter when they passed on the street. And Silent Sam, trudging up and down the cement corridor of his cell-house — stared at through the bars by visitors, interrogated in vain by the guards — remained as insensible to his notoriety as he was to the mumbling of the maniac, in a neighboring cell, who thought himself the Czar of Russia and accepted Sam as the sentry at his palace gate.

At the end of the week, a negro tramp was arrested in Portland, Oregon, after he had boasted in a barroom that he had helped Daneen wreck the train on the bridge across the Little Sandy. He was promptly extradited and brought back for trial — before Judge Purvis. He pleaded guilty. He was sentenced to imprisonment for life. And the people of the State dismissed from their minds forever the case of Samuel Daneen.

So it came to pass that Deputy-Sheriff Johns had another prisoner to deliver to the Pen — a big, simply smiling negro who called him "boss" and accepted his escort almost protectingly.

"Don't be in such an all-fired hurry," Johns snarled at him on their way from the county jail to the railway station. "This 's no foot-race."

The negro guffawed whole-heartedly. "All raight, boss," he drawled. "Ah 'm sa'sfied. Don' you tiah yusself none. Mah laigs is jus' kind ah oneasy."

"Yeh," Johns grunted. "Well, they'll get ust to *that* in the nex' thirty er forty years."

And the negro chuckled delightedly: "Tha's raight, boss. Tha's no lie."

He continued interested, pleased, and happy in all they saw, in everything they did; and when their train was well under way, Johns put into words his conclusions on the man's behavior, by saying: "You're just darn fool enough to believe these people ain't goin' to keep you in, eh?"

The negro, flattered by this attention from a white

official, asked, with his head on one side, grinning:
"How d' you mean, boss? How d' you mean?"

"You know 'how' I mean. They 're playin' you fer a suckor. Did the detective give y' any money?"

"Ainy money? Fo' God, boss, I don' got nothin'."

"All right," Johns said. "Droom on. Dream on. What's your name?"

"Mah name's Joel."

"All right, Joel. Tell me when you find yourself beginnin' to wake up." Johns tipped his hat down on his eyes and leaned back comfortably in his seat. The train was crawling up the rise of alkali flats toward the foothills, in the heat and glare of dusty barrenness. After a long silence, Joel asked: "Does you know this heah Sam Daneen, boss?"

Johns replied placidly that Sam was an old and intimate friend; that every one knew he had not wrecked the D. & C. train; but that the railway detectives had accused him of it so that the road might not have to pay damages on the wreck. Johns made that point very clear. He illustrated it, elucidated it in detail, forced it on the intelligence of the blinking negro.

"They put him in the Pen," he said, "so 's to save all that money. See, sonny? We were fightin' to get him out. We were provin' he 'd never wrecked the train. So they gets you to say you helped him wreck it, an' that settles *him*, an' keeps the money in the bank. See? An' then they flings you in with him — 'cause you said you 'd helped him — an' they keeps you there,

so 's they won't have to pay *you*. See? An' everybody's happy. Eh? Dream on, you damn fool."

Joel studied on it; his smiling confidence had gone as suddenly as a child's. Then he perked up with: "What 's the matteh why Ah cain't tell 'em Ah lied about it, if Ah wants to gait out? Ah can *do* that. They 's got nuthin' on *me* but what Ah says so, boss."

"You 'll never get the chanct to open your fool mouth about it, nigger," Johns replied.

His indifference was convincing. After a frowning interval, Joel observed more plaintively: "He 's suhely requiahed to play squah with *me*. Ah suttently stood by mah promises. Ah suttently did."

To which Johns sneered: "You suttently are one big fool nigger-man. You suttently are."

He rested complacently in the cushioned seat with his eyes closed, and enjoyed hearing the negro shift and mutter to himself. Every mile or so, Joel would break out: "Mebbe Ah nevah wrecked no train, boss." And Johns would reply: "You swore you did, nigger, an' we got to believe you." Or: "Mebbe Ah nevah seen this heah Sam in all mah bo'n days;" and Johns would reply: "Well, I 'll interduce you, bo. You 're goin' to spend the rest o' your 'bo'n days' locked up with him." Or, more desperately: "Cain't Ah do nothin' 'bout it, boss?" And still more cheerfully: "You 've done your doin's, Joel. You 're 'a gone nigger."

After forty miles of this sort of "third degree," Joel was a worried-looking, mulatto-colored son of slavery

betrayed into the power of the dominant race. He began to stammer an almost unintelligible, terrified explanation of what had happened in Portland.

"Keep that fer the warden," Johns stopped him; for Johns was planning a surprise for Zug. "I can't help you any. Keep it fer him."

"The wa-wahden? 'S he the man?"

"He's the man fer *you*, sonny. He can do a lot fer *you*. Come along, now. Here's where you meet the 'wahden.'"

A hope as simple as his terror drew him out to the station platform and cheered him up the fatal hillside to the stone walls of the Pen.

"Don't go too fast," Johns purred. "You'll get winded. You won't be able to make your little speech. That's better. You'll have lots o' time . . . Fine day, Joel. Sun's hot, eh? . . . Well, it'll be shadier inside . . . Here we are."

He led him straight to the warden's office. "Here's a nigger wants to see you," he announced to Zug. "He wants to tell you how they got him to swear he helped on that Little Sandy wreck."

"'Fo' God," Joel broke out wildly, "Ah nevah wrecked no train, boss. Ah—"

Zug rose with his wrinkled smile and patted him on the shoulder. "Just a minute, boy," he said. "You better tell this to a man it'll do some good to. He's inside here." He led him to the corridor. "Jake," he said to the turnkey, "tell Geddes to put this man in to take care o' Sam Daneen." He explained, as

Johns unlocked the handcuffs in the turnkey's cage: "He ain't much of a talker,— Sam ain't — but he 'll like to listen about that wreck. Tell *him* about it."

Johns chuckled flatteringly: "He need n't hurry, neither. He can tell 'm as often as he likes, eh? He 'll have lots o' time."

* * * * *

"And the funny part of it is," the reporter always says, when he finishes telling his version of the story — "the *funny* part of it is that this happened *in America*. They 're down there yet — in the Pen. Daneen's gone blind, as well as nutty, and the nigger leads him around by the hand. It's a great sight to look at — on the Fourth of July."

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HIS MOTHER

I

MRS. REGAN was at the front window of her tenement-house flat, watching. She was not beautiful. Her eyes were sunken and beady under the worried wrinkles of her forehead. Her high-boned cheeks looked as tough as the corners of a battered leather trunk. Her withered old mouth was drawn tightly shut, as if she were holding pins between her lips. And yet, in those eyes, about that mouth, there was an expression of anxious and loving expectation that was more beautiful than beauty, because it was so human, because it had that endearing ugliness of worn life.

She was watching for her son Larry, and she kept saying to herself: "He's late. I wonder what's keepin' him."

He was twenty-odd, a typesetter by trade, "a sober, law-fearin' good lad," as she would boast, who neither smoked nor drank nor used bad language—"except now an' then, mebbe, when he fergets I'm in hearin'" — and who brought his money home to her on pay-days "as reg'lar, come Friday, as Friday comes." She had worked her hands "to the bone" to give him his school-

ing in the days when he, after school hours, used to go on the streets to shine shoes and sell newspapers or do whatever else came to hand to earn an honest penny. She was working for him still, but no longer going out scrubbing, and taking in washing, and stitching ulsters a^t night on a sewing-machine at twenty cents an ulster. (It was the machine that had made her voice so loud; she had been used to talking while she worked it.) Now she sat at home, "like a lady," and only sewed, and mended, and cooked, and scrubbed, and swept, and dusted, and washed for him; and only sat up late at nights till he had gone to bed, so that she might tuck him in, because she believed that if she did not watch him so, he would be sure to kick the covers off his legs in the night, like a big baby, and catch "his death o' cold."

"He 's late," she said, for the twentieth time. "I wonder what 's keepin' him."

She would see him as soon as he turned the street corner far below her, and she would hurry back to the kitchen where the dinner was all ready to be whisked out of the oven to the table. As soon as he opened the door of the flat, she would call "Is that yerself?" and he would reply with a cheerful grunt of assent. ("He never talks till he 's fed — poor boy.") There would be no kisses, no embraces of affection, no show of love between them. Her pot pie, her biscuits, and her English breakfast tea "with a pinch o' Paykoe in it" were her caresses; she would ply him with them, beaming on him fondly, every helping affectionate and every bite

grateful; and his final sigh of repletion would be as eloquent to her as the suspiration of a full heart.

She would have to tell him all the gossip of the neighborhood, where she knew everybody's troubles, because everybody came to her to borrow a little assistance in bearing them. "Yuh can have annything I got to spare," she would tell them. "Many's the time, when I had nothin', I wisht I c'u'd borry it meself." And he would read the newspapers and listen to her talk — both at the one time — and if there was any one happier than Mrs. Regan then, it was some one who had no right to be. She was sure of that.

"He's late," she said. "I wonder — There now!"

It was he.

She did not wait to wave him a greeting. She ran to the kitchen and caught up her towel, all her anxieties forgotten on the instant. And it was with no resentful impatience that she cried "Is that yerself?" when she heard the door open.

"Sure," he answered. "How've you been?"

She looked back quickly over her shoulder as she measured her drawing of tea. (She said afterward: "As soon as he opened his mouth, I knowed there was somethin' wrong.") She heard him coming down the hall to her; and he should have gone to wash. "Dinner's ready," she assured him.

He said: "So'm I."

He had a parcel in his hand. He tossed it on the kitchen table.

"What's that?" she asked.

He answered: "Open it an' see."

She was not only mystified; she was alarmed. And his casual explanations, as she untied the string, did not reassure her — that he had seen it on the street; that a push-cart peddler had had it; that he had thought she might like it.

It was a white crocheted "umbrella" shawl.

She spread it out, half flattered, uneasy, touched by his thought for her, but uncertain how to take it. "There now," she reproached him. "Why'd yuh waste yer money?"

He laughed shamefacedly and went back toward his bedroom.

He knew that she would fold the shawl in a bureau drawer, and show it to her visitors as a "prisont from Larry," and perhaps on some special occasion wear it with all the pride in the world. He did not know that after he left her, she returned to her tea-making so puzzled to know what was "up" that she forgot to put in the extra spoonful "fer the pot."

Her suspicions were not allayed by his talkativeness at the table, for she knew him well enough to understand that whenever he had anything on his conscience he was always instinctively ingratiating and good-humored. She said little; she listened without betraying herself; she watched him furtively with her sharp old eyes. But she saw nothing in his talk until he had finished telling her about the opening of the new subway from Brooklyn Bridge to Harlem. Then, hav-

ing pushed away his plate and tilted back his chair comfortably, he said: "We could get a fine big flat uptown fer what we pay here. It would n't take me any longer to get home, either, now. We don't *have* to live down here. We could move fer nex' to nothin' — five er ten dollars."

He had evidently been leading up to that proposal, diplomatically; and with equal diplomacy, she evaded it. She did not reply that this was her home; that all her friends were about her here; that the church in which she had been married, in which he had been christened, in which she had heard mass for the last thirty years, was just around the corner — to say nothing of her grocer and her butcher. She suggested merely: "Yuh 'd miss the boys."

This referred to the younger members of the Dan Healy Democratic Association in which he was a stalwart. "Oh, well," he said, easily, "I been thinkin' o' givin' all that up, any way. There's nothin' in it fer me. I got my work. I don't need to live off politics. I've sort o' cut it out lately."

For some days past, he had been going out every night; and he had let her suppose that he had been spending his evenings in the rooms of the association, helping to prepare for the coming campaign. She rose to clear the table, so that, under cover of the activity, she might have time to think.

"I met the Senator on the street to-day," he said, "an' told him."

"Told him what?"

"That I was qu'etin' politics."

She put down her dishes. "Fer the love o' Heaven, why?"

"Well," he said, "I been thinkin' it over. It's all right — but it ain't straight. They're a nice lot o' fellahs, but they're in wrong." He was a big, dark-faced Irish boy, deep-eyed, with a gaze that was calmly direct. "I want to keep clear of it. That's why I want to get uptown out o' this."

"They've been good frien's to us, Larry. Many's the dollar Senator Dan —"

"I know all about that. I've tried to make it up to him. I've done things fer him I would n't 've done fer nobody else — around the polls. I won't do it any more."

"Are yuh sore 'cause yuh did n't get Flanagan's place?"

"Sore? No, I'm dang glad I did n't get it."

"What's come over yuh, then?"

"Well," he said, vaguely, "I've been meetin' people — another kind o' people. I've been seein' things diff'rent."

She realized, then, that she was facing a crisis in his life greater than any she had had to deal with since the day when he had wished to leave school so that she might not have to work so hard for him. He was wanting to take his life into his own hands again, to turn against his politics, his class, and all his old associations. So much she understood, with a mother's jealous instinct, instantly, though she did not accuse him

of understanding it himself. He had evidently been influenced by some one. She set herself to find out who it was.

She asked: "Are yuh goin' out to-night?"

He accepted the question with relief. "I thought I would — a little while. I'll be back early." He sat with his elbows on the table. "I promised I'd see some one."

She turned her back, craftily, before she asked: "Can't yuh bring him here?"

"Well, not very easy," he said. "It's a girl."

He tried to give it in a matter-of-fact tone, but he did not succeed. She tried to receive it in a matter-of-fact manner, and she was more successful. She kept her back to him and continued with her work. She glanced at the shawl with her lips tightened. A girl!

It was her conviction that every girl in the town was a designing hypocrite who was bent on flattering Larry into marrying her so that she might not have to work for a living. Not one of the whole useless set would know how to cook for him. Not one would be able to do anything but spend his wages in clothes for herself, and ruin his digestion with stuff bought at delicatessen counters, and with her folly and extravagance worry him to death.

It is a mortifying thing to raise a boy to the lovable helplessness of manhood only to have him taken advantage of by one of your own sex. She said angrily. "Are y' ashamed to show her?"

After a moment of silence, he replied: "All right, then. I'll bring her." And rising abruptly from the table, he stalked into the front room and sat down at the window.

She did not need any further proof that the girl had caught him, for he was not the sort of boy to bring any young woman to see her unless he had been already committed, in his own mind, to matrimony. The prospect of his death itself would hardly have been less welcome to her; and yet the hardening of her face and a little trembling of her hands as she took up the dishes were the only signs she showed of her emotion. He was going to marry! She would have to share Larry with a strange woman — if he did not desert her altogether.

She continued her work, all the joy of it gone from her, miserable, but bearing her misery dumbly. She did not even ask him who the girl was. What did it matter *who* it was? She tidied up her kitchen determinedly. "She'll not find the place dirty when she comes," she promised herself — reserving an opinion of what it would be like before the girl had been long in charge of it. And when Larry had dressed and gone out, she attacked the little front room with the same thought — arranging the folds in her lace curtains to conceal patching, and covering the delinquencies of her "crimson plush" with a cushion here and a tidy there, and dusting the paper fans and the framed photograph in its red-velvet mat, and assuring herself that the block of wood was safely supporting the back leg of the easy

chair that had lost a caster. "They 'll be gettin' new," she prophesied. Sho herself had clung to the old, even when Larry had wished to be rid of them. Sho was old herself. Well, he would soon learn whether the new was better! Sho shook her head prophetically. He would soon learn whether the new was better.

II

That mood passed, and a more characteristic one succeeded it.

She told herself that the girl would be some "gum-chewin' young gad-about with no more than brains enough to dress herself like a fool." A shop-girl, no doubt — a shop-girl that carried all her wages on her back and walked with a wiggle! There were no girls, no more, like the girls of her day. Never a one. Now, they went to work in offices instead of staying home and learning the things a girl ought to know. They mado poor wives and worse mothers. They were half of them sickly and all of them silly. They knew no more about their proper business in life than a peacock knows about hatching duck's eggs.

Sho muttered and grumbled it over and over while she dressed — angry at herself now, because she had dared Larry to bring the girl. What could she say to the fool creature? Let him marry her and go off with her out of this. She could take care of herself — and that's all she *would* do. She did n't want to see the girl. Why should she? Drat the young snip. Who wanted to listen to her cackle? If Larry liked it, let

him take it and live with it. There was no accounting for tastes. Larry! Of all boys in the world! Well, live and learn. Live and learn.

She plumped herself down in her rocking-chair by the window and waited indignantly for them to come. She looked very sour, very stiff and forbidding. Hard work had kept her thin and angular. She snorted and muttered to herself. And she was still in this frame of mind when the arrival of Larry and his "girl" brought her to her feet. "Now then," she said. "Now then!"

There entered a meekly dressed young woman, about thirty years old, tall, in black, with a plain pale face and a subdued manner. "Miss McCarty," Larry introduced her, very proud and somewhat apprehensive. ("God help us," Mrs. Regan said afterward, "I thought 'twas a joke he was playin'. She was nothin' at all to look at. An' old enough to marry two of him!") He did not notice how his mother received Miss McCarty; he was only anxious about how Miss McCarty would be impressed. And the mother received her as a rival who, at first sight, disproved all the formidable reports concerning her; and Miss McCarty showed no more impression than is indicated by the deepening of reserve.

She had a broad, flat forehead; and her eyes were set under it, far apart and colorless, with a quiet despondency of expression. Her mouth had the same flatness — a wide mouth, thin-lipped and full of the character of a woman who has a mind of her own. When she sat

down she folded in her lap a pair of immaculate hands, large, firm, very white, and evidently very capable. Her physical largeness was obviously of the same quality of graceful strength.

"Well, now!" Mrs. Regan said, at last. "Will yuh tell me somethin'? Wherever did yuh meet?" Her excitement gave her voice the shrillness that made her sound shrewish to those who did not know her.

"Down-town," Larry answered, with his eyes still fixed on the girl.

"Do yuh work?" the mother asked her.

"Oh, yes," she said, "I've always worked." And she spoke in the voice that had glamored Larry.

It was not the voice of a dialect; it was not even markedly the plaintive intonation of the Celt. It was a rich full breathing of deepened vowels and blurred consonants that put a sort of pastoral gentleness and charm on every word — as soft as an Irish mist on the green undulations of an Irish landscape.

"What do yuh do?" Mrs. Regan demanded.

Larry answered for her: "She's a manicurist."

"A — What's that?" she cried, annoyed because the girl had an appearance of ignoring her.

Larry laughed nervously. It was evident that Miss McCarty did not understand the brusque kindness of his mother's inquiries. "Never mind what it is," he said. "What difference does it make?"

Mrs. Regan contained herself by folding her arms on her pride. "True enough," she said. "What difference? 'Tis none o' my bus'ness. None at all." And

with that she assumed an attitude of silent self-suppression that was comical — as well as tragic.

“It only took us twenty minutes to get down to Fourteenth Street from a Hundred an’ Third,” Larry told her.

“Did it,” she said, shortly.

“Lots o’ flats to rent up there.”

She said nothing.

“Better air, too.”

With one hand supporting an elbow, she fingered her lips as if she were fingering a padlock on them. Miss McCarty was very reposedly looking aside out of the window. Larry tried to make talk.

The end of it came when the girl, having carried on five minutes’ futile conversation with him — about flats, comparative rents, and the possible construction of more subways — rose placidly to say good night; and Mrs. Regan awoke, too late, to the inhospitality of her behavior.

“Yuh ’re never goin’ so soon!” she cried. “Wait a bit. Have a cup o’ tea now.” The girl refused firmly, but Mrs. Regan hurried out to the kitchen to put on the kettle and open the cake box. She heard Larry call out something which she did not understand. And when she returned with her pewter cake-basket and her tray of cups, the room was empty.

They had gone.

She went back to the kitchen, thumped the cake into the box, banged the basket down on the table, and snatched the kettle from the stove. “There!” she said.

"Now!" And seating herself in the chair by the fire-escape window she began to weep.

She had done it. She had quarreled with them. The girl would take Larry away from her. It was the end of everything!

III

Larry had first seen Miss McCarty in a down-town barber shop — and if he had not hung up his hat before he had seen her, he might have backed out of the place. As it was, he had taken his seat in the chair nearest her with an uncomfortable feeling that she had intruded on his toilet. She was manicuring at a little table near the door.

"Hair cut," he said, in a husky undertone, and felt like a fool when the barber swathed him in striped calico and tucked it in around his neck. It was no position for a man to be seen in by any young woman. In the best of circumstances haircutting was to Larry an operation of personal beautification that was to be rushed through with a scornful lack of attention; he would scarcely look at himself in the glass until he could do it alone and unashamed, and curse the barber who had made the parting an inch too high on his head. And now, when his hair had been ruffled up unbecomingly, he kept darting irritated glances at her out of the corner of his eye, to see that she was not staring at him.

She was polishing the finger-nails of a man who had his back to Larry, so that Larry could not see his face.

It was enough for him to see hers. Not that she was beautiful — or even of an interesting ugliness. He thought her merely plain looking, with a nose too large. What he saw in her face was the evidence that her customer was annoying her; and as Larry watched her, he added his irritated embarrassment about his own toilet to an accession of uncultured contempt for the man who could loll back, ogling, in a barber shop, while a woman polished his nails.

The barber slewed Larry's head around — first this way and then that way — with the masterful hand of his trade; and Larry caught but fleeting glimpses of the girl's reddened ears and frigid haughtiness. The man was leaning forward on one elbow, a roll of flesh bulging above his collar. Larry's slanted eye fixed on that fat roll malevolently for a moment before the barber swung him around again. And when he was sheared and sleeked down with bay rum and out of the chair finally, he reached for his hat — with his eyes on the remembered neck — just as the girl, dropping her chamois pad, looked up appealingly at the barber as if for aid against insult.

Larry stepped forward, jabbed his fingers in between the neck and the collar and raised the man with one hand while he withdrew the chair with the other. The tightened collar prevented any but a guttural, choked outcry. Larry jerked him clear of the table and propelled him swiftly toward the screen door, shoved him through that, ran him across the sidewalk, and there, bumping him behind with a bent knee, sent him sprawl-

ing into the gutter. Then, without any undignified haste, but with sufficient celerity, he shouldered his way through the midday crowd on Broadway, turned a corner, and hurried back to his work.

He had almost forgotten the incident before he saw her again. He had not gone near the barber shop meanwhile. He had not given her a thought -- except a vaguely resentful one. And when he met her, face to face, in City Hall Park, he was not sure where he had seen her before. She said, quite frankly and unemharrassed: "I want to thank you. Don't you remember me?"

"Sure I do," he replied, and he did not say it flipantly. She had spoken in that wonderful voice of hers, and it had made him respectful at once.

He turned back with her, and she accepted his escort as a matter of course. They said nothing of any importance; they parted at the step of the "El." in Park Place, with a nod and a smile; and Larry was half way back to his own station of the Third Avenue Elevated at Brooklyn Bridge before it occurred to him that he would like to see her again and had not provided the opportunity.

The omission made it necessary for him to stand opposite the barber shop, next noon, and wait for her to come out for luncheon.

There is, in such affairs, an unwritten code that prohibits the asking of personal questions. The young man must accept the young woman "sight unseen" -- as the boys say when they "swap" with their hands be-

hind them — until the first trial of acquaintance has been proven. Then, if the interest becomes serious, mutual confidences are naturally exchanged, the right to receive them having been established. It was for this reason that even after Larry and she had gone to the theaters together, sat in the parks, and patronized the museums of art and of natural history — which a thoughtful public has erected for the use of New York lovers who need sheltered benches on wet Sunday afternoons — he knew as little about her past, her parentage and the private circumstances of her life as she knew about his. She remained placid, uncoquettish and still reserved with the reserve of a woman whose voice was not made for chatter. That voice haunted him. He heard it even in the midst of the crashed metallic tinklings of the linotypes.

Then, one evening, when he called upon her by appointment to take her to the theater, she did not meet him at the door of the flat-house; and he ascended to the top floor apartment to find her with a headache and unwilling to go out. She was sharing the flat with two friends — one a head waitress in a dairy restaurant, the other a black-haired little Socialist who was trying to organize a union among the shop-girls of a department store where she worked. And it was here that Larry began to “see things diff’rent,” as he told his mother, in the matter of politics. Here, too, he got another impression of Miss McCarty, from the deference which her two room mates showed her and the air of right with which she accepted it — to say nothing of the graceful

dignity of the way in which she reclined upon a shabby corner couch and listened to the argument between Larry and the Socialist.

She gave him an impression not only of superior experience and superior age, but even of superior culture; and when he left her that night he had an uneasy suspicion that she was, perhaps, "above" him.

He was ambitious. He was also proud — as proud as his mother. And when he came to ask the girl to call on Mrs. Regan with him, he gave the invitation as if it were a defiance. She accepted it — after a moment's reflection — with some of that feminine, Old-World dignity that refuses to recognize a lover until he makes his formal declaration.

It was this dignity that carried her outwardly unmoved through the interview with Mrs. Regan; and it was this dignity that sat so stiff upon her as she journeyed back to One Hundred and Third Street with Larry, in the roaring subway, after she had refused Mrs. Regan's cup of tea. There was nothing to say; the noise about them, in any case, prevented them from saying anything; and Larry waited until they were in the street before he even asked when he might see her again.

She replied calmly: "I don't know."

"Will you come to — to the theater to-morrow night?"

"No, thank you," she said.

"Why?"

Her manner replied that she did not feel he had any

claim upon her that would justify the question. She looked straight ahead of her in silence.

Larry put his hands in his coat pockets, with the air of a boy who has been insulted and who puts away his fists temporarily until he can make sure that the insult was intended. He asked: "Don't you want me to come to see you?"

"I think not," she said, in her smoothest voice. "No."

Larry took her to her door without another word. He stopped on the pavement. "Good night," he challenged.

She looked back over her shoulder as she took the first step. "Good-by," she replied cheerfully; and it was a cheerfulness that only made finality sound more final.

Larry nodded briefly and turned away. And to match the finality in her cheerfulness, there was, in his nod of dismissal, an anger that was as implacable as an Irish hate.

IV

Mrs. Regan, when he returned to the flat, had apparently gone to bed, but after he was in bed himself she came to his room in her blue flannel wrapper with a light, to make her peace with him; and he pretended that he was asleep, lying very stiffly on his back with his eyes shut, in an attitude that would not have deceived the blind. There was nothing for her to do but to go back to her misery and lie awake with it, staring at

a darkness that was as black as her future to her. She had quarreled with Larry. Oh, dear! Oh, dear!

When he came to his breakfast, next morning, he had his eyes open, but otherwise his mental attitude seemed to be unchanged. He ate his breakfast — which she laid before him as humbly as if it were an altar sacrifice — and he spoke to her in a voice that was only too well controlled. But he did not meet her anxious penitent glances, and when he went away to his work he left her to as unhappy a day as any that her husband had ever given her. She had quarreled with Larry! He would be leaving her. It was all over.

She prepared for him, broken-heartedly, a lavish dinner of stuffed heart and mashed potatoes; and he came home earlier than usual to eat it with what she mistook for signs of a better feeling toward herself. That night, to her surprise, he did not go out; he read his newspaper and re-read it and read it again, until it was evident to her that he was reading the same pages twice without knowing it. She watched him — but without gathering any idea of what was going on in his mind.

And she watched him all next day, which was Sunday, without understanding his lack-luster mood, his absent-mindedness and his gentleness toward herself. He did not go out; he sat gloomily indoors; and when he proposed a street-car ride in the cool of the evening, she went with him, in a remorseful state of wonder.

At last, when she could bear it no longer, she asked:

"What's become o' the girl that yuh don't take her?"

"*Her*," he said bitterly. "We're not good enough fer *her*."

"An' why not?" she cried.

"I don' know," he answered, in a tone hard and even. "An' I don't care."

"There now!" Mrs. Regan addressed herself aloud. "What d' yuh think o' that?" She stared at him, turning in her seat, with such an expression of bewilderment that he asked sourly: "What's the matter?"

"Nothin'," she said, collecting herself. "Nothin' at all."

But throughout the silence in which they finished their car-ride, she kept saying to herself in her thoughts: "What d' yuh think o' that? An' me thinkin' he was mad at me an' goin' to loave me fer the girl. . . . What d' yuh think o' that? The likes o' her! The likes o' her to be puttin' him down! Him — that was worth a dozen of her. It's enough to make the saints in heaven — Glory be to Peter! What d' yuh think o' that?" Amazement and indignation alternated with amazement and relief. She was not going to lose Larry — but the likes of her! Not good enough for her. Did any one ever hear anything to equal that? The fool of a girl! What were they coming to nowadays — the girls — any way? She could have chuckled with contempt for them, if it had not been that Larry would have heard. Larry was evidently in no frame of mind to hear chuckles.

He continued in a mood — or rather in and out of a number of moods — which she did not find herself able to follow. In accordance with the best traditions of the poets, he lost his appetite, but only because he had developed in its place a worried indigestion that made him irritable rather than languishing or lackadaisical. He had decided that Miss McCarty had thrown him over because, after seeing his mother and his home, she had found them “beneath” her. And one night he would bring his mother home the gifts of a resentful pride in her, and the next night he would be querulous and sharp, and handle the furniture as if he could scarcely restrain himself from throwing it out the window. He would come to his breakfast with a melancholy lover’s distaste for food; and after his eggs and coffee, he would be ready to boil over with ill-temper at a word. He was sick and despondent, hilarious and had-natured, fiercely proud and for the most part quite impossible.

His mother did everything to tempt his appetite with rich dishes that only made him the more dyspeptic. She tried to please him by proposing that they move to a flat uptown and buy a “hran’ new” set of furniture that she had seen; and this proposal found him in one of his proud moods and made him furious. She almost wept over his gifts — beginning to have a glimmering suspicion of why he bought them — and he was so indignant that he swore he would never bring her another. “Well, love o’ heaven!” she cried, at last. “There’s no livin’ with y’ at all! What is it?”

What's wrong with yuh? If yuh want the girl, why don't yuh go get her? God give her joy o' yuh! Yuh 're worse 'n a bear with a sore ear!"

"What're you talkin' about?" He glared at her. "Who said I wanted her? I'm done with her — and she knows it! I would n't look at her if she —" He choked wrathfully.

"Well, then," she complained, "what is it? What's the matter? I can do nothin' with yuh."

"Who asked you to? Leave me alone. I'm all right. Only you're always makin' out I'm — she — as if I was gone nutty about her. I don't care a darn about her. I'm as good 's she is. If she thinks we ain't, that's her lookout. She can't bother me fer a minute!"

"Aeh," Mrs. Regan said, "I dunno what yuh're talkin' about. I've said nothin' about yuh bein' nutty — though, Lord knows, y' act like it."

He swallowed the insult — turned suddenly dispirited — and they let the quarrel lapse into a worried gloom until some fresh misunderstanding should arouse it again.

It summed up for her, before long, into the conclusion that the boy was ill, that he was unhappy, that he was eating out his heart, and ruining his digestion, because of a fool of a girl with whom he had quarreled. "They neither o' them 've got sense enough to know what they want! Some one ought to take an' bump their heads together fer them. Drat them both! They'll drive me out o' me wits. . . . If I had her

here, now, I'd give her a talkin' to she'd not forget to her dyin' day!"

But she did not have her there; and she had not the faintest suspicion of where to find her — until, one day, when she had been to call on a neighbor who had recently moved to One Hundred and Third Street, she told Larry of the visit and he said: "Hundred an' Third Street! Whereabouts?" She replied: "Near the subway. First block east." He said: "I don't want you to be foolin' around there. It'll look as if we were —" And she remembered that Larry and the girl had come down from One Hundred and Third Street in "twenty minutes."

"Foolin' around there!" she said, to herself. "Why should I fool around there! It's yerself that'll do anny foolin' around that's to be done, me lad. I'd look nice goin' up there fer yuh, tryin' to patch up quarrels I know nothin' at all about. I'd look nice."

Any one who understood Mrs. Regan would know that this fiercely contemptuous repudiation of any intention of "foolin' around" Miss McCarty was the first sign of her purpose to do just that. The boy had begun to look bad about the eyes. When his face was in repose it took a worried wrinkle between the eyebrows. He had moments when he was so meek that he was as pathetic to her as if he were teething. She could not endure it. "If I knowed what was wrong between them," she told herself, "'t w'u'd not be so bad. I'd like to see that girl. Drat her! I'd put it to her straight."

The next time she called in One Hundred and Third Street she examined the bells of all the apartment houses in the block, and when she came to "McCarty" she muttered: "There y' are, are yuh? If I thought yuh were up there now — but I s'pose yuh 're at work. The devil take yuh. Do yuh go out nights, I wonder. Huh! I see meself! I'd look nice!" And turning her back resolutely, she walked off with her chin up.

Naturally, she said nothing to Larry of that visit, and he had no suspicion of her duplicity when she went out on the following Saturday evening to confession — it being the eve of the first Sunday of the month — and took the subway north. "I'll tell no lies," she assured herself, "but I'd better see her first — an' confess after." And when Miss McCarty, alone in the flat, received her with a well-controlled but evident surprise, she took the upper hand in a manner of self-justification, and demanded: "Now then! What is it all about? Tell me that, will yuh? What's wrong between yuh? Why have yuh thrown down the poor boy?"

Miss McCarty had, of course, "thrown him down" because she was too proud to intrude upon any family that did not welcome her, and Mrs. Regan, by her manner at that first meeting, had most obviously intended her to understand that she was not welcome.

"Won't you sit down?" she asked, calmly.

Mrs. Regan sat down while she was replying that she could not do so, that Larry thought she was at church, that she must hurry away, that he was ill, that he was

worrying. "And why?" she cried, shrilly. "Why is it? What's wrong? I can make nothin' of it!"

Miss McCarty began to explain the situation as delicately as she could.

"Well!" Mrs. Regan broke in. "Well now! Did y' expect a woman to grin an' say 'Thank yuh kindly, miss,' when yuh come to take her son from her? Did yuh? Fer if yuh did, yuh got less sense than yuh look. Faith, if *you* had no one in the wide worrld but Larry, yuh 'd not welcome the girl that came fer him, neither." There were tears in her eyes.

"But, Mrs. Regan," the girl put in, quickly, "he never said that he wanted —"

"Ach!" Mrs. Regan made a gesture of contempt for such nonsense. "What does it matter what he said er did n't? There he is — like he 'd just buried his gran'-mother — turned agin his meals — an' that bad tempered there's no livin' with him. Are we all of us to be made miserable be such-like nonsense? Take shame to yerself, girl!"

"Well" — the girl smiled — "what do you want me to do?"

"Marry him! Marry him, an' let's have some peace in the world. I don't know who y' are, an' I don't care. There's no livin' with him without yuh. Take him an' be done with it. Can yuh cook?"

"Yes," she said, amused. "I think I can cook."

"Where are yuh from, annyway?"

"I'm from Dublin. I went to London as a lady's maid. I came here as a traveling-companion — and

did n't like it. I took up manicuring because I could do that — and could n't do anything else."

"Have yuh no relatives? Are y' all alone here?"

"Yes. All alone — except for the girl friends I've made."

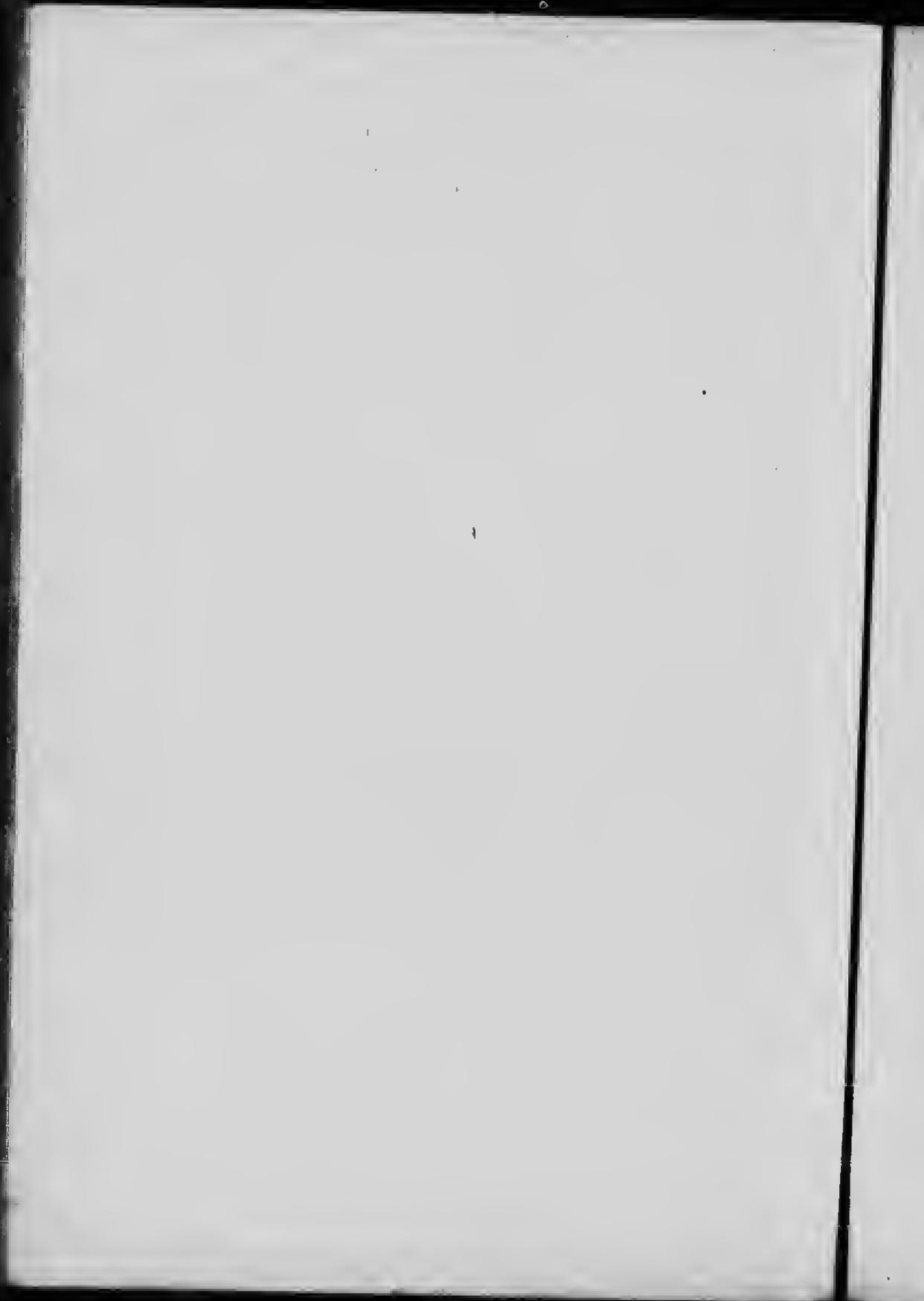
"There now," Mrs. Regan relented. "He'll make y' a good husband. He's the best boy in the world." And she launched out in a mother's eulogy of him. "Yuh're a fine, big, healthy-lookin' girl," she ended. "Yuh'll be happy together. I must get back now." She rose to go. "Don't tell him I've been here." She paused, frowning. "How'll I —"

Miss McCarty kissed her. "I'll write to him. Don't worry about that. Let me take you to the subway."

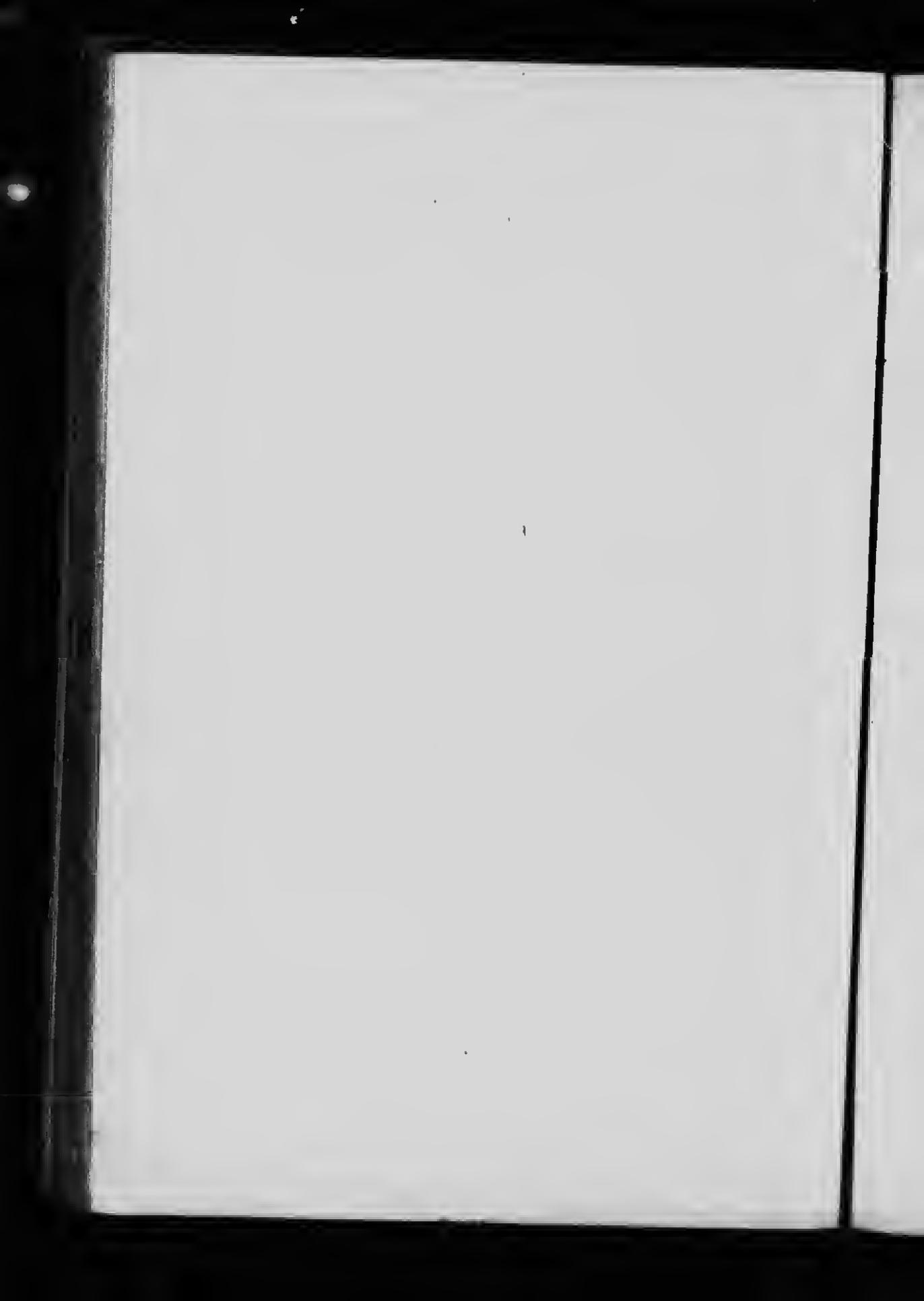
"I will not," Mrs. Regan replied. "I'm not so old I can't walk alone. Good-by to yuh."

And when Larry, on the following Monday, had received his letter and had gone out (rather sulkily, but in his best clothes), to reply to it in person, Mrs. Regan sat down by her window with an exclamation that was between a sigh of satisfaction and a grunt of disgust. "There y' are," she told herself. "That's what it is to be a mother. 'Tain't only that yuh can't keep yer boy, but if yuh try it, y' end by goin' down on yer bare knees to the girl to marry him. A nice thing to have to be doin'! A nice thing!" She grumbled indignantly. "Well," she said, "that's what it is to be a woman an' have to be lookin' after the men all yer

life — an' managin' them — an' feedin' them — an' seein' they 're kep' full an' happy. Faith, I wish 't I'd been born a man meself. 'T must be an easy life." She shook her head over it. "I s'pose I'll be a gran'mother, too, now, soon enough. There's no end to it. Nothin' but trouble. . . . A gran'mother. Well now!" And with that she began to smile as tenderly as if she had the baby in her arms already. "A gran'mother. What d' yuh think o' that!"



IN THE MATTER OF ART



IN THE MATTER OF ART

THE automobile had dragged itself up the rise of the country road with a painful slowness — with a violently irregular beat of its disordered pulse and every now and then an explosive hoarse cough of protest. The chauffeur shook his head, and listened, and shook his head again, like a doctor who sees that the end is near. The man beside him kept flicking the ash from a cigar impatiently, with his eyes now on the turn of the road ahead, now on the row of little cedars that were held in single file along the way-side, like a chain gang, by three rusty strands of barb wire, for a fence. Behind them a cow, in an orchard pasture, chewed with true bucolic stolidity as she watched the car. Around her, the old apple trees, petrified by decay, stood motionless, as if they had just been interrupted in some skeletoned dance of death, their bleached limbs contorted, their bare twigs, as sharp as talons, still quivering a little in the sunlight.

The chauffeur pulled a lever that mercifully ended the agony. The car settled back against a water-bar, panting. The man sighed and rose from his seat.

The chauffeur had told him what was wrong — something the matter with the "contact" — but Ruttlely did not believe it. He believed that the chauffeur was one

of those deft mechanical idiots who are never happy except when they are tinkering with machinery, who invent reasons for tinkering and then tinker so badly that they have to tinker again to cure the ill effects of the previous tinkering, and so on forever. It was an annoying defect in the man's character, but Ruttley accepted it — as he accepted all human delinquencies — without trying to correct it. He was not a reformer. He was a playwright.

He did not so much as look to see which part of the machine was to be operated on, but turned his back and moved slowly away up the road, in his dust-ulster, smoking. The apple orchard was not like any he had ever seen on the stage, and he regarded it a moment. The blue haze of the hills beyond was a commonplace of back-drops, and he turned from it to the other side of the road, where poison-ivy and blackberry brambles struggled with a thicket of plum shoots for possession of a hollow in the hillside. When he passed the thicket he saw a house, a well-top, and a woman drawing water there.

That was the order in which he saw them, and the order in which he considered them. The house might have had some interest, for a "By Gosh" drama, if it had not been spoiled by a new roof of cedar shingles, new tin gutters, and new leader pipes. The well-top was characteristic — particularly the faded green verditer of the lattice on it. The young woman had her back to him; and he saw, at once, that it was a back that was all a back should be.

There was not a show-girl on the Rialto that had a better. It was ideally flat, as flat as a kite. It rose, from a round waist to rounded shoulders, on a line of vertebræ that would be indented like a prolonged dimple. It responded with its muscles to every tug of her arms on the rope of the well. When she bent, it was as supple as a snake's.

Rutley was a connoisseur in backs — for dramatic purposes. And he said now to himself, as he watched her at the well: "That's as good a back as Celia Cibber's" — of whom it reminded him.

He said it with a reminiscent scowl, for it was he who had discovered Celia Cibber, and it was he who had lost her. Her sudden withdrawal from the lead in his "By Hook or Crook" had crippled that play at the beginning of what had promised to be a long run in New York. She had gone abroad — to England — nobody knew why — in spite of his furious indignation and the more tender regrets of a public that had just begun to rise to her adoringly. She had given him her address — in care of a London tourist agency — and he had torn it up and flung it on the deck at her feet as he turned to leave her on the steamship; and he had not heard a word from her, or of her, since.

While he was still scowling — at the thought of Miss Cibber — the woman bent to empty the well-bucket into her tin pail, and showed him a cheek, the point of a camel's-hair eyebrow, and a pink ear. He snatched his cigar from his lips and hastily fanned aside a fume of smoke that obscured his vision. She walked across the

grass, unconscious of him — bent sidewise, lithely, with the weight of the pail — as graceful as a Naiad with a vase on her hip. The screen door of the kitchen slapped shut behind her. Inside, she began to sing, in a deep contralto voice:

*“Now you are married you must obey;
You must be careful of all you say:
You must be kind, you must be good —”*

He had flung his cigar aside, as if it were his last doubt, and strode after her. With the click of his heels on the stone slabs of the walk, the song stopped. When he came to the screen, he saw her standing beside the stove, holding a tin dipper over the mouth of the tea-kettle, her face turned to him.

He was sure that she could not distinguish his features; the strong sunlight was at his back. And he did not believe that she recognized his voice when he demanded abruptly: “What are *you* doing here?” But with the amazing self-possession that had been her first stage asset, she emptied the dipper into the kettle and clapped the lid on it before she replied: “I’m making luncheon.”

He pushed open the door to confront her dramatically, his vizored cap in his hand. She did not accept the confrontation. She put her dipper on a table. Then she wiped her fingers on the kitchen apron that she wore. Finally, with an amused arching of her eyebrows and a slowly growing smile, she said: “How do you do?” and held out her hand to him.

To no one who remembers Celia Cibber in "By Hook or Crook" will any description of her smile seem adequate. It was one of those elusive smiles that do not wrinkle, that do not so much as pucker, the face — that do not even draw a line from the nostril to the mouth, but turn aside, under the rounding cheeks, and twinkle in two dimples there. It opened her eyes gaily. It showed the white of parted teeth that were waiting for the low laugh and darling chuckle that were to follow.

When the chuckle came he dropped her hand. But in that brief interval he had seen and decided that she was as handsome as ever, as inscrutable as ever, and more at her ease with him than ever. The friendliness of her smile was only the sparkle of sunlight on very deep water; he knew it; he knew that no amount of peering would give him a sight of what lay below that dazzle; and it was with the intention of clouding it over, that he repeated, with his persistent frown: "What are you doing *here*?"

"Living," she said. "Don't you like it?"

It was a blue-and-white kitchen, with blue-and-white curtains on the windows, blue-and white china on the shelves, blue-and-white linoleum on the floor.

"Stagy," he said. He repeated "Stagy" at her blue-and-white checked apron.

"Sniff now," she said, "and I'll think I'm at a rehearsal again."

He preserved his expression of Dantesque severity and disgust. It was an expression which she had once thought awfully like Sir Henry Irving's at his most im-

pressive. It did not awe her now; it seemed to amuse her; and she laughed, clasping her hands in her bosom as if the humor of it tickled her there.

"You went to England."

She nodded. "And came back again on the next boat—by way of Montreal." She added, as a woman's postscript: "I was married there—in Montreal."

"Married?" He bent upon her a penetrating, quick scrutiny. "Married!"

She continued to hug herself with that unchanging girlish joyousness.

"Don't tell me you've been such a fool."

She smiled and smiled, twinkling at him.

"Who is it?"

"Oh, a *dear!*" she gurgled. "Nobody that you know. A *love!*"

He thrust his hands, cap and all, into the pockets of his ulster. "So that was it! I might have guessed it. And he supports you—does he?—in this abode of luxury."

Her look deepened into a sort of happy pity of him. "He works for me, and I work for him."

"Did you know where he was going to bring you when you—married him?"

"I picked it out. We had it ready before I sailed. I went to England just to throw you all off the track."

"And you gave up your—your career—for this?"

She considered him a moment with her untroubled gray eyes. "Oh, *you* would n't understand," she said;

and with an adorable gesture of smiling young wisdom, she dropped her hands and turned from him, to the stove.

He began to pace up and down the room. "And you had the promise of being — Nothing but a little training to make you — Why, damn it all, common sense — ordinary common sense. He cried to her indifferently back. "I thought you had *that* anyway."

She said, over her shoulder, as she broke an egg and drained off the white into a bowl: "I can't cook with you stamping around — if I *did* use with it."

"Cook!" he fumed. "Cook! There are millions of women to cook. "You're an actress."

"Oh, I'm learning," she said. "I can do a foamy omelet. I'm doing one now, if you'll be quiet a moment."

He folded his arms in the final calm of exasperation. "Who is he? Where is he?"

"He's a newspaperman." She broke another egg. "He commutes — to Findley — and walks here over the hill." She applied herself to a Dover beater. "He gets home at four in the afternoon, and leaves at six in the morning."

"Good heavens! A commuter! A suburbanite! In New Jersey! What else? Poor, I suppose."

She was consulting her cook-book. "Twenty-five dollars a week. 'One tablespoonful of butter. One —'"

"Are you living on twenty-five dollars a week?"

"Yes. Now please don't bother me," she said.

"Go and sit down in the other room — where it's cooler." And she knitted her brows over the recipe, determinedly oblivious of him, in an almost exaggerated pose of housewifely absorption in her work.

He went to the door of the dining-room — a sunny, small room, done in what the decorators call "old gold," with yellow sill-curtains of Chinese silk on the windows, and a sere grass matting on the floor. "Twenty-five dollars a week!"

She said, from the cupboard: "And enough money in the bank to last us three years."

"Ach!" He left her — with her irritating complacency — and stalked through to the living-room, glancing in at a white bedroom as he passed. There was nothing anywhere to indicate the actress. Even the pictures on the walls were not of the stage. They were the usual reproductions of popular magazine prints — many of them what are technically known, to the producers of them, as "kissing pictures." He sniffed and turned his back on them, standing before the window, his hands in his pockets, his feet wide apart, in a thoughtful attitude.

He stood there until he saw his chauffeur and his auto appear from behind the plum thicket. Then he went to the door and called authoritatively: "Go on up the road and get yourself something to eat" — and came back to the dining-room with the face of determination.

"You're acting," he said. "It's all a pretense."
She was setting the table with dishes for two, and

she did not interrupt her work while she replied:
"Don't you think I do it well?"

"Because you're deceiving yourself. You're playing being married and keeping house — acting it — and you think it's real."

"Well, at least," she said, "I get more pleasure out of it than I ever did in *your* plays." She looked up at him, archly sly, to see how he took it.

He took it with a grim nod. "You've been reading Ellen Terry's memoirs. That's where you got the idea. Aha!" he cried. "I thought so. Wanted to act the Mary Anderson, did n't you?"

She had shown by a blush that he had probed her, but she carried it off: "Ellen Terry went back to the stage. Mary Anderson —"

"Oh, you'll go back. You'll go back. And the public'll not remember who you are."

"It would n't take me more than one night to remind them," she said proudly as she passed into the kitchen.

He drew up a chair to the table and sat down with his elbows on the cloth. "Would n't it! Would n't it!" he exulted. "How long do you think you'll keep young here? You'll look like that old apple orchard before you're thirty. Work yourself angular —"

"I've gained five pounds," she called out.

"Spoil your hands —"

"I'll wear rubber gloves."

"Grow dowdy, stolid, beefy. Your husband will tire of you —"

"Will he?" she said, reappearing with the omelet

on a platter and the teapot in the other hand. "I'll attend to that. It'll be variety that will tire him, if he *does*."

"And *you'll* tire of *him*."

"If I do, I'll never let him know it. Now"—she put the omelet before him—"help that before it goes flat. Won't you take off your ulster?"

He was hungry enough to be diverted by the sight of food, and gentle enough to be mollified by an offering of hospitality, but he still insisted, even as he took off the coat: "You're acting. There's not a thing of your real self in the whole house. You're pretending that you were never on the stage. Not even a picture."

"You have n't seen the garret. Cream and sugar?" she asked, pouring his tea. "Real cream. We have a cow. I milk her."

He had to say: "Please. Two lumps." He helped her to a portion of the omelet, and she smiled hospitably upon him as she took her plate from him and passed him his cup. "Jack says I brew tea like an Englishwoman."

"Now look here," he said, as he attacked his omelet, with the air of a man who was accustomed to transacting business at luncheon, "you can't put me off. I've caught you, and you might as well give up first as last. Who is he? Eh? Where did you meet him? Why did you marry him? Why did you run away and hide?"

"Because," she replied, addressing herself daintily

to her food, "I knew you would all talk just as *you* have been talking now, and I did n't want to be bothered with you."

"Guilty conscience," he said curtly. "You knew you were doing wrong. Did you tell your parents?"

"I have n't any. Mother died — and father married again — before I went on the stage. He's too respectable to own a daughter who's an actress. Jack was the only person in the world I cared a cent about. I knew him before I came East. He's been writing to me for years."

"Love letters?"

"Oh, the loveliest!" she cried. "It was his letters that did it. He could never have talked like that."

"He's a hypocrite," Ruttlely said. "No man ever wrote good love letters that was n't. He'll fool you yet."

She laughed, in a happy scorn of his cynicism. "Save that for a play."

"I will. And I'll give *you* the line. Go on. Why have I never seen this paragon?"

He listened, playing a keen eye from her to his plate and back again.

"I would n't have him hanging about the stage door. I told him so. Besides, I was n't in love with him then. I just used to meet him, now and then, somewhere, to cheer him up. I saw you once on the street, but I got him around the corner before you noticed us."

"The girl who deceives her father will deceive her

husband.' That's the moral of runaway matches. Go on."

"And then he took ill, and I did n't see him for nearly a month, and I missed him so much —"

"That you thought you were in love with him. I understand. That's the usual thing. He was probably pretending that he was sick, just to see whether you had 'got the habit' or not. He played you like a fish — tautened the line — and when he was sure that he had you well hooked — eh? — he said: 'Now you must leave the stage. I'll feel safer when I have you in my own little creel.' You *were* a gull."

"No." She pushed back her plate and put her elbows on the table, her hands clasped under her chin. "No. He did n't say a word about leaving the stage. I did that myself."

"You did. Well, well. No wonder you're proud of it." He took out his cigar-case; she watched him, reminiscently, the light of his match reflected in her set eyes. "Perhaps," he said, "you will explain *why?*"

She blinked quickly. "Yes," she replied, "I'll explain why. . . . I was out at a studio — a painter's — and he had a pet monkey that imitated everything it had seen him do. It sat at his easel and daubed his canvas — and put its head on one side and then on the other — and when we all clapped our hands and cried: 'What a perfect little actor!' it chattered and made mouths —" She imitated its grotesque baring of the teeth. "And I said to myself: 'There I am.

That's *me*. A perfect little actor. They dress me up, and put me on the stage, and I imitate what I've seen real people do —'

"*But*," he cried, "that's true of all art, if you want to look at it that way. The painter — mimics life in colors. The sculptor —"

She spread her hands. "So much the worse for art. I know a motto for it, then: '*Monkey see; monkey do*.' Hang that up in your library."

He puffed at his cigar, ostensibly to resuscitate it, but really to gain a moment in which to prepare a retort.

She did not wait for him. "I was tired of it," she went on, in a voice full of protest, emotion, scorn, and yearning. "Tired of being a monkey. I wanted a real life of my own — away from all you people that don't see anything except to imitate it, to write it, play the monkey with it. And when I found that I really could love Jack — that I had enough of the human being left in me for *that* — I saw my chance, while I was still young, if I could only get away somewhere, with him, where all the rest of you could n't come around and remind me that I *was* only a monkey, and spoil it all, and try to coax me back. That's why I hid. I want to live." She threw her arms out at the sunny room. "Here. A real life. With a real man. And be happy. And I am. Never! You'll never coax me back as long as I can have this. I'm going to have a real life, with real work, real love — and babies — real babies — babies of my own." She

stopped, tears in her eyes, her lips trembling; and with one of those sudden changes of mood that had made her acting so heart-tickling, she quavered: "And you're probably sitting there thinking: 'What a beautiful bit for a play! If I could only get her to act it like that!'"

"You were thinking it yourself," he said to the ash of his cigar, "it never would have occurred to you. However, you could marry and keep your private life to yourself. Your public life —"

"I don't want any public life. I've had all the public life I want. I don't want two lives. I want it all one — and *this* one."

"Very well," he said. "If that's the way you feel about it. Nevertheless, there's no reason why a man or a woman can't be a great artist and live a real life as well."

"'Nevertheless'! Nevertheless, what sort of life do *you* lead?"

He put that question aside with his hand. "My life is what I'm able to make it. If I were a bigger man, I might lead a bigger life. You —"

"I'm not half as big as you are. This is big enough for me — this life."

"You'll eat it up. You're wolfing it down now, and smacking your lips over it. When you've devoured it, you'll go back to the other, too."

She settled back in her chair rather languorously — as if exhausted by the emotions that had thrilled her — and looked down at the spoon which she had begun to

balance in her fingers. "You don't know. You don't know how lovely it is. Just the joy of working for him! I never wash his teacup after he's gone, that I don't want to kiss it."

He smiled, a trifle wryly. Perhaps it was because he had not had any of that sort of sentiment in his own life; perhaps because she seemed to him more gushing than sincere. His profession had taught him to suspect the emotional sincerity of a young lady of her temperament and training. "Well, I'm glad you're happy," he said. "I hope it lasts. But if you ever want to come back to the stage —"

She shook her head.

"In case he fell ill, or anything — or you needed money. Remember, you owe it to me to come to me first."

"Thank you," she said, non-committally.

"I have a play now that I've just finished. There's a part in it that would make your fortune. You could retire, then, with enough to keep you both in luxury for the rest of your lives."

She had risen. "No, no," she cried. "Behind me, Satan." She caught up some dishes and fled with them. "Don't try to tempt me now," she called from the kitchen, "or I won't come back into the room."

"Very well," he resigned himself. "But I want you to promise me one thing."

"What is it?" she asked from the doorway.

"That you'll not leave here without letting me know where you go. I want to keep an eye on you."

She came in for the other dishes. "I will on one condition — that you don't tell any one where I am — that you've seen me, even."

"Very good. That's agreed."

She went about her work. He continued smoking silently, watching her. "You're a strange girl," he said, out of his thoughts.

"Yes?" she smiled. "How did you find me?"

"I've been worked too hard," he sighed. "I needed a rest. I've been knocking around the hills with a cursed mechanic that's always stopping to take the car to pieces. However, people can't write — or telegraph me —"

"So you've run away, too," she said, and left him to go about her kitchen work. "Have to have the place tidy before Jack comes back," she excused herself.

He sat musing, enjoying the quiet of the room, of the view across the valley showing between the curtains of the window, of the whole life that seemed to be peacefully breathing in the faint sounds from the fields. She called, *sotto voce*: "Don't let him come in. He might recognize me."

It was the chauffeur coming back with the car; she had seen him from the kitchen window, far up the road. Ruttley went to the door. "All right," he called through the screen.

"Good-by," he said to her, "and remember."

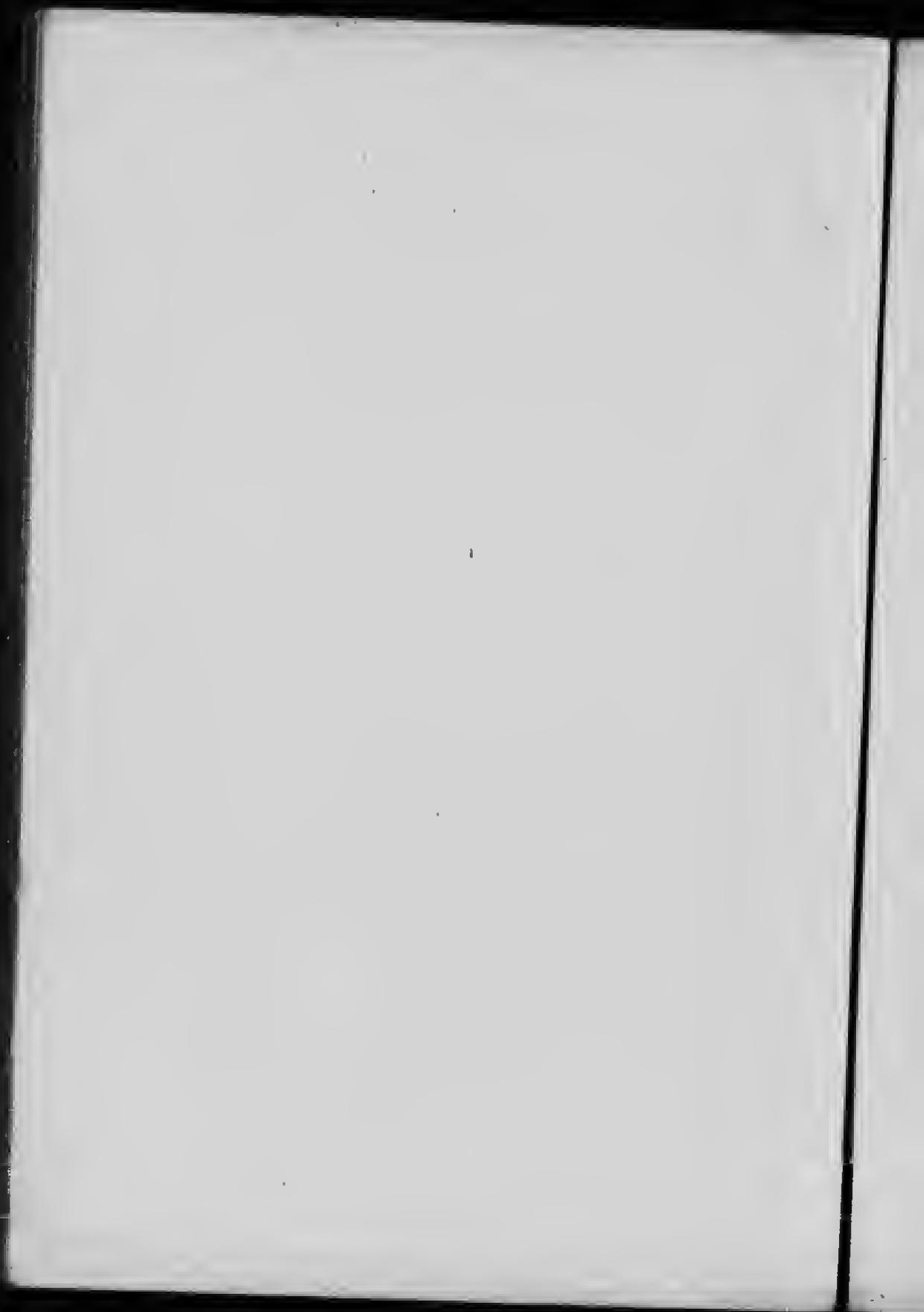
She dried her hands hastily. "Good-by. And don't forget. Not a word to any one."

They pledged themselves in the clasp of a handshake.
He put on his cap and went out.

On his way down the path he heard her take up again
the song which his arrival had interrupted:

*"Now you're married, you must obey;
You must be careful of all you say;
You must be kind, you must be good—
And help your husband split the wood."*

"That's acting," he said. "That's acting."

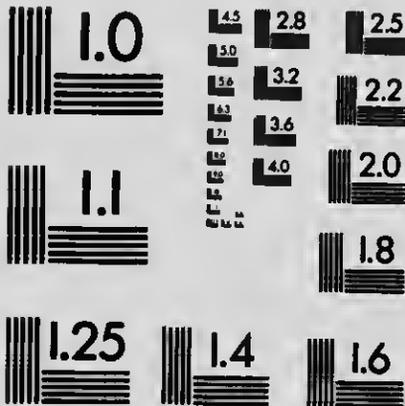


TAMMANY'S TITHES



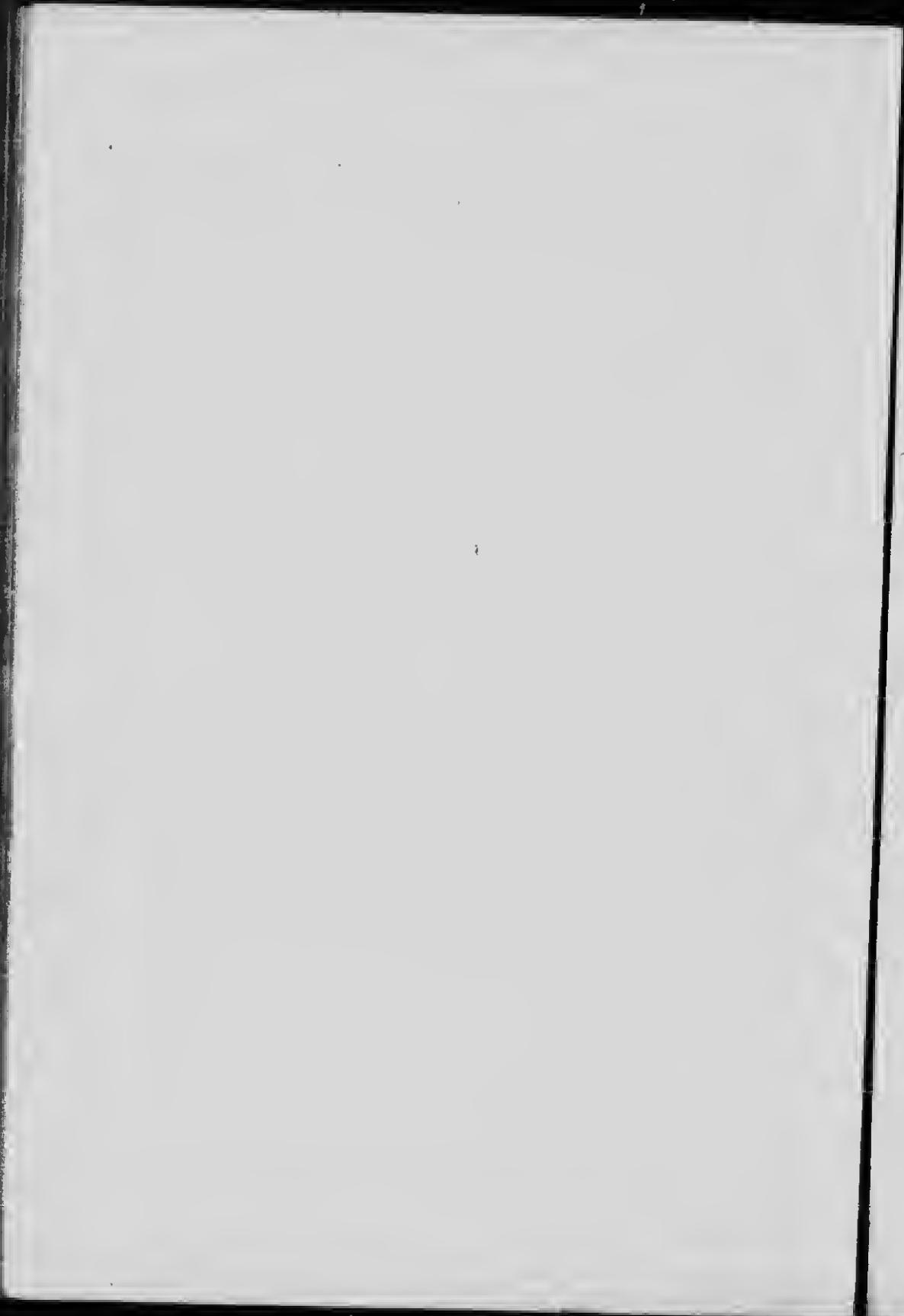
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TAMMANY'S TITHES

AT this time of night, the street was as quiet as a creek run dry,— with nothing to recall the day's turbulent flow of traffic except its empty channel of paving-stones worn smooth. Over the black walls of the warehouses, a moon hung like the frosted globe of an arclight in the slope of a high sky. A parade of street-lamps, marching down the deserted sidewalks, had halted along the gutter-edge; and under the light of one of these lamps, Patrolman Feeny was planted foursquare on the corner bend of the curb, straddling his shadow, with his head down.

He had recently been transferred to this precinct from a station-house in Harlem, because he had refused to buy the privilege of remaining conveniently near his home. Still more recently he had been called before the Deputy Commissioner on a baseless charge of being off post, and he had been fined two weeks' pay. Finally, he had just been warned that he would continue to be so transferred, fined, and generally persecuted until he gave up the twenty-five dollars that was required of him. And he was glowering at the gutter here, his chest tight with a suppressed wrath, ready for all impossible revolts.

Or were they impossible? The elections were coming on. The reformers were making "police graft" the great issue of the campaign. He could give some evidence that would be worth hearing; and if he made Tammany his enemy forever, he would make all respectable citizens his friends. There were other ways of earning a living besides walking the beat, weren't there? A man had a right to call his soul his own, had n't he? He was n't owned by a lot of dirty grafters who could shake him down every time they wanted money, was he? Not by a —!

He raised his head defiantly — his big bullock head. He was n't going to pay them for his right to earn an honest living. Not by a good deal! If he had to leave the department, he'd go. He could get along. He had saved a little bank account out of his salary. He could get a job somewhere.

He could get a job — for that matter — on the tunnel work, as night-watchman, like old Joe.

The thought was flashed on him by the sight of old Joe's lanterns further up the street, where the red lamps of a tunnel-digging burned in the solitude like the signals of a deserted railway yard. They reminded him that it was time old Joe had his coffee; and he started up the flagstones to relieve the friendly watchman, his shadow now shouldering along determinedly before him, now following doggedly behind.

An iron shutter creaked somewhere in the wind; the blazing windows of a trolley car floated silently across the distant head of the street; a manhole was steaming

in the gutter. For the rest, he was the only thing that made sound or motion.

When the red lights were still a block away, he saw "old Joe" doddering down to meet him, muffled in a yellow horse-blanket that he had doubled over his shoulders for a cape. He had a teamster's cap drawn down to his eyes. Under the peak of it, his old black pipe protruded, smokeless, as if for he generally sucked it cold.

"All right," Feeny said gruffly. "I'll look out till yuh get back."

The old man stood to tamp his pipe with a hooked finger. Feeny turned him round with a hand on the shoulder, and they went along together.

The watchman coughed feebly. "I seen two dips goin' yonder to the baths," he said, "the Turkish baths. They'll be out fer no good to any one, 'd' yeh think?"

Feeny grunted; he did not reply.

"It's none av *my* business, that's true enough," the watchman muttered. "I thought yeh'd want to know."

"I don't care a curse if yuh seen all the crooks off the Bowery," Feeny growled.

The old man stiffened in his step. "Eh? What's that? What's that yeh're sayin'?"

Feeny took him by the elbow. "Come on," he said. "I'm sore. They've been poundin' me — up to Headquarters. No offense, Joe. They've been tryin' to shake me down. . . . An' by God,—" he broke out,

clenching his gloved fist before him, "I won't stand fer it. I'll fight 'em on it. I'll squeal on the whole lay-out. I will, s' welp me! I will!"

"Tsh, man, not so loud," the watchman cautioned. "What is it? Squeal, d' yeh say? Are yeh goin' to fight Tammany Hall?"

Feeny thudded his fist into his open palm. "I am!"

The watchman struck down at Feeny's hands with a passionate hlow that knocked them apart. "Niver! Niver!" he cried. "Are yeh crazy, man? Niver try that. Niver, niver! Hear what I tell yeh." He had caught Feeny by the sleeve and clung to him. "Hear what I tell yeh." He dropped his voice. "They'll crush yeh like a toad." His old loose lips, set between the heavy wrinkles that fell from his nose, writhed out the words in a hissing whisper. "The way they did me!"

Feeny took a long hreath. "What's the matter? What ails yuh?" He had been startled.

The watchman pushed up the peak of his cap. "Did y' iver hear av Vinny Doyle?"

Feeny shook his head. "Doyle? What Doyle?"

"Yer father 'd 'a' knowed." He tapped the patrolman twice on the broad chest. "I'm Vinny Doyle." He drew hack. "*Me!*"

The light of an electric lamp above them shone in his face. It was the gray face of senility, grooved and hollowed. A three days' beard had covered his chin with a growth as fine and white as a mould. His

stretched neck was shrunken to the sinews. There were tears in his eyes. "Vinny Doyle!"

Feeny backed him into the shadow of a doorway. "Here, Joe," he said, "pull yerself together."

The old man shook him off. "I know — I know what yeh 're thinkin'—" He passed his hand over his worried forehead. "Wait now. Vinny Doyle! It's a name on a gravestone, that!"

Feeny stepped out to reach an empty barrel plastered over with theater posters. He rolled it into the doorway. "Sit down," he said.

The old man sat down weakly. He sighed and shook his head. In a little while he sighed again. Suddenly he asked: "D' yeh mind 'Big Six'? Old 'Big Six'? — Tweed's 'Americus Six'?"

Feeny did not understand.

"The fire injun — the big one — the double-decker," the old man urged.

"I guess that was before *my* time," Feeny said.

"Sure enough, it was. . . . Well, well. . . I ust to run with her, an' fight with her. . . An' Bill Tweed? Yeh mind Bill Tweed?"

"I mind when he died in Ludlow Street Jail," Feeny answered patiently.

The old man chuckled. "He did that. He did that. But this was thurty years befoore — down in th' injun house in Hinry Street — whin he was foreman av No. Six."

"Uh-huh," Feeny said. "Yuh 're an ol' vamp, are yuh?"

"I am that." He threw back the corner of his blanket, and went through his pockets for a match.

Feeny filled his cheek with a ball of fine cut, and leaned back against the door-post. "Them was gay ol' days, if yuh believe all yuh hear."

The watchman wagged his head. "I mind the nights better thin the days," he said. "With us sittin' 'round in the dark — an' the light leakin' out av the cracks in th' ol' stove — an' the wood that was blazin' in it, stole over Grigg's back since the night befoore. An' Duffy singin' 'Red Robin' er 'Th' Angil's Whisper.' . . . My, my, how Duffy cud sing. I niver heerd the bate av him."

Feeny said, absent-mindedly: "Uh-huh!" and his thoughts returned to his troubles. He heard the watchman rambling: "Niver the bate av Conny Duffy to sing — an' Butcher Sleeman to fight — till I wint at him, bare-handed, in the bunkroom, an' pounded his faytures into a mince. After that, I was 'Banty Doyle' the 'Tirror av the Tigers' — an' me two eyes blue-black fer a week."

This did not seem very important. Feeny's attention wandered. When he listened again, the old man was saying: "'Yeh're a beauty,' Molly says to me. 'So I am,' says I. 'But I'm a plaster cast to yer frien' Butch Sleeman,' I says. 'I come to tell yeh he won't be 'round to see yeh fer a month.' An' we wint off to Niblo's Garden, that night together, Molly an' me."

Feeny asked: "Who was Molly?"

"She was a great gurl — a great gurl. But she wanted all the fun av coortin', an' none av the trouble that begins whin the coortin' inds, an' she kep' me an' Butch prowlin' 'round there, spittin' an' spattin' like a pair av tomcats on a fince, till we splitted the comp'ny into two halves with our fracshuns. An' whin Tweed run fer Alderman from the Sivinth, we both woorked to see which cud woork the hardest — an' Tweed wint in, with a toorch-light percession an' a hill av a jambaree — an' I got me job in the Coort House — an' Butch got a plintiful promise av big things to be."

Feeny snorted. "It's a dirty game, politics. They're a gang o' fakers."

"It's like iv'rythin' ilse," the watchman replied. "It's what we make av it. But it takes big men to play it big, an' the little men it makes little shysters." He reached out his black claw of a hand. "Man alive, if we Irish had the men to lead us! If we had the men! We stick to such as we have — we vote fer thim, an' fight fer thim, an' believe in thim whin iv'ry one ilse is peltin' thim with purseutions — an' by God, they chate us, an' sell us, an' laugh at us — *laugh* at us! — till some one ilse sinds thim to jail fer stealin' from us! An' even *thin* do we give thim up? No, sor! 'Tis the curse av loyalty that's on us — the curse av loyalty. I mind the day whin I 'd' ve bit off me thumb fer Bill Tweed, an' I —"

"What 'd he do to yuh?" Feeny cut in. "What 'd he do to yuh?"

"He done me dirt. He done me dirt." He gulped.

"Wait, now. I'll tell yeh. Lind me the loan av a match."

His hand shook as he took it. When the dottle of his pipe was glowing again, he went on, hoarsely: "Yeh mind, in thim days, the fire comp'nics was a sort av military, too? Well, I was the best shot av the Young Americus Guard. An' whin we'd p'rade home from a target excoorsion — an' that was a clam-hake or a chowder party, 's the case might be — there'd be a big buck nigger at the head av us with the wooden target slung 'round his neck, an' somewheres about the middle av that butt there'd be *my* mark, now, yeh cud be sure av that. . . . That 's how I come to jine the Zouaves — th' Ellsworth's Zouaves — the 'Pet Lambs' they called us — whin the war bruk out. I went to pot holes in the rihils, an' Sleeman, that cud n't no more than hit a side av beef with his fat fist, he stayed to home, sure enough.

"An' he was the wiser man. But Hivens! there was 'liven hunderd av the hoys listed from the fire-houses in three days, mind yeh! Sleeman must've been as cold-blooded as one av his own steaks to've stud the whoop that carried us all in.

"I went to Molly. An', 'Molly,' I says, 'I'm off to Washin'ton. I've jined,' I says.

"'Jined?' says she. 'Jined what?' An' her hand was gone limp where I held it.

"'I've listed with the hoys,' I says. 'We're goin' to defend Washin'ton.' An' with that she gave a little grunt, like some one 'd hit her in the wind, an' she come into me arms sohbin'.

"She was a fine fat gurl, as soft as feathers.

"'Faith,' I says, 'if I 'd knowed this, now, I 'd niver 've done it. 'Tis worse an' better than I thought,' I says. 'But look yeh now,' I says. 'I 'm only sworn fer three months,' I says, 'an' if yeh 'll marry me now, I 'll be back in July to yeh.'

"'Twas takin' advantage av the poor gurl, I know. But we done it. I married her with her eyes wet. An' 'twas n't the las' timo they were so — ner mine nayther — God hilp us!"

A rubler-tired coupé bowled past them, carrying the wreck of some midnight dissipation to the Turkish baths around the corner. Feeny spat solemnly and changed the leg.

"God hilp us!" the watchman said. "We marched off that day — the twilft' av April — like we was goin' to another clam-bake down the Bay — with the crowd whoopin', an' the hand bleatin', an' us the bully boys! — down Canal Street to th' ol' 'Baltic,' that was lyin' where we 'd ust to catch eels, many 's the time — long, yellah-hellied eels — an' bat thim on the head fer supper. . . . My, my! Little we thought! Little we thought!"

Feeny cleared his throat. "Did yuh serve all the war?"

"I did not — worse luck! I got no further than Bull Run. . . . We sailed down to Washin'ton an' wint into quarters there. An' we toorned out to a fire that was burnin' nex to a hig hotel. I mind that well. . . . An' thin we were shunted hero an' shunted there fer

months, an' there was nothin' but the divilmint av the boys till we went to the front cheerin', to wollop the ribils.

"What happened I dunno, fer right to the start av it, I got a bullet in me right arm — here!" He stretched out his deformed wrist. "An' while I was huntin' for a doctor, all the boys came runnin' back through the woods on top av me, cursin', an' weepin', an' talkin' to thimselves — an' the sight av thim scared the soul out av me, an' I tied meself up in a han'kerchief an' run till the groun' lifted up an' bumped into me — an' that's all I rimember fer a week."

He shook his head. "'Twas a bad bus'ness. 'Twas that."

Feeny grunted.

"An' whin I heard the doctors talkin'— er thought I did — I was not in me right mind, no doubt — talkin' av cuttin' off me arm at th' elbow, I says to meself, 'No soree! If yez can't fix me together, I know a man that can.' An' I slid out av hospital, an' crawled to the depot, an' the nex' thing I rimember I was bein' bandaged be ol' Doc. McGrath right here in Cherry Street. But how I got there, no one niver cud tell."

Feeny coughed apologetically.

The old man hastened to add: "Anyways it made no matter. Me time was up, an' I was no good fer soldierin' with the hole in the hinge av me hand. Not a bit. Not a bit. . . . Rot the pipe! Have yeh the makin's av a smoke about yeh, at all?"

"I've got a cigar," Feeny said, feeling in the breast of his overcoat.

The watchman sniffed. "What good's a saygar? Gi' me a pinch av yer chewin'. I'll smoke that."

Feeny passed him the package of fine-cut, and he filled a pipe-bowl that was burned as thin and jagged as the half of a scorched eggshell. He blinked his pathetic old hound's eyes at the flame of the match. When the tobacco had begun to fume and bubble rankly, he settled down with his elbows on his knees, and said: "Listen, now. I've come to the pint. Listen!

"When I got foot on the pavemints again, what d' yeh think I larned? — that Sleeman had me job in the Coort House — Butch Sleeman! — an' him givin' me the lough! 'Faith,' I says, 'I'll fix *you*, me brave boy,' an' I wint to Tweed. An' he toorned me down! Toorned me down! . . . 'Yeh wint galivantin' off to the war,' he says, 'an' left yer frien's to fight out their own troubles here,' he says, 'an' now yeh can make good,' he says. 'Go an' make good,' he says.

"I looked at him, an', 'I'm a married man,' I says — an' tried fer to say it meek, fer Molly's sake, the way av married men — 'I'm a married man,' I says, 'an' the wife's in trouble, an' there's the doctor to pay, an' the likes av that,' I says.

"He waved me off like a street beggar. 'That's none av my doin',' says he. An' with that, 'twas as if some one had pulled a trigger in me head, an' I booted out with a curse av Tweed, like yersilf here — jus' like!

In thim days, *I* feared no man, nayther. I was young an' raised rough, with fires, an' fightin', an' the devil knows what. An' I dared Tweed to his face. 'I'll make good,' I says. 'I'll show yeh, niver fear. I'll show yeh,' I says. 'I'll show yeh!'

"An' I done it. I got Barney Coogan to promise he'd run ag'in' Tweed's man fer alderman. I got a meetin' together an' nominated him. I woorked fer four months in the ward, with me frien's — an' I had plinty — an' Tweed bein' busy with his own campaign fer sheriff, an' Coogan a pop'lar man — we got Coogan ilticted by the lin'th av his long ears, an' the boys av No. 6 swore they'd batter me to a pulp.

"Look yeh now. Here's what happened. I was so blown up with what I'd done, that one night I walked into a joint they called the 'Tiger,' to show the gang I was in no fear av *thim* — if I *had* raytreated all the way from Bull Run to Cherry Street, hot foot, as they'd been sayin' durin' th' 'liction. Me arrm was in a sling, but I had a pistol in m' other pocket, an' I strode up to the bar an' ordered me drink like a loord. An' whin I toorned on me elbow, there they sat watchin' me, quiet, like so many circus cats in a cage. An' I knew, thin, I'd done wrong.

"There was no word said, but one av thim got up an' slid too'rds the door, an' whin I started backin' on it, whippin' out me shooter, the tables wint over with a leap — an' the room full av thim pounced on me — an' some one grabbed the gun — an' it wint off in his grip — an' through the smoke I saw Butch Sleeman open his

big mouth an' clutch at a splatter av blood on his throat an' go down with a gurgle!

"The bullet had took him fair in the neck, an' bruk his spine. He was dead whin they picked him up off the sawdust, an' I dropped the gun an' run fer dear life.

"I was with Molly whin the police caught up to me — waitin' fer thim — sittin' on the side av the bed, an' Molly propped up with the pillows, in her night-clothes — waitin' fer thim. . . . I mind the ruffles on 'round her neck, an' all. . . . Niver a word she 'd said, but jus' screamed whin I 'd told her — an' caught hold av me hand, an' held to it, dumb. . . . She sat up whin they come in, starin', an' her lips as white as her teeth, breathin' hard. An' whin I kissed her good-by, she did n't take her two big eyes off thim, an' the sweat was drippin' off her face like water. . . . I cud n't speak. Me voice was dried up in me throat. . . . An' that was the last I iver saw av Molly."

He dropped his hands between his knees and stared out at the white street. "The last I saw av Molly. . . . They swoore I 'd walked into the 'Tiger' an' had words with Sleeman an' pulled out me gun an' shot 'm. One after th' ither, they got up an' swoore to it — the whole gang — Tweed's gang. An' they told av th' old inimity between us two, an' how Sleeman 'd took me job from me. An' they had the gun with the chamber impty, an' the broken bullet. An' they had *me*, like a man in a dream, listenin' an' watchin' till the cold crep' up from me feet, an' me heart toorned over an' died inside me."

He licked his lips. "They sintined me to prison fer life."

Feeny swore a great oath. "That — Tweed!"

"No!" he cried. "No! 'Twas not Tweed. Little need had *he* to do it. 'Twas done fer 'm be the toads that wanted to get right with 'm. There 's the danger! Whin yeh fight Tammany, yeh fight all the thaves, an' liars, an' jail-burds that do the dirty work without bein' told — in the hopes av what they 'll get fer it. Yeh 'll fight Tammany, d' yeh think? The dogs that live off Tammany's leavin's, *they're* the ones yeh 'll fight, Feeny. An' God hilp yeh!" He reached his hands up over his head. "God hilp yeh, fer yeh 'll need it. It 's me that knows — me that 's laid awake nights holdin' mesilf down in me bed to kape from leapin' at the bars like a wild-cat — me that 's been buried alive these thurty years, a livin' corpse — me that 's lost wife, an' child, an' frien's, an' fam'ly — All lost, Feeny, all lost!" He broke into sobs, his old toothless mouth trembling and distorted, the thin tears streaking the hollow of his cheeks. "Me! The husk av a man! That dare not go into a crowd — that dare not so much as inter a departmint store — fer fear av what might happen to drag me back to me cell! Out on commuted sintince fer good conduc'! All the life wrung from me, drop be drop, an' the dried rind av me thrown out here in the gutter! Take yer lesson here, Feeny. Take it here, fer it 's bitter teachin' yeh 'll get from *thim!*"

Feeny took off his helmet and wiped his forehead. The old man sank down on himself, exhausted.

"At first, I thought 'twas all done be way av just frightenin' me — that after a month er so some one 'd come foorth an' clear me, an' I 'd go back to Molly contint to have no more to do with Tweed, ner Tammany, ner any other. . . . Thin Molly died, an' the child after, an' she ust to come to me like, at nights — with the ruffles 'round her neck, an' all, an' her black hair pinned up the way she ust to pin it up fer bed — an' we 'd whisper an' talk low together fer fear the guards 'd hear us. . . . Well, well, 'twas years since — years an' years since. I was half crazed, no doubt.

"She wint, like iv'rythin' ilse. Molly wint. I dunno how ner why. An' I kep' writin' fer pardons — writin' — an' talkin' to this one an' that one — year in an' year out. . . . I was 'trusty' av 'Millionaires' Row,' as they called it; an' they all promised to hilp me whin they 'd get out — Jawn Y. McCabe an' Biff Ellis an' all the rest. An' some one hilped me, no doubt; fer Guv'ner Roosevelt commuted me sintince to fifty-five years, an' I got twinty-two off fer good conduc', an' here I am. . . . Here I am."

There followed the silence of despair — the old man hunched up on his barrel, gazing at nothing and sucking on his cold pipe — and Feeny standing with his jaws set, blinking at the red lights in the road.

"What 'll I do, then?" he said at last.

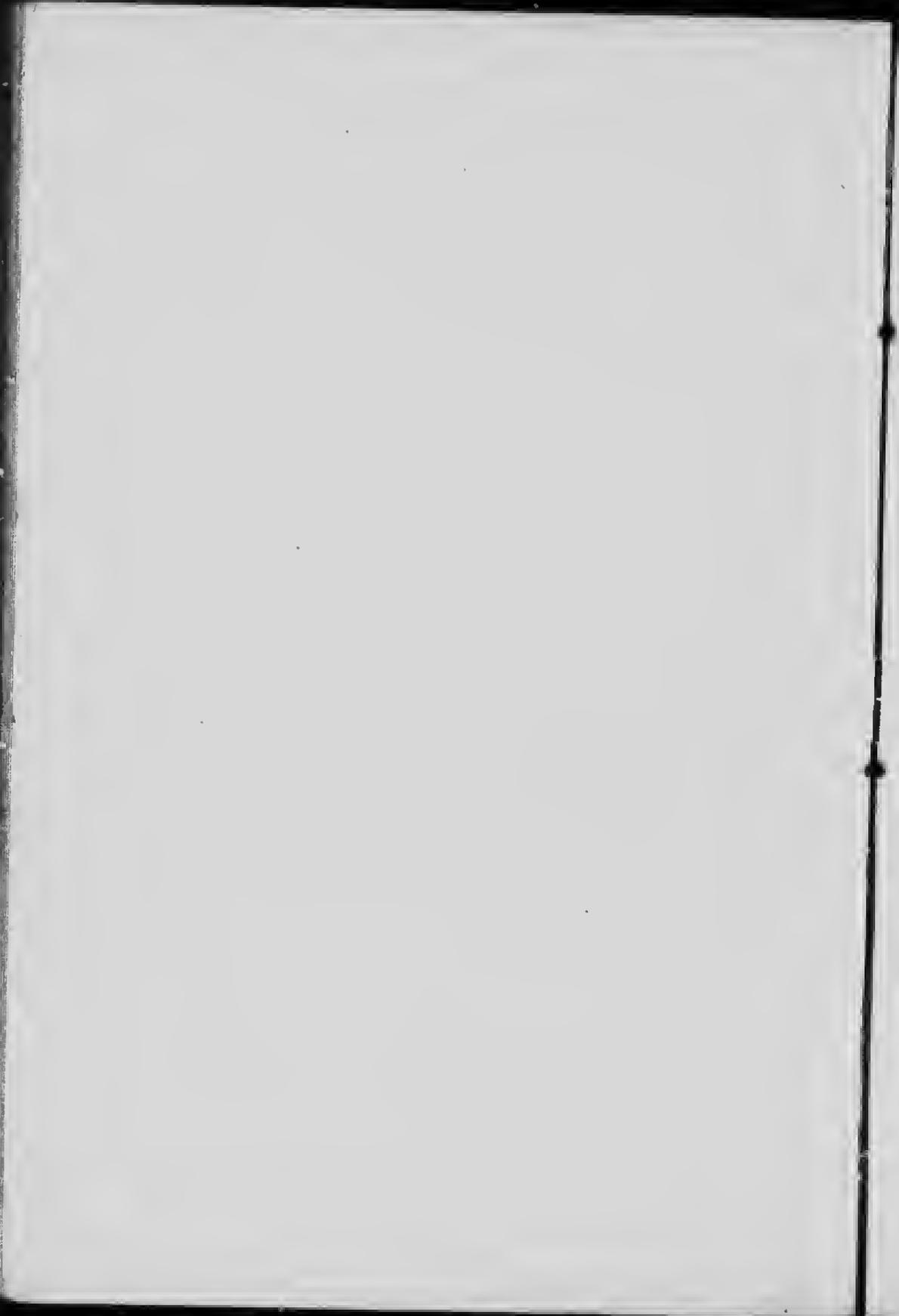
"Aye," the watchman answered, "what *can* yeh do? What can *one* man do to right what we've all av us made wrong, an' our fathers befoore us? We must make oursilves right first, Feeny. 'Tis in the nature

av us — deep, deep! 'Tis like Jawn Y. McCabe that was sint up the river fer falsifyin' his register lists — an' I've seen him readin' his Bible in his cell iv'ry mornin', an' niver cud he see that he 'd done wrong — niver!" He put his pipe in his pocket and rose stiff-kneed. "'Twill all come right some day. Whin we're dead an' gone, mebbe. But nayther through you ner me, Feeny. Nayther through you ner me." He muffled himself in his horse-blanket. "Kape yer eye on thim planks a jiffy," he said huskily. "I'm goin' 'round the corner to get a dish av tay."

Feeny watched him go. The silence closed in behind the shuffling footsteps. The distant murmur of traffic was no more than the restlessness of a city asleep. And Nicholas Pascal Feeny was alone with the curse of his kind.

He took off his gloves. He tucked them into his belt. He drew a roll of bills from his pocket, counted off twenty-five dollars for Tammany's tithe, and put them inside the sweat-leather of his helmet to have them handy.

THE CLOWNS



THE CLOWNS

I

"THE difference between the two Henry Brothers," a dramatic critic had written of them, jocularly, "is the difference between the realist who observes the modesty of nature, and the romantic artist who adds on to truth and begins where the realist leaves off."

They were "The Henry Brothers" on the programs; but they were "Hen Sutley" and "Harry Burle" in private life; and they were the "star" clowns of the New York Amphitheater. Their dressing-room was a fireproof cement-and-metal cell, as small as a bathroom and as full as a wardrobe — with parts of costumes hanging from hooks, dangling from clothes' lines, curled on steam pipes, heaped on stools, spread on trunk-tops, packed on shelves and even tied to door knobs — with battered hats and tangled wigs, pink fleshings and striped tights, underclothes and foot wear, bandana handkerchiefs and paper collars — with disorder crowded on discomfort in the temperature of a Turkish hath and the odors of a soiled-clothes' basket.

The lean Sutley sat in his undershirt, on his make-up stool, sewing a rent in his tights. His face was the poisonous white of a death's head. His eyelids were blackened. His mouth, black too, was painted in the

melancholy wide grin of a skull. His long arms were as thin as cross-bones. Barelegged, as solemn as Death mending his shroud, he sewed and said nothing, while the fat Burls perspired and complained.

And the sum of Burls' complaint was that spring was here; that summer was coming; that Sutley and he might be out with a circus, dressing in a shady tent, with grass under their feet, eating like farm-hands, and sleeping the sleep of tired tramps while the railroad train rocked them across cool country — instead of stewing all day in this condemned "sweatshop," eating like condemned cockatoos in little footy cages, and trying to pound their ears at night in condemned two-by-fours, while all the kids and all the cats and all the married couples of the quarter "scrapped an' yowled" together "on th' other side o' the plaster."

"And besides," he said, in a semi-humorous exaggeration of disgust, "these N' York crowds 're froze all the time. I don't want to dally with 'em. They 're a bunch o' yaps that on'y sit an' grin at the chorus girls. You have to near break yer neck to shake a laugh out of 'em. I'm sick of it — grindin' through the same ol' gags twice a day. Why don't they turn us loose the way they do in a circus, an' let 's raise a laugh any way we can?"

He shut his lips long enough to mark them out, with vermilion, in a fixed grin that curled up into his cheeks. He reddened his nose end. He drew barbaric rings around his eyes. And then he continued, in a voice of self-conscious indignation:

"We got an act here — with Milly an' ol' Pop — that'd bring twice the price with a circus. An' we could make a contrac' fer our own little hanky-panky entries all to the good. We're wastin' time an' we're wastin' money. Milly's act 's a lalabazaza. She's the best thing on the bare-back since Lally Dulian. An' they're tryin' to keep her down so they won't have to pay the price. If she was to sign with a circus, they'd paint her name on the paper in letters a foot high, an' we'd make as much money as them dip-o'-death gazay-bos — an' make it with our hoofs in the sawdust all the time."

Sutley said, sepulchrally: "Ol' Pop Yost would n't give us none o' *his* graft."

"He'd have to. If they contracted fer the act, we'd all get our share in it. We'd all get paid."

"*She* don't get none of it, *now*."

"Well, he's her boss, but he ain't ours, is he? Anyway, she's tryin' to get away from him. She's pullin' on the rope. An' he's nervous. There's too much Willy-at-the-stage-door bus'ness goin' on here. I know how he feels about it. He's game to leave it an' go 'n under canvas any day. She could n't get out of his eye-sight if they were travelin' with a show, but she'll get away from him here, if he don't look quick."

Sutley made no reply; and his face, in its make-up of oxide of zinc and grease-paints, was as expressionless as wax works. But when Burls dropped his voice to a chuckling note of confidentiality, and said, "I been tellin' ol' Pop I'd hoard there was a yap out in front

that's been tryin' to get a mash note in to Milly," Sutley looked up at him with a startled round eye.

Burls grinned. "I got *him* goin' all right."

"Say," Sutley protested, "what's the use o' stirrin' up dirt? We're all right the way we are. I ain't stuck on the circus. It's a lot cozier here when it rains."

"Rsins!"

"Well, I ain't got three fingers o' suet on my ribs, like you, an' I'd just as leave keep dry."

Burls put aside the objection with a disingenuous laugh. "How about settin' out on the bseck stoop o' the sleeper, wavin' yer legs in a forty-mile breeze?"

"How about the night the menagerie jumped the track an' we bumped into the ditch on top of 'em?"

"Aw, add it up! Add it up! You leave this to mo, Hen. What we want's a contrac' fer two-hundred per apiece."

The call boy shrieked up the iron staircase: "Hen-reys!"

Burls answered, "Yaw right!"

They attacked the final details of their costumes in the silence of preoccupied haste, as busy with their thoughts as they were with their buttons; for -- from the futile discussion that the call-boy had ended -- an impending crisis had made itself apparent, plain to both, outwardly ignored by both, but secretly, to both, exciting and decisive.

II

They found "Milly" (who was "Mlle. Blanc") and her father (who was her ringmaster) in the wings, at the head of a runway that led up to the stage from the basement stables. She nodded to Burls, and said "'Ello 'En!" to Sutley; and her father, arranging the fastenings in the back of the "Mother Hubbard" that she wore, looked over her shoulder to growl a curt greeting to the clowns. A stableman led up her white horse, "Prince." Her father gave her a lift to its broad Norman back, well rubbed with powdered resin. Burls led the old man aside.

She watched them go. "What's 'e got on with Pop?" she asked Sutley.

He stroked the horse's neck. "D' you want to go back to the circus?"

"Me? Nyo! We on'y just got the flat lookin' like 'ome. W'y?"

"That's why." He indicated Burls and the father with a nod. "Keep yer eyes open. Don't say I tol' you."

She gave him a long stare of comprehension. "W'at d' you think I *ham!*"

He did not say, although he studied her as gravely as if he were preparing some reply. Her mother had been a frail Cockney blonde, and she herself was of that type of prettiness; but she had her father's darker eyes, and she had the robust good health of her circus training. She was just full-grown, and she was as frank

and simple-minded as most modern circus-women are; but the stage had added a touch of coquetry, and she smiled down at Sutley challengingly.

His eyes, in his set face, looked up at her as if through the eyeholes of a mask. "He wants to go back to the road. He won't go unless he goes with your act."

She said: "Then 'e 'll be a long time goin'." She put on a big sun-bonnet and tied its strings under her chin. "All right, 'En. I 'll 'elp."

He nodded.

She settled herself for her public appearance, as her father, with a ringmaster's long whip in his hand, took Prince by the bridle and led him out to the cocoa matting of the Amphitheater ring. Burls ran after, pretended to trip on the wooden ring-bank, fell on his face, and came before the footlights pressing the flat of his hand to his nose-end and grimacing for a laugh — which he did not "draw."

The gaunt Sutley followed. When he came to the spot where Burls had fallen, he stepped over it with a carefulness that was only slightly exaggerated; and a little titter of amusement went like a ripple over the house.

Burls muttered: "Yaps! Yaps!"

Prince began to amble around the ring and the country girl in her Mother Hubbard clung to the two-handed girth of webbing that gave her a hold on the horse's back. Sutley sat down on the bank facing the footlights and began to dabble his feet — huge, falso feet, bare and

ugly — in the imaginary water of a pool. Burls was making an appeal, in dumb show, to Milly and her father, to be allowed to ride behind her on Prince, running after her as she swung around the circle, and tripping and falling continually. When "Pop" Yost stopped the horse, Burls tried to climb up one of its hind legs, sliding down it as if it were the "groasy polo"; and Yost laid aside his whip to lend a hand. Immediately, Sutley reached the whip, bent a pin to the end of the lash, impaled upon the hook — in pantomime — an imaginary earthworm as long as a shoelace, and began to fish. He was so innocently absorbed in watching for a bite that Yost's indignation fell on him unawares. He accepted the traditional ill-treatment from the ringmaster in a shrinking helplessness that was pathetically funny, and when Yost had gone back to the pair on the horse he bent another pin, went through all his pockets for a length of twine, baited with another make-believe worm, and settled himself meekly to his fishing again.

To the audience, they were merely four mountebanks, of no recognizable human personality, performing like trained animals together. It was not apparent, across the footlights, that the girl received Burls on the horse with an inimical indifference; and the rack of the ringmaster's whip expressed to the house nothing of the parental ill-temper of which it spoke to Milly and her partners. Sutley seemed wholly interested in his absurd angling, covering his head with a red handkerchief to shade himself from a pretended sunlight, and wist-

fully pulling on his line to see whether he had a fish. The others seemed to be as diligently playing the fool, intent only on amusing the audience.

And the truth was that the whole four — being circus-trained and indifferent to “Rubes” — scarcely gave the audience a thought. Milly went through the motions of her act mechanically, watching Sutley and thinking of what he had said. In her pretense of awkwardness on horseback, she clung to Burls; but she might have been clinging to a dummy, for all the thought she gave him — until he asked flirtatiously: “What’s the grouch Pop’s got on?” Then she returned from absent-mindedness, focusing her eyes on him to answer: “*You* ought to know. *You* were speakin’ to ’im last.”

He, in his part, swayed and sprawled and almost fell from the horse — replying at the same time: “I was n’t askin’ him any fam’ly secrets.”

They bumped along together in silence, slipping and clutching at each other in a burlesque of fear.

She said out of her thoughts: “’E’s gettin’ so cross there’s no suitin’ ’im.”

He suggested: “You might’s well be married as livin’ with *him*, eh?”

She had a feminine impatience for this sort of professional humor. She did not reply.

“Say, Milly,” he joked, “now that you’re thinkin’ about gettin’ married — how about Hen there?”

It was said partly in jealousy because he had noticed her friendliness for Sutley.

She stared at him with an expression that did not take the joke. He tried to smile her down. "What's the matter, eh? He ain't as ugly as he's painted." His make-up spread his smile across his face in a mocking and enormous leer. "Could n't you learn to love him?"

"Aw, come off," she said hotly, and, lurching against him, she upset his balance.

He fell from the horse's flank to the cocoa mat.

This fall was a bit that was in the act, but she had given it out of its time; there was no crash of drums to mark it, and the music, instead of quickening for the change in the act, dragged along in the unfinished movement of the amble. Nevertheless, Milly jumped to her feet on the horse's back, untied her sun-bonnet and flung it at Burls — who was limping after her, at a loss how to take up his part again, and bruised and angry. Then, with a jerk at the fastenings that her father had arranged in her Mother Hubbard, she flung off that flimsy wrapper and emerged, the lithe and graceful "Madoiselle Blanc," in the white silk costume of an acrobat, pirouetting on one foot, poising like a ballet dancer, rising and falling swimmingly to the applause of the house.

But the music and the horse were still moving too slowly. Her father cracked his whip at Prince and cursed under his breath. The conductor of the orchestra, seeing the difficulty, tried to catch up to the act, and threw his musicians into confusion. The "equestrian director" came up frowning to the ring-bank and cen-

sured Burls for falling from the horse. There were some awkward moments before the performance began to go smoothly again, and in the mean-time the defiant Milly lost her flush of impetuous ill-temper and began to consider the explanation she would have to make after her somersaults were finished and she faced her father in the wings.

Her success as a bareback rider was all that remained between him and the poverty of a circus acrobat's old age. He had taught and trained her. He watched over her talent, now, with the fierce jealousy of an old miser. He dictated what she was to eat. He saw to it that she kept light and supple. He went about with her like a Spanish duenna, afraid of the inevitable love affair that would mean the beginning of her end; for the laws of nature do not allow a matron to do horseback tumbling, and even maturity itself is an enemy to the agility of the equestrienne.

She knew how he would storm at her for having marred her act, and the knowledge made her anxious at a time when she should have had every faculty undistracted, every nerve tense. She made her first somersault successfully, with an accuracy almost automatic, quite unthinkingly. But as she gathered herself for her second leap she wakened suddenly to an unreadiness of mind that became a consciousness of impending failure as her body launched into its spring. Her brain seemed to hang back, fumbling with the messages it should have sent to the responding muscles; and in mid-air she found herself frantically "cast," dead of mo-

mentum and paralyzed with fear. For an instant the air seemed to support her, inert, as if she were floating, aware of the horse below her, the flies above her, the footlights, and the crowded house. Then she felt herself falling, and with a panic-stricken convulsion of every despairing muscle she threw herself clear of the horse and came down on her feet in the ring.

A pain wrenched in her back. Her father caught her as she staggered. She saw that he was white with a spasm of fear that had brought the perspiration to his forehead. "Oh, you need n't be afraid," she said bitterly. "I ain't 'spoiled.'"

His face darkened with a different emotion. "You better look sharp, me girl," he threatened. "You 'll be fined for this, mind you."

"That's all *you'd* care about, if I broke me back."

"'Ere!" he signed to Burls to lead up the horse.

"Get up there" he said to her, "an' do yer turn."

"I won't!" she said.

"Get up there!"

"I won't. I'm 'urt. I won't." She turned to Sutley. "'En!" she called in a fierce undertone.

Sutley had been trying to cover the break in the act by making a frantic dumb show of a man whose hook has been taken by a maskinonge; but at her cry his line broke and he ran to her to explain in pantomime that a fish two feet long (he measured it off in the air with trembling hands) had almost dragged him into the water. At the same time he asked, like a ventriloquist, without moving his lips: "What's the matter?"

"I nearly came a nasty buster. I've strained me hack."

Sutley turned to her father, repeating his pantomime, but increasing the length of the fish to three feet, and explaining at the same time: "You'd better help her off. She's lamed." Crossing to Burls, he said: "Take away the horse. Milly's hurt." And the fish, this time, was four feet long. When he came to the "equestrian director," it was apparently to lament the loss of a young whale. And he continued running from one to the other — as they made their exit to the wings — trying in vain to stop them with his lost-fish story.

As soon as they were behind the shelter of the scenery, Yost rounded on the girl, and she turned for aid to Sutley. But it was Burls who saved her, for the moment, by stepping between her and her father and drawing the old man aside; and the authoritative ease with which he did it showed that there was some understanding between them to give the clown the influence he evidently had. Sutley said to her quickly: "He'll use this. See?"

She saw — with a glittering dry eye of anger.

He whispered: "To-morra's Sunday. Where can I find you — in the mornin'? Will you meet me at the corner o' Broadway? I want to see you."

"If I can get out. 'E'll try to make me stay in, if me back ain't better." She looked at him, silent. "I'll come," she said.

He went with her to the foot of the iron stairway

that led to her dressing-room; and he stood to watch her mount to the first turn of the steps. She climbed slowly, an almost hoyish figure, as pretty as a court page in satin doublet and hose, but lifting herself from step to step with a discouraged weariness that reflected itself in a caricature of pity on Sutley's grotesque face. She smiled wanly down at him as she disappeared, and he remained there staring up at nothing until he was pushed aside by a troop of chorus girls.

He returned to his dressing-room to change his costume for another "entry." He was husy with his wardrobe when Burls came in, triumphant to announce: "It's the goods, Hen. Sashay the girl home t'-night. I got hus'ness with th' ol' geezer. She's put the hog ring in *her* fair young snoot all right, all right."

III

They were Hen Sutley and Harry Burls to their friends, but they had been, in the days of their youth, Henrik Sutliev and Henry Berlitz — the first the son of a hird-fancier and taxidermist on the Bowery, and the other, as he said, "the heir of a kosher harber" on Canal Street. They had been doing "comic entries" together for thirteen years — beginning with a night at the old Columbia Music Hall when Sutley had given some shrill "vocal imitations" of birds and beasts while Burls had "executed" buck and wing dances and nasalized comic songs; and they were bound now in their partnership by all the years of hardship they had endured, by the prosperity they had achieved, by the

apprenticeship and the success in life that they had shared together.

But they had come to the Amphitheater from the circus-ring where Sutley had been little better than a "feeder" to the popular Burls; and now he was in a fair way to make Burls merely a feeder to the popular Sutley; for Burls was a "knockabout" clown, and his slap-stick art was in tone with a three-ring circus, but too loud for the theater; whereas Sutley merely translated the actions of life into terms of his own personality, expressing himself in a pantomime that was naturally comic just as the movements of beauty are naturally graceful, and he had "made a hit" in the Amphitheater after failing to make one in the circus tent. It was chiefly for this reason that Burls wished to return to the "big top"; and it was for this reason, too, that Sutley wished to remain on the stage.

"He don't know that *I* know why he's doin' it," Sutley explained to the girl. "An' I don't like to let on. He's pretendin' it's because he'd sooner be out on the road — where we'd make more money, he says, if we'd sign a contrac' all together — you an' Pop, an' me an' him. I wou'd n't like 'm to know I was playin' against him. But I don't want to go back to the circus, if I can help it."

Milly and he had stopped, on their way from the Amphitheater, to rest on a bench in Bryant Park, where the trees, in their new green, spread thoir leaves against the electric light with an artificial vividness and transparency of color that had the tone of a stage setting.

She was sitting up, stiff-backed and defiant. He was nursing a sharp knee in his clasped hands, gazing out under his hat-brim gloomily.

"'E don't consider *your* feelin's, 'En," she told him.

"Well," he said, "you know I never cut much ice in the bus'ness till we come here. He ain't been used to considerin' me. I don't blame him, neither. I guess I ain't such a much."

"You 're as much as 'e is," she cried. "An' 'e need n't poke fun at you, anyway. I gave 'm a good bump fer *that*."

"Fer what? How?"

"Did n't you know I shoved 'im off the 'orse?"

"No! What'd you do that fer?"

"Fer w'at 'e said. 'E's too fresh by 'alf."

"He don't mean anythin' by it. He's always been like that. He's all right."

"Well, 'e don't stick up fer *you* the way you stick up fer 'im, 'En."

"I guess he thinks I don't need it any more then." He shook his head. "We been stickin' together a long while. We been through a lot o' trouble." He sat, thinking it over. "We were near lynched together, once, in Macon. They took us fer a pair o' huckmen that'd been skinnin' the crowd with a shell game, out on 'the lot.' An' when we went into town to get some crackers an' cheese they folly'd us. They'd 'a' lynched us if it had n't been fer some o' the zinc I had in m' ears. They would n't believe us when we said we were

the clowns — until I showed 'm the make-up I had n't washed out o' m' ears."

He smiled slowly as he added: "At first, when Harry seen 'em pointin' us out an' follyin' us up on the street, he thought we 'd made a hit. He thought they were pointin' us out because we were the clowns."

"Served 'im right," she said. "'E thinks 'e's the whole show now."

He did not reply to her. He went on with his thoughts: "Once, when we got stranded in Kansas, we was beatin' our way back to Chicago, an' we begged a couple o' handouts from a back door an' went an' sat 'n under a water-tank waitin' fer a freight to come along — We drank the water that dripped out o' the tank, too — an' there was a lot o' names cut in the beams that the tank was on, an' while Harry was cuttin' his name in with the rest, a big farmer's dog sneaked up an' eat his grub — an' then he was mad because I'd eat mine while he was carvin' his name."

She made a contemptuous sound in her throat.

"I had m' arm broke comin' home — sleepin' in among the lumber on a flat car, an' the load shifted onto me in the night — an' Harry tore the back out of his shirt to make a sling fer me."

He drew up his sleeve to bare his forearm, and sat studying it for so long a time that she leaned forward, beside him, to look. There was nothing that she could see. When he had pulled down his cuff again he concluded: "He's all right, I guess. That's just his way. He thinks he ought to be clownin' all the time."

"Don't you believe it, 'En," she broke out. "'E's just usin' you the way Pop does *me*. An' I ain't but a trained monkey to Pop. 'E don't treat mo 'uman. I can't even talk to no one. It's a dawg's life; that's w'at it is."

He shook his head. "He's scared you'll get away from him."

"'Ow get away from 'im?"

"Well, if you was to get married — see? I guess he's scared you'll meet some ono that way. That's the way it was with Lally Dulian an' her maw."

"I got a right to get married, ain't I?"

"You sure have, Milly," he said gently.

There was something in his voice that caught her ear. She looked up at him with a sidelong glance. His thin features, yellowed by the paints, wore the blank look that his profession had made second nature to him; but his eyes, thoughtful and melancholy, fixed on vacancy, gave his face an expression of mute wistfulness that was almost ludicrous. "I say!" she laughed. "It ain't as bad as that, is it?"

He turned to find her apparently mocking him with her amusement. He replied with an attempted smile that was little better than a writhing of the lips; "I guess I'm a good deal of a joke, ain't I? . . . Oh, I know," he went on. "It's paint yer face an' play the fool, fer *mine*. I ain't kickin'. They're right, all right."

He made as if to rise. She stopped him with a hand on his arm. "W'at 're you talkin' about any'ow?"

"I 'm talkin' about *you*," he said bitterly, "an' *me*. If I 'd 'a' been anythin' but a joke d' you think Pop 'd 'a' let me come with you? Say, gi' me the laugh. Go on, I kind o' miss it."

She straightened her hat. She tucked her handkerchief into her cuff. She stood up. Then she said, looking down at him: "That 's w'y I bumped 'im off the 'orse — fer talkin' that way about you an' me. . . . Come on. I 'm gr: 'ome."

"Mil!" He caught her hand to hold her. "Is that — is that right?"

Her fingers — the strong fingers of the circus woman — closed on his in a friendly pressure that crushed his bones. "Come on, 'En," she said. "Pop 'll be after us if we don't 'urry."

He replied, in the fervent voice of a lover: "T' 'ell with Pop" — and drew her down beside him. In a moment the situation was clear in his mind.

"G —, Mil," he said, in a broken rush of emotion, "if you 'll stan' by me — I did n't care where I went to before, ner what I did. I 'd 'a' gone back with Harry an' give up. But if you 'll stan' by me — I 'm on the right track. I know I am. There 's never been a clown — a good one — that 's done the knockabout. It 's been imitatin' life with them — the same as with me. I c'n make good. I c'n make good without *him* — Harry. You need n't be ascares o' that."

"I 'm not ascares," she said. She asked, in another tone: "Do you like me, 'En — much?"

He drew a long breath, as if to get a grip on his

voice. "Mil," he said, "I ain't — The first time I seen you —"

"All right, En," she laughed. "I'll take yer word fer it."

"Aw, don't make fun o' me, Mil," he pleaded.

For answer sho loaned forward and put his arm behind her and snuggled up to him. "Who's makin' fun o' you, you big goose?" she whispered. Her face was upturned, invitingly. He wiped his mouth with the back of his hand before he kissed her — a fumbling clumsy kiss that made her laugh again with a half-amused and wholly contented chuckle. "All right, 'En," she said. "I'm 'appy. Now w'at 're you goin' to do with Pop?"

IV

The following day, as Sutley had remarked, was Sunday; and in the morning Milly tried to escape from her father's surveillance by insisting that she must go to church. "W'at for?"

"Because I want to. It ain't agayn the law to go to church, I 'ope."

He grumbled that she was always taking up with some crazy notion or other, but ho could not in reason keep her home, and he contented himself with accompanying her as far as the church door.

She wore her new spring hat, with a white veil, and she was as excited as a bridesmaid. He did not notice it. They passed Sutley at a street corner, and Yost nodded curtly, unaware of the significant look with

which Milly signaled her lover as she went by. The clown followed her at a safe distance. He saw her father leave her at the church steps, and he waited until the old man had turned the street corner. Then he hurried furtively to join her where she was awaiting him in the vestibule.

"Did you get it?" she whispered.

"Sure!" He produced, from an upper pocket of his white waistcoat a precious square of paper that shook in his hands as he unfolded it. "The parson says he'll see us after the show in here's over." He indicated the muffled singing of the congregation with a jerk of the head toward the closed inner doors of the church. "We're to go aroun' to the side somewheres."

"'Ow much does 'e want?"

"Whatever I want to give, he says." He explained it to her perplexedly: "They don't have a reg'lar price."

She choked down an excited gurgle of laughter, blushing up at him. "'Ow much d' you think it's worth?"

"God! Milly," he faltered. "It's worth all I'll ever make."

"Well," she said, with a flippancy that was half hysterical, "that's w'at it's goin' to cost you before you're done with me." One of the ushers of the church approached them. "Come on," she whispered, taking Sutley's arm. "We might 's well see th' 'ole performance."

They went in to their wedding like a country couple entering a side show.

Meanwhile her father, after stopping by the way in a saloon, returned to the flat in which he and Milly had spent the winter, and sat down beside a front-room window, in his shirt-sleeves, to smoke. It was the typical room of a circus man's leisure, decorated with old photographs of acrobatic troupes and high-wire "artists" and famous equestriennes who smiled out of yellowing prints as if they had thought their long-forgotten charms would bloom there immortally. A riding whip, which his wife had used, was crossed with a horseshoe under a staring crayon portrait of her wearing her "waterfall" in a chenille net. A tarnished gilt frame hold the indenture of his apprenticeship, made when he was six years old, to a "teacher of dancing, gymnastics, and theatrical horsemanship." The man used to lash him with a "lunge" whip, holding him with a line about the waist; and Yost remembered that training when he was considering how best to discipline his daughter.

His past was thick about him — and he smoked, indifferent to it all, callous with age, and sleepy. His gray eyebrows were tilted up from the bridge of his nose in a harmless scowl; his gray mustache, professionally waxed, bristled above a mouth that drooped weakly at one corner where the pipe weighed it down.

He was not troubled about Milly. He was accustomed to think of her — as the old person so often thinks of the young one — not as a human being with attributes and character, but rather as a new example of the known faults and flightinesses of youth.

He considered that she needed a proper display of harshness on occasion, patience and a firm hand. He felt that she would understand, and appreciate his stern care of her, as she grow older.

And he was not troubled about Burls. He had decided to "turn down" that too friendly adviser. He considered himself "too old a bird to be caught by chaff." If there was more money to be made out of Milly's act with a circus, he and Milly were going to make it themselves. He was able to attend to that. Burls could make his own contracts, and he and Milly would make theirs.

He blinked drowsily, satisfied with himself, with his circumstances, with life in general. The sun was bright; the children were playing in the street; a German servant was singing and clattering dishes in the kitchen. He would have a good dinner when Milly came back, and then he would settle down for a quiet Sunday afternoon, undisturbed. So —

He put his pipe on the window-sill and lay back in his chair to have a snooze.

He was wakened by the sound of voices. The servant had come to the front door in reply to the bell that had rung in the kitchen. He opened his eyes, blinking. Burls was entering with a genial smile, and Yost, because he had been disturbed, scowled at the intruder.

Burls accepted the scowl with a beaming good nature. "Takin' it easy, eh? That's right. I been seein' them down at the Garden about that contrac'." He had begun to sit down, and though Yost put in curtly: "I

"Don't want a contract; I'm goin' to stay w'ere I am," Burls lowered himself into the armchair and nodded as if this reply did not in any way change the situation.

"Don't want it, eh? Got somethin' better?"

"We stay w'ere we are."

"Uh-huh? Well, I don't know but what you're wise. I was on'y int'rested in goin' on account o' Mil. This chorus girl life ain't exactly the right soil to bring up a girl like her, d' yuh think? That's the way I feel about it anyway. I'm kind o' soft about her." He looked up at the wall, smiling. "She's a mighty fine girl, Milly is. I don't like to think o' her gettin' mixed up with any o' them Willies that hang aroun' the stage-door."

"I can see to that."

"Mebbe you're right. But I been thinkin' now — She'll be gettin' married, some day, won't she? She was talkin' about it las' night. An' I been thinkin', what's the matter with givin' one of us a chanct — some one that's in the bus'ness with you? You can't keep her like she was in a nunn'ry. She'll get away from you, sure. That's human nature. What's the matter with givin' *me* a show?" He was talking now with the most evident earnestness. "I'm soft on the girl. I like her — an' I don't know that she don't like me. If you'll gi' me a leg up, I can make it."

Yost threw out his hands with a gesture of uncontrollable impatience. "Leave us alone! Leave us alone! Mind yer own bus'ness, will you? I can make

me own contracts. I can look after me own daughter." He checked himself on the sound of her voice in the hallway. "Don't you be puttin' notions into 'er 'ead now," he said hoarsely, "or by —"

"That 's all right," Burls smiled. "Think it over."

The door opened before her — and Sutley. "'Ello!" she said gaily. "'Ere 's 'En come to have dinner with us."

Sutley came in, very red and guilty. And Burls, looking over his shoulder in surprise, caught his partner's expression and turned in his chair, drawn around by the expectation of ho did not know what.

Milly added, as she took off her hat: "'E 'as something to tell you."

Yost said: "Somethin' to w'at?"

Sutley shifted his feet heavily, and then looked down at them as if he had expected to find them the false ones that he wore on the stage. "You see," he began inconsequentially, "Milly an' me did n't want to go back to the circus. She don't like it there any more 'n I do — an' I never cut much ice 'n under canvas. I c'n make more money where I am. They 'll give us a contrac' — Burls an' me — fer a hunderd an' fifty apiece fer three years to stay on where we are."

"W'at the bl ——'s that got to do with me?" Yost demanded.

"Well, you see, Milly an' me, we did n't want to go back, an' Milly said she 'd stan' by me. An' —"

"You 're at it, too, are you?" He swallowed wrathily. "You can get out o' 'ere an' mind yer own affairs."

I'll look to me own hus'ness without any 'elp neither from you ner Burls."

"'Ol' on now, Pop," Milly interfered. She nudged Sutley. "Go on an' tell 'im."

She closed the door behind her to shut off the servant.

Sutley gulped. "We — we got married this mornin'."

He did not look up to see Yost's expression, but the silence in the little room was itself an accusing gape of amazement. He continued apologetically: "You see, she did n't want to go back to the circus, an' I did n't. She wanted to stay in the flat instead o' knockin' aroun' on the road — so we thought we'd jus' stan' hy each other that way — an' see if we could n't fix it up afterwards." His voice faded away in an unintelligible mumble.

The old man had half risen from his chair, as open-mouthed as Pantomime, his eyes fixed in a staring speechlessness on his daughter. She was unconscious of the fact that she was busily shaking out her veil and folding it in a trembling excitement.

"Milly!"

She shook her head, without looking at him. "I 'ad a right to get married. I 'ave a right to live as well as other people."

And suddenly Burls, bringing his hand down with a smack on his knee, broke out in an echoing guffaw, and lay hack in his chair shouting his laughter, open-mouthed, his eyes shut.

Yost sprang to his feet. "You let 'im take you in

with a lie like that? 'Im! 'Im an' this other one!" He pointed at Burls, his hand shaking. He shook his fist at Sutley, sputtering Cockney oaths. "The two o' them! That's w'at they've been up to!"

Burls bellowed "Ho-ho-ho!" convulsed and helpless, unable to defend himself though Yost, in a dancing rage, kicked at his legs and shouted: "Look at 'im! Look at 'im! Because you've made a fool of yerself — married!"

The girl screamed through the uproar: "W'at's the matter with 'im? W'at's the matter with *you*?"

Her father turned on her. "You d — little —! You'd make a fool o' *me*, would you?" He raised his fist at her. She darted behind Sutley.

And Sutley — who had been standing quiet in the midst of the confusion, listening, solemnly intent — faced the father with an expression of disturbed pity. Yost was opening and shutting his mouth on an anger that was choked in breathlessness — caught suddenly with pain in the heart — threatening the clown with his raised fist that remained checked in mid-air.

"That's all right, now," Sutley said. "I don't want none o' what she earns. You need n't get — Mil!"

The old man had collapsed, and Sutley, with that cry to the girl, caught him as he tottered. "Get's a drink quick."

Burls was still sobbing with the exhaustion of laughter, even when he dragged himself to his feet to assist them. They laid Yost back in the chair from which

Burls had risen, and Milly struck the sniggering clown an angry cuff on the head to silence him. He threw up his elbow to shield himself, hysterically weak. She thrust him away from them. He stumbled and fell into another chair, where he buried his face in his hands, limp.

"Get 'm a drink," Sutley pleaded, trying to fan the old man with his open hands, and apologizing frantically: "That's all right, now. It need n't make no difference to you an' Milly. I c'n earn enough fer her an' me, an' you c'n have what *she* makes. You need n't mind me aroun'. It's natural fer her to want to get married, an' it's better fer her to marry some one in the bus'ness."

Yost roused himself to a sort of expiring gesture of contempt and fell back gasping.

"It need n't make no difference to *you*," Sutley kept on. "Burls had n't nothin' to do with it. We did it so we would n't have to go back to the circus. That need n't make no difference to *you*. You need n't get mad about it."

His feeble gestures, his anxious tone, his expression of awkward solicitude — all were unconsciously clownish and laughable. And when Milly came back with a bottle and a glass, she put him aside, in a sort of distracted perception of his absurdity. She poured a drink for her father and held it to his lips. He looked up at Sutley in a weak disgust that would have expressed itself plaintively if it could have expressed itself at all.

As soon as he found his voice, he said: "Take 'im away. Take 'im away from me."

"Now, look 'ere, Pop," she replied. "You behave yerself. 'E never would 'a' married me at all if I 'adn't asked 'im. You behave yerself. You're a disgrace to the fam'ly." And it was evident from her manner that she and Sutley were "the fam'ly."

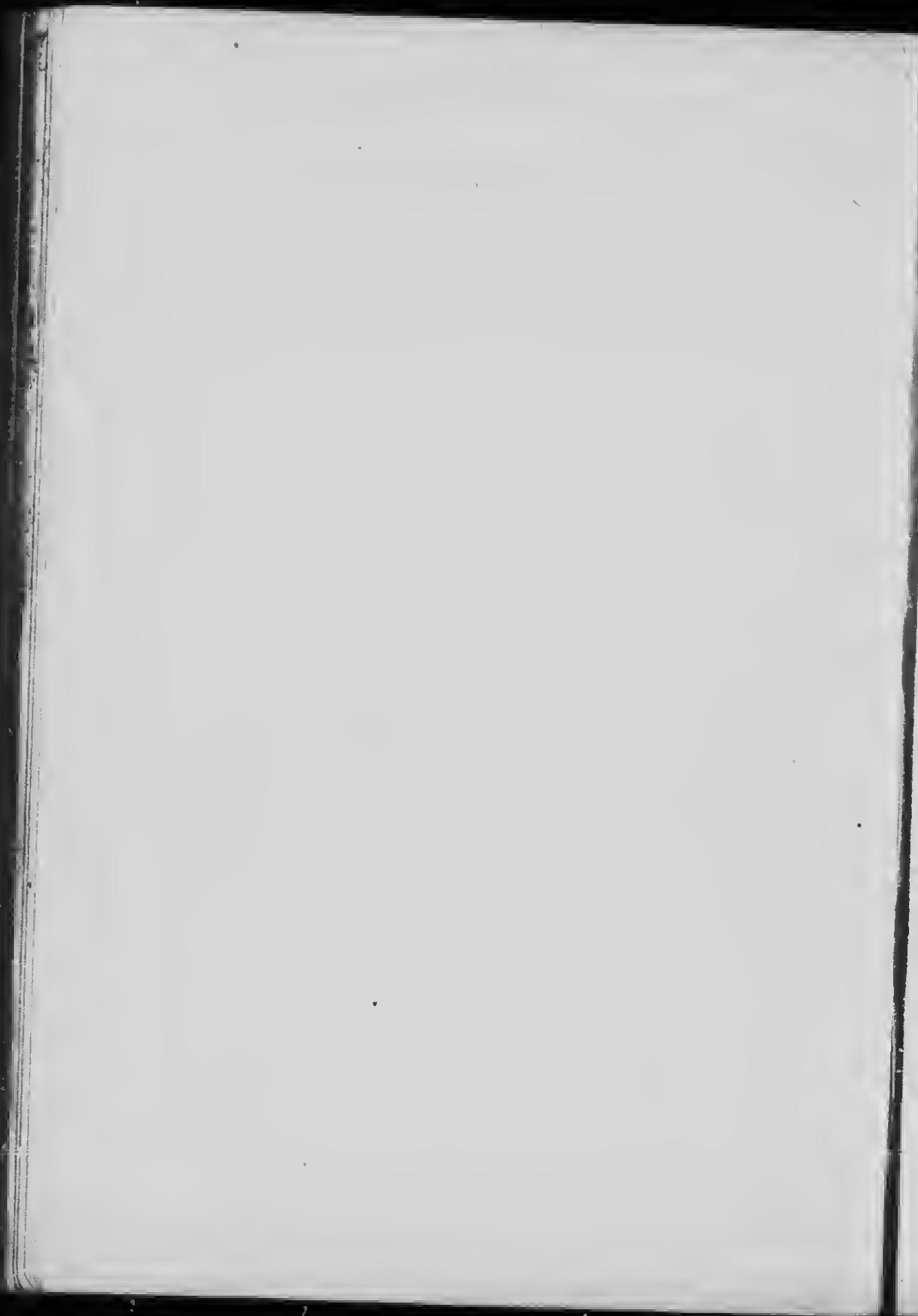
It was the servant who ended the scene — and recalled them all to the proprieties — by putting her head in the door to announce: "'S retty — dinner!"

It was through Burls, of course, that the story became public. He still tells it with roars of laughter; and he is most effective when he describes how Sutley announced to old Yost that Milly and he were married, and Yost attacked the clown with his ringmaster's whip. This is almost as good as his other story of how he and Sutley were nearly lynched in Macon, once, and he saved Sutley and himself by sending the mob into convulsions of laughter with his clowning. He is truly a romantic artist.

He does not tell that he was, in his own way, almost as "soft" on Milly as Sutley was. The only hint he ever gives of it is when he says, disgustedly: "I tell you what's the whole trouble with women: they got no sense o' humor. They don't even know good clownin' when they see it. They're too danged matter-of-fact."

And Sutley, funnier than ever and more successful than ever, continues to work at his clowning with all the seriousness of a Russian realist. "No good clown,"

he insists, "ever did the knockabout. It's been imitatin' life with them, the same as me. Now, take that baby act I do, with the doll: I got that from my own kid, straight. The wife did n't like it, at first — makin' fun o' the youngster — but she's all right now it's a hit. No, she don't work any more. She an' Pop look after the kid."



THE DEVIL'S DOINGS



THE DEVIL'S DOINGS

MRS. CREGAN wept, and her tears were ludicrous. She was as fat as a Falstaff. Her features were as ill-suited for the expression of grief as a circus clown's. She had not even a channel in her plump cheeks to drain the tears from her eyes; and the slow drops, large and unctuous, trickled down her round jowls and soaked into her bonnet-strings, leaving her cheeks as fresh and as ruddy in the sunlight as if they had been merely wet with perspiration. Her eyes stared, unpuckered, apparently unconscious that they wept. Her mouth was tight in an expression of resentful determination. Only her little round chin trembled — like a child's.

Yet Mrs. Cregan was as nearly heart-broken as she had ever been in her life. She was leaving her husband. What was more grievous to her, she was leaving her home. She was on the streets of New York, with her small savings in her greasy purse — clasped tightly in her two hands under her Sunday cape that was trimmed with fringe and tassels like a lambrequin. She did not know where to go. There was no one to whom she could turn for aid, and she would not go to any one for pity. Behind her was the wreck of a breakfast table — the visible symbol of her ruined home — with a cursing Irishman, whom nobody could

live with any longer, shouting "Your house, is it? I'll show yeh whose house it is! I'll show yeh! I'll break ev'ry dang thing in the place!" Before her were the crooked byways of what had once been Greenwich Village, as quiet as a desert, and as indifferent, in the early morning radiance, with shuttered windows and closed doors.

The domestic peace of those old streets made her own homelessness the more pitiful to her. She felt as she had felt once before — years before — in her childhood, when she had set sail with her parents for America. It had been a cold day; and the mists had steamed up horridly from the water, with a desolate, wet sea-odor; and the memory of the sunlight on green fields and the warm perfume of the land had been like a longing for health and daylight to the darkness of a death-bed. The future had threatened her with the terrors of an unknown world. The past, despite its poverty and starvation, had been as dear as life. She had suffered all those pangs of dissolution that assail the home-loving Irish when they have to leave what association has made dear to them; for, with the Irish, familiarity does not breed contempt, but affection.

She suffered these same miseries now. She saw her home through tears of regret — though unhappiness had driven her from it. And her lips were set in a determination never to return to Cregan, though her chin trembled with pity of herself in the determination.

Some distance behind her came a smaller woman, as shrunken, as withered, and as yellow as an old leaf.

Even her shoes seemed to have dried and shriveled, curling up at the toes. And she fluttered along in the light morning breeze, holding back against it, on her heels, with an odd effect of being carried forward faster than she wished to go.

She was Mrs. Byrne, from the floor below Mrs. Cregan's flat, and she had been starting out on a secret errand of her own when she heard the quarrel overhead and stopped to hear the end of it. There was something guilty in her manner. She was evidently struggling between her desire to reach the next street unseen by Mrs. Cregan and her desire to know what had happened in the Cregan flat. Her curiosity proved the stronger.

She let the wind blow her alongside her friend's portly despair. She said, in the hoarse whisper that was all she had left of her voice: "Is it yerself, Mrs. Cregan? Yuh're off to choorch early this mornin'."

Mrs. Cregan looked around, blinking to clear her eyes. "Choorch?" she said, on the plaintiveness of a high note that broke in her throat.

"Yuh're cryin', woman!" Mrs. Byrne's look of craftiness changed at once to one of startled distress. "Come back out o' this with yuh." She caught Mrs. Cregan's arm. "It's no thing to be doin' on the street! Come back, now. Where're yuh goin'?"

Mrs. Cregan marched stolidly ahead and carried her neighbor with her. "I've quit 'm."

"Quit who?"

"Himsilf. . . . Dinny."

Mrs. Byrne expressed her emotion and showed her tact by silently compressing her lips.

"I've quit 'im, fer good an' all." She stroked a tear down her cheek with a thick forefinger. "I'll niver go back to 'im. Niver!"

"Come away with yuh, Mary Cregan," Mrs. Byrne cried, in her breathy huskiness. "At *your* age! Faith, yuh're as flighty as one o' them girls with the pink silk petticoats. He's your husban', ain't he? D' yuh think yuh were married over the broomstick? Come an' behave yerself like a decent woman. What'd Father Dumphy say to *this*, think yuh?"

"He's a man. I know what he'd say. He'd tell me to go back to Cregan. I'll niver go back. Niver!"

"Yuh won't! What'll yuh do, then? Where'll yuh go to?"

"I'll niver go back. Niver! He's broke me best chiny. An' kicked the leg off the chair. An' overturned the table. An' ordered me out o' the little bit o' home I been all these years puttin' together. The teapot th' ol' man brought from Ireland — the very teapot — smashed to smithereens! An' the little white dishes with the gilt trimmin's I had to me weddin' day, Mrs. Byrne! There was the poor things all broke to bits!" She stopped to point at the sidewalk as if the wreckage lay there before her. "All me little bit o' chiny. All of it. All of it, Mrs. Byrne. Ev'ry bit! Boorsted!"

Her tears choked her. She could not express the piercing irreparability of the injury. It would not

have been so bad if he had beaten her; a hurt will heal. But the innocent, wee cups — and the fat old brown teapot — and the sweet little chair with its pretty legs, carved and turned so daintily! She had washed them and wiped them, and dusted and polished them, and been so careful of them and felt so proud of them, for twenty years past. And, now, there they were lying, all in bits — past mending — gone forever. And they so pretty and so harmless.

The crash as they fell on the floor had sounded in her ears like the scream of a child murdered.

She started forward again, determinedly. "I'll niver go back to 'm. He can have his house to himsilf. . . . What do I care fer Father Dumphy? He wants nothin' but the dime I leaves at the choorch doore, an' the dime I drops on the plate! Whin me poorse's impty, he'll not bother his head about me!"

"Shame *on* yuh!" Mrs. Byrne wheezed, with her eye on the house she was passing. "Yuh talk no better than a Prod'stunt."

"An' if I *was* a Prod'stint," she cried, "I'd not have to pay money iv'ry time I wanted to hear mass. I'd not be out on the street here, not knowin' where I'm goin' to, ner how I'm to live. It's *thim* that knows how to take care o' their own — givin' the women worrk, an' takin' the childer off to the farrms, an' all the like o' that. You Dogans —"

Mrs. Byrne glanced about her fearfully. "Stop yer talk, now. Stop yer talk. Stop it before some one hears yuh makin' a big fool o' yerself."

"I'll not stop it. What do I care who hears me? I'm goin' off from here fer good an' all. 'T will know me no more. 'T will not. I'm done with it all. I'm done with it." She held out her purse. "I've got me bit o' money. I'll hire me a little room uptown. I'm done with *him* an' Father Dumphy an' the whole dang lot o' yuz. Slavin' an' savin' fer nothin' at all. I'll work fer meself now, an' none other. Neither Cregan ner the choorch ner no one ilse 'll get a penny's good o' me no more. I got no one in the wide worrld but meself to look to, an' I'll go it alone."

Mrs. Byrne was a little woman of a somewhat sinister aspect, her dull eyes very deep in their wrinkles, her nose pushed aside out of the perpendicular, her long lips stretched tightly over protruding teeth. She was as curious as an old monkey; but it was not only her curiosity that made her the busiest gossip and the most charitable "good soul" in the street; she had her share of human kindness, and if she was as crafty as a hypocrite, it was because she enjoyed handling men and women, like a politician.

Seeing that Mrs. Cregan was beyond the reach of shame or the appeal of the priest, she said: "Well, I don't blame yuh, woman. Cregan's a fool — like all the rest o' the men. An' yerself such a good manager. Well, well! Yer rooms was that purty 't 'ud make yuh wistful. Where will yuh be goin'?"

"I dunno."

"Have yuh had yer breakfast?"

Mrs. Cregan shook her head.

"Come back, then, an' have a bite with me."

"Niver! I'll niver go hack."

Mrs. Byrne hitched up her shawl. "Come along then to the da-ary restr'unt. There's no one home to miss me. I'll take a bit o' holiday, this mornin', meself. I've been wantin' to taste one o' those hatter cakes they make in the restr'unt windahs, this long enough."

"Yuh've ate yer breakfast."

"I have not," Mrs. Byrne replied. "I was off to the grocer to buy some sugar when yuh stopped me."

It was a lie. She had, in fact, started out, secretly, on a guilty errand that she should not acknowledge.

"It's a lonely meal I'd've been havin'," she said, "with Byrne down at the boiler house an' the boy off on his run."

Mrs. Cregan did not reply, and they came to Sixth Avenue without more words. They paused before a dairy restaurant that advertised its "Surpassing Coffee" in white-enameled letters on its shop-front windows. Mrs. Cregan's hunger drew her in, but slowly. And Mrs. Byrne followed, coughing to conceal her embarrassment.

II

It was the first time that Mrs. Byrne had ever sat down in any public restaurant, except the eating-halls at Coney Island (where she went with "hasket parties") or the "ice-cream parlors" at Fort George. And she glanced about her, at tiled walls and mosaic floors, with

a furtiveness that was none the less critical for being so sly.

"It's eatin' in a bathroom we are," she whispered. "An' will yuh look at the cup yonder. The sides of it are that thick there's scarce room fer the coffee in it! Well, well! It do beat the Dutch! They're drawin' the drink out of a boiler big enough fer wash-day."

The approach of a waitress silenced her. When she saw that Mrs. Cregan was not going to speak, she looked up at the girl with a bargain-counter keenness. "Have y' any pancakes fit t' eat? . . . How much are they? . . . Ten cents! Fer how many? . . . Fer three pancakes? Fer three! D' yuh hear that?" she appealed to Mrs. Cregan. "Come home with me, that's a good woman. It's a sin to pay it. Three cents fer a pancake. Aw, come along out o' this. Ten cents! We e'u'd get two loaves o' bread fer the money, an' live on 'em fer a week!"

But Mrs. Cregan was beyond practicalities, and she ordered her buckwheat cakes and coffee with an air that was mournfully distraught. Mrs. Byrne made a vain attempt to get her own cakes from the waitress for five cents, and then resigned herself to the senseless extravagance.

"Yuh'll not make yer own livin' an' eat the likes o' this," she grumbled asthmatically. "Yuh'd better be savin' yer money."

Mrs. Cregan was looking at the thick china with a sort of aggrieved despondence. It was almost the expression of a bereaved mother looking at one of her

neighbor's children and thinking it a healthy, ugly brat whom nobody would have missed! She stared at the bare walls and the bare tables of the restaurant, and found the place, by comparison with her own cozy flat, as unhomelike as the waiting-room of a railroad station — the waiting-room of a railroad station when you have said good-by to your past and the train has not yet arrived to carry you to your future.

As her pancakes were served to her, she bent over the plate to hide a tear that trickled down her nose. It splashed on the piece of food that she raised to her mouth. She ate it — tear and all.

"An' them no bigger than the top of a tomato can!" Mrs. Byrne was muttering.

Mrs. Cregan ate, and the food helped to stop her tears. It was the strong coffee, at last, that brought her back her voice. "If it'd b'en *him*, he'd 'a' gone an' got drunk," she said, wiping her cheeks with her napkin. "The men have the best of it. Us women have to take it all starin' sober."

"They're no more than children," Mrs. Byrne replied, "an' they're to be treated as such. Sure, Cregan could n't live without yuh. He'd have no buttons to his pants in a week."

"An' him!" Mrs. Cregan cried. "Iver since the Raypublicuns got licked, there's be'n no gettin' on with him at sll. Thim Sunday papers've toorned his head. He's all blather about his rights an' his wrongs. Th' other moornin' did n't I try to get on his bus from the wrong side o' the crossin', an' he bawls at me: 'Th'

other side! Th' other side! Yuh're no better than any one ilse!' An' I had to chase through the mud after him! The little wizened runt! He's talkin' like an arnachist! An' that's why he smashed me dish. He'll have no one say 'No' to him. . . . Ah, Mrs. Byrne, niver marry a man older than yersilf."

"Thank yuh," Mrs. Byrne replied with hoarse sarcasm. "I'm not likely to, at my age." She added, consolingly: "Cregan's young fer his years. Drivin' a Fift' Avenah bus is fine, preservin', outdoor work."

"It is *that!*" And Mrs. Cregan's tone remarked that the fact was the more to be deplored. "He'll be crankier an' crabbeder the older he grows." She dipped to her coffee and swallowed hard.

Mrs. Byrne had screwed up her eyes to squint at an idea that could not well be looked in the face. When she spoke it was to say slyly: "God forbid! But they do go off sometimes in a puff. He looks as if he'd live fer long enough, thank Heaven. But yuh never can tell."

Mrs. Cregan held her hand for a moment, and then began hastily to fill her mouth with food. The silence that ensued was long enough to take on an appearance of guilt.

It was long enough, too, for Mrs. Byrne to "contrive a procedure."

"Yuh never can tell," she began, "unless yuh have doin's with the devil — like them gipsies that see what's comin' by lookin' in the flat o' yer hand. There's one o' them aroun' the corner, an' they say she told Minnie

Doyle the namo o' the man she was to marry. An' he married her, at that!"

Mrs. Cregan looked blank.

Mrs. Byrne leaned forward to her. "I never whispered it to a livin' soul but yerself — but it was her told Mrs. Gunn that her last was to be a boy. A good month ahead! An' when she saw it was true she had no peace o' mind till she heard the priest say the words over the poor child an' saw that the sprinkle o' holy water did n't bubble off him like yuh 'd sprinkled it on a hot stove."

Mrs. Cregan's vacant regard had slowly gathered a gleam of startled intelligence.

"An' if I was yerself, Mrs. Cregan — not knowin' where I was to go to, ner how I was to live — I 'd go an' have a talk with her before I went further, d' yuh see?"

"God forbid! 'T is a mortal sin."

"'T is not. When I told Father Dumphy what I 'd done, he called me an ol' fool an' gave me an extry litany fer penance. What 's a litany!"

"I 'd be scared o' me life!"

"Yuh wud not. Come along with me. I was goin'. I got troubles o' me own. Never mind that. There 's nothin' to be scared of. Nothin' at all. No one 'll see us. I been there meself, many 's the time, an' no one knows it."

III

It was a good half hour later that Mrs. Byrne entered the "reception rooms" of Madame Wampa, "clairvoy-

ant, palmist and card-reader," with the propitiatory smile of the woman who knows she is doing wrong but is prepared to argue that there is "no great harm into it." And she was followed by Mrs. Cregan, still reluctant, still guilty, but with a sort of reverential awe, as if she were an altar-boy who had been persuaded to join in some mischievous trespass on the sanctuary.

Madame Wampa received them, professionally insolent in her indifference.

Mrs. Byrne explained that she wanted only a "small card reading" for twenty-five cents.

Madame Wampa said curtly: "Sit down."

They sat down.

Madame Wampa had been a music-hall singer when her husband was a sleight-of-hand artist, "the Great Malino, the Wizard of Milan." Her voice had long since left her. She had nothing of her beauty but its yellow ruins. And her life was made up of two great grievances — first, that her husband was always idle, and second that her landlord overcharged her for her rooms because of the nature of her business.

She saw nothing in Mrs. Byrne and Mrs. Cregan but their obvious inability to help her largely in paying her rent. She said: "I give a full trance readin', with names, dates, an' all questions answered for a dollar, or a full card readin' for fifty cents. You can't tell much for a quarter."

Mrs. Byrne shook her head.

Madame Wampa said "Very well," in a tone of haughty resignation. She turned to a booth that had

been made of a turkey-red chintz, in one corner of the room, and lit a small red lamp and sat down before a little bamboo table. A toy angel, from a Christmas tree, hung above her. A stuffed alligator sat up, on its hind legs beside her — a porcelain bell hung on a red ribbon about its neck — to grin with a cheerful uncanniness on the rigamaroles of magic. She said: "Come!"

Mrs. Byrne entered the gipsy tent, and Mrs. Cregan was left alone in the atmosphere of a bespangled past reduced to its lowest terms of imposture. There were strings of Indian corn hanging from the ceiling, Chinese coins and rabbits' feet on the walls, a horseshoe wrapped in tinfoil over the door, and a collection of grotesque bric-à-hrac on shelves and tables. There were necklaces of lucky beads for sale, and love charms in the shape of small glass hearts enclosing imitation shamrocks, and dream books, and manuals of palmistry, and gipsy cards for fortune-telling, and photographs of Madame Wampa in a gorgeous evening dress trimmed with feathers. Over all was a smoky odor of kerosene from an oil heater.

Mrs. Cregan looked from side to side with a vaguely worried feeling that it must take a power of dusting and wiping to keep such a clutter of things clean; and this feeling gradually rose into her consciousness above the dull stupefaction of her grief.

Madame Wampa, in the chintz tent, recited without expression: "Though you travel east or west, may your luck be the best." She dropped her voice to a tone-

less mutter about a "journey," and some papers that were to be signed, and a "falso" dark woman who pretended to be Mrs. Byrne's friend, but would do her an injury.

Mrs. Cregan sat as if she were waiting for her turn to enter a confessional, her hands folded, her head dropped. She heard Mrs. Byrne whispering hoarsely, but she did not listen.

Madamo Wampa said, at last, wearily: "Very well. Send her in."

She shuffled her cards and sighed. She was professionally acquainted with many griefs, and she took her toll of them. They meant no more to her than sickness does to a quack. She looked up at Mrs. Cregan's entrance almost absent-mindedly.

But there was, at once, something so helplessly stricken about the woman's plump despair, so infantile, so touchingly ridiculous, that Madame Wampa even smiled faintly and moved the bamboo table to let Mrs. Cregan squeeze into the chair that waited her. She sat down and held out her money in her palm. Madame Wampa took her hand. "I will tell you," she said. "I will see it in your hand."

She crossed the palm three times with the coin, and began in the monotonous voice and with the expressionless face of the fakir: "You — you're married. Many years. I see many years. You've not been happy. Monday's your unlucky day. Don't begin nothin' on Monday. You're thinkin' of takin' a journey — something — some change. It won't end good.

You'd better not. Whatever it is. There's a man — a man that has horses — that drives horses. I see horses. He'll have an accident. I think a runaway — a collision. He'll be — hurt. Yes. He's old — an old man. Mebbe he'll die. P'r'aps. He's a relative — related to you. Beware of animals. One'll hurt you. You'll never be rich — but comfortable. The best of your life's colin'. You'll have your wish."

Mrs. Cregan had drawn back in her chair. Her mouth had loosened. Her hand lay limp on the table. All her intelligence seemed to have concentrated in her eyes, in an expression of horrified surprise. She said faintly: "Is't Cregan?"

Madame Wampa shrugged one shoulder in her red kimono. "The lines don't say." She blew out the lamp and rose from the table. "That's all. You can't tell much for a quarter. I give a full trance readin', with names, dates an' all questions answered —"

"God forgi' me," Mrs. Cregan quavered, crossing herself. She staggered out blindly into the room.

Mrs. Byrne cried: "What's wrong with yuh?"

And at that, Mrs. Cregan stampeded to the door in the ponderous panic of a conscience-stricken elephant — running to find a place where she might get down on her knees. Cregan! It was himself! It was Dinny! Killed, maybe! Maybe, at this blessed minute, he was lying in a hospital, and the surgeons cutting him up with their little knives. God forgive us! She had blasphemed against the church and Father Dumphy;

and she must pray. For herself and for Cregan. Dinny! Sho had wished him dead!

Mrs. Byrne tugged at her cape. "Whist! Whist! What's come o'v' yuh, woman? What is it?"
"It's Dinny!"

That was all that could be had out of her. Even when she reached her home again, and Mrs. Byrne followed her in, afraid of leaving the frightened woman alone lest she "blab" the whole secret to the first person she met,— even then Mrs. Cregan could not speak until she had gathered up the broken dishes and propped the broken chair against the wall, as frantically as if she were trying to conceal the evidence of a crime. Then she sank down on a sofa and burst into tears. "The poor creature!" she wept. "The poor ol' man!"

Mrs. Byrne folded her arms. "Mary Cregan," she said, in hoarse disgust, "when yuh've done makin' a fool o' yerself, I'll trouble yuh to listen to *me*. *Now!* If y' ever breathe a word o' this to Cregan, he'll laugh himself blind! Mind yuh that! He'll not believe yuh. No one'll believe yuh. No one! An' if yuh don't want somethin' turrrible to happen, yuh'll say nothin', but yuh'll behave yerself like a decent married woman an' go to choorch an' say yer prayers against trouble. That woman with the cards says whatever th' old Nick puts into her head to say."

Mrs. Cregan cried: "She saw it in me hand!"

Mrs. Byrne drew herself up like a prophetess. "Dip yer hand in holy water, an' yuh'll hear no more of it. Now, then. Behave yerself."

"I was wishin' it!" she wailed. "I was wishin' somethin' 'd happen to him to leave mo free here in m' own home!"

"An' that," Mrs. Byrne said, "is the judgment o' heaven on yuh fer carin' more for yer dishes than yuh did for yer husband. Yuh 're a good managor, Mrs. Cregan, hut yuh 've been a dang poor wifo. Think of yer man first an' yer house after, an' yuh 'll be a happier woman."

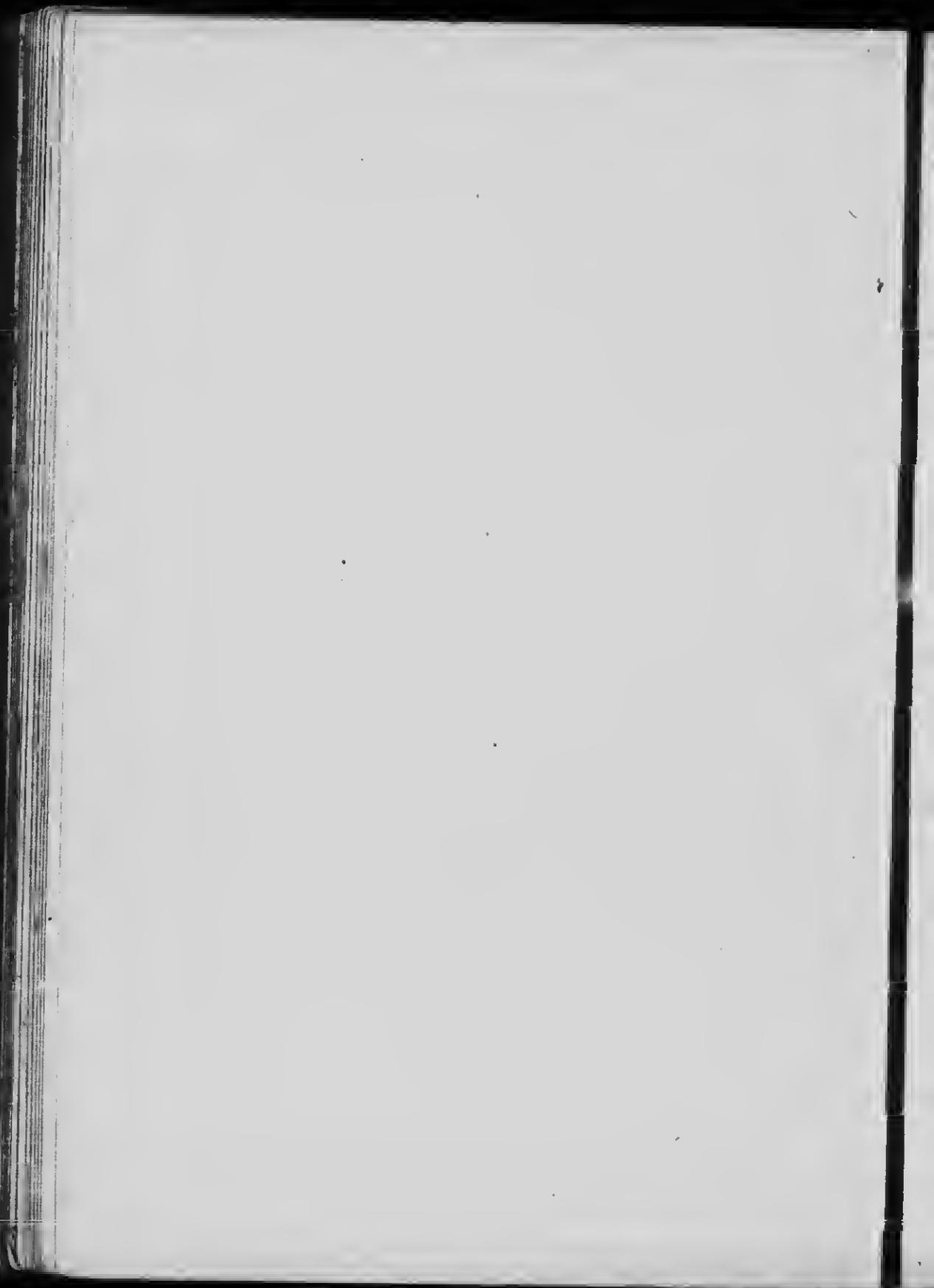
"I will that. I will," Mrs. Cregan wept, "if he's spared to me."

"Never fear," Mrs. Byrne said drily. "He 'll be spared to yuh."

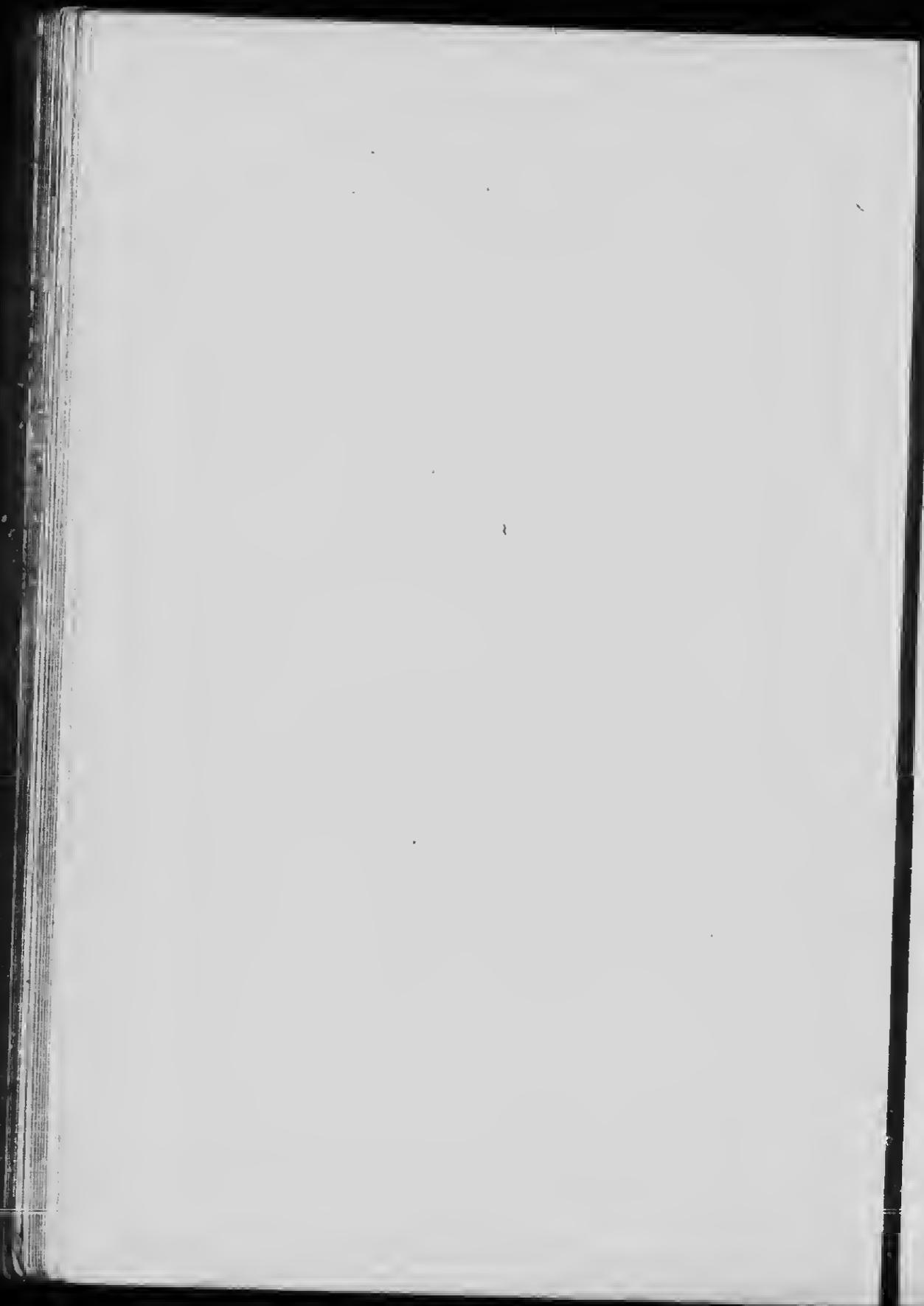
And he *has* been spared to her. At first he was suspicious of her subdued manner and remorseful gentleness. And for a long time he watched her, very warily, with an eye for treachery. Then he understood that she had succumbed to his masterful handling of her, and he was proud of his conquest.

When the Fifth Avenue huses becamo motor-cars, and Dinny retired, Mrs. Cregan began to hope that she had warded off the predicted had fortune by her devoutness; but she still had her fears. "'T was the devil's doin's," she said to Mrs. Byrne.

"He had a hand in it, no doubt," Mrs. Byrne agreed with her. "An' how 's Cregan? . . . Well, I 'm glad o' that. An' the new dishes? Good luck to them. . . . Yuh 're off early to choorch, ag'in."



THE HIRED MAN



THE HIRED MAN

I

THE tiny room, in which they sat, looked as much as anything like an undertaker's parlor. It was paneled in coffin woods, upholstered in black leather, with mirrors innumerable and shining nickle fittings. And in the ineffectual, sad light of the gas-lamp overhead, the three men were as silent as mourners, staring solemnly, with that expression of decent dejection which the Anglo-Saxon wears when he has to listen to music in silence, or smoke among strangers who do not force him to speak. Outside the windows a noisy blackness streamed by, in a torrent and a turmoil that rocked and roared unceasingly.

They were in the smoking-compartment of a Pullman car. There entered a middle-aged man in a peaked outing-cap that looked absurdly boyish above his big, sunburnt face. The others watched him blow into the stem of a briar pipe, his cheeks puffed out, his eyes shifting from one to the next. When the pipe whistled on a high clear note, he nodded his satisfaction to the whole party and sat down among them. "The frost plays the devil with the roadbeds in this country," he said, in a burly voice that filled the whole compartment.

The young man beside him was the first to clear his throat and reply. He was prematurely bald and spectacled. He had the loose-laced shoes and woolen socks of a brain worker. And it was plain, before the conversation went very far, that he was learned in the law. The others, one by one, added their voices to the discussion as the newcomer drew them out with a question or a remark which his eyes directed. In ten minutes they were all in conversational attitudes, talking or listening; and the compartment looked like the smoking-room of a club.

Railroad legislation, "trust-busting," overcapitalization, the labor problem — these were the topics they discussed. The bald young man defended the Constitution and the Supreme Court, and deplored the lack of respect for the law in a republic where the law was the only king. In a wicker chair confronting him, a heavy-shouldered traveler, speaking with a cigar in his mouth and frowning at the signet ring which he turned and turned on his finger, voiced the exasperation of the business man, persecuted by lawyers and politicians, and unable to get employees who were "worth their salt." The third man lolled back with an ankle on his knee, his stogie uptilted almost to the brim of the derby that was slanted down over his eyes. He interjected into the argument the smoking-room stories of a "drummer," each prefaced with a curt laugh and continued nonchalantly between puffs.

The newcomer spoke of "Labor" with the sympathy of one who worked among laborers, in the open air,

without gloves. He confessed that he was a civil engineer. And to make a point in his discussion he asked permission to tell a story — a long one — about a “hired man.”

The drummer said: “Go ahead.”

The business man glanced at his watch instinctively.

The lawyer lit a cigar, with an air of exceeding his prescribed allowance, and nodded like a judge.

II

The engineer relit his pipe. “I had a man named Larsen working under me once,” he said. “He was foreman of one of the shifts of laborers — and a laborer himself.

“We were building an intake tunnel for the water-works of a town on Lake Erie.

“I don’t want to be more explicit than that. For one thing, there’s a suit about it, between the contractors and the city, still on in the courts.” He nodded to the lawyer over his pipe.

“I had to sink a shaft just inside the island that protected the harbor from the lake. Then, from the foot of that shaft, I was to tunnel in one direction out under the island to the lake, and in the opposite direction back under the harbor to the city, so as to connect the lake with the pumping-station on the mainland. They had been using, before this, a big steel intake pipe laid along the bottom of the harbor, but it kept leaking at the joints, taking in sewage from the bay, and keeping the people boiling their drinking-water.

"Never mind that.

"The point is: we'd been having as much trouble putting down that shaft as if it had been another Simplon tunnel. There'd been an error in the City Engineer's specifications. His blue-prints, furnished us when we were bidding on the contract, showed a bottom of clay and gravel. We found quicksand when we got to work. And that makes all the difference to an engineer that it does to a builder.

"You know what a cofferdam is?—a four-sided dam. You sink your shaft inside it, after you've pumped out the water enclosed by the dam.

"Well, an ordinary cofferdam, made of wooden piles and timber sheeting, packed with clay, won't hold out water over a quicksand, because it comes in, through the sand, under the piling, as fast as you pump it out. We'd built an ordinary cofferdam. And when that did n't hold, we strengthened it with another outside of it. Then we put on extra pumps and kept them going until the quicksand shifted under the piling and wrecked our three months' work. After that, we decided to use a caisson.

"A caisson"—he illustrated it with his hands—"is properly a steel tube that's sunk in sections to make a metal well for the men to dig in. It's usually fitted with an air-lock and supplied with compressed air. As if the caisson were a diving-bell sunken in the earth—don't you know? The air in it keeps out the water, and the metal holds up the sand.

"I could n't use compressed air on the job. The company would n't stand for the expense.

"I want to hurry over these professional details, you understand, but I can't very well tell the story without them."

They encouraged him: "Go ahead. Go ahead."

"Well, we got this caisson, and bolted some of the sections together, and placed the tube in position and began to sink it in the soft sand by its own weight. It went down thirty feet, and there the suction held it. We loaded it with a deck of heavy timbers and a hundred tons of iron; and it sank four feet further before it stopped again. Then we pumped the water out of it, and began to dig out the sand to see if we could lower the caisson by relieving the suction on the inside. When the men had gone down twenty feet, the quicksand rose on them like a rush of water, and they had to scramble up the ladders to save their lives. Any one could see that if we kept on taking out the sand as it rose, we'd cause another shifting under the foundations of the cofferdam and wreck the whole work again. Besides, Larsen reported that his men were afraid to go below to dig, because two of them had been caught in the quicksand and nearly lost. So we decided that we'd try dynamite in the toe of the caisson. The explosion breaks the suction and lets the tube drop a little. We did that, and we were succeeding with it, when — well, when my story began.

"You see, by that time, we'd been working for five

months. We'd been two months building our first cofferdam, and another month strengthening it with our second. It had taken us three weeks to get the caisson placed, and we'd been five weeks sinking it. We'd driven our first piles through floe ice — dancing on the decks of our tugs to keep our feet warm — and now it was August. We'd worked in sleet, in driving rain, in the drizzle of spring and the heat of mid-summer. We'd fought the northeast storms that battered the walls of our dam and the quicksand that shifted and undermined them. One of my men had fallen into the shaft and broken his neck. Another had had his foot crushed under a steel plate. One of the boilers in the power-house had blown out. My pumps had clogged with sand. My steam-pipes had burst. My firemen had come to work drunk. Our materials had been delayed. Even my little bedroom, in the shack that served as an office, on an angle of the cofferdam, had taken fire, and my oilskins and such had been burned.

“And Larsen had been sharing all these anxieties — disappointments — delays — with a sympathy that you could n't help smiling at. Whenever he sat with me, of an evening, in my bedroom over the office, he'd take his chair to the window and keep one eye on the work outside. He arrived in the morning in the bows of the company's tug, and he left, at night, on the stern. He seemed to be living with his back to the outer world and his face to the shaft.

“I said to the company's superintendent, one day:

'Larsen watches that shaft as if he thought some one was trying to steal it.'

"The superintendent had risen from the ranks of the 'sandhogs' himself, and he had the sort of practical mind that is n't interested in character study. He said: 'That's what Larsen's paid for!'

"I wondered whether that was the whole explanation of Larsen. It was n't easy to decide anything about him. He'd been a sailor, and he had all that patience, and resourcefulness, and sort of silent endurance — don't you know? — that the sea gets into a man. He was habitually silent.

"Well, we were still sinking the caisson with dynamite — dropping it a foot or so at a time — when old Nolan, the head of the company, came to see for himself what was delaying us. He looked over the situation, and cursed the City Engineer for reporting clay and gravel where there was quicksand, and cursed our own men for not discovering the truth when they made their borings. He cursed the slowness and difficulty of the operations, and the consequent loss of profits on the contract. And he ended by ordering us to use more dynamite in a charge.

"I objected, of course, that the dynamite might split the caisson.

"Nolan was a black little man with an under jaw that closed on a cigar in a bulldog grip. 'Dynamite,' he said, 'is one of those things that either make you or break you. Go ahead. Put down a box of it.'

"The box went down. And the explosion wrecked the two lower sections of the caisson.

"'My fault, boys,' he said, as cheerful as a gambler. 'Do it your own way.' And with that apology, he left us to repair his blunder the best way we could.

"Now, I understood this attitude of mind. It's the typical contractor's — the attitude of a man who sees in an engineering operation only the question of profit or loss, and who's willing to stake everything with a chance of losing it. But I'd seen Nolan succeed by means that most of your academic engineers would be afraid to use, and I was n't contemptuous of his failure with the dynamite. I looked around for Larsen.

"That was where I got my first light on Larsen. I found him scowling after the tug that was carrying Nolan back to the city. His big fists swung down at his thighs, like knotted clubs. 'What does he want to come here for — buttin' into this?' he said. 'We near had her! We near had her! He thinks because he owns this business —'

"And so forth.

"I could see that it was n't any personal feeling of loyalty to Nolan that had kept him faithful. I still had to find out whether it was his wages — or the prospect of better wages.

"Are you interested? Does this bore you?"

They answered, with various degrees of politeness: "Not at all. Go on. Go ahead, anyway."

III

He refilled his pipe. "We went to work again. We got a lot of steel piling that would hold out quicksand, and we sank a fence of interlocking steel piles, in a square, inside the wooden cofferdam and bolted to it. Then, inside this square steel dam, we sank another dam of the same sort of steel piles, fitting them, knuckle to hub, in a circle around the broken caisson. And by pumping out the water and digging out the sand inside the square dam, and sinking the circular one as we dug, we succeeded at last in driving the circular dam down to rock bottom. Understand? But the top of that circular dam was nineteen feet below the top of the square steel dam, and the pumps had to be worked night and day. I took the night shift, with Larsen under me.

"We had to dig out the broken caisson.

"It was as ticklish a job as you'll meet with in the ordinary run of work. It was one of those bits that make an engineer's life so — so interesting to *him*. It would n't interest you any more than a doctor's account of a surgical operation.

"However, we got it done — or almost. And one morning, after the day shift had taken over the work, I congratulated Larsen on it. I said that Nolan ought to give him a raise of wages. Of course, I was trying to find out how he felt about the wages.

"He was sitting at my bedroom window, waiting for the tug to start back to the city. He slept at home. I

had my boots off, sitting on the side of my bed, smoking. I said:

“‘Nolan ought to give you a raise of wages on the strength of this.’

“Larsen replied: ‘No. He won’t raise no wages onto me.’

“I asked him whether he did n’t think he was worth more than he got. He opened his hands and looked at the palms of them. ‘It’s the brains that gets paid,’ he said. ‘I got a boy. He goes to school. . . . No. Not me.’

“I can’t give you the tone, or the words exactly. But they expressed the sort of tragedy of his own labor — don’t you know? — and the hope that made him ambitious for the boy. He said he was making an engineer of him.

“That was lesson number two for me. I got my next one next night.”

The business man interrupted: “You would n’t call him typical, would you?”

The engineer answered: “I don’t know. Wait till I tell you the rest.

“I slept till ten o’clock that next morning, and then I dressed to go into the city — to arrange for a supply of stone and cement that would soon be needed — and this business kept me on my feet all day. At nightfall I boarded the company’s tug again, intending to have a look at the shaft and then turn the work over to Larsen and have a sleep. When I arrived I found Larsen struggling with a clogged pump at the foot of the shaft.

"The water was rising. It rose so fast that the pump was drowned before it could be started again. We turned the steam on the big duplex, up above; but the duplex, waiting idle, had n't been kept in readiness. Some one had neglected it. It did n't answer the throttle. I threw off my coat and jumped down on the platform where it had been planted, at the foot of the square dam, fifteen feet below the level of the water — and found the suction buried in the sand. I called to Larsen to lift it out with a derrick. And Larsen, running about in the half light, like a gorilla with his long arms, slung the tackle and worked the winch and cleared the suction.

"The man at the shaft reported that the water was rising in a steady flow.

"We threw the steam into the duplex again. It did n't lift. I saw there was something wrong in the cylinder. When Larsen and I got the cylinder head off, we found the ring of the piston broken. It was the work of hours to mend it, and the water was rising at the rate of an inch and a half a minute.

"Well — not to bore you with exciting details — before we had repaired that piston, the water was up to our waists. While we were replacing the cylinder head and setting the valves, it came up to our armpits. We worked at the nuts and bolts until the water reached our chins. We could n't finish. I had to trust what few nuts I could get on to hold the head. And I had to drag Larsen out by the collar.

"When we pulled the throttle on the pump, it

could n't make the stroke. It was choked with condensed steam. And Larsen groaned as if he were watching a deathbed.

"However, it got to work after a little and began to lift. I felt mighty grateful to Larsen. I took it that if he had n't been working, this way, out of any loyalty to Nolan — or with any hope of getting a raise of wages — it must be that he had some sort of affectionate interest in me and my success with the job. And when we were drying out our clothes together, in front of one of the furnaces, I tried to express my gratitude, you know.

"He took it in silence. He kept going out, every now and then, to look at the water in the shaft, in a sort of angry bewilderment that ignored me altogether. I tried to jolly him out of his bad mood, by telling him about an engineer who got his back up at things, that way — and lost a leg before he regained his temper. Larsen did n't wait to hear about it. He simply walked back to his pumps without paying any attention to me whatever. And I was wise enough to see that he had no more personal loyalty for me than he had for Nolan.

"That was lesson number three.

"I'm nearly done now. Just a minute.

"When the day shift arrived, I was 'cross-eyed' with lack of sleep, but the square dam was empty and the pumps were beginning to draw water from the shaft itself. I took a final look around, and warned the superintendent to watch the wooden cofferdam, because

a strong wind had been blowing from the northeast, and the waves were working at the outer sheeting. I told Larsen that he had better come along and get a snooze, but he looked up, like a sailor, at the storm in the sky, and shook his head. And I left him.

"As I was going into the office, I saw a company tug coming up, with Nolan in the bows. I was too tired to meet him. I told one of the men to call me if anything went wrong — and climbed up to my bunkroom. I fell asleep."

He looked for a long time at his pipe. It was black out. He had been holding it, forgotten, at his lips.

"I heard, afterward, how it happened. The waves caused a shifting of the sand on the eastern front of the dam, and loosened the piles, and spread the sheeting — and the water began to pour in on the square steel dam. The men were ordered up from the shaft, and they ran with timbers and shovels to throw clay into the hole and brace the planking; and Larsen and the shift worked like mad. It was no use. The waves sucked out the clay faster than it could be shoveled in, and the dam just sank under their feet. When the inner sheeting began to give way, Larsen shouted for timbers to reinforce it. And when the men ran for beams and planks, he was just crazy enough to brace himself between the wooden sheeting and the steel dam — his feet against the one, his shoulders against the other — to try to hold the planking until the men could come to his aid.

"I saw him there. The row had wakened me, and I ran to the window. A big wave struck into the breach

behind him and spurted over him, and I yelled to him to get out of that. It was too late. The wooden dam seemed to open and sink as if there was an earthquake. And then, that side of the steel dam — loosened with the piles it was bolted to — fell inward like a big fence.

“Larsen went under.”

He made a gesture of apology for the emotion that had clouded his voice. “I swung over the window-sill and struck the water at the same time as one of the men. We caught Larsen as he came up, and we dragged him out. I saw he could n’t stand. His legs were all sort of twisted. He looked down at them as if he was surprised to see them there. . . . I beg your pardon . . . You see, his back was broken. He’d held himself braced between the timbers and the steel until his spine cracked.”

He blew his nose hastily. The others did not look at him.

“He did n’t pay any attention to old Nolan’s assurance that he and his family would be ‘looked after.’ He did n’t pay any attention to me. All he said was — when they were carrying him aboard the tug: ‘She’s all gone, this time’ — speaking of the dam.”

He was silent.

The business man challenged him: “Well?”

“Well!” he cried, suddenly, “we’re all hired men, aren’t we? Do I work the way I do, for money alone, or out of any loyalty to anybody? Does a soldier, or a clergyman, or a doctor, or an artist? Does even a man like Larsen? Is the world really run by wages —

by hire — or by any feudal-system sort of loyalty? Is it? Or is it the joy of the work, of the game, that makes us break our backs in it? You asked me whether I thought Larsen typical. I tell you 'Yes! Yes! A thousand times yes!' We could get employees 'worth their salt' if we had work to give them that was worth its salt. We appropriate all the joy of the work, all the interest of the achievement, and we leave them nothing but the tasteless labor."

The lawyer interrupted: "Are you arguing for socialism?"

The engineer turned to him, surprised. "Socialism? I don't know. I never have time to read up about those things. I'm telling you what I've seen; that's all."

THE HONEYMOON FLAT

THE HONEYMOON FLAT

I

THE ferry-house clock, at the foot of Christopher Street, marked fifteen minutes past five; and all the trucks of the wholesale district were hurrying in, over the paving-stones of the side streets, to the wide esplanade of asphalt that lies along this stretch of the New York water-front.

They kept coming, like the rout of a commissariat, with noise and confusion, clattering over the uneven pavements and bumping across the car tracks. Already hundreds of them, their empty shafts thrown up before them like stiff arms, supplicated the sunset in long rows; and down the passageways between them, the drivers, on the backs of their horses, raced to the boarding stables like farm-boys free for the night.

Carney was late. He had hoped to have his team in their stalls by five o'clock, but his last delivery of packing-cases had not been taken off his hands until ten minutes past five. Now he came down Christopher Street like a Roman chariot-racer, standing behind the high seat of his double truck, shaken to the ears with the jarring of the axles, his huge Clydesdales pounding along as if to break their hoofs.

He turned in on the asphalt at full speed, and wheeled with the recklessness of a battery going into action; and before the team could catch breath, he had unhitched the tugs, and freed the pole, and vaulted to "Sharkey'a" back, and set off at a gallop to the stables.

He hoped to be married that night. At least, there was a possibility that he might be. And his bride-elect would leave Sturm & Bergman's display room at six. She might wait for him, and she might not.

It was already half-past five when he hurried into a water-front saloon to get a bundle of clothes that he had left with the barkeeper that morning; and he struggled in the little washroom there — fighting with starched linen and twisted suspenders — to get himself into his wedding garments. It was a hot August evening. His fingers were slippery with perspiration. His neck was swelled with blood. He struggled in his efforts to fasten his celluloid collar. And every time that he paused to take breath, he wiped his forehead on his shirt-sleeve and sighed hard.

He ran for a street-car with his coat over his arm, pawing at the back of his necktie in an attempt to catch it under his collar-button. The conductor pulled him to the platform as the car started with a jerk. "Wha' 's the time?" he gasped.

The conductor thrust him aside. "Quart' t' six."

He clung to the brass hand-rail weakly. He had had no food since breakfast, except a glass of beer and some free-lunch biscuits. His legs were aching from

the vibration of the truck. He swayed with the motion of the car; and every now and then, he hlinked like a man in a drop-elevator when the cage floor leaves his feet.

Not so the lady. She was a cloak model, "36 figure," in Sturm & Bergman's; and she had been parading all day, in various winter furs and jackets, before the critical eyes of wholesale buyers from out of town. She had walked up and down interminably, as graceful as a drawing-room belle, hut as indifferent as a dummy. One of the younger buyers, admiring the stately creature in her "princess" gown of black brilliantine that fitted her like a mold, asked her, with an air of gallantry, whether she did not ever tire. She lowered a supercilious stare on him, and said "Uh?" The salesman interposed hastily: "Now *here's* one of our newest designs —"

At six o'clock, she turned from the window where she had been idle, and went to the dressing-rooms to put off her "harness" and clothe herself for the street. She did not hurry. The younger girls giggled and chattered around her, arraying themselves in open-work finery and picture hats. She was the last to leave. Her face had lost its work-hour heaviness and flushed with the faintest twinkle of excitement.

It returned to affected indifference when she saw Carney across the street. They met, as if by accident, at the corner. "Well?" she said.

He reached his hat-brim awkwardly, his coat pinching him under the arms. "How yuh been?"

"Fine. How 're you?"

"A' right."

Carney usually relapsed into a satisfied silence as soon as they met; and she, to-night, instead of making conversation for him, looked straight before her, with an air of saying: "Go on, now. I've helped you all I intend to. You'll have to do this by yourself."

He looked puzzled, as if he did not know how to begin. They walked up Broadway, jostled by the crowds that poured from the shops and the office buildings. When they came to Astor Place, she turned east toward Third Avenue, as if she were going home. "Hol' on," he said. "Ain't yuh —"

"Ain't I what?"

He hitched up his neck in his tight collar. "Ain't yuh — goin' to have somethin' t' eat?"

She asked merely: "Where'll we go?"

"What's the matter with Dinkey's?"

"All right."

And they went along again, in silence.

It was a week now since she had met Carney, one midday, as she was going out to her luncheon and he was delivering a load of goods to the freight elevator of Sturm & Bergman's. She had recognized him at once, by the scar on his upper lip, and remembered the day she had given him that wound, accidentally. (She had been breaking up a box for her mother's firing, and the head had slipped off the hatchet and struck him in the mouth.) He had been little Philly Carney then, going to school; and she had been "Clare" Walsh, carrying

parcels for "Madame Gilligan" over on Ninth Street.

That was fifteen years ago. They had been neighbors in Cherry Hill's "Dublin Row" at the time. But when her widowed mother died, she revolted against the slavery of her apprenticeship to the dressmaker, and went on the stage as a chorus-girl for three contemptuous years. The vanities of the theater had sickened her sturdy independence; she had returned to the working world as a shop-girl, and accepted a better position as a cloak model.

When Carney met her, she was adrift on the life of the city in a sort of unambitious isolation, working stolidly, lonely among the younger girls with whom she had no sympathy, and brusquely repelling any flippant advances from the men. She had lost track of all her girlhood acquaintances. "Dublin Row" had long since been torn down. When she saw Carney with his truck, it was like meeting an old friend in a world of strangers.

And he had accepted her, as an old friend, with the sympathetic interest of old friendship in all that had happened to her in the interval of absence. He had told her nothing about himself — except that he had worked hard and saved his money, having no one dependent on him. "Say," she asked him, at last, "why did n't you get married?"

"Never met the right girl," he said.

"Well," she joked, tempted by his stolidity, "how 'd I do?"

He looked at her. "Fine. Will yuh do it?"



MICROCOPY RESOLUTION TEST CHART

(ANSI and ISO TEST CHART No. 2)



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"Suro," she laughed.

They were parting at her door. "A' right," he said.
"See yuh to-morra night."

And here was "to-morra night!"

II

When they arrived at Dinkey's, she sat down, to look over the greasy bill of fare, her arms on the little table. It was a basement restaurant that offered a "regular" dinner for fifty cents. There were ants in the sugar-bowl and gravy stains in the salt-cellars. "I could eat a horse," she said.

He turned to the unshaven waiter, absent-mindedly.
"Same fer me."

When he stopped laughing with her at his mistake, he was more at ease with the situation. "Well, an' that's no joke," he said, as soon as the waiter had left them, to bring soup.

She patted her back hair, smiling at him with the flirtatious air that is proper to a café dinner. He looked at her as if the sparkle in her face were so brilliant that it dazzled him to any defect of beauty in her. He weighed his fork in his big fingers. "Say," he asked, "did yuh *mean* that, las' night?"

"Mean what?"

"You know."

She tried to laugh. "Did *you*?"

"I seen Father Dumphy this afternoon."

"You *did*!" Her lips still held the wrinkles of her smile, but her eyes, fixed on him, kept twitching in and

widening out in an alternation of incredulity and hope.

"I thought yuh — I tol' 'em we'd be aroun' to see 'm t'night — if yuh 'd come."

Her gaze searched his face like a light that took him full in the eyes and confused him. The waiter shuffled up with their soup and interrupted them. Carney, in his embarrassment, gulped a steaming spoonful and burned his throat. He felt her smile on him and met it with a twisted mouth.

"Did — did yuh mean it?" he insisted.

She answered, addressing her plate: "I guess so — if *you* did."

When she looked up, she saw him with another scalding mouthful at his lips, and she cried: "You 'll burn yourself!"

He spilled it into the plate. He wiped the splatter from his coat-front with his table napkin and mopped his forehead. "Gee!" he said.

"Fish?" the waiter asked, behind her.

"Yep," she answered. "Fish." And she spoke in the voice of a woman who was henceforth to do the ordering for two.

She had the feminine ability to take command of a sentimental situation, and Carney evidently had the masculine inability to do anything of the sort. She continued in charge of the dinner because he ate as if he did not know what he was putting in his mouth. If she wondered what was going on in his mind, she did not ask him. At one moment, he devoured his food; at the next, he sat with meat impaled on the tines of his fork,

forgetting to open his mouth for it; and when she spoke to him, he listened, smiling vaguely, without any apparent comprehension. Several times, when she was busy with her food, she felt his eyes on her, burningly, and she did not raise her own to meet them. She had achieved a manner of perfect commonplace calm.

"Well?" he said, when they had finished. "I said I'd be there at eight — about."

She straightened her head, trying to look up at it through her eyebrows. "Where?"

"Father Dumphy's."

"All right." She rose, with the manner of accepting a dare, nonchalantly. "You better pay the waiter first."

He grinned. "I forgot."

And he had forgotten more than *that*, as she discovered when they came down the stone steps of the church, married. She was both laughing and exasperated. "You're a peach," she said. "How'd you think we could get married without a ring?"

He shook his head, blissfully unashamed.

"It's bad luck," she said. "Besides, that ain't a wedding ring at all." She stretched out her finger with his huge seal-ring on it.

"Well, say," he proposed, "come an' get one."

"Yes! Where'll we get one at this time o' night?"

"I don' know."

"No. Neither do I. Put on your hat."

He put it on. They walked to the corner. He hesitated there, fumbling in his pockets.

"Well?" she asked.

"Where — where 're we goin' to?"

"What!"

"Well, I — I did n't know whether yuh meant it," he said. "An' I did n't make no — My place ain't fit — It took all the money I had to pay *him*. I —"

"Well, Phil Carney," she cried. "If you *are* at the limit!"

He did not deny it. He looked around, troubled, at the passers-by.

"What 're you going to do?" she demanded.

He had money in the savings-bank, but that was out of reach till morning. He had a brother in Brooklyn, but he and his brother were not on very friendly terms. He might borrow somewhere — enough for one night in a hotel, anyway — perhaps from Mrs. Kohn, from whom he rented his room, or from his friend the bar-keeper with whom he had left his clothes. But those two were at opposite ends of the town; and while he was trying to decide to which he should apply, she walked out into the road to meet an approaching street-car.

"Where yuh goin'?"

"I 'm going back to my room," she said disgustedly.

"You can go where you like."

"Well, say," he protested.

"Well, say," she mocked him. "The next time you ask a girl to get married, you 'd better have some place to take her to. I can't live in the streets, can I?"

That silenced him. He stood beside the car step,

undecided, as she got aboard. "Good night," she said. "I'll see you to-morrow."

He remained in the middle of the street — watching the car climb the slope of the avenue — until a moving-van almost ran him down. The shouts of the driver sent him back to the sidewalk. The movement of the late shoppers turned him round. He drifted away aimlessly.

At midnight, he came back to the foot of Christopher Street and stood looking out at the bivouac of the army of trucks, like a deserter returned to his camp. His hat was slanted down over his eyes; the torn ends of his celluloid collar were protruding under his chin; he carried his coat over one shoulder. He stepped down heavily into the gutter and stumbled across the road.

"A' right, Jim," he answered the challenge of the watchman. "I'm goin' to sleep in the cart."

III

Like most New York truckmen, Carney owned his own team and wagon; but unlike most of them, he hired out by the day, instead of by the week — for he had the best horses on the water-front, and he wished to reserve the right to keep them in their stalls whenever the streets were too dangerously iced in winter, or too dangerously sun-beaten in summer, for them to be at work. So, when he woke next morning, he was under no necessity of asking leave of absence for the day.

Long before the other drivers had arrived at their stables, he was hitching up. And by the time the water-

front had wakened to the day's work, he was driving up and down the cross streets of the East Side, reading notices of flats to let. The janitors were putting out their ash-cans. He hailed them from his high seat with "How much 're yer rooms?" Then, with the price in his eye, he "sized up" the front of the building, shook his head, and drove on.

He wanted something new; no "second-hand" flats for him. He did not intend to pay more than fifteen dollars a month rent; and he did not wish more than four or five rooms.

It was eight o'clock before he came on the row of apartment houses that are known to the neighborhood of Second Avenue and Twelfth Street as "The Honeymoon Flats"; but it did not take him ten minutes to decide that he had found his home. The last of the buildings had just been opened for occupancy; it was in red brick striped with white-stone facings; there was a shining brass hand-rail down the front steps; the halls were gay with crimson burlaps; and on the fifth floor there was a flat of five rooms, papered in gorgeous designs of red, green, and gold, to rent for twenty dollars a month.

The fact that the houses were called "The Honeymoon Flats" because none but inexperienced housekeepers would try to live in them, was not known to Carney. They were unheated, except by gas-grates; but he was not one to think of heating arrangements in midsummer, and the grates were bronzed and glittering. There were cracks around the window frames large enough to put a

finger in, had he looked for them — but he did not. He saw gasoliers as resplendent as the most gorgeous he had ever seen in a saloon; and they hung from ceilings that were bright with squirt-brush decorations of red and blue flowers and red and green fruit. The bathroom shone like a plumber's window display.

Carney nodded. "'S all right," he said. "'S all right."

He left his watch as a "deposit" and drove off to his breakfast; but he went roundabout, by way of Third Avenue and Canal Street, slowly, on the lookout for furniture stores. When he came to one with a gold sign, in letters a yard high — "Everything for Housekeeping," he stopped short. Below it, on a net banner, he read: "Ask to see our \$129 fiat, furnished complete, Ten per cent. off for cash. One dollar opens an account." He read it twice, muttering it over. Then he whipped up his horses suddenly and rattled down the street with as much noise as a tally-ho.

"Gee!" he laughed as he swung the corner. "This'll bust the bank."

By half-past ten, he was back at Mittelbaum & Schwarz's "Furniture Emporium." On the fourth floor, the enterprising manager had screened off four compartments to represent a parlor, a bedroom, a kitchen, and a dining-room. And when Carney entered that parlor, between pea-green portières beautiful with yellow ball-fringe, he took off his hat. Four rich red "damask" chairs and a sofa were arranged about the walls; a square "parlor" table, as big as a chess-

board, stood in the exact center of the room on the exact center of an "Oriental" rug that was made of a yard of cheap carpet with a border sewn on it; and in the exact center of the table, a very small lamp supported a very large globe-shade that was decorated like a dyed Easter egg.

A "pier mirror of French glass" distorted reflections from the wall opposite the doorway. A chromo on a bamboo easel stood before a pair of lace curtains that were hung to represent a window. Everything was brilliant with varnish, rich with scroll-saw carving, upholstered in imitation plushes and ball-fringe. Carney looked around him in awed silence; and when the salesman turned his back to lead the way into the bedroom, the big truckman furtively smoothed his hair.

That bedroom — from its "golden oak dressing-case and wash-stand" to its "elegant, brass-trimmed, steel, enameled bed" — was luxuriously complete. In the dining-room, an "oak" table was set with "decorated English" dishes, as thick as quick-lunch china. An "elegant sewing-machine with a five-year guarantee" stood at the foot of a puffy leather couch. There were forty pieces of tinware in the kitchen, a "golden oak" refrigerator, ten yards of oilcloth — "everything to make home comfortable and a woman happy."

Carney said, with a heavy affectation of nonchalance: "I guess this 'll do." He went down into his bulging trousers pocket for the roll of bills he had drawn from the bank. "I got my truck outside. I 'll jus' take the stuff along with me."

There were difficulties, but he overcame them all. No carpets went with the \$129 flat; he paid extra for them and got a superb design of yellow flowers, as big as pumpkins, on a flaming scarlet ground. There was a cotton-batting "down comfortable" on the bed, but no sheets or blankets; he bought them wholesale on the lower floors. If there was anything he seemed likely to forget, the salesman tactfully reminded him. He hired Mittelbaum & Schwarz's official carpet-layer to help him move in; and having paid \$25 on account and signed an agreement to pay \$2 a week thereafter, he took his center-table in one hand and his parlor lamp in the other and led a procession of employees with chairs, tables, pillows, and tinware to his truck.

"Shake yerselves, now, boys," he said. "I ain't got all day on this job."

They shook themselves. By midday, the parlor carpet was laid; a green matting was down in the dining-room; the ten yards of oilcloth adorned the kitchen; and Carney, standing in the disorder of the bedroom where all the furniture was piled, smiled around him on the beginnings of his happiness — and felt hungry. It reminded him that his team had not been fed.

He was alone in his own house all afternoon, putting things to rights. The front room was easily arranged, because he remembered exactly how it had been set up in the furniture store; but the bedroom gave him a bad half-hour. The side pieces of the bed did not fit the ends; the brass ball-trimmings came off in his impatient grip; the pillows would not go into their slips until

he took them between his knees and drew the cases on them like stockings. The pillow-shams he spread on the wash-stand and dressing-table.

By four o'clock he had the forty pieces of tinware arranged on hooks around the kitchen, and the agate-ware kettle, filled with water, set on the gas-stove. It was then he found that there was no gas in the pipes; but the janitor, frantically summoned, led him to the meter in the bathroom — a "quarter-in-the-slot" tenement-house meter — made change of a dollar for him, and showed him how to put his money in. The rest was a matter of hanging the curtains and the chromos in the front room. Carney shook his head doubtfully at one of the latter — a picture of a yellow horse dragging a sleigh-load of wood up a forest road in a snow-storm. "Darn mut," he said. "He 'd ought t' 've had a team fer that haul."

But the crowning audacity of his day was the purchase of a delicatessen dinner — cold chicken, sweet pickles, potato salad, Swiss cheese, bologna, rye bread, a wooden plate of butter, and four bottles of imported English ale. He spread it on the table, in the dishes of the "decorated English tea-set," drew up two chairs, and surveyed his work from the doorway with a chuckle of uncontainable delight.

IV

If Mrs. Carney had been a bride out of a romance, she might have entered that flat in the most adorable ecstasies of appreciation. But, unfortunately for

Carney, her mind was not romantic, and she had been using it all day.

She had repented of leaving him, the night before, as soon as she had irrevocably paid her street-car fare; and she had hurried down to her work, that morning, expecting to find him at Sturm & Bergman's side door. When he had not appeared at luncheon hour, she had been so worried that she had not been able to eat; and the afternoon's parade in fall costumes, with the thermometer at 86°, had worn her weak. At six o'clock she came out, desperately resolved to inquire for him at his rooms. And he was at the corner to greet her with a smile that, in the circumstances, was idiotic.

His explanations were irritatingly incomplete and incoherent. It exasperated her still more to find that her bad temper could not chafe a geniality in him that had no adequate cause apparent. She was peevish with hunger. She wanted her dinner at once. She insisted that there was no sort of sense in going to look at flats before they ate.

But just this *one*, Carney said. They could get their dinner right near it.

She would have left him again, but her day's experience had made her wise. She yielded at last in a sulky exhaustion, unable to argue with a man who did nothing but grin. They had to stand in the street-car. She mounted the four flights of stairs to the flat with her jaw set on a determination to disappoint the eager assurance with which he led the way.

He unlocked the parlor door and ushered her in.

She glanced around coldly. "What do you want to rent a furnished flat for?"

"I did n't," he bubbled. "I rented it empty, an' furnished it myself."

"To-day?" she cried.

"Yah," he confessed more doubtfully.

"And *that's* what you 'vo been doing all day!"

He nodded.

"Well, Phil Carney!" she wailed. "If that ain't the meanest! Why — why —" She choked up with tears and anger. "Why, that's all the *fun!*" She sat down in one of his damask chairs, fumbling for her handkerchief.

He closed the door on his masco. "Well, say," he began.

"Aw, shut up," she wept. "You go an' do everything wrong. I bet you got the dangdest lot of old junk —"

"I ain't," he defended himself. "I got the best they had."

"The best they had!" She summed up the shoddy magnificence of the parlor in a sweeping glance of disgust.

He turned his back on her to look out of the window. She whisked into the bedroom. "Ach!" he heard her cry. "Pine! . . . Cotton battin'! . . . Excelsior! It ain't even a hair mattress!" She flung into the dining-room — and stopped in the doorway.

The pitiful mute expectation of the two chairs, drawn up to the delicatessen dinner, confronted her with a

dumb reproach. Her face changed slowly, her eyebrows still knitted in a scowl that began to twitch uncertainly, her mouth trembling in a doubtful slant.

When she came back to him in the front room, she took him by the two ears, from behind, and shook his head from side to side. "Darn you, Phil," she said, between laughing and crying, "if you ain't the darnedest big baby —"

He turned around and saw her face. "Well, say —"

She had come to marriage as a strayed cat comes to a saucer of milk, with a boldness that is born of hunger, and a tense wariness that does not relax under the first caress. To escape from her single life of self-supported loneliness, she would have married any one of whom she was not altogether afraid; and she was not afraid of Carney. She had for him a feeling that was slightly contemptuous even when it was most tender — a feeling that held him off and smiled at him with an amused tolerance, at best.

It was with this smile that she sat down to their cold dinner. But in the middle of the meal, she gathered — from something Carney said — that he did not expect her to go back to her work in Sturm & Bergman's; and she was struck dumb. She had been prepared to work until the care of a family should keep her at home. She listened to him with a pathetic expression of wistfulness and doubt, while he — in clumsy apology for having furnished the flat without consulting her — took out his bank-book and explained his indebtedness to the "Furniture Emporium." "The stuff ain't all

paid fer," he said, "an' we won't *never* pay fer it unless they take back what yuh don't like, an' give yuh somethin' else 'at yuh *do*."

He passed the book to her to keep, as the treasurer of the household. She turned it over in her hands as if it had been a jewel-box. "You better look out," she said with a tremulous laugh. "I'll break you!"

Carney looked at her, solemnly trustful. "A' right. We go broke together now."

And suddenly she put her hands up to her face and began to sob.

She was somewhat tearful again in the morning when he left her to go to his work; and she hung out of the front window to wave him good-by as he turned the corner far below her. He was taking word to Sturm & Bergman's that their cloak-model had left them; and she drew in from the window-sill, and turned to look down the little flat, with a new light in her face, all the domestic instincts stirring in her chokingly. The inherited desire to be protected, sheltered, housed in respect and love, took her in its fulfilment with a hysteric swelling of the heart; and she clasped her hands under her breast and drew in a long breath, her eyes still shining with tears, her thin lips set in that hungry pout with which a child asks for either food or kisses.

She walked slowly back to the dining-room and sat in Carney's chair, stroking the handle of his knife caressingly. And when she was taking up the dishes to

carry them out to the kitchen to be washed, she stooped over them and cuddled them and laughed.

It was some six weeks later that Mr. Philip Carney, in his shirt-sleeves, with his pipe in his mouth and his wife on his knee, sat in the breeze of the parlor window, enjoying the evening air. "Well," he said, "how d' yuh like bein' married?"

She tweaked his sunburned nose smilingly, cooing to him in the ridiculous "baby talk" that seems to be the universal language of young married couples.

He rescued his pipe. "Here," he laughed. "Don't do that. Yuh tickle the roof o' me mouth."

She pinched his lips, puckering up the cut she had given him in Dublin Row when she struck her "Philly wif 'm hatchet," as she said. There was a sort of fierce playfulness in her manner, a rough fondness that was all she had left of her old imperious treatment of him.

"Huh!" he teased her. "That ain't the way yuh talked that night when yuh lef' me 'n Nint' Av —"

She clapped a hand over his mouth. "You promised you 'd never —"

He caught away her hand. "A' right," he said. "Not another word about it. . . . But how did yuh like the furnished flat that day — Ouch!"

She was pulling his hair. "Shut up, then, will you?"

"Ow! Ye-es! Quit it! I'll shut up."

She settled back against his shoulder. He grunted

as he got his teeth into the worn mouthpiece of his pipe again; and in the contented silence that ensued — looking out over the houses that had once been merely street-walls to them, and remembering the lives they had led on the pavements and in the shops — those two waifs of the city were vaguely conscious of the eternal miracle of domesticity and mildness that had been worked in them by their Honeymoon Flat.



THE OLD WOMAN'S STORY



THE OLD WOMAN'S STORY

BEHIND the fat hedge, there was a lawn like a public park. The grass was as close and fine as green plush; the undulations of the ground were padded and upholstered with it; the sun and shadow lay upon it in a figured design of leaves. Great trees stood about it, as stolid and dignified as if they had been set out by a butler. And in the midst of it, surrounded by formal beds of flowers and bushes, a huge building of ruddy sandstone, with innumerable windows, lifted heavily a square, squat tower.

It was the almshouse. On this millionaire's lawn, under these pompous trees, groups of old women in dresses of blue denim, with gingham aprons, sat gossiping over their sewing, smoking clay pipes, counting the beads of their rosaries, or dozing in the heat of the sun — as wrinkled as lizards, and blinking against the blaze of sunlight that gave an almost reptilian sparkle to their puckered eyes. Veterans in the unending battle of life, no longer able to struggle for the food to keep them struggling, they had been brought here to die in peace.

Among them was a Mrs. Judd, an old Englishwoman who had impressed the nurses with her patience and capability. They did not have to use any stratagems to draw her to her weekly bath. She kept her room neat

with her own hands. She did not hide between her mattresses any of the useless trifles which the others misered up in a senile acquisitiveness that went even to the rubbish heap for tins, and stole cutlery from the tables, and made a hoard of moldy crusts. She did not complain of her meals. She quarreled with nobody. She sat alone, placid, white-haired, and frail; and her skin, that had evidently once been beautiful, still preserved on her old cheeks the soft whiteness of a dried peach.

When a nurse joined her on her bench under a magnolia tree, her eyelids fluttered — wakening from the blind gaze of a day-dream — but she did not turn to greet the attendant.

“Lonely?” the girl asked.

“No, miss,” she said.

The nurse was a dark-haired, dark-eyed young woman with a deep voice. She had irregular features of more charm than beauty. “I’m going to leave you next week.”

“Yes, miss.”

She showed no interest; and the girl explained, importantly: “I’m going to be married.”

“Yes, miss,” she replied in the same tone. In a moment, she added: “When the men want you, there’s no denyin’ them. It ’as to be, miss.”

The girl smiled at this resigned view of her fate. “You know what it is to be married.”

“Yes, miss. I’ve been married twice.” She kept her eyes on the empty lawn, and the nurse wondered

what she saw there to hold her thoughts — what memories, what faces, what ghosts of old events.

“Had you any children?”

“Children? Yes, miss.” She folded her hands on her checked apron. “Children are the great thing while they last, but they go off an’ leave you, an’ ’ave children o’ their own.”

“They don’t come to see you here?”

“No, miss.” The tone in which she answered was not merely indifferent; it was absent-minded. She nodded at the view before her. “That’s like the bit o’ cropped paddock we ’ad between th’ ’ouse an’ the beck.”

The nurse looked at it. It was nothing but trees and grass. She asked: “What’s a beck?”

“A stream, miss — with big stones in it. The one we ’ad, in the floodtime, it made such a noise as you never ’eard, all night long, when you would be sleepin’.”

“Was that in England?”

“Yes, miss. I ’ad a room, up-stairs, that looked out a window over the kitchen garden — an’ the bit o’ paddock — an’ the beck.”

“You must miss it here,” the nurse said — for something to say.

“The beck? Ah, miss, when we left Liverpool, aboard ship, the sound o’ the water made me cry for it. An’ in my sleep, at night, with the ship tossin’ about, I dreamt of it. An’ all day long the clouds went by, ’igh over ’ead, back to Ol’ Cuniston — an’ the meadows — an’ the beck — while I sat on the deck

watchin' which way we went, so I'd know the way back again."

The girl waited, touched. She asked, at last, gently: "Were you all alone?"

"No, miss. 'E was with me. We'd run away together."

"Run away?"

"Yes, miss."

"Why?"

She shook her head. "It's a long story. It began before we ever knew it, when we went to school together. An' not such schools as you 'ave 'ere, miss. The floor was all stone like a sidewalk. An' there was no stove but a fireplace that burned peat. An' in the big pot that 'ung there, we put the potatoes we brought for our dinners — boys an' girls — an' marked them so we'd know our own. An' put the peat on the top o' the pot-lid, red-hot. An' roasted them all together. There's no such potatoes now, miss — none so big an' mealy."

"That was in the country?"

"Yes, miss. In Cumberland. You see, miss, I was born in London, but they brought me to Cumberland when I was a wee thing — because my mother was dead an' my father gone off with 'is regiment. An' when you come to the fields, so, from the choke of 'ouses an' streets, it's the wonder of life, an' you never forget it. I remember to this day, drivin' across the fells with Uncle Wilson the first time I come to th' 'ouse — an' 'ow red the sky was over th' 'ills."

"It must have been beautiful."

"It was, miss. It was a great large farm, with a stone 'ouse as big as an inn. An' it 'ad slates on the roof an' slates down the front. An' in the sido was a gate, like you 'd see to a prison. An' it opened into the yard, where the carts were, an' the doors to the barn. An' the barn was all stone like th' 'ouse. An' th' 'ouse an' the barn were joined into one by the wall an' the gate. But to come in th' 'ouse by the front door, you went through a gato in the garden wall, an' smelled the sweet briar, an' lifted the knocker. An' downst..irs the floors were slate, miss, an' they washed them with milk."

"How quaint!"

"Yes, miss. It was all a great marvel to me. I used to wake up in the mornings with joy — the air was so sweet in my lungs. An' I 'd lie an' listen to the beck an' the birds together." She paused to turn over in her memory, wistfully, these treasured recollections. "Uncle Wilson was a red-faced man, as hig as a giant. 'E worked with the men all day in the fields, or 'e was away at market by three o'clock in the mornin' an' not hack again till night. An' my aunt was tall, too, but spare, with a long face like you see on an old ewe — an' a good 'ousekeeper, but so savin' that when she sewed she 'd make me pick up her hastin' threads an' wind them on a spool to 'em dish-towels. An' there was my Cousin William an' the baby. An' that was all — except the servants that were 'ired by Uncle Wilson at the fairs on Michaelmas an' Candlemas, twice a year, men an' women, the women to work in the fields as well as the men.

"They all treated me the same as if I was one o' their own — though my aunt 'old it against me that my mother 'ad run away with a soldier before I was born — an' made me work, too, as soon as I was old enough to mind the baby an' 'elp in the kitchen an' sweep the floors. But it was Cousin William that made trouble, plaguin' me the way boys plague their sisters an' teasin' me about my red 'air. That's the way it is with some boys, miss. Because they like you, they plague you an' drivo you about. An' when you turn against them for it, they almost 'ate you — because they like you still, an' you don't like them."

The nurse nodded and smiled.

"At first, it was just that we went to school with 'Arry when 'e would come down the road from 'is father's farm. An' 'e 'd walk back with us when school was over, an' go berryin' with us, an' nuttin' — all children together an' no thought of 'arm — ridin' in the carts to th' 'ayfields or 'elpin' pile the peat when they cut it in the spring to dry. 'E was a strange lad. 'Arry, miss. 'E 'ated 'is books an' 'e would n't learn in them, because at nights 'e could n't sleep like the others that worked on the farm — an' tired themselves out — an' snored when 'e would be awake, starin' at the dark. But then 'e found picture books at 'ome an' began to be always readin' them an' bringin' them to read to us. An' 'is father would buy them in town when 'e went to market, an' put them under the pillow for 'Arry to find when 'e waked — 'Robinson Crusoe,' I remember — for it was after 'e read us from 'Robinson

Crusoe' that we played it among the rocks up the beck, an' killed a lamb, an' 'ad to bury it in the peat bog so Uncle Wilson would n't know — an' stories about America an' Indians. An' that was 'ow 'Arry began to be a scholar.

"Those were the good days, miss, when we were all young. We played 'jacks' with pebbles, an' hop-sotch on the stones of the walk, an' 'ad games up the beck, an' went pickin' wild apples an' all. My Uncle Wilson 'ad an oatmeal mill — with an ugly hig waterwheel that made a great noise — an' 'orrid big wheel that splashed an' rattled in a box. An' 'Arry played it was a giant turnin' the wheel, an' frightened us so I dreamed of it at nights, an' woke with my legs tremblin'."

"Yes?" the nurse said. "And so?"

"Well, miss, to tell the truth, befo're we were big enough to leave school, I was mad about the boy, an' 'e would be nowhere without me. 'E was as lean an' quick as a 'ound, an' 'e'd do things to make me scream — like leapin' across the rocks o' the beck when it was in flood, or jumpin' from the eaves o' the barn into th' 'aycarts as they drove in. An' Cousin William was 'eavy like 'is father — an' slow like 'is father — an' though 'e could throw 'Arry in a wrastle 'e never dared fight. But it was 'im that carried stories to my aunt. An' she said 'Arry was a wild young ruffian. An' at last she ordered 'im away from the 'ouse, one day that Cousin William fell from th' 'ayloft because he tried to follow 'Arry in some pranks. An' I — a told to play no more with 'im.

" You know 'ow such things grow, miss. There was a sheep stole. An' Cousin William told 'ow 'Arry 'd killed a lamb an' buried it in the peat bog — though 't was a year gone. An' then there was bickerin' between the farms — an' 'Arry's father took the boy's part an' quarreled. All the farmers 'ad shares in a meadows where they cut 'ay, an' there started a dispute about our share an' theirs. An' so it went, till 'Arry 'ad to pass me without lookin' aside when we were comin' to church, an' we only met up the beck when I could steal away from the others an' 'ave ourselves alone.

" That was near the end o' the good days. Cousin William grew to be a strong lad — so fat 'is cheeks shook when 'e walked — fer 'e walked 'eavy on 'is 'eels. An' 'e talked ' thee ' an' ' thou,' like the rest, with their way o' speakin' without endin' the words, as if they got the mouth open on a broad ' oo ' an' 'ad their jaws stuck. An' 'e plagued me now with 'is calf's eyes — an' 'is ribands bought on market days. An' 'is mother plagued me because she saw 'ow it was with 'im, an' she 'd not 'ave 'er son marry a girl with naught. An' 'Arry went away to town to study to be a scholar, just when they were mowin' the bracken on the fells for the winter's kindlin's. An' my schooldays were over. An' I thought there 'd be no more 'appiness for me in this world, miss."

" Did n't you write to him? "

" No, miss. There was no way to get the letters. But when 'e come 'ome for Christmas, we met again

down by the bridge, an' told each other everything there was to tell. 'E called me 'Little Miss Muffet' an' teased me because I was so small — but I knew 'e liked me small an' light-footed — for all the other girls were big an' clumsy. An' when 'e kissed me good-by, I knew it was the same with 'im that it was with me — an' I went singin' about the kitchen till I saw Aunt Wilson lookin' at me out o' the corner of 'er eye — an' after that I only sung soft in my own room, sittin' at the window an' lookin' out at the frosty beck."

She was smiling the smile of memory and soft thoughts, her eyes set and vacant. The girl beside her had something of the same expression. But the girl's smile was clear-cut, freshly minted; and the old woman's was like the face on an old silver coin.

The girl sighed. "And so," she said, "you ran away together?"

"No, miss. Not then. Not till long after. Not till 'Arry's father 'prenticed 'im to a lawyer, an' Uncle Wilson went against my aunt, an' said I 'd make a good wife for Cousin William, an' I began to plot an' plan 'ow I should do.

"'Arry would come 'ome Sundays, an' we 'd meet unknown to any one unless my aunt — an' I think she knew, miss. She found ways to let me run off unknown to Cousin William, tho' she said nothing. She 'd sooner I 'ad 'Arry than 'er son. An' if Cousin William knew of 'Arry, 'e 'id it for the sake o' bein' right with me. An' from what 'e said, I knew 'e thought 'Arry 'd forget me in town. An' so I went

to church with 'im Sundays, an' pulled the wool over 'is eyes. An' there we were, all playin' double, miss, the one with the other. An' 'Arry deceivin' 'is family the way I did mine.

"What troubled me most was that 'Arry chafed at 'is 'prenticeship, an' was all for runnin' away to London — or to America — to make 'is fortune, if I'd come. 'E would n't go so far away an' leave me to Cousin William, though I swore I'd as soon be wed to an ox. We 'ad no money. I saw never a penny from year's end to year's end on the farm, miss. An' 'Arry was not much better. But we used to meet an' talk plans — the way young folk will — an' make love as if money for marryin' was no matter.

"Then one Sunday 'e did n't come, an' I was afeard that what Cousin William 'oped was comin' true about 'Arry, an' this the beginnin'. But that night there was a tap on my window, an' the casement rattled, an' I saw it was 'Arry, dark against the sky that was full o' moonlight. 'E was standin' on a ladder that 'e'd carried from the barnyard, an' 'e laughed an' kissed me, an' said it was because 'is father 'ad found 'im out an' forbade 'im to be wastin' 'is time runnin' after a girl when 'e should be thinkin' of 'is studies. An' now 'e 'd 'ave to see me Sunday nights, after all were abed."

The girl had turned, as if she were about to speak.

The old woman hurried on: "It was 'is nature to do such things, miss, an' to take more delight in them because o' the risk. I was afeard for 'im — an' for myself. But that wore off with his comin' again an'

again. 'E was a dear lad, an' made love like a book. We met at the window, or sat by it, with scarce light enough sometimes to see each other's faces when we kissed — whisperin' an' makin' our promises an' namin' each other fond names. An' the guilt of it made it all the sweeter." She lingered on it, smiling. Her smile faltered and changed slowly.

The girl said: "You were — They found out?"

"Yes, miss. Cousin William —'e must 'ave guessed what was goin' on, though 'Arry was careful to put the ladder back where 'e found it, an' leave no footprints in the garden under my window. Cousin William — We never knew 'ow it was. But one black night, when the summer was just warmin', an' 'Arry 'ad no more than reached the top o' the ladder an' put 'is arms up to me, some one rushed around the side o' th' 'ouse from the kitchen, an' 'Arry jumped."

She dropped her voice. "It was dark, miss. 'E did n't do it o' purpose. But 'e came down on my Cousin William — an' there was n't so much as a groan. 'E was all in a 'eap with 'is 'at crushed down on his face an' 'is chin' on 'is chest, 'is neck broke, dead, miss. I saw 'im when I come down the ladder an' clung to 'Arry an' told 'im to run for 'is life."

"Good Heavens!" the nurse gasped.

She made the gesture of a fatalist. "There was no undoin' it. An' 'Arry 'd not go without me. An' 'e 'ad to go, miss. It would be found out. It would be said they 'd quarreled about me. So I climbed back an' made a bundle o' my clothes. An' when I came to the

window 'Arry called to me to get all Cousin William's clothes, too. An' I did n't know why 'e wanted them, hut I crep' to 'is room an' got them. An' I was shakin' so my teeth chattered in the dark."

"You —"

"I 'ad but the one thought — that 'Arry 'd be 'anged for murder, an' I 'd 'ave to 'elp 'im get away. 'E told me what to do, an' I did it. I 've often wondered since, miss, where I found the strength. But I was like a mad woman with fear, an' I breathed so 'oarse that 'Arry put 'is 'and over my mouth for fear I 'd be 'eard in-doors."

"Good Heavens!"

"'E shut my window. An' took down the ladder. An' smoothed over the marks in the loam with 'is 'and. An' laid Cousin William on the ladder, covered up with the clothes I 'd brought. An' then 'e took one end, an' bade me take the other. An' we stumbled down the paths to the back door o' the kitchen, an' out into the paddock, an' so over the fields to the peat bog. I fell once, miss. An' after it was all over, my teeth were sore to the roots with the way I 'd clenched them. But it 'ad to be done.

"'Arry said: 'We must 'ide 'im somewhere, till we get away.' An' so we come to the place where they 'd been diggin' peats, an' left their spades for the morrow. An' there was a pile o' the peats already stacked to dry, an' 'Arry went at them with 'is 'ands to shift them, an' I 'elped. I was cryin', miss — whimperin' with fright. An' we 'ad to wait every now an' then for the moon to

break out of a cloud — an' I don't know whether I was more feared o' the dark that 'indered us or the moon that showed us what we 'ad to 'ide. An' 'Arry said never a word, but worked slow an' careful, with only a glance about 'im — when the moon came out clear — to see that no one watched.

“An' then we 'ad the pile moved. An' then 'e dug in the bog with a spade. An' then 'e told me to go away an' turn my back. An' I fell on my knees an' prayed, miss — prayed for 'Arry to get away safe — till I thought it was not my prayers but my 'ands that 'd aid 'im, an' came back to 'elp 'im put back the peats — prayin' to myself but workin' too — till it was all as we 'd found it, an' no sign of anything 'id. An' then 'Arry went to put back the ladder in the barnyard, an' I fainted, miss.”

“Horrible!” the girl said.

The old woman wagged her head. “It was the only way, miss. We went over it an' over it 'undreds o' times after. An' it was the only way that 'd saved us. ‘They'll think 'e's run off with you,’ 'Arry said. That's why 'e wanted the clothes from 'is room, miss. ‘An' when I go,’ 'e said, ‘they'll think I've followed to try an' find you. We'll get to Liverpool,’ 'e said. ‘An' long before they know where 'e is, we'll be 'idden away in America.’

“An' it all turned out so. 'E 'id me in 'is father's barn — in a 'idin' place 'e 'd used as a boy — between the joists of the 'ayloft an' the roof, where there was old 'arness an' broken tools. An' 'e brought me food in

the mornin', an' told me Uncle Wilson was out an' off to town, an' the news was abroad that I'd run away with Cousin William. 'E went over to the Beck Farm, then, liko a man crazed with jealousy. An' my aunt railed out on me — an' there was no one workin' in the peat bog — an' 'e saw that all was safe. 'Is father, out o' pity for 'im, said naught of goin' back to his studies that day. An' in the night, 'e came to me with clothes of 'is own, an' a sheep shears to cut my 'air, an' money in 'is pocket for our passage. An' when I was dressed like a lad, an' our clothes in a bundle together, we fled away across the moors."

The nurse, stiff and silent, her eyes averted, sat as if in judgment on guilt, not knowing what to say. And the old woman went on:

"At first, it was all 'orror an' grief to me, like a bad dream. An' my feet blistered with the 'eavy clogs I wore. An' my legs were wrung with pain, miss. But when I thought that we'd done nothing wrong — unless the money that 'Arry took, an' I made 'im promise 'e'd send that back from America — an' there we were, all alone in the world together, an' 'im lovin' me an' carryin' me in 'is arms when I could walk no further — why, miss, I said to myself: "'E'll be caught an' taken from me, some day, an' I'll be 'appy now while I 'ave 'im.' An' so we were. We 'id by day in the 'edges an' waste places, an' walked by night barefooted with our bundles. An' it was sweet to 'ave 'im with his arm about me, an' sweet to lie on 'is shoulder sleepin' in the grass.

“ ‘Appiness ’ides in strange places, miss. We found it there, in the midst o’ fear. We were like the wild things o’ the wood that know nothin’ o’ this world but what we saw passin’ us on the roads when we were ’id. We had clapbread from ’is father’s kitchen — the kind they make of oatmeal an’ store in barrels. An’ ’e would leave me ’idden an’ go alone to huy food from th’ ’ouses — though we did n’t dare do this till we were far away. An’ we were wetted by the rains, an’ burned by the sun, an’ ’ungry, an’ footsore, hut ’appy as never was. It was our ’oneymoon, miss — such as it was — an’ I was wishin’ it’d never end. I could ’ve gone on with ’im fer all time, wanderin’ like gipsies, with none to plague us.

“ I made a fine figure of a hoy, an’ once when we were caught among the trees at a brookside, ’e named me ’is young brother come down with ’im from the North to work on the farms. An’ I was so brown an’ ’ardy no one would suspect. Just to be free o’ skirts an’ petticoats, an’ able to run an’ climb like a boy, was a joy of itself. An’ when we came at last outside Liverpool, an’ I ’ad to put on my own clothes again, I felt as if my wings were clipped to go back to a cage.

“ Down amid the hig ware’ouses, huilt in stone the color o’ smoke, we found a lodgin’ ’ouse, an’ stayed there till ’Arry learned about the ships an’ bought an old chest an’ some clothes for us both, an’ went aboard with me at night. We were away nex’ mornin’ over the water. An’ then I cried, miss, for th’ ’ills an’ the beck, an’ promised myself that some day when all was for-

gotten I'd come back. An' even now, miss, when I sit at my window upstairs, I think what it'd be to be in my own little room over the garden at 'ome — with children, per'aps, an' grandchildren about me — instead o' what it is."

Sho relapsed into the silonce from which the nurse had first roused her, and there was no change in her expression except for the tears that brightened her eyes.

"What became of *him*?" the girl asked.

"'E died, miss, in the West, where 'e went under a new name."

"And you married again?"

"Yes, miss. An' my second 'usband never came back from the war, an' my boys went f. other west, an' I thought to make my way to Cumberland maybe, so I came to New York an' worked 'ere. But I got myself no further, an' never 'eard word o' the farm — I was afeard to ask — but peat bogs preserve a body, miss, like mummies in a case, an' I doubt not they found 'im at last, an' buried 'im right."

"What a life!"

"Yes, miss. It 'as its own way with you — life. I can't complain. It all 'ad to be. An' now I can sit 'ere an' see it all, just as plain as I could with my old eyes if it was 'ere before me. Your body grows old, miss, but not yourself. You 'll see, miss. You 'll see."

THE HOT-AIR HARPS

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I

THE excursion barge was waiting at its pier, loaded with a wilted gaiety of white gowns and sticky children, in an atmosphere of perspiring impatience for the arrival of a tugboat that did not come. "I guess they're leavin' us here to melt down," young Barney Maloney said, "so 's the load won't be so heavy to haul." The orchestra of two fiddles and a cornet laid by its instruments and applied itself to its handkerchiefs. "No more ove'tures till the curtain goes up," Barney summed up the situation. "Even the band's played out."

It was a blazing hot day. And it was the day of the "Dry Dime Dolan Association's Annual Picnic"—a Tammany Irish picnic, chiefly, and therefore one to be enjoyed more in the prospect and the retrospect than it would ever be in the fact. "We'll think this was fun—the day after to-morra," Barney said, from his experience.

His mother, his father, his brother Tim, and his brother's "girl," Fanny Menchenoff, were sitting with him in a half circle along the shaded side of the barge, gazing out into the quivering sunlight with expressions that showed them too warm for words. On the pier before them, gangs of sweating laborers unloaded hot

sand and paving-blocks and dry hay and dusty rubble, from the barges and canal boats in the neighboring slips. "An' it might 'vo been somethin' cool," Barney complained, jocularly. "They might 'vo been unloadin' ice barges." At the foot of the street a row of heat-exhausted horses from a crosstown car line stood under a cotton awning upon which a stable-boy was playing a stream of water from a hose. Barney said: "If that ain't enough to mako you wish you was born a horse!"

His brother Tim put in, ill-temperedly: "Aw, cut it out, will you? You talk too much."

Mrs. Maloney interferred placidly: "Youso two 'ud quarrel in yer sleep."

After a momont of smiling reflection, Barney replied, unrepressed: "I guess *you* 'd think we were quarrelin' if we did n't both snore on the same note."

"Let be!" she said.

She fanned herself with a crumpled newspaper. Her husband tried to polish his forehead dry with a moist "wipe." The brother muttered something that was unintelligible. And Barney winked, with a discouraged facetiousness, at the girl.

It was for her, of course, that all this strained wit of his had been displayed.

She was a little Polish-American milliner with dark eyes that were large in a small face. She wore long silk gloves, and her dress was an extravagant creation of frills and flounces that seemed to have been designed on the same model as her lace-trimmed hat. It was too fine a costume for such a mere family party, but she had

worn it in the expectation of making the excursion alone with the elder brother, coquetting with his dazzled admiration; and, in order to array herself in it, freshly-ironed, she had kept him late for the steamboat in which he had intended to make the trip with the other politicians of the "Dry Dime Dolan Association." Consequently he had had to go on this barge, with the undistinguished horde, and he was still surly from the disappointment. Besides, he was one of the cart-tail orators of the association; he had a speech to deliver, that afternoon, on the Irish question; he was turning over in his mind some phrases of passionate invective, keeping them warm; and Barney's loquacity disturbed his sulky preoccupation.

The girl had received Barney's wink blankly. She glanced aside at Tim's shifting and restless scowl. Then she returned to consider Barney a moment as she passed him with her glance. Their eyes met; and she gave him one of those indescribable looks with which the young women of her training accept the challenge of a flirtation — a look that tempers a calm stare of large pupils with a lurking smile.

It was the first time that she had met any of Tim's family, and she had been studying them all. She had accepted the mother as harmlessly meek, the father as weak and incapable. She had understood Barney's advances, and received them indifferently as the awkward tribute of the young male. If she resolved to encourage them now, it was only because she resented Tim's behavior.

Barney put his hat on the back of his head and regarded her with a bold admiration. "Oh, gee!" he sighed, "but this picnic's a hot frost!"

She shot a smile at him under the lace fall of her hat. His mother replied, literally, with her usual patient optimism: "We'll get the more good of ut when we get out whur ut's cool."

"I could stand it," Barney said, "if some one'd only encourage me. I'm not so pretty, but I'm a nice boy."

The girl laughed, drawing up her glove as if she found her finery less uncomfortably warm.

When the whistle of the distant boat split the hot air with three shrill notes of warning to the barge, Barney stood up to see a committeeman in the bow of the approaching tug waving cheerily as it bore down on them. "Well," he said, as he seated himself again, "here they come. We'll be gettin' Home Rule fer dear ol' Ireland next. How about it, Tim? Think the speech'll do it?"

"What speech?" The brother, as he turned his head, slanted it — one eyebrow up and one down — to rake Barney with an oblique and dangerous eye. "Don't try to show off, now," he growled. "You ain't funny."

"No, I'm as solemn as a dead mass." He took the girl into the joke with a twinkling side glance. "It hurts me to see you crackin' yer face that way, though. If you wanted to laugh, what'd you come to a picnic fer?"

"Aw, forget it!" Tim thrust back his chair. "Come on, Far." He had been aware of the object of Barney's humor, and he wished to take her away from it, as well as to escape himself.

She kept her eyes fixed on the pier. "Thanks," she said. "I'm comfor'ble where I am."

Tim expressed his unconcern by tilting his hat down on his forehead contemptuously as he turned away. And she expressed her defiance in a little upward thrust of her small chin as she looked around to see him go.

"Ta-ta!" Barney called after him. The orchestra struck up "Tammany." He beamed at the girl. "Oh joy! Ain't we happy!"

"You seem to be havin' a good time."

"Well, come on in, then," he said. "I don't want it all to myself. I ain't selfish. I'm gettin' lonesome."

"Yeh young imp," his mother scolded. "Why d' yeh pester yer brother so?"

He clasped his hands behind his head, grinning at her fondly. "I'm helpin' him to forget the wrongs of Ireland. You're all right. You've got a new silk waist. But Tim's got nothin' to get gay on — except the promises of Uncle Mike."

This last was a bait cast to his father, who rose to it at once. "Dang little good he'll get o' *thim*," he said, bitterly.

"Whist now!" Mrs. Maloney put in. "We'll none of us get good o' talkin' that way. Hold yer peace."

"I will not," he said. "It's a free country, an' I'll talk me mouthful — if I want to."

Barney explained, to the girl: "Uncle Mike's the Hon'able Michael Maloney, member o' Congress fer the distric', an' hon'ry vice-president o' the Dry Dimers." He winked at her, as much as to say: "Watch me get a rise out o' th' ol' man."

She turned expectantly to the father.

"Hon'able nothin'!" he snorted. "'Sheeny Mike' — that's what I call 'm to his fat face, an' it's good enough fer him."

He was a thin and withered old Celt, the skin of his face fitted to the bones without the plumpness of any flesh beneath, his lips like some soft leather that had been slit over the toothless aperture of his mouth. He drew them up in a sour pucker of tanned hide. "'Sheeny Mike!' Me own brother!"

"Agh, let be!" his wife said. "We're all sick o' such like talk as that!"

"Are yeh so!" he cried. "Thin it's *you* an' Tim that'd lick the boots o' the man that put me down."

"'T was him that got yeh yer job on the light."

"Yes — thinkin' he'd stop me mouth! I know 'm. I know Mike. 'T was to shut me mouth he did it — nothin' ilse. An' he won't shut it fer all o' that!" The barge had begun to move out from its dock, and the sunlight on the water shone in his eyes. He blinked at it angrily, under the rim of a stiff felt hat that was faded to a yellowish green. "Me stuck out in the water, with the light, like an oold duck on a rock! An'

him a congressman! That's what ho's done fer me! That's me brother Mike. I know 'm. An' I'll tell what I know. He'll niver buy me up with none of his govo'mint jobs."

The girl was watching him curiously. His wife had made a gesture of resignation and settled back in her seat.

"Well," Barney egged him on, "ho got you out from Ireland, did n't he? If what Tim says 's true, it's a good place to come from."

The old man turned on him. "I was well enough in Ireland. Why did n't he lave me there?" He caught the girl's interested eyes. "But no!" he cried to her. "He must sind the money fer me passage, an' a letter full o' lies fer to draw me on. I was to come out an' make me for-tune with 'm. An' that's foorty years ago — an' here I am, five years older than 'm — an' him a congressman, d' yeh see! He's got himself made a congressman, an' he's got me a job trimmin' a lamp on a rock up the river yander, on a wage that wud n't fill the bowl of his pipe. There's the sum an' substance of all his boold promises, an' his 'Sind Nick out to me. We'll make his for-tune!'"

"Take shame!" his wife said. "Yeh've been at the drink again, er yeh'd not talk so to a stranger."

He wagged his head at her, with an effect of repeating and insisting on all that he had said. "That's the talk! That's the talk that *he* had to his tongue when he first tried to chate me out o' me partnership in the saloon. 'Faith,' I says, 'an' what's the drink fer,

thin, if it's not to put in yer mouth?' 'It's to put in yer poorse,' says he, like a fool. Says I: 'I'm thinkin',' I says, 't will be little enough of it 'll be like to get into *my* poorse,' I says. An' that was the truth of it, fer he was skinnin' the till ev'ry night himself. 'Little enough,' he says, 'unless yeh swally yer poorse first,' he says. An' 't was not long, thin' befoore he toorned me out. Me that'd woorked up the trade fer 'm, mind yeh! I was but drinkin' fer t' encourage the customers. But no! He took an' toorned me out to dig drains. An' niver a cint 've I had from 'm to this day."

"Have yeh not!" Mrs. Maloney muttered. "Thin many's the dollar's worth of help yer wife's had —"

"Niver a cint!" he said. "Fer niver a cint wud I take. Though I was to starve fer it!"

"Why did n't you go into politics yerself," young Barney prodded him. "There's money in politics. You'd —"

"Did n't I?" He turned to the girl, as if he felt himself on his defense before her. "Whin *he* was runnin' fer alderman — an' th' others put up oold Diedrichs ag'in' 'm — was n't I the chairman of the comity, fightin' Mike? An' what did he do, think yeh? He bought up one of our lads that had the buyin' of the drinks fer a rally we was havin', the night befoore th' iliction — an' he had all the beer dosed, so's the next day ev'ry mother's son of us was too sick fer to go to the polls. An' he won be a big major'ty. He did that! An' thin he boasted that 't was me that dosed the drink

fer 'm. An' me bein' his brother, did n't they read me out o' the party entirely! The lyin' scut! 'Yeh fat toad!' I says to 'm. 'Yeh 've rooned me,' I says. 'Yeh 've rooned me!' An' he had so — but divil a bit *he* cared. 'Yeh 're a most amazin' fine young roon,' he says. 'Yeh better go back to th' oold country,' he says, 'an' set yerself up on a hill where th' ivy 'll grow on yeh,' he says. Such like talk as that! An' him that 'd brought me out to make me for-tune, mind yeh! Mind yeh that, now! . . . Sorry the day, Mike. Sorry the day!"

He had dropped his voice to a pathetic huskiness, and he blinked as if to keep back tears. Barney saw that he had gone too far with his joke; it was evident that the girl was not finding it amusing. "Say!" he turned to her. "Come 'n' have a lem'nade. They 'll be dancin' down on the groun' floor."

She rose at once.

"We 'll be back," Barney excused himself, cheerfully.

His father, used to these sudden departures of his audience when he would be airing his grievances, showed no resentment — no interest even. The mother, without so much as looking up to see them go, accepted with relief the accustomed companionship of silence that was the genius of her married life.

Barney and the girl made their way along the crowded deck of the barge, through the music, and the odors of picnic baskets, and the games of children who chased one another and screamed. She said: "That's a

great song an' dance he's got about your uncle."

"Aw, that's all hot air," Barney replied. "There's nothin' but kicks in our fam'ly. Did n't you ever hear Tim on the wrongs of Ireland? Th' ol' man ain't one-two-three with him."

She felt that she was involved in relations with a family that she did not understand. Having a Hebraic respect for parents, she was sorry for the father, but she saw that Barney considered him amusing, and she mistook this amusement for contempt.

II

"Well, it's a crime to tease Tim," he confessed to her, over their lemonade. "It's stealin' milk from a baby — but he'll make himself sick with this Dry Dime Dolan bus'ness if some one don't stop him."

"I thought you said there was money in politics."

"Not fer Tim. They're just usin' him fer a spell-binder. They put him up to talk the wrongs of Ireland so's you won't notice wrongs nearer home. They're a lot o' grafters, an' he does the grindin' fer them. He might's well be capper to a con game."

"That's a swell way to talk about your own brother."

"Oh, well," he laughed, "it's all in the fam'ly. How're you goin' to cotton to me fer a brother-in-law?"

"Me? I don't know as I want the job."

"I'll take *mine* — unless you got a better one to gi' me."

She applied herself to her lemonade, sucking it up through a straw, ignoring him.

"Keep it up," he said. "You 'ro as pretty as a bahy with a hottle."

She tried to keep her mouth set, but with indifferent success.

"You 're an ad fer a soft drink, all right, all right. Look out!"

She had choked on a laugh. Sho coughed into her handkerchief, falling hack in her chair, but she still made no rejoinder.

He rescued the glass from her, and waited, grinning. "Gee, you 're a hard drinker! Did you swally a straw?"

It was then that he caught the change of her expression and looked hack to see Tim standing behind him.

Tim said to her, roughly: "Come on, Fan. They 're startin' to dance."

As soon as she could catch her breath, she replied, in a false voice: "I don't want to dance."

"Say," he said, with narrowed eyes, "you can't make a monkey o' me. It's take it er leave it, see? It's up to you."

"I don't know what you mean." She straightened her hat.

"Yes, you do. You come with me now, er you don't come at all."

"Oh? Is that so?"

"That's what I said."

She had the blood of a Polishwoman in her. "You can do what you like," she said icily.

"Are you comin'?"

"Not if I know it. No." She reached her glass.

He glared at Barney. "That settles it." He swung on his heel and went back to the bar where he had been standing in a line of picnic officials. Barney followed him with his eyes, half amused and half apprehensive.

"Hello! There's Uncle Mike," Barney said, in an attempt to cover the silence. "He must 'a' missed the boat, too."

The girl did not reply. When he turned, she met him with a blazing scrutiny, and he laughed to ease her indignation.

"Would n't that jar you?" he said. "Tim's on horseback, eh? D' you care?"

She drank her glass to the dregs. "Not a whole lot." She rose, throwing back her shoulders and settling her belt with arms akimbo, smiling on him brilliantly. "I saw a shady place out at the back."

"This 's where I come in," he said. "Trot me along."

It was the parental opinion that there was a "deal o' the devil" in Barney, and his relations with his more intense brother had always been sardonic. "You don't want to take too much stock in anything Tim ever says when he's on his ear," he counseled her, as they went. "Rub him th' other way the next time you see him, an' he'll ferget all about it."

"Will he? Well, I won't."

"No? Goin' to go it by your lonely?"

She nodded, her little jaw squared.

"All right." He grinned audaciously. "I'll hold your hand, this trip."

"How d' you know I'll let you?"

"Oh, you know a good thing when you see it."

"You're kind o' pop'lar with yourself, ain't you?"

"Well, I'm the hit o' the season. Where're you goin' to sit?" They stood beside a pile of boxes that held "liquid refreshments" in their racks. There was not a chair vacant. "Here," he said, lifting down a box, "they won't need all these till I start drinkin'. Make yourself at home."

He sat her down, with her back against the pile of boxes. "Gee!" he said, sitting beside her, "you're a swell dresser fer a picnic. You look as if you'd been done by one o' those Sixt' Avenue windah-riggers."

She accepted this admiration as the beginning of her revenge on the elder brother. "D' you like it?" she asked, flicking down the ruffles on her bosom.

"Sure I like it — all but those finger mufflers." He referred to her gloves.

"What's the matter with them?" She spread her hands in her lap.

"They're in the way. I'd as soon hold a canvas ham. Ain't they hot?"

She nodded. "Kind o'." She took one off, in a manner that pretended to be innocently curious on the subject, and turned her hand over on her knee, studying it.

He took t^h hand — imitating her interested manner — scrutinizing it and comparing it with his own cigarette-stained fingers. "That's a swell little fin," he said. "Gi' me that to take home with me, will you?"

"It don't go alone."

"It don't? They only sell by the pair?"

She nodded, her face coquettishly serious. "I'm thrown in with them, too."

"All right," he said, putting the hand in his coat pocket. "I'll take the lot."

She leaned back, smiling at him intimately. "You haven't asked how much it's worth."

"Gee! I thought you were givin' them to me. What d' you want fer 'em?"

"Oh, lots o' things."

"I could love you a whole lot."

"I've heard that song before." She withdrew her hand.

"Here, hol' on!" he said, putting it back in the pocket. "That's mine."

She hinted, demurely: "Well?"

"Well," he said, "let's see. Board an' keep, eh?"

"What sort o' board?"

"Bread an' cheese an' kisses."

"It takes two to make kisses."

"All right. You can help."

"I don't know that I know how."

"I'll show you." He glanced around, as if preparing to follow up his offer.

She snatched her hand out of his pocket, edging away from him.

"What 's the matter?" he asked, in great surprise.

"Oh, you're too previous. I'm not as easy as I look."

"All right." He settled back against the boxes. "You were tryin' to get too much anyway. You'd be dear at twict the price — that 's what I think. You're not as pretty as you look. An' you're second-handed, at that!"

"I'll smack your face in a minute."

He smacked it himself, with an open hand, impassively. "I don't need you to do that fer me. That's not such a stunt."

She giggled. "You're crazy!"

"No, I'm not. I'm in love." He sighed lugubriously. "Were y' ever in love? Come on an' be in love with me."

"You'd make fun o' me, if I was."

"No, I would n't. Jus' try me."

"That 's what I *been* doin'."

"But you did n't tell me. I did n't know."

"Well, you know now."

"Do I?" He brightened at once. "Say, ain't it swell?"

"D' you like it?"

"Fer your life! Don't you?"

"Uh-huh!" She put her hand back in his pocket, slyly.

He folded his arms, hugging himself. "If y' ever

go back on me now," he said, "I'll get a gun an' blow my hat off. Hello, Pop! Have a chair."

He accepted his father's sudden appearance as if it had been entirely expected. "Sit down an' save your boots," he said, placing another box. "Been havin' a drink with Uncle Miko?"

The old man blinked his wrinkled eyes morosely. "I'd as soon drink with the divil himself. Why did n't none o' youse tell me he was aboard?"

"Did n't none of us know. Did he seo you?"

He sat down, rheumatically stiff. "That Tim tol' me there was some one below hero wanted fer to sot me up — an' walked me into *him*, grinnin' at the bar."

"An' you cocked up your noso an' quit him?"

He spat on the deck. "I did that."

"There's a good drink gone to waste."

"I want none of his drinks."

"Why did n't you take a cigar then?"

"T'ell with 'm. Let 'm lave me be."

"He wants to make it up with you. Tim says he's talkin' about you half the time." He nudged the girl, secretly. "He says he knows, now, 'at it was all his fault. He says he never got nothin' but the worst of it, at that. Why don't you let up on him? Are you goin' to hound him to his dyin' day?"

He grunted. "Let him lave me be, thin."

"He's been tryin' to snugglo up to you through Tim fer the last five years. You ought n't to keep poundin' a man when he says he's had enough. Why can't you ferget it, now, an' help straighten things out?"

The old man pushed up his hat from his forehead with the flat of his thumb. "He got the worst of it, did he? Well, he'll niver win me over. I c'n tell you that, now. I got nothin' at all fer 'm but contimpt. He c'n go his way, an' I 'll go mine."

Barney rose, with a conspiring wink at the girl. "Excuse mo a minute," he said. "I want to pick up that drink Pop dropped."

III

The Honorable Michael Maloney was a largo and florid gentleman who bloomed in a white waistcoat with a red geranium in his lapel and a Panama hat on the side of his head. He had been a "gay bucko," as Barney said; and age had brought him the mouth of an old goat, with a long upper lip and a shallow chin clean-shaven between gray whiskers. His eyes were heavy-pouched; his nose was swollen; and yet there was, in his smile, an expression of professional benevolence and good-nature that marked him as "one of the boys" and accounted for his popularity.

He carried that smile like a flag of truce when he came with Tim and Barney to the place where old Nick Maloney and the girl were sitting; and his expression did not change when Nick, humping himself forward with his arms on his knees, refused to notice him. He held the girl's hand while he said genially: "Miss Mench'noff! Well, now, we're glad to have yeh with us, I'm sure o' that. It's a fine day. How're y' enjoyin' yerself."

She smiled at Barney as she replied: "Pretty good, I guess." And the uncle took his cue from the direction of that smile, to say: "Barney's the boy to give y' a good time. Eh, Barney? Well, y' always did have a sharp eye fer the gurrils, Barney. How's yer mother?"

They cut off the father's escape by sitting down in front of him, but he pretended to be unaware of them until the Honorable Michael said: "Well, Nick, don't yeh know me?"

"Oh, I know yeh!" he answered, under his hat.

The uncle smiled amiably at his nephews as he replied: "If yeh knew me as well as I know meself, yeh'd like me less."

"I like yeh little enough."

"An' I'm sorry fer that." He nodded, reassuringly to the girl. "We're gettin' to be too old fer inimities."

Nick flared up: "I suppose yeh think I ought to be thankin' yeh fer gettin' me the job on the light?"

"Why should yeh? It's nothin' to what I ought to've done fer yeh—if yeh'd let me. But yeh've been so dang indipendent!" His voice was politic.

"I wanted nothin' from yeh but to be let alone."

"I know it. . . . Well, yeh've had yer way. It's been a bad bus'ness, an' I'm glad it's all done with. If we had our lives to live over again, it might be diff'rent. How's the wife?"

"She's well enough," Nick answered sulkily.

"That's right. Yeh're lucky to have a good wife an' a fine pair o' boys." He turned to the girl. "I'm

an ol' bachelor meself, but that's not my fault. None o' the gurrils 'ud have me."

"I'm sure I don't know why," she said, with a coquettishness that concealed sarcasm.

He smiled a broad smile between his gray whiskers. "I never made it out meself. But then I never had Barney's way with the gurrils. How's the work, Barney?"

"Oh, all to the good," he said. "Lots o' work, anyway."

"That's right." He had caught Tim's frown. "Lots o' work fer all of us. How's the speech, Tim?" Tim studied his knuckles. "It's all right, I guess."

"Well, if I had *your* gift, boy, I'd 've stopped at nothin' short o' the Presidency." He chuckled. "I'm a clam at a speech. The best I can say is, 'What'll yeh have?'" He covered the three men with an inviting smile. "What'd yeh say to a high ball?" Old Nick glanced up furtively and looked away when he found his brother's eye on him. "Come on, Nick. This's a holiday. We c'n afford to ferget our troubles."

The old man tried to hide the fact that he was flattered. The Honorable Michael took him by the knee and shook it playfully. "We'll be in our graves soon. Ferget it, man. Come have a drink."

Barney helped his father to his feet. "Go on, Pop," he coaxed. "Go an' tank up. Get some bubbles in you. This's a picnic. You're as flat as milk."

"Well, by the jukes," the father muttered, "I'm that hot I'd drink with all hell." One corner of his

mouth tried to droop with stubborn ill-temper, but the other twitched with a smile. He shuffled along behind Tim, who followed the Honorable Michael down narrow passageways between the groups of picnic parties.

Barney wagged his head. "There goes Ol' Grievances," he said to the girl. "To-morra he 'll be tryin' to hang himself fer a traitor."

"Well!" she cried. "Why did he go, anyway? After what he said!"

Barney put her off with a laugh that explained nothing. "Here," he said, slipping his arm behind her. "It makes my back ache to look at you. Leave it be. Sit close an' no one 'll pipe it. Eh? How d' you like youah honey? Ain't I a sweet?"

She tried to reply to him with some dignity, but she had carried the affair too far to be able to retreat. She said, rather wistfully: "You're makin' fun o' me. I knew you would."

"Jus' tell me that you love me," he replied, "an' I 'll never smile again."

She did not answer him, but she did not move away. She sat gazing out at the shore of Staten Island, over a stretch of water that lay dead in the heat; and her face, in thoughtful repose, showed some dissatisfaction with herself. When she thought of Tim's actions as the cause of her own, she tightened her lips. When she considered the family relations, which the morning had discovered to her, she wrinkled her round forehead in a puzzled frown. She disliked the uncle; and she did not understand how the father could have accepted his

advances. She did not understand Barney's part in the affair. She felt a mild contempt for Tim.

Barney yawned behind his hand. "Cheer up," he said. "Tim 'll be back."

She did not reply. And they were sitting, so, in silence, when Tim returned to confront them with a pallor of indignation. Barney rose eagerly to meet him. "Come to claim your bride? Where's Pop?"

Tim thrust him aside. "Look here," he said, in a low voice to the girl, pointing his finger at her. "You need n't think I'm goin' to ferget this the way I did las' time. This 's the finish between us, see?"

He paid no attention to Barney's "Sit down, you lobster, an' get busy."

He went on: "You can't play me fer a sucker. I'm on to you, an' you're no good." She looked straight ahead of her, ignoring him, but flushing under the eyes. "You've picked your card, now, an' you'll stick to it. You need n't come upstairs after me, because I don't want you around. We're quits. It's off, see? I'm done with you." He threw Barney's hand from his arm.

Barney said disgustedly: "Come off! You're talkin' through your spout."

Tim nodded, furiously calm. "Am I? You'll see." He turned and shouldered his way through a little circle of the curious who had gathered to the sound of a quarrel.

Barney said to them, as he sat down: "Aw, run away an' sell yer papers." They melted away before

his disgusted stare. "He's an Indian!" he said to the girl.

She was putting on her glove. "What're you?" she cried. "You're worse'n *he* is — er you would n't 've stood there an' let him say things like that to me. You're a cheap lot — the whole lot of you Maloneys."

"We are?" He studied her, with an irritating smile.

"Make fun of an ol' man," she said. "That's *your* limit, I guess!"

"Say," he laughed, "you're off your beat. That's the whole trouble with you. You're out of your bunch."

"Am I? Well, I'm goin' to get out o' *this* bunch fast enough."

"You don't talk Gaelic," he said. "That's what's the matter with you. We don't mean what we say — half the time — an' when we *do*, we'll take it back just as quick. Me an' Tim, now —"

"I don't want to hear about neither of you."

"Well, you can't play me off against Tim. An' you ought've known it."

"Aw, you're a hot-air Harp."

"I'm a Harp, all right, but *you* can't string me."

She saw the father returning. "I've met Harps before, but they were n't your sort. You're all mouth — you an' your whole fam'ly."

Barney pretended that he had not heard, but he reddened as he turned away. He was sensitive to a criticism that deprived him of any superiority over his

family and found him guilty of a family weakness which he thought he despised. He asked, to ignore her: "Buried the hatchet, Pop?"

The old man sat down with a sniff. "I have not! He can't buy me off with two slugs o' B'urbon. The fat toad!"

Barney saw the disgust that deepened in the girl's expression. She summed up her opinion of all the Maloneys in the contemptuous look that she gave him as she rose. She did not speak. She did not need to.

He watched her until she disappeared among the excursionists on the farther side of the barge. He said: "There's the makin's of a swell batch of trouble, gone sour!"

The father muttered, over one of the Honorable Mike's cigars: "Sheeny Mike! Huh! It's good enough fer'm!" And Barney, seeing himself in the same attitude of futilely defying the absent, felt the truth of her criticism of him rankling in his wounded self-respect. A family of hot-air Harps! And he the worst of them, since he had not even Tim's loyalty to his kind.

The thought made him meek. "Well," he said, "she's well out of it, I guess. Where's Tim? Back at the bar? Come an' have a drink with us, Pop. It's on me."

IV

If Fanny Menchenoff thought, then, that she had forever done with the Maloneys, it was because she did

not yet understand them. Tim made the most applauded oration of the day; and afterwards, flushed with cheers and congratulations, he came on Fanny sitting alone on the beach. Their reconciliation was fairly complete in fifteen minutes. "You should n't 've said what you did," she wept, "back there on the boat."

"I would n't 've said it if I really meant it," he consoled her. "I did n't care what I said. I was mad."

"Did n't you mean it?"

"No, I did n't. An' it was n't true."

"What did you say it fer, then?"

"I don't know. . . . Aw, say, Fan," he pleaded, almost in tears himself at her distress, "fergit it. It was n't *all* my fault. I'm all right, if you take me right. I'm not much of a hand with a girl. I ain't like Barney."

"No. Thank the cats!" she said. "You ain't!"

But when they met Barney, he was so warm with pride in his brother's success on the platform, and so humorously meek with her, that she could not find it in her heart to give him so much as an ugly look. At the picnic "spread," to which they all sat down, he chaffed his parents, still, but with an affectionate railery which the girl did not misunderstand. He waited on them jocularly, and made them comfortable, and smiled across the tablecloth at her with an irresistible "diviltry" that made her gay.

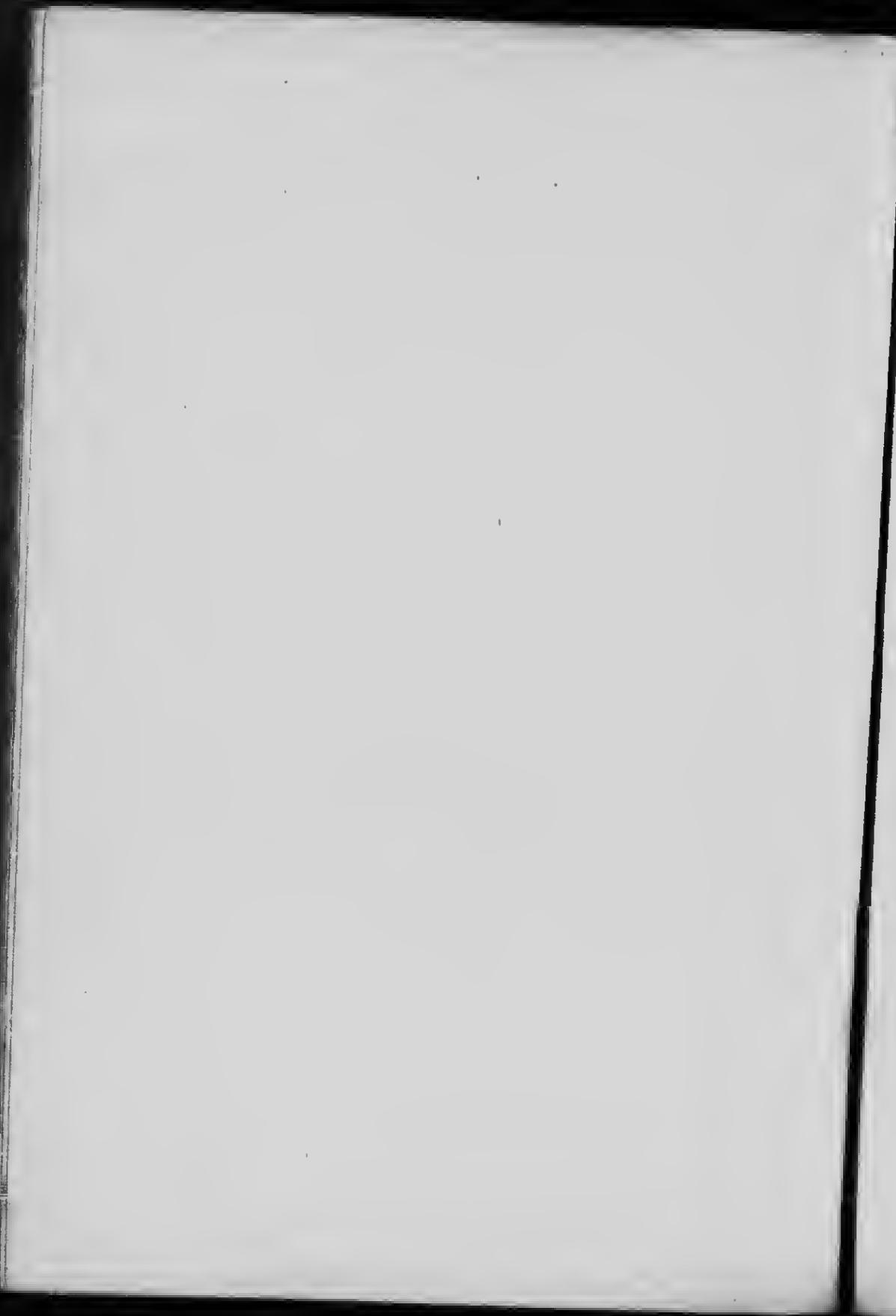
She even discovered that old Nick had the same family pride in the Honorable Michael's success that Barney had in Tim's, though the references to "Sheeny Mike"

continued with apparent rancor. It was Tim who enlightened her on that point. It was Tim, too, who got talking of the English, later in the evening, and so far forgot his platform hatred of the oppressor that he spoke of the Irish regiments and the British empire as if the glory of the latter had been the proud work of the former.

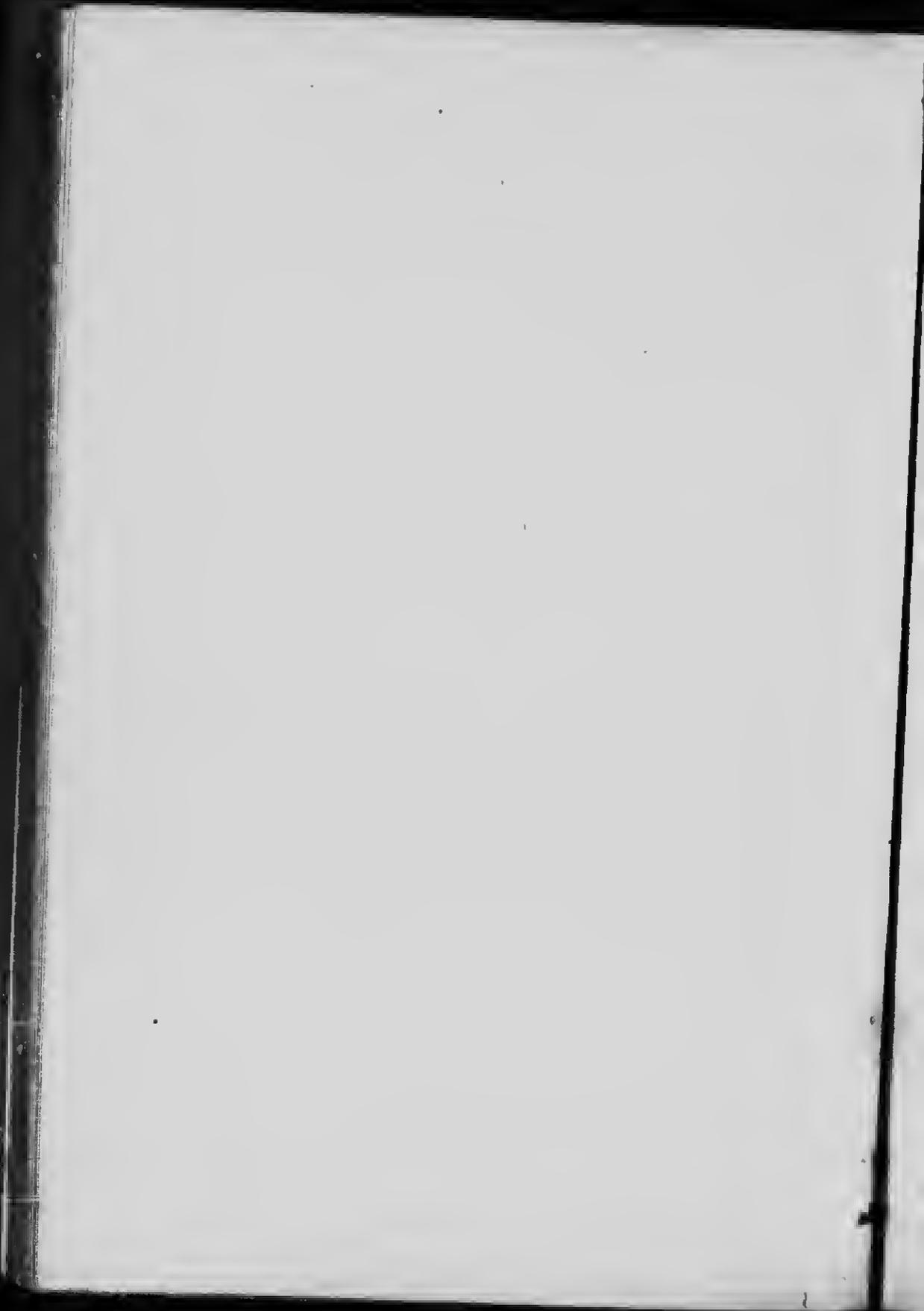
She was puzzled.

"They 're queer some ways," she was to tell her shopmate, next day. "You 'd think they were fightin' sometimes when they ain't. I guess they bark worse 'n they bite. You 'd like Barney, Madge. He 's just your style. He 's an awful jollier — an' he teases Tim an' says things about him — but he thinks Tim 's the whole tip, just the same, when you *know* him. An' say! Don't Tim know how to be sweet when he wants to!" She laughed. "Never mind. I ain't goin' to tell."

If she could have told any more, it might have been to put a tongue to that racial mystery, the charm and contradiction, the appeal and the repulsion, of the kind of Irish whom she had called the "hot-air Harps." Perhaps she was wise to refrain from the attempt.



THE REPORTER



THE REPORTER

I

THE committee of the Colorado Senate, sitting on the Las Animas election protest at the Capitol, had adjourned *sine die*, and the political reporter of the *Denver World* was free to look for "action" elsewhere. He was looking for it in the register of the Hotel Capitol, where he hoped to find the names of some Las Animas visitors who might be interviewed before they were called to go on the witness stand; but he was not looking very eagerly, for the Las Animas scandals were now an old story that was printed without leads among the jumps and tail-ends on page five.

His black bowler hat was raked down over his eyes; an unlighted cigarette hung from his lower lip; his hands were thrust deep into his trousers pockets. It was his opinion that nothing exciting had happened in Colorado since the Cripple Creek labor war — when he had been deported from the State by the military authorities — and his attitude of cynical ennui expressed the hope deferred that makes sad the heart of the prowling newspaper man.

He had a round, smooth face, dark-browed, and as inexpressive as the back of a playing-card. He was known as the best poker-player in the Denver Press Club, where men who have learned the game in mining

camps "tear off" the worried amateur while they converse distractingly of other things. And his whole physical make-up, from his thick ankles to his big shoulders, was as round and strong and smooth as his face.

When a man came up behind him and dropped a hand heavily on one of his shoulders, he did not turn. He finished the page of the register at his leisure and then slanted his head around — to see a stranger, baldish, with white eyelashes and a sort of soggy, fat face.

"You're a reporter," the man said.

Colburn did not deny it. He rather took it for granted that every one knew it. He returned to his register.

"Do you want to make a hundred dollars?" the stranger asked.

He did, but he did not say so. He had lost thirty-seven dollars, the night previous, playing "loose deuces." He slewed the register back into position for the hotel clerk, detached his cigarette from his lip, and dropped it into a brass spittoon.

The man accepted these movements as implying assent. "Come up to my room," he said.

They crossed the rotunda to the elevator, and Colburn walked in a manner of absent-minded indifference that was habitual with him when his mind was busiest. He had "sized up" the stranger as a mine promoter from the East who had a story he wished to plant on the investing public; and Colburn intended to put the hundred dollars in his pocket — or as much of it as he could get

in advance — and drop the story into the wastepaper-basket.

The man wore suede spats. He dragged his right foot over the tessellated floor, limping. "My name's Fisher," he said.

Colburn did not volunteer anything in reply.

"What paper do you work for?" he asked as they entered the elevator.

"*Rocky Mountain Chronicle*," Colburn lied.

"Thought you were with the *World*."

"So I was."

"Fourth floor."

Colburn studied the back of the elevator boy's head. The boy had had his neck shaved, and it made him look as if he wore a wig. Colburn allowed his face to express a slow esthetic distaste of that cut of the hair. He knew, of course, that Fisher was scrutinizing him in the mirror-panel of the car.

They reached the fourth floor in silence, and padded down the heavy hall-carpet of the corridor in silence; and Fisher threw open the door of a lighted sitting-room, gaudy with scarlet carpet and red walls; and Colburn entered without taking off his hat. It was a joke among his friends that he slept in his hat.

Fisher, having closed the door behind him, crossed the room to close the door of the bedroom also. Colburn seated himself in a rocking-chair and took a book of cigarette papers from his watch-pocket. He was tearing out a leaf when the man asked: "When did you leave the *World*?"

He finished making his cigarette before he replied — with an air of calling for a showdown — “What do you want?”

Fisher nodded. “I want you to interview a friend of mine.”

“What about?”

“I want you to ask him four questions. If you get the right answers, I’ll give you a hundred dollars.”

Colburn struck a match, lighted his cigarette, and blew out the match thoughtfully. “How’ll you know whether they’re right or not?”

“I’ll know.”

“You know the answers, then?”

“Yep.”

The reporter puffed up a screen of smoke before his eyes and took a sharp look at the man through it, rolling the burnt match reflectively between a spatulate thick thumb and forefinger that were brown with nicotine. Fisher was leaning forward, his elbows on the arms of his chair, his little whitish eyes glittering with a malignant eagerness, his mouth twitching and hesitating on a thin smile.

Colburn said: “Suppose you say the answers are n’t right — when they *are*.”

“I’ll play the game square.”

“Nothing doing.” He tossed the match on the carpet. “Not on those terms.”

“What? What’s the matter with it? I’ve got four questions. The fellow that knows the answers — he’s right across the hall. All you have to do is to go over

there, and say you're a reporter come to interview him, and get the answers. I'll give you twenty-five hucks for each answer. Worth trying, ain't it?"

Colburn shook his head, his eyes on the floor. "He could pass me out any old talk. I'd come back here and get the laugh. My time's worth money."

"I'll —" Fisher threw himself back in his chair and thrust out a leg to clear his trousers pocket. "I'll give you twenty-five down."

"Well?"

He drew out a roll of bills and thumbed off two tens and a five, shakily. Colburn took them, as if deep in thought.

Fisher clucked a hoarse, excited cough to clear his throat. "You ask him what was the name of the island in the Snake River where he helped to stake out a claim in '98. Write it down."

"Go ahead." It was a point of professional pride with Colburn that he rarely took notes.

"Ask him how much he got when he skipped with the clean-up." He reflected a moment, with his eyes turned up to the electric lights, glowing in their tarnished copper calyxes. He hlinked, smiling and puckering up his lips like a man who has a pleasant taste in his mouth. "Ask him what was the name of the woman he hid behind."

Colburn tucked the money into his waistcoat pocket.

"And ask him why he did n't stop to hurry her."

Colburn had been watching him under the brim of his hat. Suddenly he said — in the sharp voice

of the reporter using the probe —“ Why don't you shoot him up ? ”

Instantly, Fisher's face contracted in a spasm of hate that clenched his hands, and drew his legs in under him, and plucked him forward on the arms of his chair. “ Him! G— — him! I want him to live just one day longer than I do. I want him to know I'm on the other side, waiting for him. I—” He stopped, eyeing the reporter. “ No, you don't,” he said. “ You've got to get it from *him*.”

Colburn returned to his indifference. “ I don't contract to publish, you understand.”

“ Do as you — please about that. . . . And you're not to tell him I sent you. See? You're a reporter come to interview him.”

“ What's his name ? ”

“ He's registered as ‘ Sims ’—‘ S. A. Sims. ’ ”

“ What's his name ? ”

“ Bell — Billy Bell.”

Colburn raised himself to his feet. “ Across the hall ? ”

The man limped eagerly to the door, and jerked it open. “ There.” He pointed. “ In there.”

Colburn slowly crossed the corridor and rapped on the panel. Some one called faintly: “ Come in.” As he opened the door before him, he heard the one behind him gently close.

II

Colburn divided all mankind into newspaper men and

"outsiders"—whom he called "barbers" in his more contemptuous moods. The first were the writers, the second the written. The first lived on the second, despised them, exposed them, flattered them, used them, bled them, and made fools of them. There was some necessary fraternizing between the two, but no possibility of sincere friendship; and even in his most companionable moments Colburn did not forget that the outsider with whom he drank was a possible source of a news story — and watched for it.

The man Fisher whom he had just left was an outsider of a particularly odious type: he was the sort of "barber" who thinks he can buy a newspaper man, hoodwink him, and use him for "outside" purposes. But the man to whom Colburn entered now, as he opened the door, he recognized as the sort of outsider who fears a reporter as a criminal fears a court of law.

He was yellow, like a Chinaman — as yellow as his teeth — and there was an Oriental look about his lean, flat face, with his lips drawn back from his protruding incisors. He was a "lunger"; that was evident — to Colburn's practised Denver eye — from the wasted neck that left the cords standing in two ridges behind his pale ears. He was packing a battered suit-case, open on his bed; and he continued to pack it even after he had glanced at Colburn over his shoulder.

"I'm from the *World*, Mr. Sims," Colburn said as he shut the door. "I'd like to have a few minutes' talk with you."

Sims shook his head quickly. "I've nothing to say

to the *World*." His voice was a breathy falsetto. He crammed his linen into the case.

"I understand," Colburn said, putting up his hat from his forehead, "that you had a mine in Idaho."

"Me? I had n't." He clapped down the top of the case and snapped the catches on it. "Nor anywhere else."

"On the Snake River," Colburn added.

Sims was bending down to his work. He did not straighten up, but after a perceptible pause he turned to the reporter the tail of a startled eye. Colburn's face shone in the light with a plump and interested geniality.

"You've got the wrong man," Sims said hoarsely.

Colburn replied, without irony, in a tone merely of seeking further assurance of his mistake: "Oh! Is that so? Did n't you stake out a claim there, with a partner, on an island in '98?"

Sims reached his hat and his overcoat, and caught up his suit-case. "I've got to catch a train. I've got no time to talk to you. I've got no time, I tell you. Let me out of here."

"I'm sorry," Colburn said as he opened the door. "I wanted to give you a chance to put us right on that story. That thing's pretty heavy, ain't it? Let me have it." And with all the calmness of his strength he took the suit-case forcibly from the trembling Sims. "What train do you want to catch?"

Sims struggled into his overcoat, hurrying along the hall, pulling his battered soft felt hat down on his ears.

"It's none of your business," he kept saying, breathlessly. "It's none of your damn business."

The hat was too big for him, and it made him look more than ever like a Chinaman — with a queue concealed. Colburn kept pace with him — and rang the elevator bell. In vain the man fumed and fretted. Colburn passed him into the car, a hand under his elbow, and said "Down" to the elevator boy. When they stepped out into the rotunda, Colburn led the way to the desk and said to the clerk: "Got Mr. Sims's bill, Jim? Hurry up. He wants to catch a train. If any one calls me up here, tell him I've gone out." And when Sims had paid his bill, Colburn ushered him out to the street, hailed a taxicab, put him in it, ordered the driver to take them to the Union Depot, and got in beside Sims with the suit-case.

"This is a damn outrage," Sims broke out. "Get out of here. I'll call a policeman."

Colburn shook his head. "Better get out of town without any more noise than you can help. He's been drinking and he's looking for you with a gun. That's how we got the story. Turn up your collar. These cabs at night are great places to catch pneumonia in."

Sims squirmed and muttered unintelligibly. "Leave me alone," he stammered when Colburn put out a hand to help him turn up his collar at the back.

"What's the matter?" Colburn soothed him. "I simply wanted to give you a chance. I don't believe in jumping into print with a story without hearing the other side of it. It makes no difference to me. I

simply thought you might want to put yourself right."

Sims made no answer. Wrapped in his heavy overcoat, muffled up to the eyes, he sank back in the darkness of the cab, feebly obdurate. Colburn sat forward on the edge of the cushions to roll another cigarette by the light of the passing street-lamps. It was one of those chill Colorado nights that come down to Denver from the mountains when the sun has set, but Colburn was used to them; he did not even wear gloves. "Ever play loose deuces?" he asked. He added, in a moment: "You'll be in time for the seven-forty-five."

"You go to —," Sims said. "You can't draw *me*. I've had this game worked on me before."

Colburn sat back to reconsider his play. It was evident that Sims knew his hand, and he did not know Sims's. At such moments you would swear that there was a film drawn over his eyes.

III

"Well," Colburn said as he put Sims's suit-case on the seat of the Pullman, "I don't want to go back to the office with half the story. I know your name's Bell, and he says you shot the woman and ran off with the clean-up. What I don't understand is why you did it."

Sims sat down, without answering, and looked out the window at the station lights, waiting for the train to start. Colburn promptly sat down beside him and stretched out his legs as if he intended to stay. Sims glanced around at him pathetically. "I did n't shoot

her," he said. "He shot her himself. Now go away and leave me alone."

It was said in a manner of wearied and persecuted innocence; and Colburn, with his eyes on his feet, turned it over in his mind, dispassionately.

"You took the clean-up, though."

"I took my share of it."

"I see. You were partners in the mine. You're not a Westerner."

Sims shook his head feebly. "Chicago."

"Neither is he."

"He's my brother."

"Your *brother!*"

Sims's teeth bared between drawn lips, as if in the emotion of a bitter smile. It was about as interpretable as the grimace of a monkey. Colburn could make nothing of it, but he saw his opportunity to ask the first question on his list. "What was the name of the island?"

"Henry's," the man answered; and as if the name were as full of memories as a photograph in a family album, he stared at it from the hollows of his eyes, his chin sunken on a collar that was too large for his shrunken neck.

The car was jarred by a sudden bump as the two sections of the train — divided by a station crossing — were brought together and coupled for the journey. The covered platform echoed with cries of "All 'board!" from the negro porters. Sims looked up, roused from his thoughts. Colburn made no move to leave.

"Go on," Sims said weakly. "There's — there's nothing in the story — for a newspaper. What do you want?"

Colburn drew from his inside pocket a bundle of old letters, forgotten memoranda, and such clutter of a reporter's work. "I don't suppose there is," he said, looking for his "annual." "But when a man's sent out on a story, he has to come back with something. Personally, I don't care a cuss about the thing."

Sims watched him in silence a moment. Then he asked in another voice: "Will you promise not to tell him which way I went — which train I took?"

"I sure will."

He sank back against the cushions. "What do you want to know?"

"Who was the woman?"

The car had begun to glide out of the station noiselessly. Sims let his chin sink upon his collar again.

"Can't you leave her out of it?"

"Yes — but *he* won't."

"He don't care."

"No. Not *that* way. Was she his wife?"

"I guess. He brought her out from Chicago — when I wrote to him about the claim. I wanted him to help me work it. He treated her like a dog."

"They generally do — that sort," Colburn commented. "She was about half his size, I suppose."

"She was n't any more than a kid."

"Sure thing. The life was pretty rough on her, was n't it?"

"No," Sims said, with some interest. "No. She liked it. She'd been shut up in a dirty little back street and she was crazy about it—about outdoors. She liked it. She did n't seem to mind the way he treated her. She was used to that. Her old man had been a bad one— from what she said— used to get drunk and beat her up."

Colburn was not interested in that part of the story. He interrupted: "What did he shoot her for?"

Sims drew a long tremulous breath, like a man on trial who is asked a question that involves his whole defense. "Well," he said, "I—I was sorry for her. She never looked to me for anything— any more than a dog would if the man that owned it kicked it. And at first I said to myself it was none of my business. But she— she looked after things for us like a mother— and I could n't stand it. I—"

Colburn put in: "You got her to run away?"

Sims nodded, swallowing dryly.

"And he caught you?"

"He was laying for us, I guess."

"How did he know?"

Sims shook his head. "I never found out. He must've been watching us. We thought he'd gone off to shoot something for dinner— and we saddled the pony and struck off on the trail to the railroad. It was a ninety-mile ride— if we'd made it . . . He was laying for us in a bit of woods— took us head-on from behind a tree. The first shot rapped me on the shoulder, and then the next one fetched the horse and

ditched us. I came down hard and it knocked me for a minute. I saw him coming at me, but I did n't have sense enough to pull my gun — till I saw Fan jump up and run toward him, screaming at him — and he just took and shot her through the head. . . . I fired low. Broke his ankle. . . . That was all there was to it."

"You got away?"

"Through the woods. I waited till I was sure she was dead. She never moved. I could have killed him if I'd wanted to — from behind a tree. I could see him watching for me. He could n't get up."

Colburn stared at him. "Well, good —! What's he kicking about?"

Sims was gazing at the blank plush of the car seat opposite him. "I got lung trouble," he said. "He knows I can't go East. And he hunts around till he finds me. That's all he does. He's about crazy with hate. When he can't do anything else, he sets a newspaper reporter after me. I don't want to do anything — but keep away from him."

"The dirty barber," Colburn muttered.

"At first he used to swear out a warrant and have me arrested and skip out before the trial, but he could n't keep that up. Then he used to trail me up and try to scare me with a gun, but he did n't shoot — and I got on to it. Now he generally gets some newspaper reporter after me."

"How the — does he find out where you go?"

"He used to pay detectives, but now he does it him-

self. It gives him something to do, I guess. He knows I can't go far. I have to stay in hotels mostly. Boarding-houses won't let you in when you're as bad as I am. I can't go off and live by myself. I'm scared to get far from a doctor."

There was a long silence. The car rocked along the rails to a rhythm of "*Clackety-Clack*" and "clackety-clack." Suddenly Colburn said: "Look here. The Chief of Police is an old friend of mine. If you'll come back to Denver, I'll see that your brother gets out — and does n't bother you any more. And it won't go into the papers. I'll get a warrant against him for murder, if we can't scare him any other way. He'll never dare to put his nose inside the town again."

Sims sighed. "That's all right. Thanks," he said. "Well, will you do it?"

He studied the hollows between his knuckles, rubbing the back of one clenched hand with the thumb of the other. "What's the use? Leave him alone. He's in hell as it is." He looked around. "You don't think he'd be doing this if he were n't suffering like the devil, do you? He knows how he treated her. He knows he's got nothing against *me*. And I ain't going to give him anything. He murdered her, and he can't get away from it. That's what's the matter with him. Leave him alone. He's getting all that's coming to him."

"How about *you*?"

"I can stand it. Never mind me."

His tone was final. Colburn returned to Fisher's

questions. "How much did you get out of the 'clean-up'?"

"About two thousand," Sims answered irritably. "Is there anything else you want to know?"

There was not. He had the answers to his four queries. "I guess not," he said. "No."

"Will you go away, then, and leave me alone?"

Colburn rose, feeling in his pocket for his package of granulated tobacco. "Have a smoke?" he asked. Sims did not even look up. Colburn nodded, to himself, and went away to the smoking compartment.

The man's story had no news value; and no other value interested Colburn. He consulted his watch; it was 7.57. He consulted the railroad time-table; the first stop was Littleton, at 8.09. He found that a train returning to Denver would pass through Littleton at 9.22; and it would get him back to Denver at 9.45. Good. If there was a night-game at the club —

He settled himself in his seat, with the newspaper man's ability to dismiss the troubles of the outside world from his mind and wait as patiently as an old dog for the next whistle of events. He would return from wiring the story of a hanging, with just such placidity. His sympathies had been only momentarily stirred. And he had no literary interest in the psychology of the story and no feeling for its merely human appeal.

When the train stopped at Littleton, he got out, and stood facing the little brick station while he reflected that from 8.09 to 9.22 would be a wait of one hour and thirteen minutes. He decided to go back by trolley.

Then he walked up the platform to look in at Sims. The man was apparently asleep, peacefully exhausted, with his head thrown back and his face as waxy as death. The train bore him gently away, and Colburn remained looking at the other passengers as they were carried by.

He blinked and started — turning to follow a vanishing window with his eyes. For the fraction of a second he had seen Fisher's fat profile — the whitish eyes fixed in a malevolent stare ahead of him, as if through the walls of the intervening cars he could see his brother.

Fisher! He must have followed them.

The two red lights on the tail of the train swiftly receded in the darkness. One of them winked, like an eye, as a telegraph pole for an instant blotted it out. And Colburn had a vague feeling that it expressed a humorous contempt of him for standing on the platform while that train, with the tragedy that freighted it, dwindled and disappeared from him forever down the rails. Had he missed a story, after all? For a moment he wished that he had let Sims talk; and then his professional instinct for news assured him that a story eleven years old was not worth —

Pshaw! It was the money! Fisher had promised him one hundred dollars!

"Well, the dirty barber!" he muttered. "The dirty barber!"

And he felt relieved. His newspaper conscience was clear. It was only money he had failed to get.



THE MOTHER-IN-LAW

THE MOTHER-IN-LAW.

I

MRS. JOLIFFE had said, at the time of her daughter's marriage: "Then I hope her children 'll not take after *me* — fer if they do, they 'll have the divil's own time bringin' *her* up." Mrs. Joliffe was Irish. She was fat and jolly, with a sense of humor that could be sly, and whimsical, and even discreet. Her husband had been English and a butcher. "He was a blood-puddin' Britisher," she would say in loving memory. "God rest his bones." And whatever natural differences she had ever had with the girl, she laid to the fact that Hetty took after *him*.

"An' annyway, there's no sort o' comfort in a daughter nowadays," she contended. "I'd as soon have a canary bird to look after. They eat nothin'. An' they 're that danged indipindint! If I'd 'a' had a son, ~~now, he~~ 'd never 'a' knowed where to find a shirt to his body unless I laid it out fer him. These hoity-toity young misses in their little slippers, goin' hoppin' along on two toes! If I'd 'a' had a son, I c'u'd 'a' heard him comin' a block away. I never see a big fut like that in a trolley-car that I don't envy the mother of it."

These complaints, of course, were intended more than

half jocularly. Mrs. Joliffe's daughter and she had lived happily enough together, the mother being contented to stay at home and keep house in their little flat, and the girl willing to work all day in the millinery department of Altgelt's Sixth Avenue store. When the daughter married Bailey, who had charge of a section of Altgelt's grocery department, Mrs. Joliffe saw them off on a honeymoon excursion to Niagara Falls, and undertook to have their new home ready for them before they returned. "If yuh c'u'd eat hats," she said, "I'd not need to bother with yuh. But I'd better be lookin' after yer meals a while, till Hetty learns how to trim a steak. Go along with yuh, an' don't fall in the water. I'll have everythin' set up fer yuh betimes."

She had it set up now, and she was expecting their return at any moment. They had found a "jew'l of a flat," with doors at both ends and a kitchen in the middle; and that kitchen was the largest room in the apartment. There was a bedroom for Mrs. Joliffe, opening off the dining-room and separated from the young couple's quarters by the whole length of the flat. "I c'n live here," she told herself, "with no more trouble to them than an ol' dog in their back yard." Bailey had given her money to spend on furnishing. She had more of her own; she had a small estate, which her husband had left her; and she did not spare her own in her desire to give her daughter "a start that anny gurl c'u'd be proud o'."

She covered the floors with carpets and then covered the carpets with druggets, with rag rugs, with door-

mats, linoleums, and hall strips. It was her belief that a floor was by nature cold and that the more one put upon it, the warmer the house would be. She covered the windows with white roller-blinds, double sash-curtains of muslin starched like surplices, long lace curtains reaching from the cornice to the floor, and over-curtains of some sort of yellow stuff with an inwoven tinsel thread — until every window was as beautiful in gold embroidery and fine lace as “an archbishop sayin’ mass.” She crowded the little parlor with unmatched pieces of plush-upholstered furniture, which she had acquired in exchange for trading-stamps. She regilded her old picture-frames with a brush, bought Fourteenth Street colored “art photos,” and hung everywhere her holiday calendars, embossed and beribboned, but years out of date.

The kitchen she outfitted as if she were to cook there for a regiment; and in the place of honor she hung two great frying-pans, as thick as iron pots, heirlooms, such pans as are no longer made in these days of gas-stoves and light-housekeeping. She set her arms akimbo and looked about her. “There,” she said, with the defiant air of an artist opening his exhibition, “let ’em come.”

It was nine o’clock at night when they came. They had been on the train all day, and Hetty looked tired. She was a small blonde, with pale, gray-blue eyes and with one of those firm little mouths that are capable of unlimited silence. “Well, Mother,” she asked, with a slow correctness of pronunciation that marked an ambition in her, “what ’ve you been up to?”

Mrs. Joliffe laughed. "All sorts o' divilmint," she said, kissing Bailey. "I been settlin' things in a kind o' way till you 'd be able to put 'em to rights." She stood aside from the doorway. "Here's the parlor."

Hetty looked it over. She had it in her mind that the walls were like a stationer's window in Christmas week, and the whole room was as old-fashioned as her mother; but she said nothing. She accepted the arrangement as provisional: she could change it to the latest styles of Altgelt's furniture displays, in due course.

Bailey had been a country boy who had come to the city to be a millionaire, and he had been living in shabby hall-bedrooms. If he did not seem sufficiently enthusiastic about the parlor, it was because he did not wish them to think he was not accustomed to such magnificence. Added to this country reticence, he had the art of accepting a bargain with a show of reluctance. He said: "It 'll do us all right, won't it, Hetty?"

She pretended that she had not heard.

But Mrs. Joliffe was not discouraged. She introduced Bailey to a little tobacco-table set with a tobacco-jar, a corncob pipe, and a tobacco-cutter on a mahogany board — the very cutter with which Joliffe had sliced his plugs. A padded armchair stood beside the table. A pair of new "morocco" slippers waited under the chair, and a tin spittoon beside it. "That's the place fer you," she said, "when yuh come home with yer boots tired o' yer feet."

"But, Mother," Hetty objected, "he won't smoke in the parlor!"

"Won't he then?" she said. "He'll be a fool if he don't. He'll smoke where he likes in his own house." She produced a shaving-mirror in three leaves. "There," she said, "yuh c'n see all but the top o' yer head in it. An' thank the cats, as yuh get older, yuh won't have to shave *that*."

Bailey, heretofore, had had no one to consider his comfort but the washerwoman, who sometimes charitably darned his socks. "That's great," he laughed, flattered. "All the comforts of home!"

Mrs. Joliffe made a gesture that said "Wait! I'll show yuh!" and led the way to the dining-room.

She had prepared cold ham and hot coffee, pie and pickles and chocolate cake, bananas and cheese, bottled beer and sweet biscuits, celery, potato salad, table raisins, canned salmon, and chili sauce. They were crowded on the table promiscuously. There was scarcely room for the plates. "If yuh want annything yuh can't reach," she said, "ask fer it."

Hetty excused herself, on the plea that she was train-sick, and went to bed; and Bailey sat down to such a meal as he had not eaten since he had left his country home — for Mrs. Joliffe had boiled the ham herself, baked the cake, made the salad and the chili sauce, and ground the coffee; and they had the flavor that cannot be bought.

She kept his plate filled and his cup overflowing. When he had had enough, she coaxed and wheedled him

into taking more. "Yuh sh'u'd never stop eatin', man," she said, "till yer hands 're too tired to feed yuh."

He ate until he was red in the face; and then she brought him his pipe and let him talk. He talked shop — as Joliffe used to do — and she listened as if the ambitions and jealousies of Altgelt's grocery department were the most interesting gossip. "Yuh 'll be startin' up store some day fer yersilf?" she asked. He replied that he would as soon as he had saved the necessary capital. "Then yuh need n't worry about the house," she said. "It 'll cost yuh less than it did fer board, er *I'm* a Dutchman. Hetty 'll want nex' to nothin' fer clothes. She sews her own. An' I 'll look after the kitchen till she gets the hang o' house-keepin'. We 'll be millionaires this day next week."

He went to bed, gorged and optimistic, and relieved of half the worries of a newly married man. He had been aware that Hetty was the sort of wife to grace any station in life to which his business success might raise him, but he had been afraid that she might prove rather expensive at first. Now he was assured, that with her mother's aid, their beginning would prove as easy as their end would be glorious.

Mrs. Joliffe remained for an hour in the kitchen, washing the supper dishes and setting the table for breakfast, as satisfied as if she had been for a year out of work and had just found "a job." She took a last fond look at the table before she reluctantly put out the light. And neither she nor Bailey suspected that there

was any person in their flat not perfectly happy and willing to let things go on as they had begun.

II

It was two days later that Hetty began her quiet campaign against the established order.

She had found her first day a day of empty restlessness and dissatisfaction. She missed the noise and bustle of Altgelt's, the chatter of her fellow clerks, and the work to which she had been accustomed. She might have taken some interest in the housekeeping if her mother's incessant activity had not forced her aside and left her idle. She unpacked her trunk, put a few stitches in a torn flounce, changed the trimming of a hat, and washed her yellow hair in the sunlight; but chiefly she wandered from room to room or hung out of the parlor window, vacant-minded, empty-handed, like a girl who has left boarding-school and come home to find nothing to do.

Her mother rarely joked with her, having learned by experience that when a joke falls on a literal mind it is likely to sprout a misunderstanding. When she was not "slushin' about," as she called it, in the kitchen, she was humming "old-country" tunes and rocking happily in a favorite chair, which she had put by the dining-room window. It would be a nice study in psychology to explain why she never sat in the parlor; but she never felt at home there; and if she went in, it was only to stand a moment looking out of the window before she rearranged the curtains and went back to her

usual place. "I'm like our ol' cat Tom," she had explained once, "that was never happy off his own bit o' rag carpet. Leave me be." And Hetty had the parlor to herself.

She was ill-tempered that evening, and ate her dinner in silence, resenting the fact that Bailey had the head of the table, where he carved — and her mother the foot of it, where she poured the tea — while she herself sat at the side and had no hand in anything. She vented her resentment after dinner by objecting again to Bailey's smoking in the parlor; and he moved his smoking-table to the dining-room, where Mrs. Joliffe and he played cribbage. Hetty disliked cards. She disliked sitting in the dining-room beside a table set with dishes. She stayed in the parlor — where she could hear her mother quarreling humorously over the pegging and Bailey laughing with the heartiness of a winner. Finally she went to bed in a sulk.

Bailey, after a midnight supper, came to his sleep chuckling. She said nothing to him.

But next morning, at breakfast, she demanded that they hire a servant so that her mother might not have to spend all her days in the kitchen. "Good heavens!" Mrs. Joliffe cried. "What w'u'd yuh be doin' with a servan' gurl litterin' up the house, an' pokin' her nose into ev'rybody's bus'ness, an' talkin' about us to the neighbors, an' stealin' ev'rythin' she c'u'd lay hands to, an' pois'nin' us with bad food! A servan' gurl!"

Bailey was less voluble, but equally determined. A servant was an expensive luxury, which he had no in-

tention of indulging in — though he did not say so. He allowed his silence to say it for him.

"Well, I'm not going to spend all my time over a cook stove," Hetty protested.

"Leave the kitchen to me," her mother said, "an' don't be talkin' nonsense. We c'u'd live on Fif' Avenuh fer the price of a servan' gurl."

"Well, then," Hetty said, "let us send out the washin'."

"What!" the mother cried. "Pay some one fer tearin' yer clothes to pieces? I'd as soon have a cook bringin' me on grub that I did n't know what she'd been puttin' into it. What's the good o' havin' purty clothes if yuh're never to have the fun o' washin' an' ironin' 'em? I never heard such like talk. What's got into yuh at all, gurl?"

A feeling that she was useless in her own house — that was what had got into her. She had looked forward to having a little home in which she and Bailey might be happy and alone together. She had expected her mother, if she joined them, to take her place as a visitor and grow old in idleness. Instead of that, Mrs. Joliffe had furnished the flat to her own taste and was running it to her own satisfaction. She had made herself more necessary to Bailey than his own wife. And the girl's attempts to supplant her with a servant only established her more securely in the kitchen; for Hetty maintained her determination not to work there at all, and Mrs. Joliffe ruled unchallenged.

When Hetty claimed the right to do the shopping,



MICROCOPY RESOLUTION TEST CHART

(ANSI and ISO TEST CHART No. 2)



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at least, she was invited to "go ahead an' do it, then." But when Bailey opened a bad egg for breakfast and sat down for dinner to a rolled roast so tough that no one could eat it, there was a scene at the table, and Hetty declared, in a passion, that she would never buy another thing for the house. She went to bed almost weeping with anger.

Bailey played his cribbage and smoked his pipe.

"Leave her be," Mrs. Joliffe counseled him — and Hetty overheard her through the open door — "she'll come out of her tantrums. I know her. Two fer 'his heels.' Go on now."

He tried letting her be and found it a poor plan. She let *him* be. She withdrew herself ostentatiously from the household life, was silent at the table, and turned her back on him when they were alone. She sat all day by herself, amid the furnishings of a room that she hated, brooding upon the incidents of a life that she despised. Bailey's manner during his courtship had flattered her by a tacit acknowledgment that she was something finer and better than he. (He had fallen in love with her "citified" sophistication.) She had not allowed him to see much of her mother, of whose simplicity and commonness she had been ashamed. She had never let him know that her father had been a butcher; she had intended to leave all that sort of thing behind her when she married. She had known that Bailey was a trusted man at Altgelt's, with a future before him, and she had counted on rising with him out of reach of her past. She had vaguely intended to sub-

due her mother and put her into the background of her new life.

And, to Hetty's mind, it was the mother who had wrecked every plan. Had n't she told Bailey about her husband — "God rest his bones." Had n't she dragged Bailey down to her own free-and-easy tenement-house manner? Had n't she destroyed his awed respect for his wife?

"What's the matter with you, anyway?" Bailey asked her impatiently; and she turned on him in a blazing indignation. "Don't you speak to me like that," she cried. "You have n't married a servant girl."

"I don't know what I *have* married," he retorted.

"You seem to 've married a mother-in-law," she said.

"Go and sit in the kitchen with her. It's the part of the house you 're most int'rested in."

"That's a nice sort of talk!"

His reproof put her on her dignity. She saw that she was lowering herself still further in his regard; and thereafter she said nothing. She became self-contained, haughty, silent, and altogether impossible. No endearments could draw an explanation from her, and no impatience provoke her to a retort. She lived a silent protest against the whole situation, and Bailey rapidly found himself reduced to a state of worried misery.

He could no longer enjoy his evening game of cribbage in the dining-room; and yet he played, because he did not wish to hurt Mrs. Joliffe's feelings. He could not enjoy his meals, but he had to pretend, for Mrs.

Joliffe's sake, that he did enjoy them. She exerted herself to please him, performed miracles in cookery, and tried to keep the table lively with an indomitable good nature. But she did not understand what was wrong. She thought there had been some belated lover's quarrel between the two, and she considered it the part of wisdom to ask no questions. She was cheerfully happy herself, worked singing, read the newspapers in her rocking-chair, and kept to her own end of the flat. "The gurl's a fool," she said herself, "but I was the same mesilf at her age. . . . Poor Jollie! Heaven give 'm rest!" She laughed to herself. "Us women — we're danged hard to live with!"

She played her part until it was not humanly possible to play it longer. Then she scolded her daughter and got nothing but a malevolent look. She advised Bailey to take his wife to the theater at night, and he did so, though he fell asleep in his seat. Then he took her to Coney Island on a Saturday afternoon, and came back desperately discouraged — for the girl had told him calmly that she would not live in the flat more than a month longer; that as soon as the cool weather came, she would return to work in some shop.

He sat with his cards in his hands, too worried to play his game. He gazed at nothing, with an empty pipe in his mouth.

"She wants a couple o' babies," Mrs. Joliffe declared. "When she has some squallin' young appetites to be stuffin' she'll have no time to be thinkin' of hersilf."

He shook his head.

"Aw, yuh 're as bad as them ol' maid ministers," she cried, "that 're allus writin' to the paypers about the divorce prohlum. If you men had more children, yuh 'd be havin' less trouhle with yer wives."

"She does n't like the flat."

"The flat! What's wrong with it, man?"

He looked at her as if he were going to tell her, flushed self-consciously, and went on with his game.

That look gave her her first suspicion of the truth. She lay awake a long time in the night, "puttin' two an' two together," as she would have said. When she saw her daughter in the morning, she understood.

"Well," she said to herself, "I ain't goin' to hutt in. Let her do things her own way if she wants to. She 'll learn as well hy tryin' as by hein' told!"

III

She understood why Bailey did not play cribbage with her that night — though he pretended that it was because he had a headache. He spent the evening in the other end of the flat, with the doors closed against her so that she might not hear what Hetty was saying. The old woman darned his socks and assured herself that it was natural in the girl to want him to herself. She overlooked his guiltily apologetic manner toward her in the morning, and said nothing to Hetty when they were left alone together.

The girl swept the parlor herself that day, rearranged the furniture, and took down all the calendars — as Mrs. Joliffe discovered in the evening, when Bailey

and his wife had gone off to a roof-garden. She found her cherished decorations thrown together in a closet, and she put them away in her trunk, her lips twitching with a pained indignation. The insult was two-edged, though it hurt her most by impugning her taste as a housekeeper. "Dang the girl," she said. "A few years ago she'd not 'a' behaved so — er if she did, she'd 'a' got well spanked fer it!"

She was up early and had breakfast ready for Bailey in the morning, with a cheerful countenance that changed, for a moment only, when she understood from his long and shamefaced explanation that he was going to take Hetty out to dinner in a restaurant and would not be home to the meal. Here was an insinuation that her cooking was not all that it might be! He invited her to come with them, but she knew better than to accept. "Never mind me," she said. "I'm too old to be gaddin' about."

Hetty's manner during the day seemed to have a suggestion of silent triumph in it, but nothing was said. The mother could not speak of what was in her thought, and the daughter would not. Mrs. Joliffe could only wait and watch, hoping that what seemed to her an unreasonable anger in the girl would abate for want of provocation. But Hetty was determined to have her mother understand that *she* could not be ignored and put aside in her own house; and as her mother yielded, bewildered and hurt, Hetty pressed on to the realization of the plans that she had made before her marriage.

It became one of those tragi-comedies of household life that develop day by day, week after week, in the small incidents of domestic routine. Bailey did his best to smooth over the situation, but he was no diplomat. He asked Mrs. Joliffe to play cribbage with him, once, tentatively; but he was evidently relieved when she did not accept. He allowed Hetty to send her own clothes to the laundry, and then his, and finally the household linen. He even ate less heartily what Mrs. Joliffe cooked, and he was content when she accepted these slights without appearing to notice them. He let Hetty take down the curtains in the parlor and put up others more to her taste. He gave her money to buy some new furniture, and she put away the rugs.

Mrs. Joliffe, sitting quiet and humiliated in the dining-room, heard the girl, now, singing as she worked.

By this time, of course, Hetty was no longer silent at the table, except when she and her mother were alone. When Bailey was there, she was quite talkative and affable, and affected to ignore what looked like ill humor in the old woman. "She'll come around," she told him privately. "She's sulky because she can't have everything her own way." She had bought a recipe book and she was experimenting in the kitchen with desserts, which Bailey praised immoderately and ate largely of. She had persuaded him that tea gave him indigestion; she did not drink it herself; and her mother had none to pour but her own. When the furnishings of the dining-room were overhauled, she turned the

table around and placed Bailey's chair opposite hers — by which manœuver Mrs. Joliffe was left in the place of the outsider. As a final touch, Hetty helped the vegetables; and there was something hard to define in the way in which she passed her mother's plate. It was perhaps unconscious and unintentional; but it made Mrs. Joliffe feel that the hand of a slighting charity was extended to her with the food.

"I'm not wanted," she told herself. "I'll go away. I'll go away an' live by mesilf." But she had spent too much of her own money on the despised furniture and decorations of the flat, and she was too proud to ask for it back. The prospect of a lonely and useless old age frightened her even more than poverty. She wanted work to do; and here was work, if Hetty would only let her do it. "What's the matter with the child?" she asked herself. "What've I done *to* her? I'm that worried I've got the heartburn." And she rubbed her waist-line pathetically and blinked her faded eyes.

She did not appreciate this desire of a young life to mold its own circumstances, direct its own plans, achieve its new ambitions. She saw herself thrust aside by a filial jealousy that seemed to her the most horrible ingratitude, unnatural and heart-breaking; and this jealousy, having begun in ill-temper, continued in that aspect, because the girl was best able to justify herself in her own eyes by preserving her resentment against her mother, even after Mrs. Joliffe had been reduced to the meekness of despair.

At last Hetty happened to say, one day at dinner: "When we have a girl wo 'll be able to givo little parties."

Bailey remained silent, and his silence piqued her. She glanced at her mother and took the old woman's set lips as an unspoken challenge. She remembered how humiliatingly she had been defeated on this point once, and she set herself to carry it now — to make her husband say that sho might have a servant if she wished, although she did not intend to get onc.

She complained of the need of some ono to run out to the grocer's, or to answer the door. Sho found frequent occasions for remembering that her neighbor had a servant. And although there was no room in the flat for a maid, unless she turned her mother out — and she saw that her mother regarded the matter in this light — she persisted and insisted and took every opportunity to push the question home.

"Hetty does n't want me," Mrs. Joliffe told her son-in-law, with tears in her eyes. "She knows I won't stay here idle, eatin' what I do nothin' to earn. She 'll need me bedroom fer the gurl. I 'll go. I 'll go."

Bailey remonstrated privately with his wife. "That 's all talk," Hetty replied, with more animosity than she really felt. "She 's too old to do the work now, and she 's growing older every day. She does n't get things half done, and tho stuff she cooks makes me sick."

She had, in fact, been feeling unwell, complaining of attacks of faintness and eating very little.

Bailey said indignantly: "Woll, I'm tired of this whele business. We don't need a girl and we can't afford one. Leave the poer old weman alene. The house was a good deal happier as it was — besides being cheaper."

"Very well," the wife replied. "If you think more of her crazy notions than you do of *my* health —"

She went out to a dairy restaurant for luncheon and bought some food in a delieatessen shop and hid it in her trunk. She ate nothing for dinner except some tapioca pudding, which she had made herself, and it was so badly eoked that it disagreed with her. She was ill in the morning, refused to have her breakfast brought to her in bed, and sent Bailey to his work, to worry about her. Her mother came to see her at mid-day with a bowl of ehicken broth and some buttered toast. She refused it. "If I want anything to eat," she said, "I'll cook it myself."

Mrs. Joliffe put the food on the dresser and went to her room to pack her small belongings. "I can't stay here," she told herself, "an' I don't know where I'll go to. I'll have to got work. I'll havo to get werk somewhere, but I'll go to the poorhouse before I'll stan' fer this. I've slaved fer her all mo life, an' I'd work fer her now, till the flesh dropped off me fingers, if sho wanted me. But sho don't. I'll go — an' be danged to her!" She wiped her cheeks on the end of her apron. "God help Bailey. I'm glad it's him that's got to stay an' not *me*."

She stripped her little room, packed her pictures of

the saints, her holy-water font, and her photographs. She even began to tie up her bedding in a bundle, but left it until she should see Bailey. "I can't move till mornin' anyways," she said, "an' I'll not sleep on the floor to please nobody."

She did not go in to her daughter again; and Hetty, in a high fever, with a blinding headache, had the satisfaction of finding herself seriously ill. When Bailey came home, he was in such a state that he ran out again for the doctor. Mrs. Joliffo looked on at his anxiety, grimly contemptuous, and sat down to her lonely dinner, eating and drinking mechanically, with her eyes blank and her face resolute.

"I'm leavin' here in the mornin'," she told him.

The doctor was in the other room, and Bailey was awaiting his opinion of the case. "Leaving?" he said. "She's sick."

"She'll let me do nothin' fer her. She'll eat nothin' I cook. She wants a gurl. She wants to be rid o' me. I'm goin'."

He wandered back to the bedroom again.

She heard the murmur of the doctor's voice and she said to herself: "He e'n cure her bad timper, no doubt! It's all that's wrong with her!" When she heard the doctor go out, she took Bailey's dinner from the oven, ready for his return to the table. "Poor boy," she said. "She'll lead him a life!"

He came out to her, pale. "She wants to see you," he said huskily.

"What is it?"

Ho looked down at his feet. "She'll tell you, I guess."

His manner alarmed her. She hurried to the bedroom and found Hetty lying among the pillows, her eyes dilated, her lips trembling. "Mother," she said, clutching at the old woman's hard hand, "don't go away. Don't leave me. I'm — I'm frightened."

"What is it?" the mother whispered. "What is it?" And even as she asked it, she knew. . . . "Dear God," she laughed, while the girl clung to her, "I wanted nothin' hut to stay with yuh. Who said I was goin' to leave yuh? Don't be a fool, gurl. What're yuh scared o'? D'yuh think yuh're the first woman ever had a baby? Wait now. Yuh're hungry. That's what's wrong with yuh. Where's that broth?"

She ran out to the kitchen with it to warm it up. "There!" she said to Bailey. "What'd I tell yuh! We'll have no mero trouble in *this* house. Sit down there an' eat yer dinner like a man an' a father. I'll beat y' at crihhage when I get her off to sleep."

She chuckled to herself, good-naturedly, over the stove: "I hope it'll be a gurl, an' marry young. I do *that*. 'T'ud serve Hetty dang well right if she lived to be a mother-in-law herself, fer her sins. . . . A mother-in-law! An' they make jokes about us in the paypers!"

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IN THE MUSÉE



IN THE MUSÉE

I

REDNEY"—who sold chewing-gum and prize packages on the various floors of the old Bowery Musée—stopped at the door of Madame Carlotta's gipsy tent and grinned in at Madame. "Well," he said, "how 's the game goin'? Been holdin' any warm hands lately?"

It was a gipsy tent that might have served as a Turkish cozy corner in a Harlem flat; and Madame Carlotta, plump and comfortable, dressed in a scarlet kimono, among soiled bespangled cushions, looked almost as gipsy-like and nomadic as a fat house cat looks tigerish. She was occupying her spare moments by furtively darning the heels of the Professor's socks, looking down her nose through the glasses of an old-fashioned pince-nez that was poised on her nose tip as if it had slid down there to cling to boneless pudginess in the last feeble grip of exhaustion. It was a nose to discourage anything but a carpenter's vise, and the spring of the pince-nez had been worn weak—reading palms. In private life, of course, she used spectacles.

She looked up at Redney, carefully, mindful of the glasses.

"Yuh 'll sneeze some day," he said, "an' get them goggles stuck in yer throat."

She took them off to ask: "Why ain't you sellin' your things?"

"Nothin' doin'." He had a wooden tray of chewing-gum and prize packages slung before him on straps from his shoulders. "Could n't sell that gang silver dollars at three for a nickel. They ain't got the price. Bunch o' kikes. Say! The nex' dame yuh get in here, tell her she's goin' to find her fortune in a prize package, will yuh? That'd help."

She shook her head. "They don't come the way they ust to. The Professor says he don't think we're more than payin' rent since Feb'u'ry."

Redney made a sound of derision in his nose. "The game's a dead one. Ev'ry one's wise to *them* fakes." He indicated the "exhibits" with a backward jerk of the head.

He was called "Redney" as a dog is called "Spot"; his real name was as unknown as his history. He had arrived at the Musée with the sun-scalded complexion of an amateur tramp; and after "boosting" for a time, on the street, he had obtained the privilege of selling candies inside, on a percentage basis. It was understood that he had previously been traveling with a circus, as a "butcher," selling lemonade and "red-hots." He had a lumpy chin and jaw, but lips that were nimble, full of unexpected muscles, suave and slangy — the lips of a man who has the gift of the gab.

"Movin' pictur' joints an' nickelodeons 've got us on the blink," he said. "We're tryin' to pay too much rent anyway."

She replaced her glasses and resumed her darning desperately. "I don't know whatever we'll do — if the Musée shuts up — the Professor an' me. We haven't got a penny put by. Oh, dear! I'm that worried I can't sleep nights." She added, unexpectedly: "You must n't be fightin' with him. He's worried. That's what makes him bad-tempered."

Redney and the Professor had come to an open quarrel on the previous day because Redney had wished to call his wares on the floors of the Musée, and the Professor, as floor-manager, had refused to let him "solicit" except silently.

"He seems gay enough to-night," Redney said.

She shook her head again. "I don't know whatever we'll do."

He suggested: "Yuh don't get along with him any too smooth, yerself, do yuh?"

"Oh, well," she sighed. "You know — old married people —"

He cut in: "When were yuh married?" His tone was dispassionate and inquiring, but there was something under it that startled her.

She gave him a quick look.

He said: "Uh?" His face was blank. "Yuh said yuh were old married people. Yuh must 'a' married young."

"O-oh!" She busied herself in a suspiciously close inspection of the mended socks. "Yes." She doubled a pair together, inside of themselves, in the customary

deft way of housewives. "We've been married a long time."

"Yuh've said it twice, so it must be true," he remarked, with his usual brazen calm. "Been a gay life, eh? Enjoyed ev'ry minute of it?"

She regarded him with a pathetic doubtfulness of expression, bewildered by worry and not sure of his sarcasm. "Gay?" she said — and got no farther.

There was a look in his eyes that had nothing to do with his words — one of those indescribable significances of scrutiny which do not express thought but show where it is concealed. On the instant, with a shifting of the eyelid, it was gone. "Well, cheer up," he said. "The worst is yet to come." And, shrugging up the tray-straps on his shoulders, he went out, to meet the small attendance of visitors who were following the Professor from the lower end of the hall.

She sat looking after him, blankly, with the socks in her hand, weighed down by an apprehension which his parting words had not allayed.

II

The hall on which he had issued was the width, length, and height of a single Bowery shop — and that is narrow, long, and low. It was dismally lit with a half-dozen gas-jets that did not seem to thrive in the exhausted air; and under these jets, on platforms along the walls, sat a half-dozen entertainers, exhibitors, and living curiosities waiting for the public to be drawn to them by the Professor's "spiel." In a double row down the

center of the room were punching machines to tempt the Bowery's strong right arm, blowing machines for the lungs, lifting machines for the back, grip machines for the hands, automatic phonographs, weighing machines, and mutascopes — all waiting in vain for the unwary penny. The owners of the pennies evidently knew by heart the automatic record of their physical prowess. They walked up and down the rows of machines listlessly, with the blasé air of the true Boweryite when he is trying to be amused — that air of wandering about in the vague hope of arriving somewhere else, with the certain knowledge that he will find there nothing new.

The Professor stood upon a platform watching them. Redney watched the Professor.

He was the floor-manager, the lecturer, the announcer, the general "spieler" of the Musée — a black little man in a black little suit of evening clothes that looked as old and rusty as he. He wore them always, and his manner became them always, for he had a dignified, high manner of public ease. He had dyed his mustache — a mustache that writhed up on each side of an overhanging nose as if it felt pinched uncomfortably between the nose and the lip. He had dyed the greasy black strings of hair that were combed across his bald top. He had dyed his rising eyebrows. (He was sandy Scotch by nature and his name was MacFinn.) But every one who knew him understood that he dyed for professional reasons, and not because he wished to disguise his evident age; he had too much tolerant con-

tempt for the world to affect any appearances that were not required of him by his position. He was accustomed to talk down to his audiences patronizingly, with an obvious realization of the fact that they were creatures of a lower order — working, worried people come to him for amusement as they might come to a high priest for religious consolation — and, while he lied to them like a press-agent, he did it for their own good, to take their minds off their troubles — a feat which he performed with ease.

It had been noticeable of late that he had been worried himself, as Madame Carlotta had said — that he had been had-tempered, as Redney had had cause to observe. The staff of the Musée had supposed that this change in him was due to the “had business”; and the staff, of course, had been right. But to-night he had broken loose in his lectures in a mildly wild sort of gaiety; and Redney — after listening to him at the lower end of the hall — had come to Madame Carlotta to see whether she was aware of anything that had happened to relieve the anxieties of her husband. Her conversation had convinced him that she was not in the secret. And when he came out of her tent, it was to watch the Professor again and listen.

The pompous little man cleared his throat. “Ladies and gentle-men!” he began, with a sort of benign contempt. “Allow me to *in-troduce* to your notice, Professor Hei-namann, the *cham-pine* altitudinous *a-erial-ist* of the world.”

Heinamann looked at the public, looked down at the

bagged knees of his faded pink tights, and showed no interest in either.

The Professor teetered complacently on heel and toe. "I am *in*-structed to an-nounce . . . for the *ben-e*-fit of those *in*-dividuals who may happen to be in the *vi*-cinity of this building at ten A. M. on *Mon*-day morning . . . that Professor Hei-namann on that *o*-casion will perform a daring *ah*-scension from the roof of this *buil*-ding to the *ex*-tra-*or*-dinary al-titudo of some thou-sands of feet above the *sur*-face of the earth . . . if the weather on that *o*-casion happens to be *pro*-pitious."

The aerialist was staring at the back of the Profes-sor's head, startled.

"*And*," the Professor continued, "when the daring *navi*-ga-tor has de-scentit again from the clouds to *ter*-ra *fir*-ma . . . the vehicle in which he per-formed this *en*-tirely new and novel *ah*-scension . . . will be placed on *ex*-hibition in this hall for the bene-fit of the *Am*-erican public . . . dur-ing a short en-gage-ment . . . be-fore the Pro-fessor makes his so-journ to Paris *and* Lon-don."

That promise caused no excitement among the "vis-itors." They were accustomed to hearing the impos-sible promised and then seeing the commonplace performed. It startled Heinamann for the moment only; he had photographs and a history of his life for sale, and he hastened to offer them while the wonder was still new. It puzzled Madame Carlotta, listening in her tent; but she decided that the Professor was making an heroic effort to draw a crowd for Monday.

Redney alone, lounging against the wall, saw something in the reckless promise of the speech which the others did not appreciate.

The Professor rarely joked. He had always been a conservative liar on the platform and magnified the past of his "exhibits" without promising too much for the future. And Redney, thoughtfully scratching in the red thatch of his head, was aware that there was, as he would have said, "somethin' doin'."

The Musée had seen its busiest days in the early eighties, when its Civil War relics were still fresh from the factory and there were enough English-speaking immigrants on the East Side to give the Professor a profitable audience. In the nineties, when "Madame Carlotta" joined its staff, it was just beginning to feel the competition of the Yiddish theaters and the ponny arcades. A decade later, when Redney came to it, it was already in its hopeless decline. What he called "movin'-pictur' joints" and "nickelodeons" had changed the public taste in amusement. Civil War relics were no longer of interest — even though they had been imperfectly converted into relics of the campaign in Cuba. The living curiosities had outlived curiosity. Even the Musée's "Amateurs' Night" — of the Professor's own origination — had been stolen by its rivals, and the glory of its Friday night contests had departed. A three-story building, with a theater on its ground floor and two large amusement halls above, cannot pay rent and salaries on a feeble trickle of dimes that took a whole evening to fill one of the wooden pools

of the till in the box-office. The tragedy was inevitable. The end was foreseen.

And Redney suddenly suspected that it had arrived. He went downstairs to the box-office to investigate.

The Professor proceeded to introduce a "paper wizard" who was waiting to fold a sheet of foolscap into some thousand different shapes, to sell a water-proof shoe-dressing that he had discovered in a "geezer" in Yellowstone Park, and to preside over the transformations of an "Enchanted Palace" of tinsel and tissue paper, "showing seven wonderful scenes from all parts of the universe, and closing with a grand transformation scene in honor to our national hero, Admiral Dewey." And when the paper wizard stepped forward to roll up his sleeves, the Professor looked in on Madame Carlotta. "What's that boy doing in your tent all the time?" he demanded. "I don't want him round. I told you that before."

His dislike of the boy was the antipathy of mature dignity for the insulting self-sufficiency of youth. It had been increased by Redney's open contempt for the Professor's eloquence. It had gained purpose and effect when Redney succeeded in so ingratiating himself with Madame Carlotta that she had wished to "give the poor boy a home," and the Professor had refused to let her do it.

She put her hand down flat on the table. "Mac," she said, in a low voice of determination, "I won't stand it. I won't stand it no longer. People are throwin' it up to me the way you treat me —"

"That's — that's that boy!"

"And I won't stand it. Here I've been spendin' ev'ry cent I made — on you an' the flat — ev'ry cent of it. An' now, if anything happens I got nothin'—"
She checked herself with the thought that if she quarreled, now, she might not have even *him*. "I've done everything fer you, an' you have n't — You won't even tell me," she said, plaintively, "about the Musée, whether it's goin' to bust up."

He nodded at the charts of palmistry and decorations of hocus-pocus on the walls. "Read it in the cards," he said. "Read it in the cards."

"You've never treated mo right. Nover!"

He had found her practising her innocent black arts in a tenement-house, and had procured her her placo in the Musée. He was then a lonely old bachelor, and she was the deserted widow of a circus man who had run away from her and taken their child. She had been so grateful to the Professor that she had served him ever since like a bound slave; and he had accepted everything from her with his high-platform air, acknowledging no obligation to anybody, reserved and selfish, above the world and vain.

He said now, narrowing his eyes: "If the Musée shuts up, p'raps *he* 'll look after you, eh? You were so set on giving him a home, mebbe *he* 'll give *you* one. I've never treated you right! You turn on me the first word a red-headed brat says against me. Mebbe *he* 'll do better for you. Yes! Eh?"

"I never turned against you," she weakened. "The

boy's nothin' to me, an' you know it." She began to weep. "I've been that worried — You've been so bad-tempered — Wh-what are we goin' to do if the place shuts up?"

He made a face that expressed his contempt of these marital quarrels and feminine blubberings. "I've been trying to hold the place together here for the Boss. I did n't know whether we were going to shut up any more than you did. Now — Well, you'll have a chance to learn who your friends are to-night. Young gutter-snipe! We'll be rid of *him*, anyway."

"Are we goin' to close to-night?"

"That's not your bus'ness."

"We *are!*"

"You keep quiet," he ordered. "Do you want them to come here and seize everything for the rent?"

The paper wizard had raised his voice to describe the climax of his grand transformation scene; it was the call of duty to the Professor, and with a final snort he left her and went back to his work. She looked out after him, her eyes so filled with tears that she could not see confronting her the "triumphal arch to Admiral Dewey" with the Philippine Islands in the background. But even through the stupefaction of her anxiety she heard the ridiculous wizard orate: "Many beautiful flowers blossom on these islands, only to fade, wither, and pass away, but the flower of the American navy, his glory 'll never fade in the hearts of his countrymen, Admiral Dewey." A bouquet of paper roses opened into a chromo of the admiral, and, in a dead silence,

that should have been filled with an ovation to the hero, the paper wizard bowed himself off. The imperishable glory of the flower of the navy had already faded in the hearts of his countrymen, and Madame Carlotta recognized that the wizard's climax, like everything else in the Musée, was a foredoomed failure.

If the Musée closed —

"Ladiesangelmn," a new voice piped up, "alludin' to these prize packages w'ich I'm givin' away this ev'nin', I want 'a say each an' ev'ry package consists in the best cough drops, dew drops, lem'nade drops, an' bunbuns mado 'r manafactered, war'nted a cure fer all such as coughs, col's, warts, an' toot'aches, an' if any o' youse —"

It was Redney. In defiance of the Professor's orders and the rules of the Musée, he was crying his wares. She watched him from the door of the tent, her fingers at her mouth. He was holding aloft a sample package.

"— has such as coughs, col's, warts, an' toot'aches, I'd advise him to try one at onct. One fer you?"

The Professor had shouldered his way through the little crowd to him. Redney offered him a package impudently. "In each an' ev'ry package the ladies 'at wraps up these packages — Fi' cents. That's all. Marked down from ten. Don' want it? Well, run away an' play. I'm busy."

The Professor had reached a hand out at him, to grip his coat. Redney struck it aside. "Cut it out," he snarled, "er I'll —"

"Redney!" she cried.

The crowd closed in with the eager expectation of seeing a fight. He waved a package at her, reassuringly. "The ladies 'at wraps up these packages has a habit 'f accident'ly droppin' in gol' watches an' di'mon' ringses, an' if any o' youse gets such as a gol' watch er a di'mon' ring — All right, gran'pa," he checked the Professor. "Run away an' play with yerself — I 'n requested t' ask yuh to leavo it with gran'pa here. He 's savin' up gol' watches an' di'mon' ringses fer Chris'mas."

The Professor had mounted another platform. "Ladies and gentle-men," he shouted, in a voice trembling with rage, "if you will now kindly step this way —"

"These here packages," Redney overtopped him, "sells fer a dime, ten cents, but on th' int'restin' o-casion I 'm sellin' 'em two fer five. Here y' are. Don' mind ol' Baldy there. Two fer five. Two fer five. Soon 's I 'm sold out I 'll take him down off his perch an' wipe the floor with him. Two fer five. Hurry up now, if you want to see the fight. Right y' are. Who 's the nex'? Here it is."

The Bowery knew a bargain; and the prize packages, two fer a nickol, were sold as fast as Redney could hand them out. The Professor, fuming helplessly, watched them go. Several times he called out his invitation to "step this way," but no one obeyed him. At last, when it was almost time for Redney to redeem his promise to wipe the floor with him, he shouted: "We will now

proceed downstairs, where some inter-esting exhibits are awaiting us," and, leaving Redney to his triumph, he went helow with all the dignity of an old dog that has been barked out of countenance by a pup.

When Redney had emptied his tray, he said cheerfully: "Now, frien's, I want to thank yuh fer yer kind attention an' say good-night. The rest o' the show's waitin' fer yuh downstairs. Hurry up, er yuh 'll miss it. Go on. Go on. NO fight to-night. All hets are off."

III

He waited until the last reluctant small hoy had taken to the stairs; then he grinned his way over to Madame's tent, winking at his friends on their platforms, and counting his nickels as he went. "Well," he said, "I'm sold out. How 're *you* gettin' on?"

"What's the matter?" she asked. "What did you do it fer?"

He jerked his thumb over his shoulder at the hall. "They're grabbin' everythin' downstairs fer rent. Two fer a nickel's better 'n nothin' apiece. The game's up."

"There!" she said. "I knew it!"

She sank hack upon her cushions, staring at him with the dumb eyes of disaster realized. He laughed and reached for her cards on the table.

"Now what 'll we do?" she said. "Now!"

He sat down and shuffled the hits of pasteboard and began to lay them out on the table before him.

"Not a cent saved," she said. "Not a cent. . . . Where is he? The Professor? What's he goin' to do?"

"Yuh can search *me*," Redney assured her. "I don't know." He studied the cards. "Say," he said, "yuh been married before."

"What?"

He put his cigarette-stained forefinger on the Queen of Hearts. "Yuh've been married before. Had a kid, too."

She blinked at him between grief and amazement. He laid out more cards. "He was a circus man, was n't he? What become o' the hoy?"

She opened her mouth to speak and remained with it open, leaning forward to see the cards — which he was studying sagely. "Yer name was Carr, eh?" he said. "Lottie Carr. That's why it's Madame Carlotta, ain't it?"

She clutched his arm. "What're you talkin' about?"

"I'm tellin' yer fortune." He spread more cards. "Huh! He ran off with the kid. A tumbler. Yuh don't say. Got his neck broke in Denver. What become o' the kid?"

She answered, as if in spite of herself, faintly: "I don't know."

"Well, let's see." He spread more cards. "The kid, eh? Let's see. . . . How about that? That looks like it. He went on with the troupe. An' then when he would n't tumble he got to sellin' peanuts an' lem'nade. He was darned glad he was quit o' th' ol'

man. Let's see. He come back to N' York." Her hand had tightened on his arm, in a shaking grasp. "An' one day, on the Bow'ry, he seen a sign 'Madame Carlotta' in a Musée. Wonder if it was her?"

He grinned round past his shoulder at her. "Looks like her."

Her poor old face was as if paralyzed in an expression of incredulous amazement and delight. "Ah!" she said in her throat, without moving her lips, open-mouthed. And then, with a shaking jaw, stutteringly, she cried: "B-b-bab!"

"Sure thing," he grinned.

She caught him round the neck and drew him down to her, and in spite of his shamefaced and protesting laughter she almost strangled him with a hug and smothered him in her embraces. "Bab! Bab!" she cried, her hands about his face as if he were a child — patting his cheeks, stroking his hair back from his forehead, kissing and fondling him. "Oh, Bab!" Her tears came with her kisses. "My — my —"

It was too much for her. She burst into sobs, fumbling for her handkerchief.

The boy patted her awkwardly on the back whispering: "Hol' on, mom. That's all right. Don't cry about it."

"Oh, I can't help it," she wept, wiping her eyes with the sleeve of her kimono. "I'm so — Oh, I was so worried. Oh, it did n't seem as if there was any one — Oh, Bab!"

"That's all right," he said. "I'd 'a' told yuh long

ago only I did n't know whether — I thought p'raps
th' ol' guy —”

“ Oh, why did n't you? Oh, dear. Oh, I can't stop.”
She mopped her face frantically. “ Oh, I'm so glad.
Oh, Bab!”

He waited until she had regained control of herself,
patting her clumsily on the shoulder. “ That's all
right,” he said. “ I thought p'raps the Professor —”
The name checked her; she choked down a sob, sud-
denly recalled to the thought of *him*. “ I did n't
know,” Redney went on, “ whether he'd want me
round — whether you —”

“ Bab!” She rose with all the dignity of an old
mother. “ D'you think I'd let him —”

“ That's all right, then. All right. It's up to
him, then.”

She took off her kimono and threw it among the cush-
ions. “ There!” she said. “ I'm done with him.
He's never treated me right. Never! He told me
to-night — No! I'll work no more for him. Bab!”
She threw out her arms to him. “ Take me away —
from — from this — from him. I —”

“ Here now,” he said, with embarrassed gruffness.
“ Yuh don't need to throw a fit. Yuh're comin' back
with me an' stay there. I know a better job than this.
Yuh won't have to work fer nobody. Get yer hat on.
Come on.”

The Professor filled the tent door — wiping his fore-
head weakly with a red handkerchief, unconscious of the
fact that she was not alone. “ Well,” he said, bitterly,

"you've got it now. They've seized everything." He saw Redney, and throw out a hand at him, passionately, shaking the handkerchief. "Get out of here. Get out."

Redney nodded. "I'm goin'. Come on, mom."

She jabbed in her hat-pins. "That's my son," she said. "That's my boy. He's offered me a home. Now, then!"

The Professor looked from one to the other, with his scowl of anger slowly fading till his face was a gape of staring astonishment.

"You've never treated me right," she cried. "Never! I've given you everything — worked fer you an' everything. I'm not goin' to do it no more."

He sat down among the cushions, blinking, with a sort of stunned look that was pitiable enough to accuse her of inhumanity.

"You've made my — It's been a cat an' dog life," she defended herself. "You've brought it on yerself. I wanted to do what was right. You've no one but yerself to blame."

He tried to pull himself together, with a return of his pride.

"I don't want to leave you on the street," she said, reluctantly. She looked around at Redney. "I s'pose, if he — until he gets work somewhere —"

The Professor drew himself up. "No!" His voice was no more than a croak. "No!" His vanity would not let him — or if not his vanity, then his self-respect. He did not know how dependent he was; we none of us do. He had regarded himself as a masterly,

strong spirit, living aloof from the weakness of humanity; and he was willing to let her go without a word of kindness or reconciliation.

She went. He stood up, dazed and shaken. He stumbled out into the hall to look after her. There, all the living curiosities, exhibitors, and platform entertainers were cursing and despairing together like the passengers on a sinking ship. Their wages were lost; their trunks, their properties, their trained animals and their poor exhibits were all held by the law. They faced bankruptcy and want. And the Professor, the captain of the wreck, stood for a moment pale before that hubbub, and then retreated from it, down the back stairs, into the street.

He wandered about desolately, till fatigue drove him home to his empty rooms. She had been there. Her trunk was gone and all of her small furnishings that could be packed into it. On the back of an envelope, hung on a gas-jet where he could be sure to see it, she had scrawled: "Good-hy."

He left it there.

He left it there and left the gas burning, and — as a final expression of his mood — went to bed in his clothes, with his shoes on.

That was some years ago. Every trace of the old Bowery Musée is gone now — gone with the public that used to patronize it and the conditions that kept it alive. A penny savings-bank has been built on its site. Madame Carlotta and young Redney have disappeared to-

gether — no one knows where. Only the Professor remains — an old rounder on the Bowery, gray an' shabby, sleeping in doss-houses and hawking a china cement — and he, as the chief victim of this tragedy in fakirdom, is still too proud for pity and too absurd for anything else.

rofessor
ay an'
a china
tragedy
absurd

THE EXILES



THE EXILES

THE street was a narrow lane of asphalt between two walls of brownstone house-fronts; and these two walls were so exactly alike that each seemed to be staring, with all its shutterless windows, across the roadway at the other, in the dumb amazement of a man meeting his double. Both were ruled lengthwise in the same four rows of windows. Each window was like all its fellows. All were arranged as regularly in line as the inch-marks on a yardstick; and at every third window in the lowest row, a house was marked off — as if it were a foot on the rule — by the projection of a brownstone stoop, from which a flight of steps led down to the sidewalk.

It had once been a street of homes; and, in its prosperous days, its stiff monotony must have realized the ideal of the lives that were lived there, then, according to the strictest conventions of respectability. But now it had fallen into shabbiness and disrepair, and its set, methodical air seemed only proper to such a street of boarding-houses where the conduct of life was chiefly an affair of subdividing identical days into sleeping, waking, and eating, joylessly, by the clock.

It was to this street that the dining-room maid in Mrs. Henry's boarding-house had to look for entertain-

mont whenever she was tired of her round of cooking, serving, and washing-up. She was an Irish girl; and her name was Annio Freel; and her cheeks were still as fresh as pinks from the breezes of Donegal. She had the physique of a milkmaid and a rustic gracefulness of good health that was almost beautiful by contrast with the background of Mrs. Henry's faded dining-room — a background of rusty steel engravings in tarnished gilt frames, hung on a yellowed wall-paper that made the whole room look as if the innumerable meals that had been served there had given it the complexion of a dyspeptic.

She was sitting beside the grated basement window, peeling potatoes into a dish-pan, but she kept an eye on the "area" and the street; and whenever the wheels of a wagon sounded on the pavement, she stopped her work to watch it pass behind the stone spindles of the area balustrade. The thermometer on the window frame marked 92 degrees, and her face was wet. There were heat rings under her eyes; and her eyebrows were drawn in a frown that made no wrinkle on a forehead that had never been broken to worry. Whenever she looked away from the window, she glanced anxiously at the clock; it marked a quarter past eleven, and the groceries had not come.

She let her hand fall idle into the cool water of the pan, and stared at the dust floating in the sunlight.

The cook called hoarsely from the kitchen: "Annie!"

She started. "Yis?"

"What 're y' at?"

"Peelin' pitaties."

"What's makin' yeh so noisy?"

Annie looked down at her hands without answering.

"Why don't yeh sing no more these days?" The voice was querulous.

Annie poised a potato to her knife and blushed to the tops of her ears. "It's too warrm," she said.

A pan banged in the kitchen. "Warrm, d' yoh call it? I call it drippin' danged hot!"

The girl did not reply; and the cook, after grumbling to herself for a while, resigned herself to a stifled silence.

A delivery wagon came clattering up the street, swung into the gutter, and pulled up with a jerk; and Annie dropped her potato and watched eagerly. When she saw a strange man climb down the wheel, she put her dish-pan on the deep window-sill and stood back from the light to regard him with a look of distress. He bustled down into the area and threw all his weight on a tug at the bell.

"Glory bel" the cook cried to her. "What's that?"

She did not answer. She went to the door and took the basket without raising her eyes from it.

"The grocery man!" the cook greeted her in the kitchen. "Does he want to pluck the bell out be the root! That's not Jawn?"

Annie shook her head. "No," she said vacantly, and turned to empty the basket on the serving-table.

The cook studied a moment on the tone of that "No;" and then, taking up the chopper, she attacked the meat in the wooden chopping-bowl with vicious blows. She had the arm of a butcher — short but powerful — and a body of the same build; her hair was a greasy gray; her face was the flat-nosed typo of Irish, that is so pathetically like an apo's.

Annie went out with the empty basket, but this time she met the man's eyes with a look of inquiry that held him until she could ask: "Where's Mr. Boland now?"

He grinned. "Jack? Oh, he's quit. He's got married. I don't know where he is."

She released her hold of the basket, her face as blank as a bewildered child's.

"Jack'd sooner marry than work," he laughed. He added over his shoulder as he went, "Hot, ain't it?"

She shut the basement door, and stood for a long time with her fingers in the iron lattice, gazing out at the area with set eyes. When she turned back to the dining-room, she groped her way blindly through the dark hall. And when she sat down to her work again, her hands went about it mechanically under the fixed mask of her face.

"Is 't the heat that's worryin' yeh?" the cook asked at their luncheon. "Sure I know it is," she persisted, at the girl's listless denial. "It's bad weather fer young blood. Me own ould skull's splittin' like the shell of a hard-boiled egg. Phew! Go in an' lay yer-silf down, that's a good child. It's out 'n the fields

y' ought to be, stackin' hay, 'stid of stewin' in a kitchen here. Go on, Annie, gurl, an' rest yersilf."

Annie went. In the little bedroom that opened off the kitchen, she stretched herself flat on her back and lay stiff. The pillow was hot to her head. She put her cold hand on her burning forehead, and her eyes settled in a wild stare on a picture of Christ that was tacked on the wall at the foot of the bed, with the heart in the open breast flaming red in a yollow aureole.

The cook muttered over her work: "Please God 't will let up a bit t'-night. . . . What's happened that boy Jawn, I wonder. The young thief! She's been lookin' fer 'm fer a week past. . . . Phew, but it's hot! . . . If he's playin' games with her, I'll break his back."

The city baked its bricks and stones in a scorching sunlight all the afternoon, till the streets were as hot and dry as a kiln. Then with the slanting of the sun, a mist as warm as steam began to gather in from the Bay; the faint breeze that had been fluttering along on the housetops feebly, fell among the chimneys; the plumes of steam rose from the elevator buildings straight in the still air. The thick dusk closed down smothering all.

Annie came white from her room. She blundered from pan to pan in the fat-smoke of the kitchen, helping the cook. Dazed and stupid, in the glare of the dining-room, she served greasy food to the tables and poured ice-water in a dream. Swaying over the pan of steaming dishes — at the sink where the roaches gathered to

the sound of trickling water — she washed a thousand glasses, cups and saucers, plates and spoons, knives, forks, pans and pots, deaf to the kindly garrulity of the cook who helped her. When it was done, she went back to her bed again. “Ah, go away, Mary,” she said wearily. “Go away an’ let be.”

Mary took the kitchen rocking-chair and carried it out resolutely to the area. “As sure ’s my name ’s Mary McShane,” she promised herself, “I’ll break the back o’ that boy Jawn! Here ’s Saturda’ night, an’ no sight of ’m since this day week. Let ’m come now. Let ’m come. I’ll give ’m a piece o’ me mind.” And she sat down with her arms crossed to wait for him.

There was a fluttering of white skirts here and there on the porches across the road, where some boarders were sitting out. Men dragged past with their straw hats in their hands and their coats on their arms. The clang of trolley gongs and the iron hum of trains on the elevated railroad came to her drowsily. She relaxed to an easier posture and began to fan herself with her apron as she rocked. Both motions ceased together. She closed her eyes.

It seemed only a moment later that she was awakened by an insistent “I say, cook! Cook!” She started up to see the young man whom she knew as “Mr. Beatty of the top-floor rear” leaning over her. He said: “What ’s wrong with Annie?”

“Annie?” she gasped, wide awake. “Suints in Hiven —”

"Oh, it's nothing," he laughed. "She seemed to be acting rather strangely. Anything wrong?"

She put her hands up to rub her eyes in a pretense of sleepiness. "Yeh scart the heart out of me," she evaded him. "I was dreamin'."

He waited.

"Annie?" she said. "Sure, she's worried, poor gurl, be the heat. Sho's not well. She's not well, at all."

He replied: "She seemed cool enough just now. She went out in a heavy jacket. . . . She asked me to answer the door bell for her. I was sitting on the steps there, having a smoke."

"Gone out? Gone out, is she? Aye, indced, thin!" She settled back in her chair. "She must've gone out to meet that Jawn of hers. To be sure! That's it, to be sure. I thought 't was sick she was. How 're yeh standin' the heat yersilf?"

Her voice was transparently sly. He sat down on the window-sill, amused. "Not so bad. But this is hotter than Ireland, cook."

"Ireland?" She made an exaggerated gesture of despair. "Ireland!" She folded her hands in an eloquent resignation. "I was just dreamin' I was back to it. Aw, dear, dear! Will I niver forget it?"

He laughed. He asked in a bantering tone: "Would you like to go back?"

"Me?" she cried sharply. "Sure, what fer? What's to go back to? Naw, naw. Whin yeh're

ould there 's no goin' hack to the young days — excipt while yeh sleep. An' it 's the sorry wakin' yeh have."

"That 's true," he said, to humor her.

"It is," she replied, unmollified, "hut little enough yeh know of it. Yeh 'll learn whin yeh 're a dodderin' ould man with no teeth to grip yer pipe to." She nodded at a memory of her own grandfather, drowsing before the peat fire, of an evening, under the soot-blackened beams of tho kitchen, with his pipe upside down in his mouth.

Beatty smiled. The talk of this old woman of the basement's underworld — with her plaintive Irish intonation and her comic Irish face and her amusing Irish "touchiness"—was as good as a play to him. "How long have you been out?" he asked.

"Long enough to learn better. Foorty year an' more."

"Well, why did you come then?"

She turned on him. "God knows! Why did I? Why did Annie gurl? Well may yeh ask!" She tossed her head resentfully. "Beca'se roasted pitaties an' good buttermilk were too poor fer proud stummicks. Beca'se we wud be rich, as they tol' us we wud, here in Ameriky. An' what are we? The naygurs o' tho town, livin' in cellars, servin' thim that pays us in the money that we came fer, an' gettin' none o' the fair words an' kindness we left behind. Sure at home they 're more neighborly to the brute beasts than y' are here to the humans." She looked out at the stifling street. "We 're strangers in a strange land, as Father

Tierney says. We're a joko to yez, an' that 's the best yeh 'll iver make of us."

Ho sobered guiltily and looked down at his feet.

"An' Annie!" she broke out, "the simple cr'ature, ust to big gossoons o' boys that swally their tongues whin they go coortin' an' have niver a word to say — what's sho to make o' this grinnin' Jawn of hers with all his blether? I know him. He's the mate of a lad that came acrost me tho first year I was out, with his hat on the corner of his head an' the divil in 's eye. An' he talked with me an' walked with mo an' called me candy names, till there was nuthin' but the sound of his voice in me ears, an' the look of his smile in me eye the whole livelong day till he came again of an evenin'." Her voice broke. "Faith, the time he kissed me first — at the gate that was — I ran into the house trimblin' an' blushin' wit' the fear an' the delight of it, me han's shakin' so I cud scarce get me clo's off me to git into me bed, an' layin' a-wake weepin' an' smilin' tegither all night long to think of it. That 's the sort o' fool I was. Th' angils jus' come to Hiven were no happier. . . . I was come to th' ither place before I was done with him. . . . Poor Annie! Poor gurl!"

He looked at her, silenced and ashamed. She wiped her cheeks with her apron and sighed under a load of anxiety for Annie. He tried to think of something to say in apology and reassurance; and glancing from her, at a loss, he saw a dark figure climbing the stone steps, silhouetted against a street light. "There!" he whis-

pered. "Is n't that — Yes it is. She's coming back. She has n't met him. . . . That's all right now. You must n't let her go out again."

"Thank Hiven," the cook said fervently. "I been keepin' her from goin' out with him any night these four weeks. She's a mere child, raised in innocency. 'T was not like her to steal out so."

"There must be something wrong with her," he suggested.

"There is that," she said. "There's somethin' wantin' to her an' she'll niver find it in this town, though she seek it iver so. A home of her own back o' the boor-trees — an' a dip o' bog fer to plant her pitaty slips in — an' a scraw fer her fire an' her man toastin' his big feet at it, an' the baby crawlin' between the legs of his chair, an' the neighbors droppin' in to gossip an' spit in the blaze — she'll niver find it here! Niver, if she has my luck! An' it's powerful small satisfaction she'll get of writin' home to thim that has it, tellin' thim the big wages she earns an' sendin' thim money to Christmas — powerful small!"

While she had been talking, Beatty had seen a policeman stop to look up at the door and then saunter back toward his street corner. And Beatty was still frowning watchfully at the steps when he heard the cook say, "Whur 've yeh been to, Annie?" He turned to see the girl standing behind the grated basement door.

In a thick, blurred voice, fumbling slowly over her words, she replied: "Is that — is that — Jawn?" And Beatty's pipe clicked suddenly on his teeth.

"No, 't is not," the cook answered. "Go back to yer bed. He 'll not come t'-night now. 'T is too late."

"Is it?" she asked, in the simple tones of a child.

"Is it too late, Mary?"

"It is that. Go to bed, gurl. Yeh 're tired out."

"Oh?" she said softly. "It's too late." And she disappeared in the darkness.

Beatty caught a quick breath. "W-what is it? What's the matter with her?"

The cook answered wearily: "I've told ych, sor, but yeh 'll not understan'."

"But there's something wrong with her," he said huskily. "That's not her natural voicc."

"Let be, boy," she replied. "Her trouble's come to her. We can do naught fer her now." She added, more gently: "We're like a cat with our sores, sor. 'T is best to let us go off be oursilves an' lick thim. . . . She'll be quiet now. . . . It must've been hot downtown this day."

"Yes," he sighed. "I thought — I thought perhaps the heat had affected her. The papers are full of deaths and prostrations."

She nodded and nodded. After a silence, she said: "No doubt. The heat, too. Are y' a Noo Yorker born?"

He cleared his throat to answer: "No. A Canadian. An exile, like yourself."

"Aye," she said. "This is a great town fer young men. Yeh get yer chanct here."

He did not reply, and she did not speak again. For

a long time, they sat silent. Then they began to talk in low tones of anything but the thoughts that were in both their minds, until a stealthy rustle at the basement door brought them around with a start to see Annie, all in white, fumbling at the latch. She got the door open and drifted out into the light, bare-footed. Beatty stiffened at the sight of her face. The cook started up and caught her by the arm. She swung unsteadily. "That's me money," she said tonelessly; and Beatty heard the ring of coins on the area paving.

"Annie! Annie!" the cook cried.

"An' that's me purse," she said, dropping it.

The cook threw her arms about her. "Annie! Annie dear! What's this fer? What ails yeh, gurl?"

She put a hand down to loosen the cook's arm from her side. "'T will burn yeh," she said. "Me heart's all afire there, like the pi'ture." A bit of silver fell from her sleeve and tinkled at her feet. She looked down at it. "I put it by fer Jawn. . . . What's become of Jawn? Jawn?"

The cook backed her to the rocking-chair and forced her to sit down. "Dang yer Jawn!" she cried. "Will yeh drive us all daft?"

It was then, for the first time, she got the light on the girl's face — a face set like stone, while the eyes shifted and wept — and she wailed: "Ach, Annie darlin'," and dropped on her knees beside her. "Is it come to this, gurl? Dear Lord, what've they been doin' to yeh? Look at me. Look at me, child."

Annie was staring at Beatty, and he was sitting cold

with horror on the window-sill. "Who's that?" she said. "Good-evenin', sir," she smiled. "Yeh 're late with the groc'ries." She got no answer. "Look at 'im, Mary," she said fearfully, and put her hand up to her eyes, and peered at him through her fingers. "He glowers at me so."

"Aw, now," the cook pleaded. "Aw, now, Annie gurl. Don't be takin' on. 'T is Mister Beatty from the top floor, an' what'll he be thinkin' of yeh talkin' such like foolishness." She whispered: "Have wit, child. Put down yer hands. Listen to me. Listen. They'll be takin' y' away. They'll shut y' up in Bellevue fer mad. Have yeh no sinse lift?"

Beatty had risen heavy-kneed and stumbled to the basement door. "I'll bring — I'll bring the doctor," he stammered, and ran in for his hat.

The cook had not heard him, but when she looked around she knew what had happened, and she jumped up in a panic. "Quick! Quick," she cried. "They're comin';" and fell on her knees to gather up the scattered money in her apron. "Go to bed, gurl! Ach, Annie, Annie," she cried despairingly.

Annie was rocking in the chair, crooning and talking to herself. The cook caught her by the arm, pulled her to her feet and hurried her indoors. "Whist! Whist!" she pleaded. "Quit yer nonsinse, Annie. Ah, quit it — quit it! Wud yeh let yerself be taken to the madhouse? Ah, God ha' mercy—"

She hurried the girl indoors; and she had her in bed and frightened into silence when Beatty returned with

the doctor. "She's better now," she said suavely, meeting them in the dining-room. "'T was but a touch of the sun, doctor."

He looked at her. She stood blinking and shifting her small eyes. "What did you do for her?"

She began to stammer: "Wh-what did I do fer her? Why, to be sure, I — I —"

"Take me to her," he ordered.

She gave Beatty a look of hate and despair, and led into the kitchen.

Beatty did not follow. He steadied himself against the old marble mantel of the dining-room, and mopped his face and neck weakly with his handkerchief.

When the doctor reappeared, he ordered: "Call the ambulance. From Bellevue Hospital. Be quick now!"

Beatty edged slowly to the door. He darted through it, and ran upstairs, and locked himself in his room.

"You'll have to get your breakfast at a restaurant, Mr. Beatty," the boarding-house mistress told him next morning. "My cook has left me."

"What for?" he asked guiltily.

She shrugged her shoulders. "The maid that waits on the table took ill last night. She was delirious — out of her mind — positively violent when the ambulance came for her. The doctor ordered it. I could n't keep her here. How could I? Who's to look after her here? The work has to be done —"

"How is she?" he interrupted.

"She had a sunstroke, or I don't know what. I was too upset last night — We had a terrible time with her. I don't know what it was. It must 've been a sunstroke. We had a fearful scene."

"Is she better?"

"Well," she said, in a sort of defiance, "she died early this morning in the hospital. . . . And Mary," she cried, "accuses me of murdering her. And she packed up her trunk and left at six o'clock this morning, without even waiting for her wages. I never heard of such a thing. It's the most absurd — These Irish servant-girls —"

He looked away with a sickly smile. "I know," he said.



DURING THE WAR

DURING THE WAR

“**A** WAR,” he said emphatically, laying his big hand flat on the bill of fare, “a war’s a fire in a house. It’s fought to save the house. The house’s the important thing. Everybody understands that at the time. Nowadays, you all talk and write about it — glorious fire — heroic firemen — as if the whole thing’d been some sort of spectacle that the rest of us stood around and cheered! All damn nonsense!”

“Father! Father!” his daughter cried, between laughter and frowns. “You’ll scandalize the waiters.”

The lieutenant smiled at him unabashed. “That’s true of a civil war, at least.”

“Any war’s a civil war,” he replied. “We’re all human beings.”

He was leaning forward, with shoulders almost as broad as the small table, with the huge head of a sagacious giant, glaring under irascible gray eyebrows. The slim lieutenant looked like a David to his Goliath — respectful but undismayed. The daughter put her hand on her father’s great maul of a fist. “You cross old bear,” she said. “Why don’t you order your dinner? You’re hungry.”

He growled something about "nothing fit to eat," and took up the menu again.

"We were so put out to find the 'Fifth Avenue' torn down," she explained to the lieutenant; and he reflected her amusement in a frank expression of his pleasure in being there even to be lectured by her father. He had a fine air of spirited independence, which came of a military carriage of the head and an unwavering directness in the eye. She approved of it. She had seen a great many men cringe before her father, and many others adoringly make themselves ridiculous before her.

The lieutenant asked: "You were accustomed to going there — to the 'Fifth Avenue'?"

"Only hotel in the town," her father muttered. "A man might's well have dinner in a church — this place."

There were stone pillars rising from beds of palms, stone balconies overhung with creepers, a fountain splashing in a stone basin, stone walls niched and garlanded, and a high vaulted roof of skylights from which hung baskets of ferns and ropes of wistaria vines that blossomed in electric lamps. The air was artificially heated and moistened to the temperature and freshness of the spring, and the music of an orchestra softly covered the sound of the sleet on the outer glass of the skylights.

It was all absurdly artificial, appallingly expensive and yet marvelous to see, with its acres of lamp-lit tables and its quiet multitude of guests. "I wish

they'd turn off that tap," the father growled at the splashing fountain. "All nonsense. Serve a dinner without running water."

"Now, Father," she laughed, "endure it for to-night. We'll find a quieter hotel to-morrow."

He looked around for the waiter, who was behind him. They began to give their order. "And while we're waiting for it," she said to her father, "you'll tell Lieutenant Price about your meeting with General Morgan."

It would be difficult to say how she succeeded in giving the lieutenant to understand — by the mere turn of her eye — that her father's account of his meeting with General Morgan might have point in excusing his manner of meeting Lieutenant Price.

"There was nothing the matter with the way I met General Morgan," he said gruffly.

"It was the raider," she explained to Price. "General Morgan — during the war."

"Oh?" Price was interested. "Did you know him?"

"Know him? No. Knew his brother Charlton. Used to come to the Burritt House in Cincinnati when I was telegraph operator there. Huh! I'm one of the oldest telegraphers in this country, do you know that?"

Lieutenant Price knew merely that he was the vice-president of a system of railroad and steamship lines that had to publish a folder-map of a hemisphere and two oceans to show its routes — and that he was the father

of a young woman who was entirely charming. The latter fact interested Price more than the former. He was of an age to be curious about the father because the daughter had probably inherited from him some of her qualities of mind; he was not of an age to appreciate that this tremendous hulk of a man had one of the most powerful mental equipments in the world of "transportation."

Price had not yet learned the limitations of his own intellect; and when a man still believes that at the proper opportunity he will prove himself another Napoleon, he is contemptuous of any genius that is not transcendent.

"I learned telegraphy when I was thirteen," the father said. "I was a conductor when I was eighteen. The directors picked me out to take Shield's Battery up the line to intercept Morgan when I was twenty."

It was boasting. But it was the millionaire modestly boasting of the poverty of his youth.

"General Morgan had been 'making a nuisance' of himself," his daughter reminded him.

"He had! He'd been destroying houses and crops — and tearing up railroads — and burning bridges and derauling trains. For two days — *for two days* — there had n't been a train out of Cincinnati. Nuisance? The whole war had been a nuisance — drafting everybody — upsetting the country — making us run our trains from Columbus around by Xenia and Dayton so as to connect at the 'Transfer' for the South. But

this Morgan —” He straightened back in his chair. “When they took me in the room to him —”

“But, Father,” she interrupted, “you have n’t told us how you came to *be* there.”

He put the things away from him to clear the tablecloth before him. “Here,” he said curtly. “Here’s Kentucky. Here’s the river. Here’s Indiana. Here’s Ohio. Morgan got across into Indiana on the *Alice Dean* and raided up into Ohio and got around behind Cincinnati and cut off the town. Our troops were after him, or he’d have burned Cincinnati if he’d had time. He was trying to get back to the river, and we believed he’d cross the C. H. & D. somewhere between Cincinnati and Dayton. Shield’s Battery was ordered up the line from Cincinnati, at the last minute, to help intercept him, and when the train was made up — about twenty cars, five hundred men, guns on flat cars — the directors called me in and asked me if I was afraid to take it out.”

“And you were n’t, of course,” the lieutenant said politely.

He looked up with a flicker of amusement. “How old are you?”

The lieutenant answered calmly: “Twenty-six.”

He nodded — or rather, he swayed his head. He had no visible neck; the weight of his enormous skull seemed to have sunken his jaw down on his shoulders. “I’m Scotch,” he said. “And, at that time, I was red-headed — if you know what *that* means.”

The lieutenant considered him. He was gray now,

but his hair was tousled on his head in a sort of humorous impatience of convention; his gray eyebrows winged up from his nose fiercely; his mouth, between heavy wrinkles, was hung with as many muscles as a great Dane's; his eyes were keen blue under lids that sagged down toward their outer corners.

The lieutenant took their glinting challenge without a blink.

He went on again: "All Cincinnati was down in the yards, asking questions in the dark and crowding on the tracks. They started us off with a whoop, shouting to us as we pulled out. We put on steam till we got clear of them. Then we slowed down and crawled up the track, ten miles an hour — as quiet as we could — no headlight, not a light on the train. It was dark. We could n't see at all, and it did n't take long for the excitement to leak away and leave us anxious. It had been hot in town; it was cooler out on the line. That made a difference. Felt chilly.

"There was an officer of some sort in the cab with us, and he was all on edge because his artillery was tied up on flat cars and his men cooped up in coaches; and if Morgan derailed the train and swooped down on us — Well, it took us three-quarters of an hour to make Carthage, and that gentleman was fretting all the way, with his hands tied behind him. I don't doubt he was a good fighter. Don't doubt it. But this sort of thing was like running past the block signals when you have to make time and don't know whether you'll bump into the train ahead or not. It's a thing

you have to get used to. And mind you," he admonished the lieutenant, "a man's like a horse. He shies at a thing that's new to him. Don't you be too quick to call a man a coward. You'll probably find there are some things he's a mighty sight braver about than you are. I've learned that.

"Well, we got to Carthage. Ed Nash was agent there, and he stopped us with a lantern and called me in to the telegraph key. 'Come in here,' he said. 'Some fool's asking questions. See what you make of it.'

"I did n't make anything of it, at first — except that there was something familiar about the 'send.' It was some one who wanted to know who *we* were. We wanted to know where *he* was. And we kept sparring with him till suddenly it came to me that perhaps it was Ellsworth, Morgan's operator. He used to work on our line once, and I thought I recognized his way of handling the key. Telegraphers were scarce in those days. And the artillery officer kept asking: 'What is it? What is it?'

"I said to him, with a wink at Nash: 'It's the man at Dayton. The line's clear. Get aboard and we'll go ahead.' And when we'd got rid of him, I said to Nash: 'He's tapped our wire. Cut him off from Cincinnati so he won't get hold of any messages. Wire them that we've gone ahead.'

"You see, I figured that if we did n't want to meet Morgan, it was just as likely that he did n't want to meet us either. If he *had* wanted to, he could have

simply waited for us. The fact that Ellsworth tried to draw us out showed me that he had n't time to wait and listen to what was going on over the wire. Our troops were pressing Morgan, and Ellsworth was probably on ahead, with the scouting, trying to find the clearest way through to the river. We had either to make a dash for Hamilton or turn back. My orders were to take the train to Hamilton."

"Why did n't you tell the officer?" Price put in, with a professional jealousy.

"It was none of his business. I was in charge of that train."

The lieutenant had nothing more to say.

"After we left Carthage we could see red in the sky, over to the left, where Morgan was burning anything he could set a match to as he went along. It began to look pretty warm ahead. We could n't make speed for fear they'd torn up the tracks. We had to feel our way. Ever do that in a dark room? — where you knew you'd heard a burglar? — and did n't know whether he was waiting for you with a blackjack or making off down the stairs? Try it on a cold night when you feel chilly about the knees.

"The officer kept complaining that it should've been cavalry and not artillery on the job. So it should — but that did n't help any. I began to feel a tremble in the pit of my stomach, leaning out of the cab window; and I could see that the engineer was hanging back by the door so as to be ready to jump if we struck a snag. And then, as we swung past Ellison's Crossing,

just north of Glendale, we ran by a half-dozen men on horseback, standing as close to the rails as they dared to get; and it was so dark we could scarcely see more than the whites of their faces, but they let us pass without a word, just leaning over in the saddle to peer into the cars. And I says to myself: 'Now who was that? Any of our own men would have hailed us. Farmers would n't crowd up to look at a train that way.' And I said to the engineer: 'Let her out, Bob. Let her go.'

"He did it. And I was right. It was Morgan's men — the first of them — and the rest was clear track to Hamilton. We just got through by *that*." And he held up two thick fingers.

The lieutenant nodded. The daughter was watching him thoughtfully.

"We were n't sure of it till we got to Hamilton and heard that Morgan was south of us, making for Glendale; and when I went to the despatcher's room to telegraph Nash that we'd arrived safe, I found the wires cut."

"So," Price said, "you did n't meet Morgan on that trip, after all."

"Did n't, eh? Huh! My orders were to report to Cincinnati that I had arrived at Hamilton. I got a hand-car and a couple of men and began to pump back to Carthage. Before we got to Ellison's we slowed down and listened, and we could hear the horses' hoofs scuffling and pounding across the planking between the rails at the crossing. We left the hand-car there, and

climbed the bank into the woods and crept along to where we could see the road. It was just about dawn — light enough to see them dragging along, half asleep in their saddles — so much steam rising from the horses you could scarcely see the riders. Tired. It had been a red-hot day. They were riding in undershirts and trousers — and they looked less like glorious war and heroic warriors than anything you ever saw in a book of battles — like a procession of tin-peddlers, the way their sabers rattled.”

He made a gesture, dismissing the picture. “My orders were to report to Cincinnati. I had fooled that crowd of corn-crackers once, and I thought I’d try it again. They were trailing along, with gaps between them, and nobody was paying any attention to anything he passed, apparently; and I thought if I could come down on them full sweep in the hand-car, if I did n’t strike on one of the gaps, I’d probably scare the horses into opening up to let me through — do you see? A hand-car can make quite a noise, rattling down on you that way. I thought we could help it with a yell at the right minute. The only thing was: had they torn up the track?”

“To find that out, I had to turn off through the woods, as near as possible to the crossing, to look at the rails. I was careless, maybe. Anyway I ran head on into a squad of men lying down under the trees. They grabbed me. I knocked two or three of them over before some one struck me a crack on the head with the butt of a carbine.

"They were with Ellsworth — waiting there with his key for any messages that might come along from Cincinnati. He knew me. They'd have known I was a conductor, anyway, by the silver badge on my cap. Did n't wear uniform — those days — train men. And they wanted to know where our troops were — where I had left my train. And I told them they could all go —"

He checked himself, hoisted himself in his chair, and put his clenched hand on the table-top, menacingly. "I was mad. I — In those days I had a bad temper. And I guess Ellsworth knew it. I told him what I thought of him. When they could n't get anything out of me, I heard him say: 'Take him to the General. That'll give him time to cool off.' So they hoisted me on a broken-legged plow-horse and started me off to Harris's stock farm, where Morgan and his staff were having breakfast.

"It gave me time to cool off, all right, but I did n't let *them* see it. I saw I'd have to bluff it out, and I kept cursing and abusing them all the way. They were too dog-tired and sleepy to resent it. They were so tired they talked as thick as if they were drunk." He pointed his finger at the lieutenant. "You can do anything you like with a tired man. Remember that. All the mistakes I ever made in my life I made when I was tired. And I said to myself: 'If Morgan's as done out as the rest of them, I can bluff it through. I can bluff it through.'

"Besides, I never did have much respect for sol-

diers — account of their clothes. No need for a man to dress himself up like a performing monkey. Cursed nonsense.

“Morgan had stopped for breakfast at Harris’s — a big house — big farm. Harris had always talked as if he could eat a rebel a day and still thirst for blood, but when I got into the dining-room, Harris was waiting on the table himself, as willing as a nigger. I recognized Morgan — I’d seen him at the hotel — and I just stood there glaring at him, while they explained who I was. I could hear Harris cracking his finger-joints behind him, with nervousness, while he listened. And when Morgan looked at me, I looked at him under my eyebrows, with my head down, and I said: ‘Morgan, I helped your brother —’”

“Oh, dear!” his daughter interrupted. “You have n’t told the lieutenant about *that*.”

“Well,” he interpolated briefly, “Charlton Morgan had been sent up to Camp Chase on my train with a carload of other prisoners about a year or so before, and he recognized me going through the car with my lantern, and I promised to get word to his family that he was n’t killed, and go out to Camp Chase to see him — and took him tobacco. And when he was exchanged, I lent him money and took a signet ring from him. ‘And darn your eyes,’ I said to Morgan, ‘this ’s the thanks I get. If you want to fight, why don’t you stay where there are soldiers to fight with? Coming around here burning private property — assaulting private citizens. You ought to be ashamed of your-

self. Here,' I said, 'you take that ring back to your brother Charlton, and tell him if he's ever penned up in Camp Chase again and I go there to see him, it'll be to see him hanged.' "

The lieutenant was grinning. "It was a wonder he did n't have you shot."

"Young man," he said grimly; "it would be a bigger man than John Morgan that'd have the nerve to have me shot, at any stage of the game. He took the ring from the officer who picked it up, and he looked at the seal on it, and then he said: 'Send him back to his railroad in charge of some one.' He said it in the voice of a man who did n't want to be bothered with anything as unimportant as I was, and that stuck in my crop — but I swallowed it — and I remembered it.

"Before they started me out I heard him tell Harris they'd exchange horses with him; and Harris said: 'With pleasure, General. With pleasure' — though he knew it meant leaving him a lot of broken nags in exchange for a stable of the finest horses in Ohio. He never held up his head afterward — Harris. He died of it.

"All right," he said to the waiter, with the soup. "Serve it."

"When we got back to the hand-car, the raid had passed, and the two soldiers asked me, if they surrendered, would I take them back to Cincinnati and give them something to eat. They fell asleep on the car. I had to pump the whole load myself. But I got back

to Cincinnati with two prisoners," he ended triumphantly, "and reported my train."

"Well," the lieutenant said, in a voice of amused admiration of that domineering personality, "you would have made a great —"

"Here," he interrupted. "Here's the ring. I kept it as a souvenir."

He drew it from his finger and passed it across the table. It was a heavy ring of soft gold, and the shield on which the seal had once been graven was now worn smooth. "Had to have it let out twice," he said.

The lieutenant turned it over. "But," he said, "I thought — I understood you to say that General Morgan kept it."

"So he did. I'll tell you. Wait till I have some soup."

He ate with gusto. "Been at board meetings — panic conferences — all day. Hungry as if I'd been at work."

The daughter chatted with the lieutenant till her father put down his spoon. Then she turned to him expectantly.

He reached out his hand for the ring. "Morgan was captured. Too important a prisoner to keep in Camp Chase, so they shut him up in the penitentiary in Columbus. It was about three blocks from the railroad station. We used to run right under its walls.

"One night — one o'clock — four cattle drovers in long overcoats, with drovers' gads — hickory poles, six or seven feet long, about an inch thick — they used

them to prod up cattle — Four of them got aboard. I noticed they did n't get on till they saw me on, after the train started; and then I noticed that they all sat together in two seats, instead of each man sprawling over as many seats as he could cover, the way drovers usually did. And when I came to collect their fares, instead of having passes — drovers always traveled on passes — they paid their four dollars each.

“That made me suspicious. I'd heard the company was putting detectives on the cars — ‘spotters’ — and I had made up my mind that if I ever saw any on my train, I'd hand in my resignation. The more I looked at those men the more sure I was they were detectives. I spent most of the trip to Dayton turning over in my mind a hot letter I was going to write when I turned in my badge.

“We got to Dayton about three-thirty. We were to change engines there. The yardmaster came to report the engine off the track, down the yards. These four fellows were in the restaurant with me — That's another thing drovers would n't do. They'd wait for their breakfasts till they got to Cincinnati — and when they heard about the engine they went down the yards with me to help get her back on the rails. ‘Well,’ I said to myself, ‘you lads are certainly anxious to get on.’ They carried the blocks and worked as hard as the best of us. I was a little puzzled, but between being hurried because we were going to be so late that we'd miss connections at the ‘Transfer’ — and angry because the old man had put ‘spotters’ on me — I

did n't look at them right. And then one of them dropped his slouch hat. I was standing by with the lantern, and I saw him. He had shaved off his beard, but I knew his eyes. I have a good memory for faces. Conductors soon develop that.

"It was John Morgan.

"He grabbed up the hat again, and went on with his work, and I edged up to see his hands — to make sure. He had that ring on, with the seal turned in.

"Well, we got the engine on, and went back to the train, and I did n't say anything but just thought it over. As I was going through their car, one of them asked me if we would stop at the 'Transfer.' And I said: 'No'— that we'd missed connections and we'd go right into Cincinnati. And then I remembered the way I'd been dragged before John Morgan as if he were the biggest man on earth — and the way he'd said: 'Take him back to his railroad'—and I thought I'd give him a taste of that sort of thing himself. So I said: 'If you're afraid to face Cincinnati, you can jump when we slow down for the curve at the "Transfer."' One of them said: 'What do you mean?' It was either Captain Hines or General Basil Duke — I never knew which. I looked him up and down. 'You know what I mean, darn well,' I said, and I turned to Morgan and I said: 'Now, Morgan, give me back my ring.'

"One of the men did n't move — just sat there with his hat down over his eyes as if he thought that if he kept quiet no one would notice him. Duke — or Hines

— made as if to leap up, and I shoved him back by the shoulder. 'Keep quiet,' I said, 'you fool, you. You can't jump off here.' And by that time Morgan had remembered me.

"He took off the ring and held it out to me. I said: 'We're quits'—and took it. 'But the next time you come around here interfering with this railroad,' I said, 'I'll not let you off so easily, do you understand?'—and I left him.

"I looked in on them, once or twice—just for the fun of seeing them feel nervous. You never saw two generals and a captain look more like schoolboys caught in an orchard. They did n't know what I was going to do with them."

He snorted contemptuously. "They thought there was n't anything going on in the world but them and their fool war. Huh!

"They jumped near Mill Creek. I heard afterwards they were badly shaken up, but they made off down to the river and got across to a Mrs. Ludlow's—where they were expected. Next day, when it was in the papers that they had escaped from the prison, I reported about the four drovers who had jumped from the train. That was all I ever had to do with John Morgan. Never bothered me any more."

The daughter added: "Except that I was born in the room in Covington where his body had been laid out."

"Well," the lieutenant said, "you'd have made a great soldier."

"Soldier? I've seen a good many great soldiers — and I only saw one man in the whole war that I'd take off my hat to, now."

"Who was that? General Grant?"

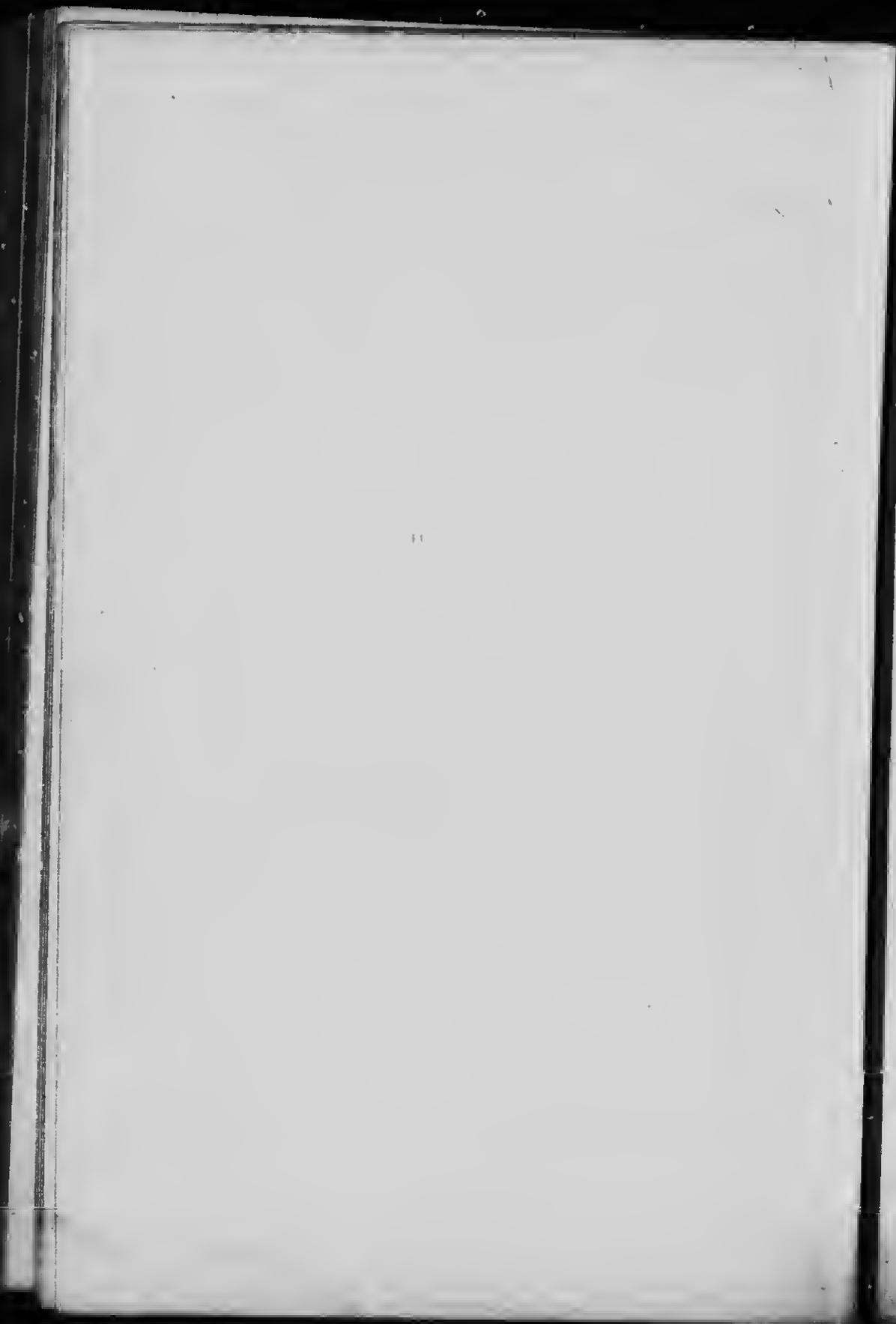
"Abraham Lincoln." He leaned forward impressively. "All the generals that ever lived did n't come knee-high to him. I was n't old enough to appreciate him then. I don't know whether I ever will be old enough to appreciate him *all*. But I tell you, young man, if you want to see war as it *is*, learn to see it the way *he* saw it — if you ever can. We were like a lot of quarreling children beside him. War? Glory? Heroism? If you want to know about what they amount to, get a good war-time photograph of Lincoln and look into his eyes. Into his eyes!" His lips quivered with some unacknowledged emotion. He looked down at his plate.

"Now, Daddy," his daughter put in quickly. "You've talked enough. Eat your dinner. I'll entertain the lieutenant."

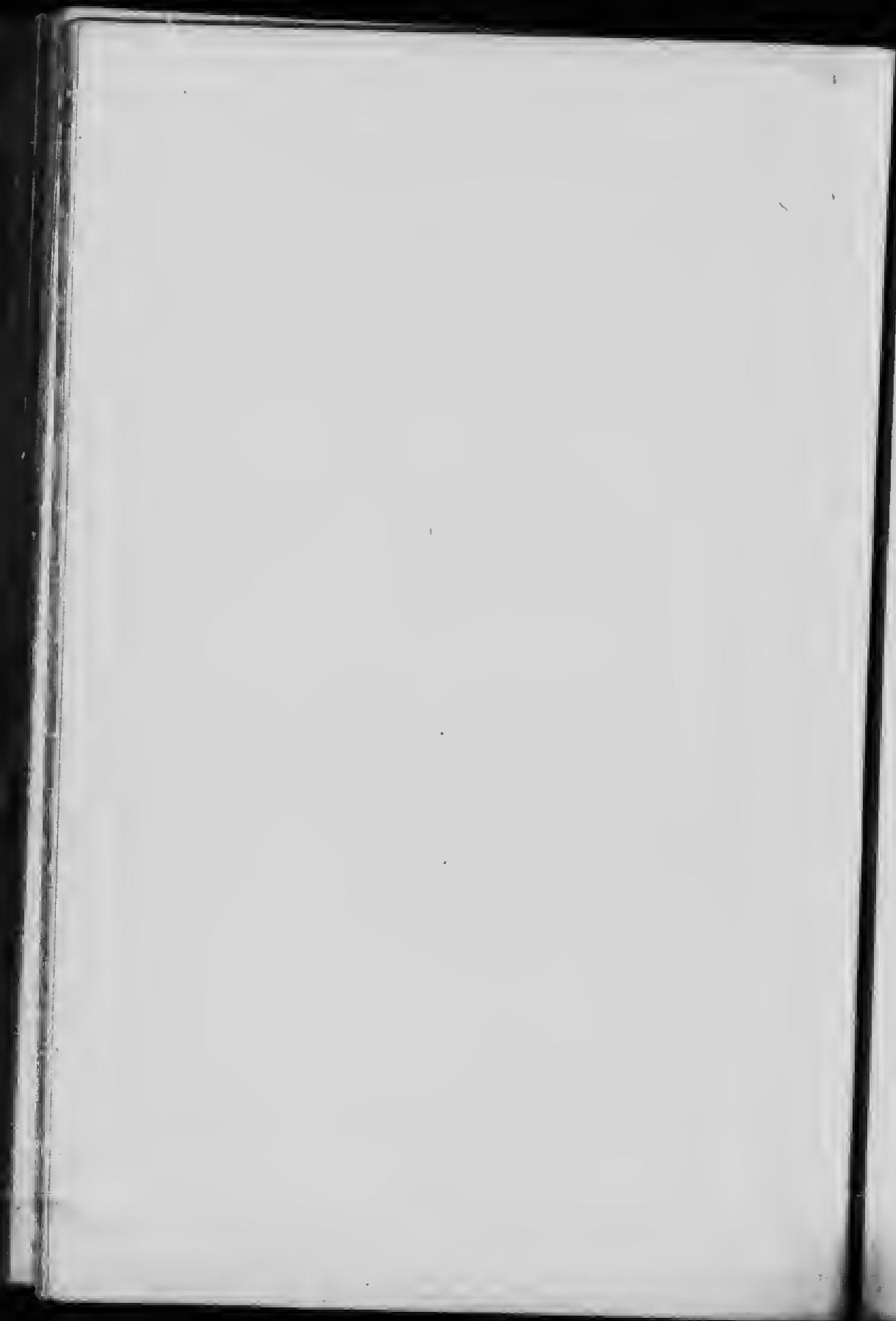
Price turned to her, flattered. When she looked at him, it was rather absent-mindedly. There was an unguarded expression of appraisal in her eyes. As a plebe at West Point he had noticed something of the same look in another girl — when she first saw him out of his cadet uniform.

He puzzled over it. Before they rose from the table he knew what it meant. He showed the knowledge in the stiffer set of his shoulders and the more determined poise of his chin as he followed her out

of the dining-room. She said good night to him at the door of the elevator, and she said it hastily — in her anxiety for her father, who was showing signs of depression and fatigue. He had been silent. He roused himself to say to the lieutenant, by way of farewell: "War! Huh! Cursed nuisance. Good-night."



IN LOVERS' MEETING



IN LOVERS' MEETING

“Journeys end in lovers' meeting.”

IT was an April morning after a night's rain; and the day had come nimbly — clean, ruddy, and tingling — from a cool bath. It was now ten o'clock. Central Park had been stirring since the dawn with the bustle of winds that shook out the tufts of glued leaflets, and tossed and dried the wet grasses. The sunshine was as yellow as the season's daffodils. The sky, washed like a pearl, seemed to swim in a dazzling brilliancy of light.

To the old washerwoman, shuffling along the asphalt walks with her bundle, these unshaded glories of the spring were giddily bright and dizzying. She had been to West End Avenue to get a Monday washing, and she had walked the whole way. The moisture of the air had started all her aches. The light bewildered her eyes. She had a touch of vertigo that made her uncertain on her feet.

She turned aside to the path that entered the “Ramble,” and sat down there on a rustic bench, dropping her bundle on the seat beside her, and clasping her hands over the ragged fringe of her shawl, as if she were clinging to the strength in her gnarled fingers. She blinked under her bonnet — a mourning bonnet, faded from black to dusty green — that did not shade

her wrinkles. She seemed pitiably old in the midst of all that glow and lustiness of young life.

Among the trees there was a squirrel that had watched her coming; and it began to approach her, now, through the grass, with quick rushes and sudden stops, jerking its tail in a way that made her smile. And when she smiled, all her wrinkles fell into their places on her face in an expression of motherly good-nature that took wonderfully from her years. It was a face that had not soured with age — that was still even comely though it was as yellow as old bones, and withered. She pursed up her lips to call: "Poosy! Poosy!"

The squirrel sat up on the border of the walk, and watched her with the eyes of a rat. She clucked to it. She coaxed it with baby talk; and the sight of its comical spryness set her shaking with the stomachic, tight-lipped chuckle that is the laughter of old folk who have lost their teeth.

It darted forward a yard on the walk, and hesitated until she held out a trembling hand at her knee. Then it crept to her feet, and sat up, sniffing for the expected alms of nuts.

"Purty, purty," she crooned. "'T's hungry, it is. Dear, aw dear." Her voice had a sweet mellowness of tone, neither cracked nor plaintive, a soft Irish accent, without the breadth of a brogue.

She reached down to touch the squirrel's head. It crouched, turned on a spring, and scurried back to the grass. She looked up to see a man approaching.

"I scart him off," he apologized, and touched the slouched brim of his felt hat in a somewhat military salute to her. He was almost as gray as she was herself.

"Sure, I 'd nuthin' to give the poor thing," she said, peering up at him against the sun.

He put his hand in the bagged pocket of his coat. "I've some goobers with me," he said, drawing out three of them. "I fed most of 'em to the monkeys. They're hungry these days, ma'am."

She studied him with a puckered eye. He was undeniably "well-preserved," as she would have said; and, though his mustache was thin and gray, there was blood and color, in his tanned cheeks, in little scarlet veins in the skin.

He whistled softly to the squirrel that was spying on them from the grass, and stooped to hold out a nut to it in a brown hand, invitingly. Mrs. Dolan took her bundle from the seat and placed it on her knees. "Yeh 'll have to sit down fer 'm," she said. "They're as timid as the mice."

She did not explain that she was on terms of friendship with all the mice of her tenement house.

"Thank, yuh, ma'am." He sat down on the edge of the bench, with a certain clumsy bashfulness, and bent over with the nut. The squirrel was erect in the grass. "Like a gopher," he said. He added in a moment, "Out West, ma'am," since she did not seem to understand. He glanced over his shoulder at her to find her smiling absent-mindedly at the squirrel. "They dig the

ground full o' rat-holes," he explained, "an' throw yer horse."

She did not answer; and he returned to the squirrel. It came to the middle of the walk, but it would come no nearer. He tossed it the nut, and it ran back to the grass to peel and eat it there.

"Were y' ever out West, ma'am?" he asked her, shoving back into the seat.

She woke to his question. "Niver a foot," she said. "Niver a foot. It's fifty year an' more since I landed in Noo York, an' niver a foot have I put out 'f it yet."

"Fifty years," he said. "Well, well. . . . The town's changed since then, ma'am."

She nodded and nodded, compressing her lips in an expression that said the thing was beyond words. "Aw, my, my," she sighed; and the thought of the past loosened her face in a pathetic droop of mouth.

"I was a boy here myself, ma'am," he said.

She did not hear him. "Aw, my, my," she went on. "Whin I think 'f it — of a Sunda', whin there's nuthin' to do on'y sit with yer hands in yer lap! Whin I think 'f it — An' all thim that's dead an' gone." She shook her head sorrowfully from side to side.

"It's a long time," he said.

"Ain't it now? A long time! Fifty year an' more since I come over in th' ol' *City o' Dublin!* . . . I mind we had the ship fever aboard, an' nineteen poor souls were thrown in the sea, without so much as puttin'

thim in a chist. An' there I was, cryin' m' eyes out, I was that sick; an' thinkin' ev'ry minute I'd be the next. An' here I am, livin' yet, praise God — livin' yet."

"We were young then, ma'am."

She chuckled, with an old woman's sudden change of mood. "An' was n't I the green one! The girls at my first place, they tol' me the children in Noo York, whin they cried, took fits an' died. They tol' me *that*, now. An' Mrs. Elliott — God bless her. She was the good frind to me. I hope that God 'll give 'r the worth 'f it — She come upstairs, an' 'Kitty,' she says. 'What's the matter, Kitty?' she says — me cryin' worse 'n the child! An' whin I told her! Whin I told her! Aw, my, my!"

At the mention of Mrs. Elliott, the man had turned to her, as if his head were on a rod, like a ventriloquist's dummy, without moving his shoulders. He stared at her, wooden-faced.

"I was the green one," she said. "I come straight from the farms o' County Cavan, where the gurls was brought up in innocency. . . . We had nuthin' but a dancin' of a Sunda' in the barn — of harvest time — no theayter — nuthin' — nuthin' at all. The folk was all dependin' to their farms." She began to chuckle again. "I mind whin I come to Thurteenth Street, with Rose — they was feedin' pigs in Thurteenth Street in thim days — I says to Rose; 'Sure,' I says, 'they're all poor here,' I says. 'They've neither bite ner sup,' I says, 'on'y what they buys.' An' Rose says: 'Don't

be talkin' sich nonsinse,' she says. Thim very words!
'*Don't be talkin' sich nonsinse,*' she says."

He leaned down again to hold a peanut to the squirrel. "Mrs. Elliott?" he asked thickly. "Where did *she* live?"

"On Tinth Street, to be sure. An' sho'd *siven* to help. 'T was a lov'ly place, an' a fine fam'ly — an' good frinds they was to me. The hand o' God was with me whin I wint *there*."

He said: "Did y' ever know Jim Farrell?"

Her hand, on the bundle of washing on her knee, twitched and trembled with a sudden leap of her heart. "Indeed, indeed," she said, "he was keepin' comp'ny with me whin he 'listed."

He dropped his head, as if shielding himself from her eyes behind the breadth of his shoulders.

"Did yeh know 'm?" she asked in a quaver.

He did not answer for a moment. Then he said huskily: "He was in th' Excelsior Brigade with me. I jus' ust to hear him talkin' about a girl at Mrs. Elliott's."

The squirrel darted away to safety with another nut, but the man did not rise from his stooping posture. As for Mrs. Dolan, she was gazing, with trembling lips, at the shimmer of sun among the trees. "What become of 'm, sur?" she whispered.

"He was killed," he said. "At Gettysburg."

Two great tears trickled down her old nose. She wiped them off with the corner of her shawl. "God rest his soul," she said. "We was to be married whin

he come back. . . . So 't was killed he was. Poor boy! Poor boy! . . . From the day he left I niver heard word of 'm, livin' ner dead." She wiped her cheeks again with a shaking hand. "What matter?" she said. "Sure, what matter? 'T's all dead an' gone these forty years."

He looked at his foot — a small foot, neatly booted. "I went with the cavalry after that, he explained anxiously, "fightin' Mexicans an' the Ku-Klux in Texas. . . . I been servin' out West ever since, enlistin' again when my terms expired. . . . I got my discharge now, an' my pension."

She scarcely heeded him. "We ust to call 'm 'Candy Jim,'" she said, picking at the soiled tablecloth that wrapped her bundle. "'Candy Jim' . . . So yeh knew 'm, sur? Well, well. It's from afar off that God sinds sometimes. . . . D'yeh mind how he was killed?"

He answered after a pause: "With a bullet, ma'am." He added: "In the head." He took a package of fine-cut chewing tobacco from his hip-pocket, and helped himself hurriedly to a mouthful of it.

"He was a good lad," she said. "We ust to go ridin' time an' again on th' ol' stage down Tinth Street to the Batt'ry. . . . He was free of his money. An' that's more than I'll say fer Dolan. Did yeh know Tim Dolan, too?"

"No, ma'am," he said, and sat up with caution.

"I married Tim — rest his soul! Tim an' five children, I buried thim all." She fell back into silence.

"Did he leave yuh money?" he asked suddenly.

"Nuthin'," she said, "nuthin'," with a bitterness which he did not ask an explanation of. "I been washin' iver since. These thurty years I been bendin' over tubs. Thurty years!"

"P'raps yuh put somethin' by?" he insinuated.

"Niver a cint," she said. "I'd John's children to raise whin m' own was gone. An' that came terrible hard on me, terrible hard. Poor gurls, I did n't begrudge thim the work. I edacated thim so's they both got good men. An' they sinds me a dollar now an' thin, God bless thim. They ain't rich — not thim. They'd hilp their ol' aunt if they was."

He turned the fine-cut in his cheek, staring across the sunlight under eyelids that had wrinkled in the glare of alkali deserts.

"'T was easy enough, easy enough, thim times," she said. "But now I ain't got th' ambition to take heavy pieces, an' my sight's bad. I don't get the clothes cleaned no more."

He did not speak.

"Well, well," she concluded. "What matter? Sure, what matter?" and twisted her hand in her bundle. "Good-day, sur." She got slowly to her feet.

He reached a hand to her arm, and stood beside her. "I'll carry that," he said gruffly.

The unexpected kindness flustered her. "Not a bit of it," she protested, as he took the bundle from her. "There's no need, man. 'T is no weight at all. . . . Well, well; thank yeh, sur. The kindness o' some

people." Her face lit with pleasure. "Thank yeh, sur. It's a touch o' the sun I had." She shuffled along beside him. "I'll b' all right in the shade o' the houses."

They made an odd pair. The old soldier had nothing of the gaunt veteran in his appearance; he was a small man who had not wholly lost a corpulence that must have been heavy on him in middle age. Mrs. Dolan, almost his equal in height, was a rotund little grandmother, muffled in her shawl that came nearly to her knees, and in a skirt that dragged below her heels. She talked incessantly.

He spoke only once, and that was when he was helping her across Fifth Avenue. He asked her whether there was no one in the city to take care of her. She replied with tales of the kindness of the neighbors, particularly of those who had helped her during the winter months when she had been sick and in want. The street, however, was going to the bad; the houses were filling with "Eyetaryans" that feared neither God nor man. A family, in the room above her, worked their sewing-machines from morning till night on Easter Sunday itself. "Thim Guinnys!"

She lived in a rear tenement — to which they entered from the street through a hall as dirty and dark as a rat-hole. She invited him to have a cup of tea with her; and he stumbled after her, up the stairway, the tread-boards of which were covered with tin. She led him into a narrow room that was at once her kitchen, her parlor, her dining-room, and her laundry. A win-

dowless bedroom, as large as a clothes-closet, opened off it; and he could see the white coverlet of the bed in the shadows, and a spray of church palm on the wall above the pillow.

He sat down, in silence, on a chair with a perforated seat that had blistered and peeled with age. She set to work to light a fire in the rusty kitchen stove, pottering about busily, chatting with a voluble hospitality, showing him the brown photographs which she kept on the mantel-shelf, and apologizing for the disorder in which he found the room, with its tubs and its boilers.

He looked at the plaster on the wall, cracked and yellowed with steam. Once or twice he coughed, as if he were about to speak, but she did not wait for him.

Finally — when she had turned her back to put a pinch of tea in the little brown teapot — he said: “If old Farrell was alive —”

She turned on him. “Sure, man,” she said, “he died in Ireland —”

He caught at his hat as it fell from the table. “I meant Jim — Jim Farrell.” He was red. “We called him ‘old’ Farrell.”

“Name of Heaven, why?” she cried. “He was n’t but twinty!” He shook his head. She laughed at him. “An’ if he was livin’ this day,” she said, “what’d he be to me?”

“He’d have his pension. A dollar a day an’ more.”

“An’ it’s needin’ it he’d be,” she replied. “He was near’s old as mesilf.” She poured water in the teapot and set it on the steaming kettle.

"He 'd have no relations," he said. "He 'd want a home of his own."

"Poor boy," she sighed tremulously. "He's home this many a day. Let bygones be."

"He could be some help to yuh, ma'am," he suggested meekly.

She felt the tears gathering in her eyes. "Well, well," she chafed. "I been gettin' on here alone these thurty years. Please God, I 'll finish it so."

He sat with his eyes on the kettle, and said nothing while she got down two stone-china cups and saucers from a shelf in the corner, and placed them on the little table. "Will yeh have a bite o' bread?" she asked him. "'T is all I have to set before yeh."

He nodded.

She ran along with an explanation that bread and tea was all she ate herself; meat was too tough for her; she had an egg on Easter Sunday, but it had made her sick.

She poured out the tea for him, and he drew up his chair at her bidding. He began to stir the drink with a pewter spoon, both elbows on the table.

"Ma'am," he said, "Jim Farrell now — I ain't sure 't he was killed at Gettysburg. He might be livin' for all I know."

"Man alive," she cried, "will yeh *niver* have done? Why do yeh be botherin' an' ol' woman with sich like nonsense! It's forty years ago, d' yeh mind? Forty years ago! Let thim that's dead rest in peace, will yeh?" Her anger passed in the instant. "Now, I

should n't be talkin' like that," she apologized. "I get few enough callers these days. Will yeh take a bit more sugar, sur — an' forget an ol' woman's blather. I'm not mesilf this noon."

He took the sugar without a word, and drank down the tea in a gulp. She pressed him to take another cup, but he shook his head. "Thank yuh, ma'am," he said, wiping his mustache with a red cotton handkerchief. "I'll say good-by to yuh, ma'am." He did not look at her.

She faltered: "I — I've offinded yeh, thin?"

He went out without answering — without meeting her eyes. She stood a moment with the teapot in her hands; then she set it heavily on the table, and sank into a chair, staring, bewildered, at the closed door.

The meeting with him, and the excitement of his visit had been too much for her. She felt ill — and old. Her mouth weakened and drew down in the whimper of a child; the memories of the past which he had recalled, overcame her; she wept.

In the midst of it, she heard the door pushed open, and she checked herself quickly, looking up with a distorted face, unable to see for the tears in her eyes. "What is it?" she asked faintly.

"It's me again," he said. "I been — lyin' to yuh. Jim Farrell was n't killed at Gettysburg. He's — he's alive yet."

She got to her feet, blinking and wiping her cheeks. "Name of Hiven! Jimmy Farrell, d' yeh say?"

"He — he —"

"D' yeh know it?"

He nodded, avoiding her eye.

She waited, shaking. All these years she had thought of Jimmy Farrell, her old lover, dead. He was alive. He had deserted her, and deceived her. She saw the shame of it in the face of this man, even.

"Well," she said at last, in a hard voice, "what of it?"

"Nothin'. But — for the sake of ol' times yuh might — He's got his pension."

She dropped her apron. "D' yeh mean that I'd take money from the — the man?"

"He — he —" He fumbled with his hat. "He'd be glad —"

"Glad!" she cried. "Glad, d' yeh say? Faith, thin, there's small reason. If Jimmy Farrell's alive, there's a liar livin'! Why — Why did he — All these years, an' — God hilp us, I —" Her voice broke in a sob. "I liked him better dead."

He winced and swallowed and turned the cud of fine-cut in his cheek. "He'd be sorry to hear yuh say that."

"Would he! Would he now?" she said in a bitter, low tone. "Thin it's God's own truth. . . . Jimmy Farrell. . . . All these years."

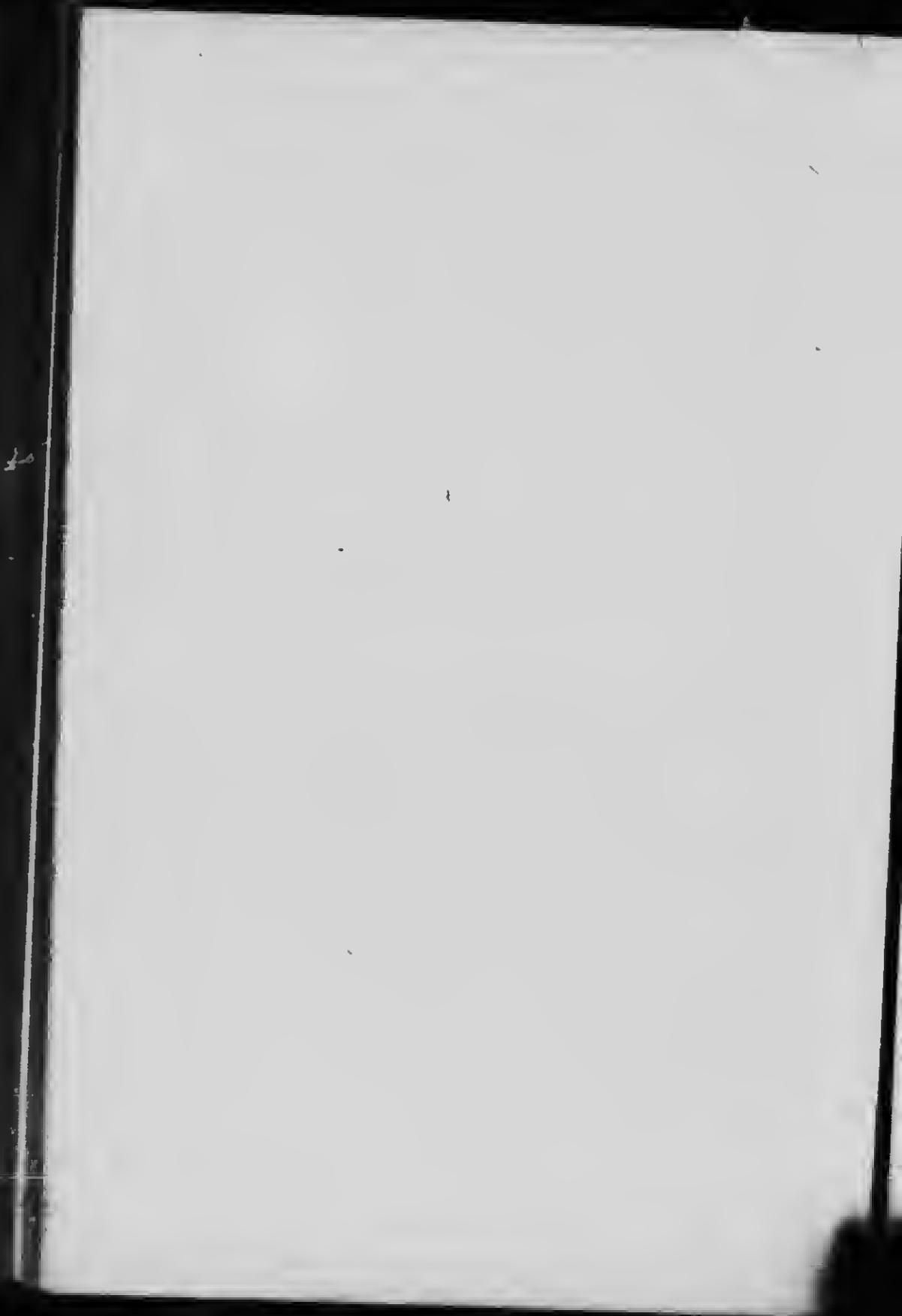
He kept his eyes on the floor. "Mebbe he's done wrong, but — he could do something to put it right."

She shook her bowed head, the slow tears running down her wrinkles. "I thought to meet him — on th' other side — with all the boys an' gurls." Her hands

clung together in a shaking grip. "Don't tell 'm yeh seen me, sur. The — the shame of it — 't would be as hard fer *him*." She reached out to the bundle of washing and began to untie it distractedly. "God ease the sin of it," she wept, "but I was happier when yeh tol' me he was shot in the head. . . . Don't tell him now. Let 'r. leave me be. I can finish be meself." And Farrell stumbled out the door, blindly, his felt hat twisted in his hands.

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THE TWO MICKEYS



THE TWO MICKEYS

LITTLE "Mickey," leaning over the edge of the theater gallery, said disgustedly: "Aw, dink it!" The hero, on the stage below — having just returned from a long sea voyage that had left no marks on either his complexion or his new sailor suit — had gathered in the heroine with both arms and cried "My-y-y wi-i-ife!" in a voice that ran an arpeggio of emotion. She had lifted a fond smile to him and replied shrilly "My-y-y husband!" Then he pressed her cheek against a clean shave; and Mickey said again: "A-aw dink it!"

His father leaned forward in the seat beside him, to ask: "Uh? What'd yuh say?"

"Dhey ain't doin' *not'in'*," Mickey whined. "Dhey's all jus' talkin' to dheyselves."

The elder "Mickey" — who was still "Mickey" to his friends, although he should, long since, have been "Mike" — sat back to allow himself an abdominal chuckle. His son's posture was not one that he could take without having his laughter choked in his waist. He was as plump as a bartender. In fact, he had been a bartender until he married — rather late in life — a hard-working widow, proprietor of a delicatessen shop; and now he sliced bologna sausage and

Swiss cheese with all the vacuous good-nature that goes, professionally, with beer.

He smiled a somewhat fuddled smile at little Mickey's shoulders, breathed heavily, and let his pouched eyes settle again on the pair of lovers before the footlights far below him. He did not hear what they were saying. He was occupied with thoughts of pride in his boy's precocity.

The heroine continued to talk to her "dear Robert" in a voice of affection that continued to make little Mickey squirm. He was not only impatient; he was not merely disgusted; he was beginning to despair. Since the rising of the curtain, there had been nothing but this "muggin'" going on. A blind wife had begun it, in a sickening high falsetto, her arms around her husband's neck. Then the comic Irishman and the innkeeper's daughter had taken it up. Now another pair were at it. There had not been so much as the hint of a murder or a robbery to bear out the promises of the bloody posters on the avenue billboards. And Mickey — watching with eyes that were as big and round in his pale face as two holes in a triangle of his mother's Swiss cheese — kept complaining to himself: "Aw, dhis's rotten! Aw, say, dhis's rotten!"

Behind him the gallery rose in tier on tier of intent faces — faces strangely white in the reflected glare of the footlights — faces that protruded out of the darkness, bodiless, unblinking, like the faces of a nightmare. But from tier to tier an uneasy shuffling of hidden movements replied to Mickey's impatience. To all the

"gods" this sentimentality was "dead slow"; they wished what Mickey wished — to see "somethin' doin'."

Mickey abandoned himself to his disappointment, and fell back in his seat. "I wisht we had n't 'a' come."

His father nodded. The loving wife on the stage was a fiction that had been largely discredited for him by his marital experience. "'S all hot air, *that*," he said. "They just does it to make out the show."

"D' yuh t'ink dhey'd give us back the price?"

Mr. Flynn shook his head. "Keep yer shirt on. This 's on'y the first act."

"Aw, gee! I wisht we had n't 'a' come."

To little Mickey, as to most of the others in that gallery, Saturday night at the "show" was the reward of a week of self-denial; and to Mickey it was more, for he expected to be well punished by his mother when he should come slinking home at midnight to meet her angry "Now whayr 've yeh been?" He had no hope that his father would be able to protect him; it had been tacitly understood between them that for the sake of family peace Mrs. Flynn should not be told how the elder Mickey had joined in the truancy. But Mickey had hoped to go to bed with a dazzled soul in his smarting body; and now he foresaw that he would have no sweetly shudderful remembrance of murder and crime to ease his aches.

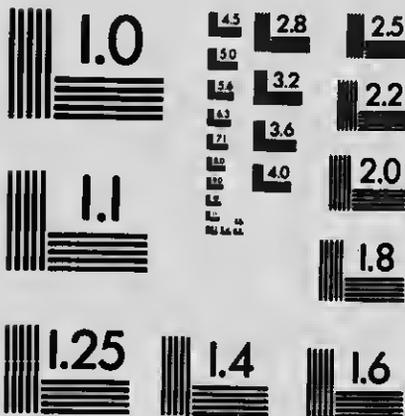
He slid down dejectedly on his back-bone. "Dhis 's slower 'n church!"

It was a remark that appealed to his father — for



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personal reasons. He wheezed and shook appreciatively. "Don't yuh like goin' to church?"

"Naw."

"Why *don't* yuh?"

"Why *don't* you?"

Mr. Flynn evaded the question. "Yer mother wants yuh to go."

"She wants *you* to go, too."

"I ust to go when I was your age."

The boy looked up at him with the sharpness of a self-sufficient little animal. "Did yuh like it?"

Some one behind them said: "Shut up, will yuh? Youse ain't the show." And Mr. Flynn coughed apologetically, glad of the interruption.

He had been vaguely aware, of late, that Mrs. Flynn was setting his son against him; and although she had been welcome to the care of the boy as long as he was an infant, now that he was growing old enough to take a side in the family quarrels, Mr. Flynn began naturally to feel a jealous interest in him. It was for this reason that they were at the theater together. And the elder Mickey smiled to find that in their dislike of church-going — as in their common contempt of feminine affection as it was misrepresented on the stage — he and his son were not divided. Mrs. Flynn, he assured himself, would not be able to make a mother's "Willie" of that boy; he had too much of his father in him.

Little Mickey had dropped his elbows to his knees again and craned his neck. A man with a villain's black mustache was attempting to interfere between the

sailor and his wife. The two men raised their voices in a sudden quarrel; and then the sailor, clenching an indignant fist, swung an upper-cut on the villain's chin and felled him. Immediately Mickey crowed and cackled. "'D yuh see him jab 'm?" he cried to his father. "Gee! Did n't he hand him a beaut!"

His father grinned, rubbing the reddish bristle on his unshaven chin. She wouldn't be able to make a mother's "Willie" of *that* boy.

Then the comic Irishman developed unexpected powers as a hypnotist — not only hypnotizing a whole man in an instant, but paralyzing an arm or a leg by merely drawing his fingers down the limb and waving a hand over it. Little Mickey tittered — giggled — shook — and screamed with laughter. The villain took another excruciating punch in the eye. A half-dozen plots of love and secret marriage, robbery and pursuit, tangled themselves inextricably together, with every knot a tableau. And when the curtain fell on the end of the act, the villain had sworn thrice, horribly, to have revenge; the captain of the gang had undertaken a dangerous robbery; the sailor's young wife was pursued by the villain because he had learned of a secret will by which she was made the heiress of the old miser's fortune; and the comic Irishman had shown a promising ability to be always in the wrong place at the right moment to frustrate villainy and rescue virtue.

Mickey gazed unseeingly at the curtain, gloating over the recollection of it all. His father had gone downstairs to get a "drink"; and this fact added, in

an obscure way, to Mickey's enjoyment. It was a part of the daring truancy of the evening; for he knew how his mother fought his father's love of a frequent glass. He smiled at the curtain.

The smile faded as he became aware that the curtain was not the one that he had seen there before. It was a tame pastoral — a Sunday-school prize volume compared to the penny-horrible in paint that had been hanging there.

"Dhey w a bull-fight on d' odder one — d' ol' one," he explained to his father, who had returned refreshed. "An' dhe bull was jus' givin' it to 'em — an' dhey was bleedin' blood." His voice went husky with the thought of much gore.

"Was they?" His father turned a blearily sympathetic eye on the place where the masterpiece had hung.

"It was did by a convic'. An' he was in fer life. An' dhey pardoned 'm — fer doin' it!"

His father nodded, drawing a package of candy from his pocket. Mickey took it awkwardly, without thanks. "'D yuh get yer drink?" he asked, to be "sociable."

"Sure! Havin' a good time?"

Mickey, sucking on a candy, winked archly. "Uh-huh!"

His father grinned. There was no need of words. They understood each other.

When the curtain rose again, it rose on the promised robbery, on low lights and tremulous violins, on an air vibrating with mystery and crime; and little Mickey

forgot his father. He leaned out over the edge of the gallery, tingling with an indescribable sensation of joyful apprehension that moved in his lower insides. The captain was picking locks. He had found the miser's strong box. He was forcing it. He was emptying it on the table — with a noisy jingling of stage money. He was looking for the secret will. When he held up a yellowed paper hanging with a huge red seal, Mickey recognized it; he had seen stage wills before. He breathed as if on tiptoe; and his father's restraining hand, on his coat tail, hushed the very beating of his heart.

It was then that the robber awoke to the danger of his situation. The door! The door behind him! It was opening! He was discovered. "Help! Help!" He threw himself on the miser. The old man struggled and choked. And Mickey strangled the gallery railing with a relentless clutch. A gurgle, a sob — What? He had killed him! He'd be caught! "Ssss-sh!"

Some one — some one — was coming. It was the robber's blind wife. "Thank God, she's blind!" Mickey caught a long breath, and the robber escaped noiselessly through the open door, just as the blind woman stumbled on the body of the dead miser and screamed an alarm. The innocent sailor rushed in to her cry. He was seized by the police (who had apparently been in the next room). "Arrest that man for murder!" "I am *in-no-cent!*" Then the robber captain's deep bass boomed out from the background: "And my evidence will *prrrrove* it!"

When the captain, posing for Liberty enlightening the Upper Bay, uttered those generous words, Mickey brought his dirty little palms together with a smack that led the gallery. A whirlwind of applause beat upon the curtain, and — when the curtain rose again — upon the actors bowing before the storm. Mickey's shrill pipe of happiness topped it all. When the uproar dwindled down to an excited interchange of appreciations, his treble kept the key-note. "Gee! Was n't it great? 'D yuh see 'm grab d' ol' guy be dhe pipe? Say, wy did n't he lift dhe box, 'stead o' monkeyin' roun' dhere till dhey got in on 'em, eh? Gee, dhough, was n't it great?"

His father had been watching Mickey rather than the play; but he simulated a smiling interest and answered: "Sure! That was somethin' *like*, eh?"

A boy of Mickey's acquaintance — the son of Schurz, the butcher — leaned in from the aisle to say: "Yer mother's out huntin' fer yuh, Mickey. *You'll* get it!" And Mickey's face fell half-way to an expression of unhappiness before it lifted to upper glee again. He turned to his father, full of the self-sacrifice of the robber captain's climax. "Dhat's all right," he cheered his parent. "If she finds out 't *you* was here, I'll tell her I took yuh."

"She won't find out nothin'. Ncver mind *her*. Havin' a good time?"

Mickey chortled. "Say! D' yuh guess dhe cap'n's goin' to confest?"

They discussed the question, sharing the candies,

drawn to each other by the guilt of their conspiracy and forgetful of the nemesis that was preparing for them.

For the remainder of the evening, Mr. Flynn, between his frequent visits to the founts of comfort, sat in a blinking state of bliss, as happy as his dreams; and little Mickey also moved in another and a fairer world — a world of robber dens, of marvelous disguises, of treachery thwarted, and “the minions of the law” evaded and abused. It did not matter that the villain was trying to betray an outlaw who lived by robbery and escaped capture by committing murders. The outlaw had a kind heart and always addressed to the gallery sentiments that were emphatically noble. When the company filed before the curtain, Mickey hissed that villain with a venomousness that irritated even his sympathetic neighbors. “Say, kid,” a man leaned over to him, “turn it off, can’t yuh? Are yuh tryin’ to spit a tooth?”

“S all right,” his father protested thickly. “Lell ’m ’lone.” And Mickey hissed till his mouth ached.

He feasted his eyes on the mystery of the robber’s cave in the woods, where the trees were painted in tints of misty blue most beautiful. He shivered in the gloom of their underground retreat in Paris, where never a door was opened except with an appalling rattle of locks and chains. He looked on the furniture in the secret office of the chief of police, and his hair stirred on his head when he recognized the fearless captain, disguised as a gendarme, entering that lion’s den. There was a

struggle between the mighty outlaw and the five gendarmes who tried vainly to handcuff him. There was another when he escaped from his dungeon with a revolver and a pocket file, having first shot his guards with a blank cartridge and so startled Mickey with the explosion that he bit his tongue. Finally, there was the captain's revenge upon the villain, who had betrayed him. "'T is midnight," he hissed. "And . . . vengeance . . . is . . . MINE!!!" Those were the last words he spoke to Mickey, for he had been shot exactly in the heart, as was obvious from the red on his shirt bosom. He died with his face upturned to Mickey, and the curtain fell.

Mickey did not move until some one butted him in the side with an impatient knee. He was shoved along with his father in the crowd; he floated down the stairs to the chill air of the streets, still half stupid. There he stood, staring at the gutter, until his father said: "C' malon'. Goil 'ome? Uh?"

Mickey looked up at the man — and accepted his responsibility. He took his father's sleeve. "Yuh 'd better get a gait on, pop," he said. "She'll give it to yuh, if yuh don't."

They would have made a moving illustration for a temperance tract. Little Mickey trotted along, thin and eager-eyed, beside his father, who rolled in a fat stagger, mumbling to himself. They made a picture of the unhappy child of poverty leading home a brutal parent to his wretched hovel. But the parent in the riotous turmoil of his mind, was talking to Mickey as a

boon companion, proud of his boy and tenderly affectionate. And Mickey, in *his* excited imagination, was the robber captain, leading his blind wife by the hand, his pockets full of the miser's gold, narrowly watching the policeman at a street corner, and ready, on the instant of interference, to throw himself on that minion of the law and throttle him to death. Happily, the streets were dark; the villain did not leap out from any doorway to intercept him with a file of gendarmes; and Mickey saw with relief, the light at the door of his underground retreat shiningly awaiting him — and saw no spy watching to betray his hiding-place to the chief of police.

He stopped. "Go on ahead dhere," he ordered. "I'll folly in a jiffy." He added: "Don't toll 'm 't yuh seen mo."

Mr. Flynn nodded with a ponderous sagacity, patted Mickey on the shoulder, and went on alone. As soon as he had disappeared, unchallenged, in the door of the delicatessen shop, Mickey turned back, crouching in the shadows, and proceeded to throw all the sleuths off his trail by doubling around the block.

His elaborate precautions carried him, untracked, as far as the front of Schurz's hatcher shop. But there the whole sidewalk lay in a blaze of light; and Mickey hid behind the wooden Indian of a tobacconist's shop, next door, planning a detour. It was indeed a dangerous pass. When he heard Schurz's door-latch click as a customer came out, he was quick to see that he might be discovered in a suspicious posture of guilt; and he

decided to carry off the situation with a bold front. He disguised himself, quickly and effectually, by pulling his cap down to his eyes and clasping his hands behind him. Then he stepped out from his hiding-place — and swaggered into the arms of his mother.

“Mickey!” she screamed, and caught him by the arm.

He looked at her, bewildered. “Gee!” he said, surprised to find himself suddenly in another world and subject to maternal authority.

She shook him. “Yeh little imp, yeh! ’T was at the theayter yeh was, was yeh? Did n’t I tell yeh —”

He did not listen to what it was that she had told him. He knew that young “Shirty” Schurz must have betrayed him. If “Shirty” had not betrayed Mr. Flynn, too, it must be because the traitorous villain had failed to see that Mickey was not alone in the gallery. He hunched up his shoulders against his mother’s wrath, and planned to be avenged on “Shirty.”

She hustled him along with her, scolding plaintively. “Have yeh no consarn at all fer yer poor mother — worryin’ me soul out about yeh — thinkin’ yeh ’d been run down be the cayrs er drowned in the river? Are yeh goin’ to grow up no better than yer fahther? An’ me thinkin’ I ’d bring y’ up dacint to be a comfourt to me.” He remained sulkily silent. “Whayr ’d yeh get money fer the theayter?” she demanded in another tone. “Have yeh been playin’ the craps again?”

“Naw, I ain’t. I ain’t been doin’ not’in’.”

“Whayr ’d yeh come by it, thin?”

THE TWO MICKEYS

369

"Some one give 't to me."

She released him, to hitch her shawl about her shoulders. "That's a lie fer yeh, Mickey. Yer father 'll hide yeh fer that."

She was a small, determined woman, harshly just as a judge, but as an executioner soft-hearted; and in her management of her little household she had always made her big husband execute her judgments on Mickey with a leather strap. "I won't," Flynn had said once. "Do yer own lickin'. D' yuh want to make the boy hate me? I b'lieve yuh do." She replied: "Yeh 'll do yer dooty as a fahther, er yeh 'll march out o' here now. Yer a dang poor husband — an' I've stood fer *that*. But yeh 'll tend to Mickey, er I 'll have yeh hulkin' round here no longer. Take the strop!" And with the air of a Lady Macbeth, she had forced him to lift the figurative dagger.

Little Mickey had no fear of his father this night, but he pretended that he had. He allowed himself to be almost dragged to the shop door, and as soon as he was inside he bolted past Mrs. Flynn's sister — who had been tending the counter while Mrs. Flynn was away — and ran to hide himself in the little room in which he slept.

It was at the very back of the small suite of rooms in which the Flynns lived; and it was as dark as the robber captain's dungeon cell. But Mickey was not afraid of the dark; there had been no fond nursery nonsense in his education. He shut his door and took off all his outer clothing except his knickerbockers. Then he

clambered into bed and waited for whatever wrath there was to come.

Of the interview between Mr. and Mrs. Flynn he heard only the muffled shrill voice of the wife interrogating silences. He lay on his back, his legs and arms spread wide — ready to resist any attempt to turn him over and expose his vulnerable rear — wondering, dully, whether his mother would succeed in extorting a confession from his partner in crime. He himself was prepared to endure all the mythical tortures of the “third degree” rather than speak a word that might betray his faithful confederate. At the same time, he saw himself, on the very edge of his doom, saved from paying the final penalty of his silence by the magnanimous interference of his father. “I am in-no-cent!” he would cry. And his father, rushing into the room, would shout: “And my evidence will *prrove* it!”

He stiffened at the sound of approaching footsteps, bracing himself from his heels to his elbows. Mrs. Flynn threw open the door. She had a light in one hand and the strap in the other. He saw that she had been crying. He shut his eyes, instinctively hardening his heart.

“Mickey now,” she pleaded, “tell me how yeh come be the money. Tell me the truth, an’ I’ll not lick yeh. Tell me, child.”

He answered stuhbornly: “Some one give ’t to me.”

“Who was it?”

“Some one.”

“That ain’t the truth, Mickey.”

"'T is so."

"Why w'u'd any one be givin' yoh money? Did y' arn it somoway mebber?"

"Naw. Dhey jus' give 't to me."

She put down hor lamp. "Got up! Get up out o' that," sho said with a hard sob. "I'll have no boy o' mino a liar if I have to kill'm fer it."

It would have been better for Mickey if he had obeyed her; for in the obstinate struggle that ensued, Mrs. Flynn lost her temper; and when Mickey, at last, came out of bed to the floor — still spread like a crab and struggling — she beat him in a nervous frenzy, beside herself with anger, flaying him mercilessly. He did not utter a sound. He did not even cry out "I am in-no-cent!" And when she suddenly dropped the strap, in a physical horror of what she had done, and ran from the room sobbing hysterically, little Mickey relaxed with the groan of innocence that has been deserted in distress by the hero who was to have rushed to its rescue.

He was not subtle. He was not sentimental. He had merely boyish ideals of conduct. But no one could fail in these without disgrace; and his father had failed. In that bitter moment the boy who had hissed the villain and applauded the hero saw his father as a coward, a "sneaker." His mother's broken sobs pleaded against any resentment of her cruelty. She, too, had been betrayed; and in the dumb-thoughted way of a boy his admiration and his love went out to her with the first burst of tears that shook him.

He crawled back into bed and wrapped himself as well as he could in the coverlet. An hour later, when his mother came in to look at him, he was throttling a damp pillow in his dreams, with a faintly mumbled " 'S midnight — an' vengesmine! "

She did not know that this triumph was her own. She did not know that the elder Mickey had taken the first irrevocable step toward losing his son; that, thereafter, the boy was to be more and more her defense against her husband's good-natured but skulking shiftlessness and — as time went on — against the world that fought her down with poverty. She had learned only that the two Mickeys had been at the theater together and she stood looking down at him through the meager tears of an emotion that was very near despair. She touched him on the shoulder, with a weary gentleness. " Lay off yer clothes, Mickey," she said. " Yeh can't sleep so."

Something in his swollen eyes, as he opened them sleepily, reminded her of his father. She shook her head. " The two o' them," she said. " The two Mickeys! . . . Ah, child, have I put nothin' of mesilf into yeh? Nothin' at all? "

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LARKIN



LARKIN

I

IT was after nightfall in that part of New York which is, to the rest of the city, the top story of the house — where the servants sleep. And now, when the business district of the lower town was as dark as a deserted basement, the lights were lit in all these shining windows; and behind the drawn blinds, clerks and bookkeepers, shop-girls and working-women laughed and chatted in their tiny cells and cubicles. Their rooms were piled up, in layer on layer, to form continuous blocks of houses; and these rose from the unbroken pavements with an appearance of standing ankle deep in a pool of frozen stone — as if an inundation of fluid rock had hardened evenly over the streets and buried every inequality of the green sod and brown soil of a suburb under a barren crust of asphalt and cement.

Up one of the bare gorges of brick and pavement, Larkin struggled against all the winds of December that fought and jostled him, beating down the flickering gas-lights until they gasped behind their rattling lamp-glasses, and puffing stiff blasts along the sidewalk to sweep the stones as clean as ice. Bending forward, with his chin in his collar and his shoulders hunched about his neck, he looked as if the violence of the wind had pounded his head into his body and crushed his

stiff derby down on his ears. He had one hand thrust into the breast of his overcoat at the aperture of the missing button and his elbows were pressed in against his sides; so that he seemed to be hugging himself against the cold, shrunken in on himself in an unwilling and shivering discomfort.

Yet, when he stopped in the light of a hall-lamp, he looked up at the number on the door, a package showed the crook of his elbow to explain his posture, and above the wrappings of that package there shone the glint of the twine of the bonbon counter. His lips were contracted with the cold as if to the pucker of a whistle, and his simple face, glowing with the nip of the wind, was the sort from which an always cheerful melody might be expected continuously to pipe.

He came up the steps to pick out the name of "Connors" over an electric bell, and he pressed the button heavily with the flat of his thumb. The door-latch clicked. He wiped his feet on the mat for a moment of hesitation, and then blew apologetically into the thumb-crotch of a closed fist as he entered; but there were the only signs of any inward agitation at the prospect of making a social call, uninvited, on a girl who did not know his name, and who might possibly not even remember his face.

A little old woman in a shawl was waiting for him in a doorway on the second landing. He asked cautiously from the top step: "'S Miss Connors live here?"

"She does." She peered out to see that he was a stranger. "I'll tell her." She disappeared.

He prepared to wait at the door, but she came back at once, in a flutter, to invite him into the parlor. She asked him, with an apologetic warmth, to be seated. He nodded but he did not speak.

He put his box of candies on the center-table and covered it with his hat. There was a pink plush photograph album under his hand, with a scroll of gilt lettering on the cover, and he stood tracing out the design on it, with a fascinated forefinger, until he heard a swish of skirts and a patter of quick steps in the adjoining room. He looked up to see the girl stop short between the gaudy hangings of the doorway. Her lips — that had been ready in a little simper of welcome — parted in a gape of surprise; her hands — that had been smoothing the shoulders of her pink-beribboned dressing jacket — caught at the curtains; and she remained held there, as if she did not intend to enter until he had explained himself.

She was a small girl, with a head of coquettish black hair, and she wore one artful ringlet hanging down in the middle of her forehead with the air of a soubrette. He fastened his gaze on it while he spoke.

"We heard 't yuh were sick — from one o' the girls. I was — I was goin' past here, an' I thought I'd drop in an' see how yuh were comin' on."

"Oh!" she said, with an affectation of recognizing him for the first time; "you're Mr. Rattray's frien'?"

He nodded. "Pipp was astin' about yuh from the red-headed girl. We been goin' to your place at the lunch counter right along."

"Have yuh?" she laughed, dropping her hands.

He nodded. "We thought p'raps yuh 'd like some choc'lates." He lifted his hat to uncover the candy box.

From the way he did it, it was plain how much he had counted on the effect. She laughed. "Oh — oh, *thanks*," she said, and came in to take the box from him. She had a kitchen pallor, but a spot of color began to blush out, like rouge, on either cheek-bone.

As soon as she had relieved him of the package, he backed away from her and took refuge in a chair, sitting down in his overcoat, with his hat in his hands.

"Won't yuh take off yer things?" she asked, in the voice of social politeness, from a flat palate, somewhat through the nose.

He shook his head. "I jus' dropped in to see how yuh were." He looked around the room in a manner of being very much at his ease.

"Oh, I 'm pretty well, I guess," she said, with a nervous laugh that was followed by a fit of coughing. She sat down with the box in her lap and began to open it.

He frowned at the cough. "That 's right," he said at last. "Yuh don't want to go back too soon after the grip."

"I guess mine was nemmonia, too," she replied, with an air of pride in it. "The doctor says my lungs ain't strong."

He nodded at a crayon portrait of Mrs. Connors on the far wall. "That 's what they tol' us."

There was an awkward pause in the conversation until she said "They're fi-i-ne!" bending over the candies. "Won't yuh try one?"

She held out the box to him and he reached across the intervening space to take a chocolate drop. He put it whole into his mouth, and rolled it over into the pouch of his cheek in a way which made it plain to her that he had not eaten candies since the days when he had sucked "penny lasters."

She nibbled a chocolate with a superlative daintiness and watched him.

He was staring solemnly at the wall. "I'm over in Bowler's," he said. "Pipp's in the Pennsylvania offices."

"Oh?"

"We ust to go to school together up home. I came down to N' York with him."

"Did yuh?"

"Yep." He nodded, sucking on the bulge in his cheek. "We sort o' ran away. I've known Pipp ever since he was about *so* high." He held his hat out on a level with his shoulder and smiled askew, around the chocolate.

"Where'd yuh ust to live?" she asked politely.

He named the little town up state. He had driven his father's bakery wagon after school hours there, and "Pipp," who was the doctor's son, had ridden with him "for the fun of it."

There was a look in his eyes which she did not understand. It came with the memory of those sleepy

afternoons in the wagon — the smell of fresh bread always sweet on its worn shelves that were as clean and as warm as a baker's oven — the sun beating down on its heat-cracked top, and the yellowish-white nag, that knew its round of customers as well as he did, tacking from side to side of the road, unguided.

His whole manner puzzled her; and it was not to be the last time he was to leave her at a loss. He had one of those minds that seem to make stolid night marches and to arrive unexpectedly at the strangest conclusions without at all sharing the surprise they cause.

He groped in his overcoat pocket to draw out a yellowed photograph of his father's bake-shop, taken by some traveling photographer who made a specialty of "commercial business." In the doorway, Larkin was posed between his parents, in a pair of knickerbockers that came to the calves of his legs; and he had an air of acknowledging that though his father was the original owner of the trousers, his mother had made them over for him.

Miss Connors did not smile when he explained that his mother looked sleepy because she always sat up until the small hours of the morning to call the bakers to their work.

He had also a tintype of "Pipp" and himself, grinning self-consciously in the gummy smile of youth. "He's pretty smart — Pipp," he said admiringly. "We used to be in the same class at school, but he got away ahead of me."

"He's a jollier, ain't he?" she said, in the same tone.

"Sure," he laughed. "He was jollyin' the red-headed girl to-day. He's more fun 'n enough."

She straightened back from the photograph with a change of face.

"I don't see such a much of him now," he went on innocently; "'cept at twelve. He's mighty pop'lar, I guess. He has to go out 'bout ev'ry night."

He turned the tintype over in his hand and sat looking at the blank back of it. She was studying him.

"D' yuh board together?" she asked suddenly.

He shook his head. "Pipp's moved downtown." He put the pictures back in his pocket and sat leaning forward with his forearms on his knees, looking down at his hat on the floor. "N' York's a big place," he said.

She smiled the smile of understanding. "It's pretty lonely, too, ain't it? Won't yuh take off yer coat?"

He rose. "I guess I better be goin'," he said. "I — I jus' dropped in — to see how yuh were." He evaded her eyes by looking into his hat, and while she was still stammering an attempt to put him at his ease again, he edged to the door and slipped out. She followed him. "I hope yuh'll come up again, Mr.—"

He did not give her his name. He stumbled down the stairs.

"Well, good-night," she said reproachfully.

"Good-night, good-night," he answered from the lower landing.

She went back into the room and took a candy from

the box and smiled as she crunched it. When her mother came in she bent down hastily to pick up the paper and gilt twine from the floor.

"Who was it?" Mrs. Connors asked.

"Oh, jus' a frien' of a fellah in the Pennsylvania offices," she said. "He sent me up some candy."

II

The following day she spent sitting at the closed window, wrapped in a shawl, the curl on her forehead done up in a twist of paper, watching what was doing in the street below her.

"I'm awful busy," she said to her mother, as she hurried back to her post of observation after dinner. "I'm movin' in across the road."

She nibbled chocolates. She sat and frowned or sat and smiled. Once, her mother, who was working over the laundry tubs, heard her singing and peeped in, to see her dusting the room. And when night fell she dressed in her black lace gown that had no collar, and put a huge butterfly bow of black velvet in her hair.

"I'll bet no one'll come, now I'm ready for them," she said humorously. "They'd sooner catch me when I'm lookin' a sight."

Larkin, however, came on the stroke of eight, and was so cordially received that he forgot, for the moment, to explain the parcel he had brought under his arm.

He did not remember it until after he was sitting down. "I thought I'd better run up with it t'-night," he explained then. "She's got to have it back Satur-

day — a girl at the house. She said she liked it. My name 's Larkin."

It proved to be a circulating library novel, "Wedded and Won," which he had borrowed from some one in his boarding-house.

"Oh! — oh, *thanks!*" she said. "I'm awful fond of readin', ain't you?"

He laughed unexpectedly. "Well, I ain't such a much. I saw some books over on Third Avenuh 't we ust to read in the barn, one day, an' got two o' them, but I did n't get through the first."

"Did n't yuh?" She smiled at his sudden volubility.

"No. We ust to have great times in the hay loft. They cost five cents each — about Jesse James an' the Indians. We ust to borrh' an' lend them — until But-tony Clark joined the Y. M. C. A. He borrh'd them all without tellin' us he was burnin' them. What sort d' you like?"

"Oh, any sort," she said gaily, "as long 's it 's a love story. I guess you men don't read love stories much." He shook his head uncertainly and then he smiled a broad grin. She turned the pages of the book. "Except when yuh want to jolly us along," she added.

He hitched up his shoulder and looked troubled.

"I don't know but what yuh look up a few pointers *then*," she said, and glanced up archly at him.

He shifted uneasily. "Pipp," he began; "he —"
"Oh, *him*," she stopped him. "I guess he don't do

all the jollyin'. That's a game fer two." She leaned back and laughed rather harshly. "I guess you have n't been readin' any of them lately, anyways."

"No — o," he said.

She bent down over the book again so that he could not see her face. "P'raps if yuh'd ever been in love, yuh *would*."

He was not so stupid that he could not see she was laughing at him. He did not answer.

"Have n't yuh *never* been? Because," she went on, without looking up, "I want to know if they do it right in the books."

Ho rose slowly. "She wants it back Saturday," he said. "I had better come fer it on —"

She dropped the book. "Yuh're not *goin'*?" she cried.

He started towards the door. She sprang up and got in front of him. "Now, you go away back there an' sit down," she ordered. "I ain't said anythin' to fly off the handle at like that. Go on, now. I won't let yuh go. Go on back an' sit down."

He did so.

"Great sakes," she said; "you're as touchy as anythin'."

He had been looking at her feet. He raised his eyes to hers now, humbly and apologetically, but with another expression too — as dumb as the look of a dog — that struck her pale. It was a glance that did not last a second. It was followed by a long silence, during which she sat, breathing quickly, the blood burning in her

checks, her eyes fixed on him in a stare that slowly changed from an expression of surprise that was almost stupefaction to one of wonder and compassion that was not unmixed with shame.

"I guess it's kind o' cold out, ain't it?" she said at last. "I wish 't'd hurry up an' get warm again."

He replied that he did not mind the cold; and the rest of the evening passed in a constrained conversation, chiefly about his work in the wholesale house and hers at the "lunch counter." When he rose to leave her she did not meet his eyes.

She hurried off to bed on the plea that she was tired. Her mother heard her coughing wakefully far into the night.

On the following evening, it was almost nine o'clock before Larkin arrived; and he was received by Mrs. Connors with a suspicious manner that thawed as soon as she saw how he took to heart the news that Maggie had been worse all day and had gone to bed.

"Ain't she gettin' better?" he whispered.

Her under lip trembled; her little sunken eyes filled. She shook her head.

He took a bag of peanuts from his pocket and laid them on the table. "Ain't she *any* better?"

"Not a bit," she said, under her voice. "Not a bit. An' I've had the doctor ev'ry blessed day, an' drugs, an' dainties that's eat up the little bit I'd put by for us — ev'ry cent of it. I'm at my wits' ends. I am that."

She began to pour out all the anxieties that she had

been restraining for months. He listened, blinking at the bag of peanuts.

"Thank God, I got my own health, but I'm gettin' old. I'm not good fer much. Our frien's 's all got troubles of their own, Heavens knows — poor souls. It's a bad way we'll be in if Maggie's never to get strong again. A bad way." She sat down and knotted her hard old hands together in her lap. "An' her such a bright girl — poor child."

She sighed and shook her head. He turned his hat over in his hands and studied it. There was a miserable silence.

"How d'yuh do, Mr. Larkin," a voice chirruped from the door. He started at the sight of her peeping around the hanging at him. She laughed. "Yuh 're gettin' so fash'nable, I thought yuh were n't comin'."

"I was huntin' fer some peanuts," he confessed. "I could n't find a peddler."

"Peanuts!" she cried. "Wait 'll I get my wrapper on."

He turned to smile at Mrs. Connors.

"They 'll do her no hurt anyways," she conceded. "I wish 't was port wine, poor girl."

It was port wine, the next time he appeared; it was also calves' foot jelly. And though Miss Connors made merry over them, her mother was visibly won. She relieved him of his hat and made him take off his overcoat. And having intervened to save him from her daughter's teasings several times throughout the evening,

she parted from him with reluctance at half-past ten and scolded the girl to bed.

"There 's not many boys in Noo York like him," she said; "more 's the pity. He 's —"

"He 's as slow as mud."

"What of it?" she cried. "It 's the mud that sticks to yeh. He 's no fly-away, anyways. He 's a good boy. He is now. Y' ought to take shame to yerself to be baitin' him so. Yer own father was as like him as ever was, an' he made as steady a man as any girl 'd want. Mind yeh that."

"All right, 'mither,'" she laughed. "Let me go to sleep. I 'll marry him in the mornin'."

"You 'ight do worse."

"I might do better."

III

Thereafter, if Larkin made no great progress with Miss Connors, he received every encouragement from her mother. She sent him one night to get a prescription filled at the drug store, and even allowed him to pay for the medicine when he insisted that he should — without letting "Maggie" know. Once having obtained that privilege, he made it a permanent one; and from this beginning he insinuated his aid into the payment of some of the other household expenses, brought Mrs. Connors presents of tea and sugar, and finally slipped a part of his pay-day riches into her hand — when she was bidding him good night in the hall — "fer the doctor's bill."

"God bless yeh, boy," she whispered tearfully. "Don't mind Maggie now. It's the way with the girls. She'll marry yeh when the time comes. Don't doubt it."

He fled down the stairs in such haste that he almost fell on the landing, but when he reached the sidewalk he stopped to turn up the collar of his overcoat and solemnly shook his head before he went on again.

Though he came every night — and even accepted an invitation to supper Sunday evening — he never had much to say for himself. Mrs. Connors received him at the door, maternally, and made herself busy about him, and followed him down the hall to the kitchen. Her daughter, propped up among the pillows in an arm-chair by the stove, greeted him with a flippant "Hello, Mike!" although she knew his name was Tom. He would grin and reply, respectfully: "How're yuh feelin'?"

"Oh, great!" she would say sarcastically. "Don't I look it?"

She was, in fact, pathetically thin and faded.

"That's right," he would insist. "I guess we'll have 't warm pretty soon now."

He would sit down at the opposite side of the room and smile and listen and watch her. She had given up teasing him about coming; she accepted him as one of the family and chatted with her mother about their neighbors and their household affairs without making any change of topic when he came in.

When she was too weak to leave her room she called

out "Hello, Mike!" as he passed her door. And when she was at last steadily confined to her bed, she had the cot moved into the kitchen to be in the warmest room in the flat, and she received him there with a smile, even when her voice was too faint to raise her greeting above a whisper. She had apparently accepted their sturdy assurance that she would get well with the warmer weather, and their evenings were as pleasant together as if they all believed that the impossible could happen and were resolved not to worry meanwhile.

He had been given her keys to the flat, so that he might not disturb her by ringing the bell if she were sleeping when he came of an evening. One Saturday night when he arrived he found the parlor door unlatched and the room filled with women, talking in subdued tones. None of them knew him and they all stared when he looked in. Some one was sobbing in the next room. Through the hangings he saw a priest.

He shut the door again, tiptoed heavily downstairs to the street, and stood on the front steps until a policeman, who was watching him, came up to speak to him. He wandered off aimlessly without answering.

He passed and repassed the door several times in the night. At daybreak he saw the black streamer on the door-jamb and turned home, and as he went slowly around the corner, in the silence of the Sunday morning, an undertaker's wagon came drumming hollowly over the paving-stones.

"Ah, don't lea' me, lad," Mrs. Connors pleaded.

"Sure, if Maggie 'd lived yeh 'd 'a' been my son, Tom. 'Tell 'm I 'd 'a' married him,' she said. 'Say good-by to Mike,' she said, callin' yeh Mike that way. 'An' tell 'm I 'd 'a' married him,' she said."

Larkin shook his head. He knew better.

However, he did not go back to his boarding-house. He sat in his old place in the kitchen until she made up a bed for him in the room that was now to spare. And when Mrs. Connors had gone plaintively to bed, he dampered the stove, tried the lock of the window that opened on the fire-escape, and took up the oil lamp which she used to save gas in the kitchen.

He stood a long time gazing at the light in his hand, swaying a little, his lips twitching. He went up the hall to the door of the room and stood there, hanging his head. He blew out the light. In the darkness, he tapped on the panel and whispered — hoarsely, apologetically:

"Maggie?"

THE END

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