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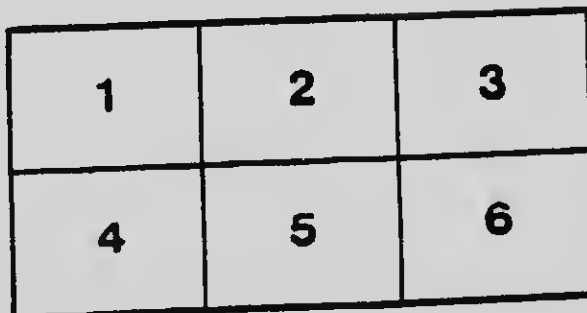
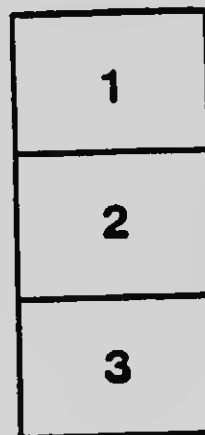
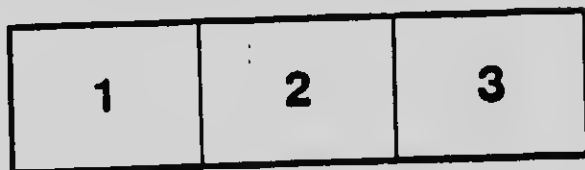
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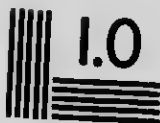
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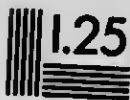
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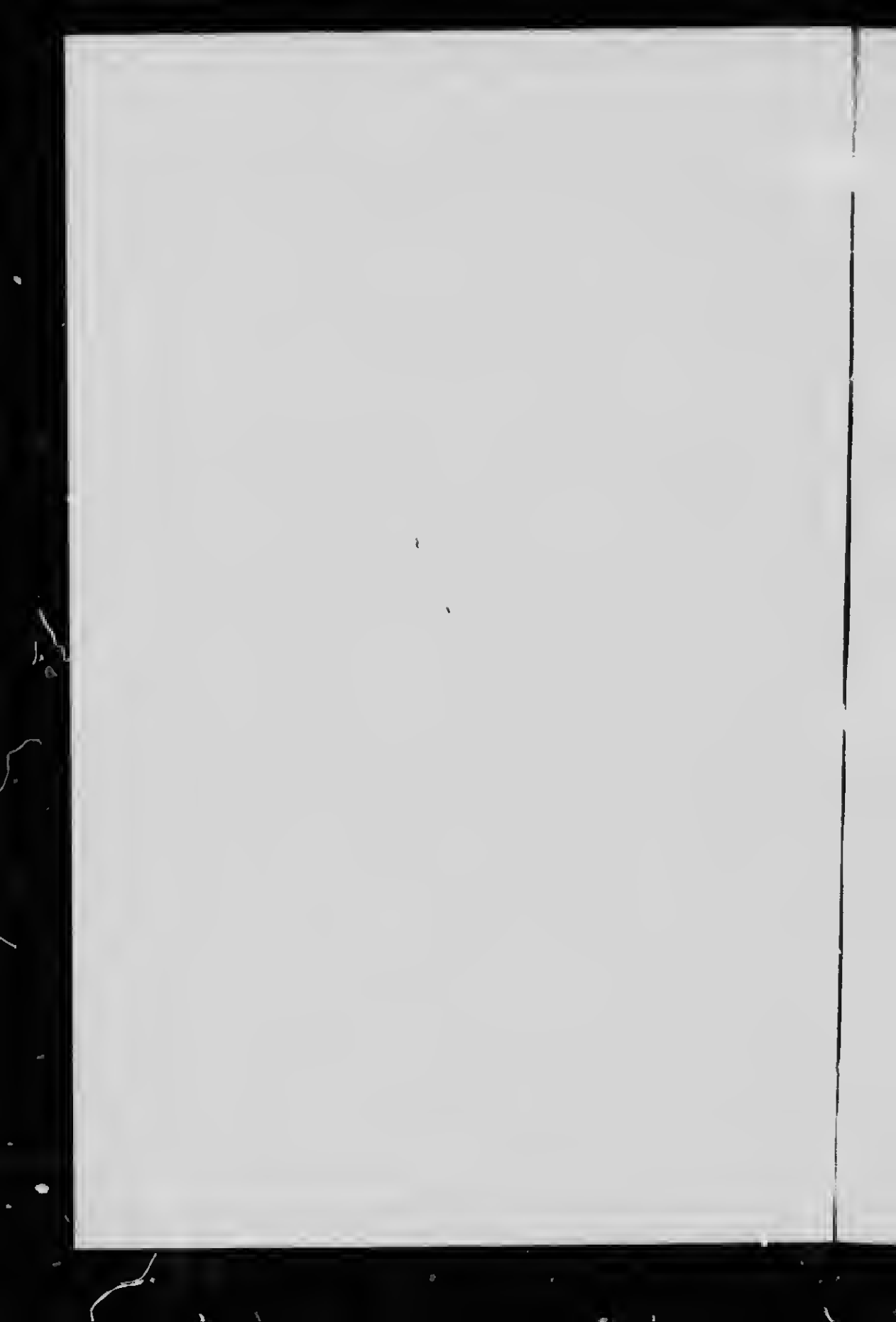
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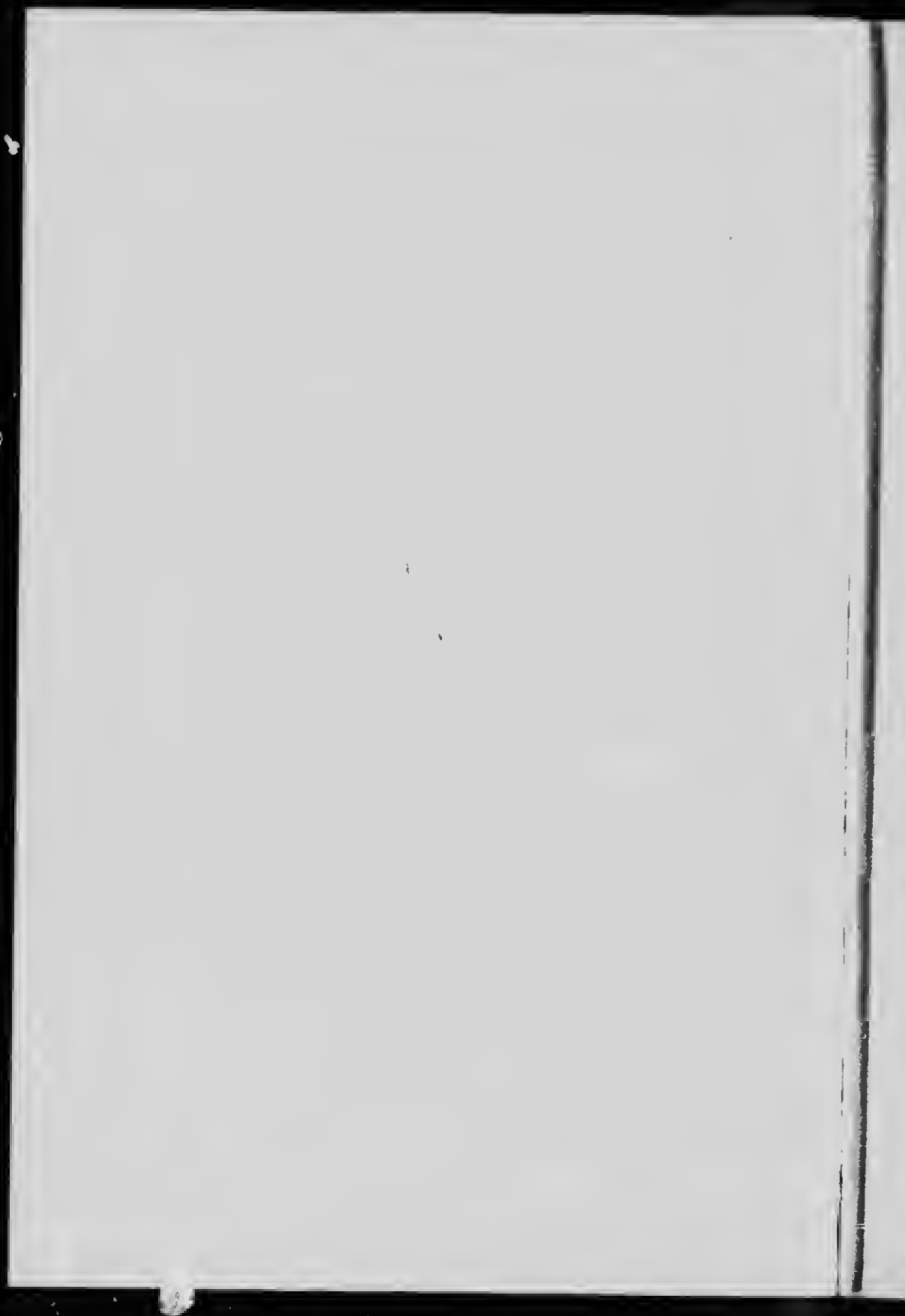
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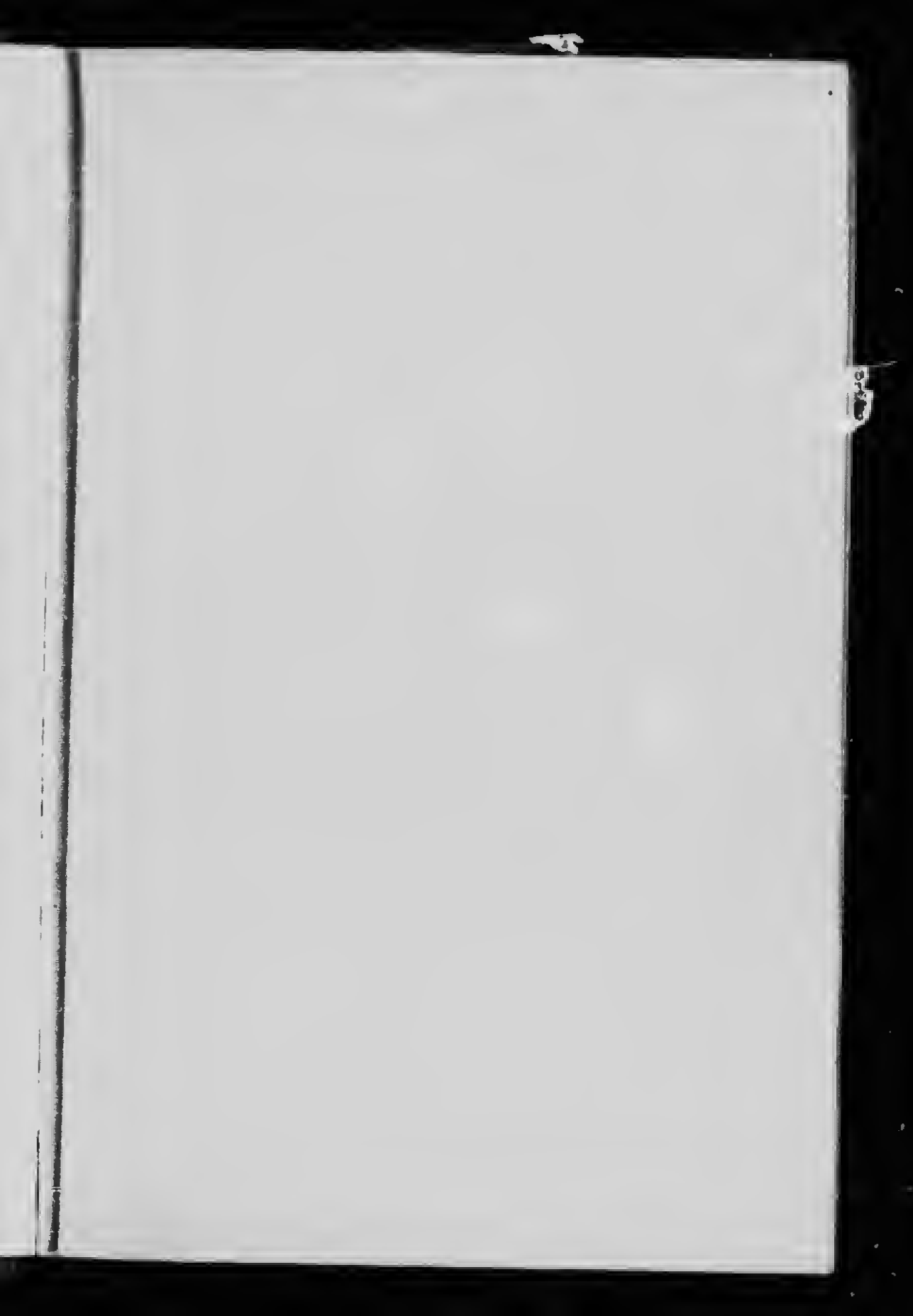
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A MAN'S REACH

SECOND EDITION







OLD SHINES KEPT TIME WITH HIS EYELIDS, AND CALLED OUT THE FIGURES AT THE
TOP OF HIS VOICE

A MAN'S REACH

BY
SALLY NELSON ROBINS

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS IN COLOR
BY
EDMUND FREDERICK

"Ah, but a man's reach should exceed his grasp,
Or what's a heaven for?"

ROBERT BROWNING'S
"Andrea del Sarto"



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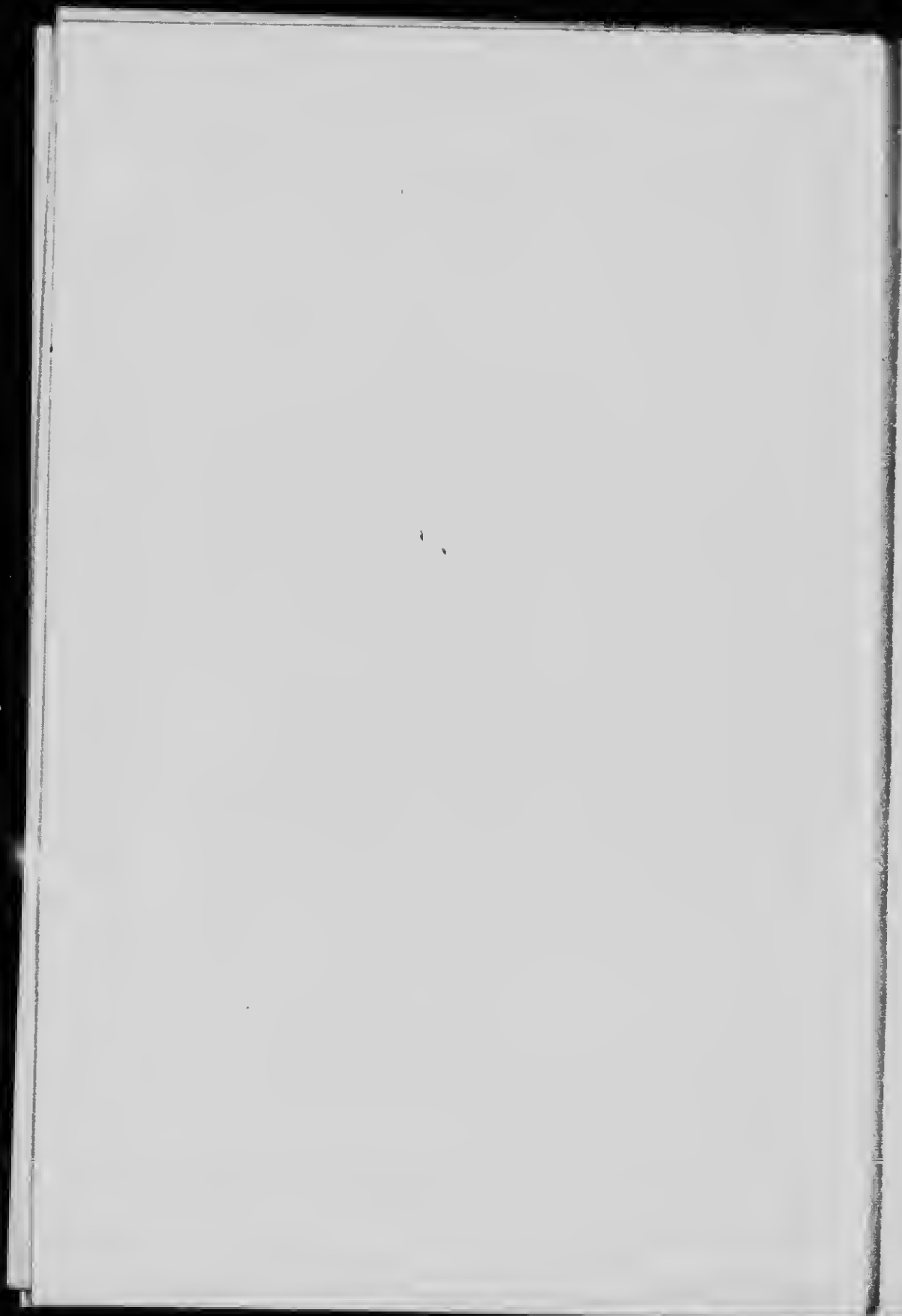
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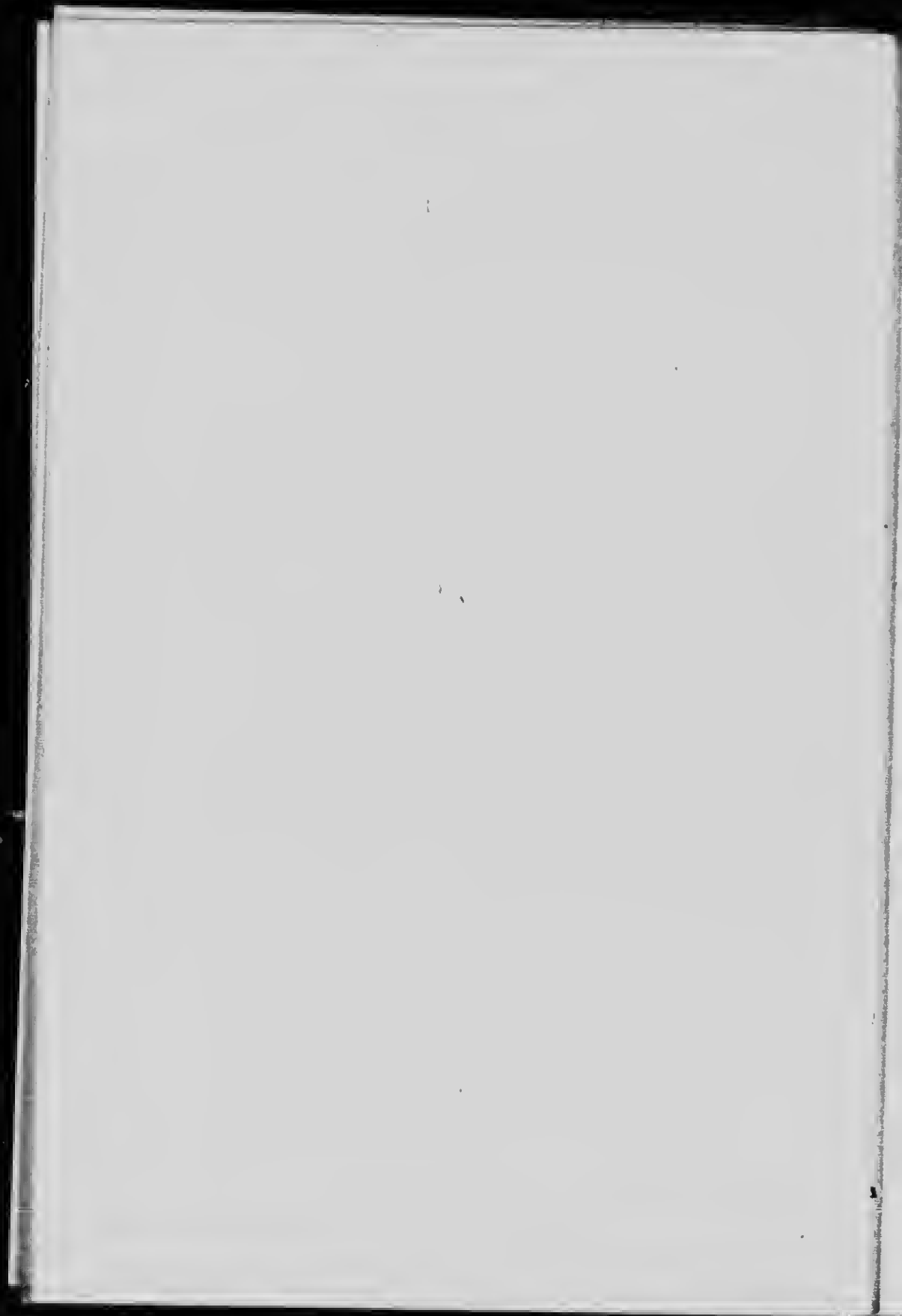
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TO MY FRIEND
J. BERG ESENWEIN
FOR HIS COUNSEL
AND
TO MY DAUGHTER
RUTH NELSON ROBINS
FOR HER PRAISE
I AFFECTIONATELY AND GRATEFULLY
DEDICATE THIS BOOK
THE AUTHOR



ILLUSTRATIONS

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A MAN'S REACH

PART I

I

"CHATTIE has a baby—a son!" was the password, to the city of Bolingbroke in Virginia, this January afternoon; and Bolingbroke, returning from tea, cards, visits or business, looked at the closed blinds of the gray house across from the "Park" and whispered very tenderly: "Dear Chattie, I'm so glad," and very sternly: "Ran must turn over a new leaf now."

Charlotte Turberville—Chattie for short—was the darling of Bolingbroke.

In the front room of the gray house blazing coals cast a rich glow on chintz and dimity, emphasizing the still joy of the woman in the bed. Charlotte Turberville was alone—waiting. "Mother" was in her violet eyes, and "Little Babies" all around her pretty mou'h. She could still feel the sweet breath of the cradled treasure, and the downy softness of the little red face. "Nine pounds, twenty-one-inches-long,—perfect, wonderful!" If Randolph would only hurry up—she had so much to say—though she was too weak to talk this morning. It was too good to

be true, this tiny bundle of love. She had waited five years for this belated little savior. How could a man help being a man, with his son looking on?

Every five minutes the "trolley" passed the door, each time it stopped she whispered, "Ran," and sighed faintly when he did not appear; but she was too happy now to mind anything—her son was born.

The car stopped again, the front door opened and closed gently, and Ran tiptoed up, but she could hear—funny for a big thing like Ran to tiptoe!

The six-foot, broad-shouldered father unbolted the door, opened it a little and squeezed through—as if it helped things to squeeze—came to the bed and knelt beside it. The soft light increased his peculiar beauty, dark, and finely moulded.

"My hands are so cold I am afraid to touch you, Honey. All right?" His smile was very tender.

"Thinking of James Lane Allen's story of the little mother and the strawberries? I can't remember her name—I can't remember anything, hardly, but the boy—our little Son-Boy." She put her hand on her husband's head. "Aren't you glad, Daddy—isn't it wonderful?"

Something strange and wonderful overpowered Randolph Turberville, and he hid his face in the counterpane. For a moment he was sorry for

everything; but he did not like the feeling, so he stood up with his hands deep in his pockets as if to steady himself.

"Women are too much for me; last night——"

"Don't mention it, Ran—I would go through twice as much for Son-Boy. You didn't want him as bad as I did, but you're glad he is here—aren't you?"

"Awfully glad." For a moment fatherhood was unexpectedly sweet.

"Go in the nursery, Ran, and look at him. He gets prettier every minute."

She must not be crossed to-night, so Ran went into the next room and talked to the nurse about his son, while Chattie smiled: not seeing, she still could see father and son, strength and weakness, love beholding its own lost innocence.

In a few moments Ran came back into his wife's room, knelt by her bed and took her lily-hand in both of his strong, brown ones.

"Oh, darling," she whispered, her lowered lids fluttering like moth-wings.

"Sweetheart, Saint Charlotte!" Ran almost sobbed, he felt strangely, abominably strong in the face of such patient weakness. Then as if ashamed of his emotion he spent it in a long, pleading kiss, finally returning to himself with—
"Pretty red!"

"That means the whitest skin, Silly! Isn't his

mouth beautiful? He has a real nose, his eyes flash, and his ears stick to his head like tiny pink shells. His body is perfect—suppose it wasn't! Nine pounds is a great big baby." Charlotte sighed for happiness.

"Everybody asked after you to-day and sent love," Ran longed to rhapsodize—he was trying his best to please, but he felt that, after all, he was not a very exultant father.

"You told his name?"

"Of course."

"The tenth Randolph Turberville."

"Six white, and three black sheep: which will he be?"

"Oh, Ran!"

"I was a baby once, Chattie."

"You are still a big baby, and your little baby is going to make you a big white sheep," she smiled. "Oh, we are going to be so happy."

She was very weak and her voice was like a flower-scented zephyr blowing fitfully. His hands were warm, now; and he took hers, chafed them gently, and patted her cheek to warn her not to talk too much.

"You women! So happy over a wrinkled beet." Ran was really a little happy, too.

"He means so much, darling—my Isaac—my Samuel—my John—your Christ—oh, I say it so reverently, Ran—your little Savior!"

Ran said nothing, but pressed her hands as her words pricked him like little tacks—he was tender to-night.

“Mammy says he is the ‘spittin’ image’ of me. I think he is exactly like you, Ran!”

“Don’t talk any more, Sweet! Let me talk to you. I met Robert Catlett to-day and he was delighted to hear about our boy—he has two.”

“Dear old slow Robert!”

“He told me to tell you that he was delighted with the country, and that he was going to bring his sons up to be farmers.”

“How is Eleanor?”

“Just as pretty as ever, he says; is a fine house-keeper, loves the mountains, her chickens and her lambs—and is raising her children according to books.”

“According to books?” Charlotte smiled, “I think love and faith the best books, Ran. Eleanor is such a mixture, by nature a wordling, by will almost a fanatic to her notions—eh, Ran? Can’t you see her now in that yellow tulle with red roses in her hair? Stunning! We thought Robert Catlett not half good enough for her. Remember when we played the ‘Lady of Lyons?’ Bob’s only words were, ‘Seize him—seize him!’ and he would say, ‘Catch him, catch him!’ He always seemed so dull—and Eleanor so brilliant.”

“They were a foil for each other—solidity and

charm—wonder what their boys will take from each? Heredity always interests me.”

“Does it? It scares me.” Charlotte shivered.

“Robert told me to tell you the oldest boy was Philip St. George after Eleanor’s father; and the youngest, just ten months old, William Robert, after his father. His nick-name is ‘Bill-Bob.’”

“How cute!”

“He is crazy about the baby—Robert is very sentimental, you know; he took my hand and said: ‘Ran, your baby and mine must inherit our friendship. Let’s pledge for them, now—to stick to each other through thick and thin!’”

“How sweet—oh, Daddy, isn’t it lovely? It’s so cozy, you and the baby and I, in this pink twilight—I wish time would stand still till I told it to go. Hear his little ‘birdy’ twitters? He feels—he knows a little bit. Precious thing!”

“Don’t talk any more, dear!”

“I’m not tired. It’s so good to have you—what else did Robert say?”

“He came down especially to see about Kate and Kitty.”

“Such a good foster-brother! Is Kate sick?”

“No—but she is too busy to look after Kitty. Nothing so pathetic as a wild child with a tame, overworked mother. As the slang goes, Kitty is on the ‘blink,’ and Kate is too busy to see it.”

“Kitty is only twelve, how could she be?”

"But Chattie—Innocent, there are signs at twelve that are facts later. Kitty is beautiful and needs looking after, and I told Robert so."

"What did he say?"

"He is going to try to make Kate let him take Kitty to Albemarle. You have talked enough, Chattie—time to get quiet. Think of your boy and try to go to sleep. Maybe I shouldn't have mentioned the Ingrahams."

"That doesn't bother me—nothing stays in my mind but our baby."

"Don't talk any more. Go to sleep—go to sleep."

Randolph Turberville, kneeling by the big white bed, might have been Sir Galahad or St. George. His proportions, in the half-light, were heroic; the mould of his head, with its dark thatch, splendid. He chafed the limp lily-hand and smoothed the pure brow very tenderly; then with a low, "Go to sleep, Honey,—go to sleep," kissed her and left the bedside for the big chair by the fire.

Chattie was very still, but fragments of satisfaction now and then passed her lips: "Beautiful—comfortable—hear his little lips 'suff'—Ran? Wonder if he is hungry—nothing for him to-night!" A long pause, then—"You there, Ran?" Another pause. "Ran!"

Charlotte Turberville's face on the pillow was a Malbone miniature with the glass scratched;

great joy had not dispelled the pinch of heartache which made her look older than her twenty-five years; her plaited hair zigzagged on the counterpane, and her face in the flat clasp of its chaste smoothness was like a bruised pearl in a rim of dull gold.

Randolph, in spite of his momentary exultation, was bored as he sat in the big chair by the fire. He generally played solitaire, smoked cigarettes, or read the papers when in the house. He wondered if a cigarette would do any harm now; amidst these holy mysteries he felt like a restless boy in church, or a bull in an airship. How could he get out? He would not wake Chattie for the world. When he did get up, everything creaked, the door almost gave him away and the floor and the steps remonstrated audibly.

Chattie's sleep was like gossamer—easily torn. The cruel repression of years had relaxed into the glory of motherhood, and she had gone to sleep with no will, only unresisted satisfaction. After an hour of billowy unconsciousness she awoke with a shrill "Ran—Ran—Ran!"

When her husband got to her, she was trembling from head to foot, and whimpering pitiably. "Oh, Ran—don't be angry—I am so sorry—but please let me hold you tight until I g-go to sleep again!"

II

THE little Park across from the gray house had not yet bourgeoned into spring's ecstasy, but here and there was a token that leaf and flower were near. A few moist April days with a touch of April sun had set the yellow-bells a-ringing, and greened the earth under the bare trees, which held the low gray April dome upon the tips of their long gray fingers.

It was a Wednesday in Lent, and from the gray house where ten years ago a son was born, came a woman and a boy. Nothing would have explained the woman better than her suit of blue broadcloth—creaseless—costly—simple. A blue velvet turban emphasized the color and courage of her face. Her figure was still slender and young, but her mouth and eyes now looked more than ten years older than had the mouth and eyes of the woman in the bed. Bouncing beside her, the boy yelled: "Bill-Bob—Bill-Bob!" and her gentle grasp could hardly restrain him for the last word which she always gave:—"Remember,—Son-Boy, half-past six—you can see the clock plainly in Park-Place tower; don't go out of the Park—hear?"

"I always hear," the boy answered frankly—"trouble is I can't remember."

He pulled from her like a young colt from a close bridle, and Charlotte smiled at his young strength—his boyish beauty—as she walked on to the church to hear her cousin, Bishop Thruston, preach from the text, "Wives submit yourselves unto your husbands as unto the Lord."

Sometimes it was very hard to submit. At this same hour Edward Potter was to speak at the "Equal Suffrage League" upon, "Women according to St. Paul." Chattie wanted to hear him, too, for although she lived according to the standard of her foremothers, away down in her truth-belt was the question, "Is it fair?" However, she still kept the faith, and her cousin Stevenson Thruston would show her this afternoon how to keep it forevermore.

Her short walk was enlivened by the shrill treble of her son's voice: "Bill-Bob, oh, Bill-Bob!" Nothing small or uncertain about young Randolph Turberville—his personality was so distinct and compelling that everybody in Bolingbroke knew him; his name opened the way and his individuality kept it. His sturdy legs bulged to strong flexible loins that yielded to the force of his broad shoulders; and upon his slender neck his fine head sat firm and well moulded. He was his father physically except in color—his mother's fair rosiness fell over his father's splendid proportions like a soft veil. In spirit as in flesh his

parents fenced in him continually—a flash of his mother's gentleness would yield to a flame of his father's anger; the foam of his mother's conscience would disappear in the green wave of his father's self-indulgence: his nature was a game and both sides tenacious.

As soon as he entered the Park, there was a cry: "Son-Boy, Son-Boy, be on our side—be on our side!" But Randolph paid no attention—he was looking for somebody.

"Needn't look for 'Bill-Bob,' he's gone," an acute observer announced.

"Where?" Randolph was not pleased with the news.

"To 'Allemarle,'" the first speaker replied.

"You know everything, don't you?" And Randolph threw himself on one of the little green seats, while a crowd of children piped,—“Please play 'Tisket-tasket-green-and-yellow-basket' with us.”

“Kids, tisket-tasket babies!” Randolph was very contemptuous. “Come on, Conquest, let's play hare-and-hounds,” as another boy ran up.

“Look at that red-haired girl!” Conquest pointed to a pretty child. “She can run like a cutter. Let's ask her to play!”

Randolph regarded the girl critically for a moment, and then with a cordial—“All right!” ran

over to her, and thus Time's flight was soon forgotten.

In a second six little boys and the girl swept the Park like a furious gale—the rest of the children sullen and envious.

As the boy, quite apprehensive, was racing home about seven o'clock, he ran into his next-door neighbor, Miss Lucy Ludwell.

"Randolph!" the boy expected a sharp reproof, but instead Miss Lucy asked: "Many gray cats in our alley?"

"Plenty of 'em." Randolph was relieved.

"Ever kill any?"

"Heap o' times."

"I'll give you twenty-five cents for every dead gray cat you bring me. A gray cat killed"—Miss Lucy almost sobbed—"my canary bird just now."

"A de-e—" Randolph restrained his indignation and added, "I'll kill you as many gray cats as you want, Miss Lucy." Then bounced along home.

It was after seven when a ruffled boy—his handsome face aflame, his hair crinkling about his brow—dashed to the gray house and threw himself upon the floor of the porch beside his red setter Tweenchie, whispering into the dog's ear, "Is she mad?" And the dog showing his teeth almost said "Yes."

His mother met him at the door, reminded him

gravely of his disobedience and sent him supperless to bed. As the boy went reluctantly upstairs, he saw his father and some merry friends in the library with glasses in their hands. He did not go straight to bed, but tipped down the passage to a little balcony overhanging the back yard and called—"Jeter, Jeter!"

A small negro boy soon answered and listened eagerly to Randolph's relation of Miss Lucy's offer.

"Think we can get any, Jeter?"

"Sure."

"Bu'iy! We'll divvy." Randolph now went to bed with this consolation: "If Jeter could only get four cats, he would get fifty cents to buy some candy for that dandy red-head girl, who was the cause of his being put to bed."

So the years went on with their burden of perplexity and disillusion: Randolph, the father, had swung far away from the intimacy of that happy birth-night; Randolph, the son, was restive, and Charlotte was often afraid that he would escape from her hand like a toy balloon and soar in an atmosphere in which she could not breathe.

At the age of fifteen Randolph was strenuous, fearless, active, intense. Instead of cells filled with discreet gray matter, his orain might have been a circuit of hills teeming with millions of

brain-ants each moving with frantic independence: he was obstreperous, restless, audacious—and kind; marvelously acquisitive—but the necessary attention, though brief, exhausted him, and his mind swung to a counter-action in the form of amusement as intense as his work. The severity of the school hours relaxed into the abandon of the afternoon game; the feverish activity of the game gave way to the calmer moments of the fireside eventide. But even then, his mind wrestled with all sorts of literature. Heredity made him courteous to girls, but after the fleeting episode of the red-head he did not permit them to bother him.

Among his weaknesses was a tendency to general accommodation: it was very hard for him to say no, and this agreeable quiescence was the forerunner of a later spirit of careless conviviality.

Religion was constitutional—so far as a reverence for ecclesiastical beauty in architecture, service and song went; but the problems coincident with its manifestations were, as yet, contradictory and obscure, and he had not the time from the glorious, plain things of life to tackle it. On Sundays he was without reproach, he enjoyed the perfection of his Sabbath attire, the dignity of his mother's appearance, the sense of distinction derived from the high seat which generations of his forefathers had occupied. His æsthetic soul took keen delight in the harmony of the service

at the Holy Comforter, in the glorious windows, the vast spaces—and the quality of the worshippers.

Charlotte Turberville — like Hannah — had vowed a vow and said, "O Lord of Hosts, if Thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of thine hand-maiden, and wilt give unto thine hand-maiden a man-child, then I will give him unto the Lord all the days of his life."

Hannahs may give, but often Samuels refuse to be given!

Charlotte had made a calendar: "Short clothes" — "teeth" — "trousers" — "school" — "confirmation"—etc. But many items on that record had to be rubbed out. According to her calendar it was now time for confirmation and she must speak, no matter how hard was the speaking.

She broached the subject in the twilight of a Sunday, after a wonderful exhortation by the same bishop who had convinced her that submission was expedient. The boy was fresh from a walk with his chums, and had discussed things hostile to the bishop's talk. One of these things was a club and cards in the little room behind the shop of Green the Tailor—to be called "The Green-Back." It was an exciting plan, and the big handsome boy was busy with schemes for all sorts of fun, when his mother, who had been very quiet

on the other side of the fire, said in her tender way: "Son-Boy, I wished for you this afternoon."

"Why, mother?" He always responded cheerfully to her.

"Bishop Thruston—our cousin—spoke to the class at the 'Comforter.' I could not half enjoy it, because you were not there."

"I have heard one sermon to-day," rather indifferently.

"Not like the Bishop's. There's so much of me in you, dear, that I know this sermon would have affected you deeply."

"A lot of you and a lot of not you." There was a twinkle in the boy's eye. "Somebody mighty near me doesn't like sermons."

His mother winced, but went on. She was afraid she had already waited too long.

"Have you thought of confirmation, Randolph?" These words affected Randolph like a loud "Boo!" He caught his breath and answered: "Of course, mother. I have seen it about a dozen times, haven't I?"

"Not quite so often, but it is time for you——"

"I thought that sort of thing was voluntary—after repentance and conversion, when a fellow saw awful sights and felt—oh, horribly! Do you remember the coming-through of Simon? How he yelled that he 'done got 'ligion, that his feet

were in the miry clay, but now on the rock of ages?'"

Charlotte was a lioness for principle, and she fiercely resented her son's levity. She fairly laid hold upon him, and the Bishop's words were no more terrible or convincing than hers. They threw a sharp shadow across the sweet vision of the "Green-Back" and blurred other little pastimes of young Randolph. His mother had not given up the savior idea, and she hoped that her boy's confirmation would affect his father favorably. She was pained by the attitude of this stony listener, and made up her mind to call in Mr. Elsing, her rector.

So within a few days her son found himself in the same room with the clergyman. It seemed to happen naturally, and not a thought of a personal interview crossed Randolph's mind until Mr. Elsing began to inquire into his spiritual condition; then the lad's embarrassment and dismay saw only one way of escape—a quick surrender, an immediate acquiescence to Mr. Elsing's suggestion for his immediate action. If he had been a bit holier, or a bit wicked, he might have been able to resist; but his accommodating spirit, his unwillingness to oppose, drew him into a net which held him painfully.

When his mother came in, Mr. Elsing, with dramatic sympathy, put Randolph's hand in hers and

whispered: "Mrs. Turberville—your boy is saved."

Chattie murmured "Thank God," and the clergyman proceeded to explain Randolph's immediate responsibilities.

After a while, the conversation changed. "You will be glad to know, Mrs. Turberville," Mr. Elsing spoke low. "That Kitty Ingraham—Mrs. Nestles, is—is going to be confirmed."

"Kitty? Back in Bolingbroke?"

"Yes, yes,—returned about a week ago—a stricken, changed woman, ready to live another and a better life." A pause and a sigh. "We must always remember that those who stray farthest are the most eager to remain in the fold when once they return. Kitty Ingraham has been thoughtless, but not wicked—I trust. She now sees herself."

"If her mother only knew!" Chattie was almost in tears.

"She knows—she knows." Mr. Elsing's smile might have been made out of tissue paper.

"We have heard so many terrible things." Chattie was almost afraid to mention them. "Her husband killed a man for j. lousy—and was acquitted."

"Yes—yes—but Kitty will explain," and with another sigh Mr. Elsing almost whispered, "She is very beautiful."

"I bet I saw her yesterday." Randolph was recovering—and much interested. "She wore a bright purple dress and has lots of light hair. I was in the Conquest's car and Mrs. Conquest winked to Mr. Conquest and asked, 'When did she come back?'"

Charlotte did not notice the boy's remark, nor did the clergyman, and after a pause she said, with feeling: "We were devoted to her mother, but after Kitty——"

"Well, well, you needn't be afraid of her now—she is a penitent who seeks confirmation;" and with a few more injunctions to Randolph, Mr. Elsing said good-bye.

When he was gone, precocious fifteen wanted to know all about Mrs. Nestles. Randolph remembered Kitty Ingraham and he was more interested in her than in his own soul—at present.

At first Chattie was disposed to be reticent, but the boy's importunity won. "Her mother was one of our dearest friends and the adopted sister of Robert Catlett, the father of little Bill-Bob that you played with so much when his father brought him to Bolingbroke—remember?"

"Of course I do—he's a bulger."

"Kitty's mother had to work, and Kitty got ahead of her and went with strange people, and finally ran off with an actor named Nestles. They quarrelled, as one might expect, and in a fit of

jealousy Nestles shot one of the actors. He and Kitty fell out after that—that's about all I know."

"And her husband was acquitted? I bet she was making eyes at the man. You going to have her here?"

"If she is going to lead a new life, dear——" Suddenly something swept Charlotte as a fierce wind bends a flower. She threw her arms around Randolph, lost her poise for a moment, and sobbed: "You have made me so happy, Son-Boy, let us forget all unlovely things—and always try to be good! A boy is not safe until he is in the fold of the church."

"Does that make him safe, mother?" Randolph was gazing steadily into Chattie's blue eyes. "For if it does, I should think every parent would yank his boy in by the scruff of his neck."

Chattie would have preferred more gravity—more spiritual elation—but she tried to be satisfied with what she had.

Randolph soon realized that the net fenced him from his companions—reared a high wall of partition between him and the "Green-Back." At first he climbed to the highest brick of this wall of partition, peered over at his whilom chums, and snarled mentally at their natural pranks; while he thanked God, insincerely, that he was not as other boys were. But it was impossible for him to maintain this forced and dizzy attitude.

Confirmation came four weeks after his subjugation by the rector. An exquisite service it was—an oratorio of song and prayer. The exaltation of his mother, which in a measure counteracted the glum isolation of his father, and a syllabus over-dressing of repentance and resolution, temporarily exalted his spirit. For the first time in his life he really listened to a sermon. The Bishop took as his subject the incident of the woman touching the garment of the Christ, and His quick perception that virtue had gone out of Him. The cry of the discourse was, "Have you ever touched Christ Jesus? And you? And you?"

His voice hammered Randolph's conscience soft; his words, like searchlights, sought out dark spots—he was one of that staring, taunting multitude—he had never touched Jesus. Who had? Anybody?

In a moment it was all plain in the translucent intelligence of a startled young mind; first the real sense of "need," then the earnest reaching out, the true touch of the Christ, the trickling of His virtue through the mazes of a human soul, creating human virtue which, in turn, would go out for human good.

Again Randolph asked, "But who has touched the Master? Who? Anybody?"

Who in this vast congregation could to-day receive the Divine encouragement "Blessed art thou,

Simon Bar-jona; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven”?

“Who had? Anybody?” Randolph turned to his mother. “Had she? Oh, yes. And virtue had in turn, gone out of her in heavenly patience, triumphant silence. Had the woman with the rapt face across the aisle touched Jesus? Oh, yes. And at length virtue had gone out of her in the classical high-school near this great edifice. Had the old soldier with the leonine head touched Jesus? Oh, yes. And after a while virtue had gone out in the hospital across the square.” He looked at this one and that: “Had he—had she? Yes—no—yes—no!” Then he asked himself: “Have I touched Jesus? Have I—have I?” Answer, young soul, answer!

The confirmation over, the communion service began, and a fear clutched Randolph’s soul: only those who had touched Jesus should presume to eat of that bread or drink of that cup. The iron spear of unworthiness pointed to keep him away; his mother’s anguish and disappointment forced him to go. “Take, eat!” Randolph took the bread, held it, moved it as if to put it to his lips, hesitated, trembled, then with more reverence than had ever guided any act of his life, he slipped it into the pocket of his vest. The young soul had answered.

"Drink this in memory of me!" No drop of it passed his lips.

After church he and his mother walked home in silence—great hours hold few words. Mrs. Turberville went in, but Randolph flew back to the church.

The rector was still in his study, which Randolph without preliminaries entered, and began equally without ceremony: "I have never touched Jesus—so I could not taste this." He pulled the consecrated crumb from his pocket and placed it reverently in the rector's hand.

His sensation when again in the street was—freedom. He felt as if a double face had telescoped into one open countenance and could look the world in the eye without flinching—he was not a hypocrite. The misery of the church was dispelled, he was like a coney or a wild goat of the mountain that had been hitched to a strange and loaded cart, and now found himself loose to scamper over the hills.

He was no hypocrite—thank God!

The sacred crumb was the first word from the cross.

III

THE next jab that fate had in store for Charlotte Turberville was a summons from the Police Court for the appearance of Randolph, who, frenzied with foot-ball, had been practising in season and out of season. The McNabb School was soon to play Woodberry-Forest, and upon young Turberville's prowess greatly depended McNabb's victory.

One day, at practice, his ball fell into the yard of a negro woman, and over went Randolph after it. The woman had picked up the ball and refused to give it up. He seized her and took it: and forthwith the irate woman had him arrested for assault and battery.

The boy got off with costs and a reprimand, and went away up in the estimation of his friends; but away down in the opinion of his mother. His adoring gang—Minor, Carmichael, Conquest and the rest—all swore to reward him for his brief persecution by a foot-ball zeal never before exhibited: they'd whip Woodberry or die. But they didn't, for there was a wonderful fellow on the Woodberry team whose stellar performance won the game by a single touchdown; this fellow was Bill-Bob Catlett.

What with the shame of the Police Court and other harrowing domestic details even more trying—it was quite three weeks after Chattie's talk with her rector about Kitty Nestles—before she found a spare evening to invite Mrs. Nestles to tea.

There had been much talk of Kitty's return—and her confirmation; even her mother's old friends thought she should have fought her battle elsewhere.

Kitty's remarkable costume at her confirmation shocked the conservative congregation, and although everybody thought her beautiful, many also thought her frivolous and unpardonably vain.

Charlotte detested her valiantly, excused her split skirt and red stockings, gave her the liberty of her home—and invited her to tea the very day that McNabb's was defeated by Woodberry.

Although he bore his defeat with a smile, Randolph was very sore over the game. His comfort, as he whistled his way home, was that his team played splendidly and would certainly have won but for a dogged, wiry chap, Robert Catlett, who substituted for "Chig" Scott—a Woodberry fellow with whom Randolph had played before, and of whom he was not the least afraid. He had always had an idea that Bill-Bob Catlett was a "fighter" ever since he played with him in the Park when he was a kid.

Before Randolph reached home he remembered that Mrs. Nestles was coming to tea. He was rather glad—they would have a fine supper of which he felt the need, and he had heard that Mrs. Nestles was great fun. He changed with care, and at half-past seven joined his parents and the child of their departed friends in his mother's library, where chintz, lamps, books and flowers always gave the impression of cheerfulness, no matter what the spiritual condition of the occupants.

"This giant—your child?" was Kitty's greeting.

"Not quite sixteen," was his mother's proud reply.

"Hard to believe!" Kitty was holding Randolph's hand affectionately. "Why I can well remember bringing your mother guinea eggs when you were born—guinea eggs and fresh rolls—don't you remember, Cousin Chattie? I always associate guinea eggs with young babies. Just think, boy, I could tote guinea eggs and walk alone when you were born."

"And not be so very old either," Randolph's smile was one of his big assets.

"Woodberry fleeced you," Mr. Turberville remarked a little teasingly.

"I don't think you could call it fleecing." A quick flush evidenced the boy's soreness. "It

was a good game—and we lost; but we played good ball even if Woodberry played better. That fellow Catlett is a fiend.”

“What Catlett?” To Charlotte foot-ball was the battle, murder and sudden death from which she prayed to be delivered; but she was immediately interested in the name Catlett.

“Bill-Bob—lives in Albemarle—stayed here once—don't you remember?” her son replied.

“Robert's son, Ran,” Chattie said tenderly.

“Looks so—but I never thought Robert's son would play foot-ball—he would more likely be a Y. M. C. A. boy.” Ran had a great contempt for the Y. M. C. A.

“Bill-Bob, they say, is awfully studious and good, but an all-around athlete—to boot, won't give as much time as the team requires, but ready to jump in when he is needed. Scott broke his leg a week ago, and Bill-Bob swore the team should win and practised for all he was worth. Nobody down here knew that Scott had broken his leg——” Young Randolph paused a moment.

“It's great to tackle nerve like that boy has—he is a natural winner.”

“You said, Cousin Ran”—Kitty's eyes were languorous and melting as she turned them upon her host—“that you would have thought Uncle Robert's son would have been a Y. M. C. A. chap

instead of a good foot-ball player—why not both?”

“They don’t go together,” Ran smiled significantly.

“I haven’t seen Bill-Bob since he was a little boy—Uncle Robert doesn’t approve of me,” Kitty’s lowered lids for a moment shadowed the velvet glow of her cheeks with her marvellous dark lashes. “He was always a darling little boy—merry as a grig, fearless and trusty as a man—not a bit like Saint George, who is a poet—dreamy, idle and beautiful. But he’ll never write poetry—it’s too much trouble; he merely thinks in lyrics, iambics and hexameters. Uncle Robert and Aunt Eleanor speak of him as their preacher—just because he is not keen for anything else, I think; but they have set Robert—Bill-Bob—apart for some sort of money-making industry that will make them all comfortable. Bill-Bob is a capable boy and Saint George an adorable idler, with a mind too dainty for common toil—they used to speak of Saint George as their silk boy, and of Bill-Bob as their good, strong denim.”

“I have come up against him twice,” Randolph remarked, “and he has been game as lightning each time.”

“Oughtn’t we to have him here, Ran?” Chattie was always bent on hospitality, and before her husband could reply she turned to her son and

inquired, "Where is the Woodberry team tonight?"

"Going to leave at ten-thirty—but at the Bolingbroke till then."

"'Phone up, dear, and ask Robert—Bill-Bob—or whatever he is—to supper."

"Bully!" Randolph fairly skipped to the 'phone. He wished to see this young hero again as a mere boy.

"Aren't you crazy about him?" Kitty Nestles asked when the boy was gone. "Handsomest creature I ever saw, bright as a dollar—glorious mixture of you both—what is he going to be?"

"A lawyer, I hope. What else could a Randolph Turberville be?" Chattie smiled at her husband.

"Some of them are so poor that I should advise a change of occupation."

Kitty turned to Ran as he spoke and could but note the time-prints on his still handsome face, and even her giddy soul was tinged with regret.

"What a pity—how could a man fail with such a wife?"—was her thought.

"Catlett is taking supper with the Anderson's," Randolph announced regretfully as he returned.

"In good company," said Ran. "Like his parents—the best or none for them."

"The way with us all, I think." Chattie arose at the supper bell.

"Except me," sighed Kitty as she followed her in.

Notwithstanding her dainty loveliness, Kitty seemed somewhat discordant to the old-fashioned dignity of Chattie Turberville's dining-room. Heavy silver, shining mahogany, thin china, portraits, and Simon the butler, were the "old" to Kitty's "new." Her gown, though beautiful, was rather startling. The soft black skirt concealed nothing of her round slenderness, every movement gave tantalizing glimpses of some half-hidden charm. Her pretty feet were but periods to her trim silken legs. Her bodice, but a picot-edged kerchief, artistically concealed and revealed her marble bosom; and her slender neck rising above was flexible ivory on which her well-cut face, with its soft tints, hung like a rose on its stem; yet over the rose, the ivory, the chiselling appeared a faint blur like a smut from the left hand of fate.

"There were never such waffles. And did you kill these ducks?" She beamed on Ran again.

"I really did—the gang has a club down on the Mattaponi—we bagged thirty-five yesterday."

"They taste as if you killed them. Oh, me, how I love Virginia cooking! Is Mandy living—and do you have waffle days and Sally-Lunn days and buckwheat-cake days as you used to do?" The musical babbling of this modern siren was the

tender recollection of sacred hours to her friends, who were going to stand by her. "This homeliness," she went on, "makes one feel like a wayward child, who is sweetly forgiven. How I have missed it! You all can never know how hard it was to come back—nor how sweet it is to be back."

Many replies suggested themselves to Mr. and Mrs. Turberville, but it was a difficult moment and none of them seemed quite appropriate. Young Randolph watched Kitty with keen interest—she was, to him, an unreal but adorable vision. He had never seen anything like her before.

Kitty wished to talk, and she rather liked their silence. She had dwelt among stage-folk. She had played parts and danced ballets; and she knew when she held her audience.

"I don't feel to any people as I do to you," looking first at her host and then at her hostess, and incidentally sweeping the boy with her eyes, "and I want you to know that I am sorry. That's the——" Kitty's voice broke plaintive, and Chattie to comfort her began: "Of course you are. We——" She looked at Ran and his queer, interrogatory smile confused her, prevented her from going on.

As for the boy, he felt, he did not think. For the first time in his life the veil of the sanctuary was lifted, and he knew that he was man—and

that she who had spoken was woman. The pool of his being was stirred, and a multitude of emotions were struggling to the top.

"What are your plans, dear?" Chattie asked when they were again in the library.

Ran's cigarette case was on the table, and Kitty took from it a cigarette, and with a smile, asked her hostess very sweetly, "You don't mind?"

"I am afraid I do." Chattie's disapproval was very gentle. "I never saw a lady smoke before, although of course I knew they did it."

"Go on, Kitty." Ran was amused. "Chattie is a back number, she's afraid not to protest—that's her religion."

Kitty lighted from Ran's, took her seat in a low chair, crossed her jewelled feet, and puffed enchantingly.

"Son-Boy doesn't even smoke,"—Chattie patted her boy's sunny mane—"and I wish you wouldn't."

Ran's expression was of amusement; the boy was fascinated; the mother was horribly disappointed.

"What are my plans, Cousin Chattie? There are only a few things that I can do, and I am obliged to make money. The only practical thing that I can do is dancing. There is a lot of money in dancing."

"And friends, too," Ran looked at Kitty slyly.

"I have taken a studio in the Arcade Building. My classes will meet mornings and afternoons, and I am giving a recital at the Bolingbroke tomorrow. I used your name, Cousin Chattie—I knew you would do everything you could do for me."

Chattie was a little surprised, but she did not protest this time.

"I have not secured a man to dance with me yet. Randolph, don't you dance?"

"Oh, no," Chattie could not keep silent now, "none of these horrible new things."

"They are not horrible, if you dance them right. I'll show you they aren't. Play 'Dreaming,' Cousin Chattie—and be convinced."

"I don't think I can." Mrs. Turberville was quite positive.

But here is a Victor—haven't you a record?"

"I believe not," said Mrs. Turberville, to the amusement of her husband and the despair of her son.

"The Conquests have one." Randolph was wild to see Mrs. Nestles dance.

"Run over and borrow it!" said his father.

"They are—" Chattie began.

"Go over and get it!" Mr. Turberville repeated with more emphasis.

The record was procured, the chairs set back, the music started, and the seductive evolutions of

the dance began. Every curve in Kitty Nestles was answer to the dreamy strain. Leg and arm had voice: eyes and lips spoke: slowly, impressively, gracefully, wonderfully, did sinuous impurity put off its purity, and unveil delectable mysteries to the senses of a throbbing, dizzy boy.

"Take the record back!" Chattie thought they had had enough.

"No, indeed," protested Ran, "we have not had half enough."

Kitty took breath and danced again. Then she must show the boy and the man, and Cousin Chattie, too; but the wife and mother declined the offer while the two men yielded to music and woman, and watched—enchanted—the glide and poise of two pretty feet, felt the touch of slim-ringed hands, and the play of warm, spicy breath.

Suddenly Kitty's mood changed. She sat down by Chattie and sighed. "Don't think I do it for fun! It is my calling—my bread. I am done with impulse, wilfulness—I have turned over a new leaf. That's the reason I was confirmed. I wanted something to clamp me, to hold me so hard that I couldn't get loose no matter how badly I wanted to. All my life I have had unmanageable desires that would run here and there wherever they wished to—like—like—flocks of little chickens out of a coop. And I didn't have anything in me strong enough to keep them in. Maybe

the church can," she sighed again plaintively.

Somebody might have spoken—but no one did. Chattie was afraid of Ran's smile—she was very religious, and if she said anything she would preach.

Ran knew that what he wished to say was inexpedient, and the boy only wanted to touch those dimpled shoulders, and cry: "You are O. K. old girl, don't mind!"

There were more sighs and a butterfly fluttering of the eyelids and Kitty continued—there would be no more explanation after to-night: "I began wrong, Cousin Chattie. I was so little when papa died, and mama never smiled—she blanketed herself—you remember that hideous pall behind and before? She made me want to get away from it. There's no telling where I went. Everybody put their fingers in my pie and told mama things, and when I was with her it was, 'Don't—don't—don't!' And when I was out of her presence it was, 'Do—do—do!' All the time my desires were irrepressible.

"The crisis came that summer the Templeton Company came to Bolingbroke—remember? By this time I knew I had looks, and I was beginning to play them. I met Paul Nestles—oh me!"

Chattie gave Kitty a nod as a warning—the boy was here—the subject was not exactly suitable for him. Then she winked at Ran and looked to see

how Randolph was taking it. Kitty took no notice of either winks or nods—Ran's attitude was encouraging, and the boy was petrified with interest.

"I couldn't get Paul Nestles out of my mind. Nothing else mattered in the wide world. Such a face—such eyes—such a melting, tender voice! I wanted him, and I must have what I wanted."

She paused, clasping her hands and looking down.

"My idol has fallen—I have seen life—I have danced for bread—I have been face to face with sin—I—I——"

Chattie's nods and winks and flushed face amused her husband and he announced gravely: "Chattie is getting St. Vitus's dance, but in spite of it I beg you to go on Kitty—Randolph is no baby."

"Have I said anything I should not have said?" Kitty asked with surprise.

"Not a word—go on," Mr. Turberville answered.

"Men like Paul Nestles don't know the truth—they act all the time—they are absolutely inconsistent. When he got tired of me he said I was too free with other men."

Chattie could stand it no longer; she proposed that Randolph go out. She might as well mildly

suggest that a young ox leave a field of juicy new corn. Ah, no, Randolph was here to stay!

"You know I couldn't be too free with men, Cousin Chattie. Well, Paul Nestles absolutely deserted me for three years. I battled about hither and yonder, and when I was free I came home—was I not right?"

"Perfectly so," Ran affirmed with feeling.

Kitty's explanation had made her cheeks darkly red like an American beauty, and her loveliness had gone from exquisite daintiness to the brilliant glory of a cloudless dawn. Hair, eyes, flesh were splendidly illumined by a rush of feeling. She closed her eyes as if overcome, and then murmured, "I am white—I am clean!"

"Of course you are." Young Randolph had been eloquently silent until this moment: when Kitty left at twelve o'clock he took her home.

IV

THE cruel beauty of Kitty Nestles stirred the pool that lay pellucid and waveless in the fastness of a youth's innocence. Something mysterious rose from the depths of the boy-man and broke into strange and fluttering desires like bright and restless humming-birds. These strange desires, these humming-birds of the flesh, sipped the dangerous nectar of Kitty Nestles's beauty; but ere it was too late they detected poison in it—and flew away: then the pool was still again.

But the "man" had stirred—was awake: and it went on growing according to nature's law. Randolph's mother watched this development jealously, and his father often felt as if he were reading a dog-eared story-book, for his son was in many ways much like himself.

Charlotte Turberville was a thoughtful woman, and she realized that the child is not solely the mother's experiment, but also the father's nature—a medley of inherited passion, a mixture of all the good and bad things which heredity can offer; sometimes so assimilated that the "man" is as acceptable as plum pudding with all its warring condiments; sometimes so horribly mixed that the result is as hideous as a crazy quilt.

To the mother of a boy there comes a day when he is an unknown quantity—like a cake which has been stirred and beaten to perfection, but not until it is done can its excellence be tested. In the moment that it is about to change from dough to cake something unexpected happens and the thing that was perfect when raw becomes awful when done.

Randolph Turberville was in this crucial, under-done state; Charlotte's anxiety made her watch the oven and the boy resented her "constant eye."

Since the fleeting obsession of Kitty, Randolph had been interested in the tyranny of sex. He began to study love. He read with throbbing pulses historic love-affairs—the world-romancy; and while he was thinking and reading he fell indeed in love.

In the autumn of his eighteenth year, Mr. Henry Corbin, of "Laneville," leased the Murray house just across the Park, and a quick intimacy sprung between the Corbin boys and Randolph. Their only sister was coming for Christmas and Randolph was sorry—they might have to take her around.

On Christmas eve's eve all the boys were going to the Church of the Holy Comforter to put up wreaths, and about half-past eight Randolph walked briskly through the Park to get the Corbins. As he stepped into the Corbins' hall, a

vision fairly took his breath away. A girl, on a step-ladder in the drawing-room, was tying a gay bell to the chandelier with a blood-red ribbon. The curve of her uplifted arm, the symmetry of her tense slenderness, and the tilt of her auburn head, delighted him.

"Turberville, this is my sister Lettice," Henry Corbin said with a proud smile.

"Who can't be decently polite because this ladder is so ticklish," came in a queer, melodious shrillness.

"Let me take your place," Randolph said quickly.

Lettice laughed—"What boy could ever tie a bow? Might as well expect a girl to sharpen a lead pencil." The ice was broken.

The bow having been tied and untied until it suited, the girl stepped nimbly from the ladder and offered her hand.

Her face, like an inspired cameo, gave at first the impression of remoteness, but her tawny, welcoming hair and the warmth of her mysterious eyes forced a sudden friendliness. Randolph was dazzled by her bronze hair—fine and wavy, that lay in a thick coil around her small head like a breathing thing asleep; by her long, curly lashes; by her eyes black as onyxes that night; by her lips undulating with feeling; by her grace; by her high

voice, which called to something listening within his heart.

For a moment Lettice gazed critically at the cheerful ribbon bow, then drew a sigh of approval and pronounced: "It will do. I have a 'scruting' eye, as Aunt Dilsey says—Aunt Dilsey is the sphynx of Laneville; I wish you knew her."

"I'm only too glad to know you." Randolph was eager and brusque. "We are going to put up wreaths in the church—come on with us!"

"Would you let me?" Her smile was grateful, and she ran up to ask her parents. Soon she returned—cheeks burning, face flaring with disappointment. "Papa, as usual, won't let me. He ought to be a pope and issue propagandas, bulls and things. He thinks himself infallible as it is, and no matter what mama thinks, she's always afraid to say 'Boo!' I must not go down to the church with you, boys, because it is sleeting and I sneezed once this time last year. Pshaw!"

"I'll run up and beg for you." Randolph was ready to do anything for her.

"Then you would be an improper gander—you don't know papa."

A sudden memory made Randolph ask, "Aren't you the girl that played in the Park with us about nine years ago—and ran like a deer?"

"You can't be the cute little boy that bossed the job?"

"I am the boy that caught you by the hair and made you squeal:—you were a dandy kid—I've never forgotten you. I sold a dead cat and bought candy for you, and when I couldn't find you, because I didn't know your last name, I got furious and threw the candy in the gutter; if you couldn't eat it nobody should."

"Delicious!" The bad humor of Lettice had gone. "Please tell me about the cat!"

Randolph told his story well, adding, "I thought your name so nice and green."

"And me?"

"I don't like to tell," and with a few more merry words the boys were off to church, and Lettice was dreaming over the fire.

Randolph spent the night in the first wild fever of real love. One moment his body would groan with a queer craving, the next—his soul would disengage itself from such queer hunger and, alit on a mysterious bough, try to peep into the heart of Lettice Corbin. Was there ever anybody like her? She had gripped his heart from the height of a step-ladder, and still held it brutally. Was she ready to catch another? Did she care?

She would—she must. He could feel her hair now—touching his face. Gee-whizz! Even the imaginary surrender made him tremble, and his youth swelled again with hunger, and then yielded

to the crooning of his soul, which thrilled—
chanted—to the soul of Lettice Corbin.

The next morning Randolph was ashamed of his sensations—but in an entirely different degree from his confusion over Kitty's brief tyranny: then it was a blush, now it was presumption. He was entirely different to-day from his yesterday-self. He felt as if he had entered the sacred places of the sages and eaten forbidden fruit. The familiar things in his room were unfamiliar, and his morning toilet was a problem. Which shoes? Which cravat? Which socks? Was his new suit too loud? He and his mother had thought the tiny fleck of red great style yesterday, now that infinitesimal prick of color frightened him. Did his hair wave too much? He must have it cut to-day.

In the library the fire was spluttering with the true Christmas spirit, row upon row of books were cordial as usual, but he did not care for them to-day. A bunch of narcissi in a red vase on the table was suddenly transformed into the fragrant purity of Lettice Corbin safe in the red coil of his love. He stood up, raised his eyes, and almost touched Christ through the vision of her unstained girlhood.

The exaltation passed, and he looked around as if afraid somebody had detected it.

Then in a big chair in the ingle-nook he reached

out to the friendly book-shelf and pulled out Dante's "Divine Comedy," turned to the index, and found "Francesca, p. 37."

He found the page and Francesca's words became his hope. "Love that exempts no one beloved from loving." "Galleotto was the book, and he who wrote it." He was her book. She could write his life with the touch of her spirit. He felt the bite of her beauty leaping through the lattice work of their short acquaintance.

This foolishness wouldn't do.

He put the book back and tried to be a normal youth by jumping into his overcoat and rushing out of the house. He would go to Forest-Hill, meet the boys—skate all day and forget the girl.

Maybe she would like to go! She looked as if she skated—(did every beautiful thing upon earth:) so instead of taking the car for Forest-Hill, he cut around the fountain, threw his skates under the steps of the "Rest-House," crossed "Belvedere," and stood on the corner, uncertain—afraid.

The grass was still green in the Murray yard, and the morning fire twinkled through the library windows, as he halted by the tall walnut at the corner of the triangle, and caught her high, clear tones from the Murray door-step. In a minute Lettice and Mrs. Corbin were chatting down the brick walk like merry twin-sisters: Lettice wore

a suit almost the color of his, and her brown hat was tilted, as if to reveal her shining hair and the morning glory of her face. She gave Randolph a careless nod, and when she had quite passed he heard these flippant words:—"Christmas eve and silly little presents! We're taking the stores by the forelock. Good-bye!"

Randolph stood by the fence with his hands in his pockets and watched Mrs. Corbin and her daughter go down the street. Then turning with a fierce "I'll be dogged," he went to "Forest-Hill" as fast as the trolley could take him.

He skated furiously all day to forget her, but when the sun dipped behind the woods and the energy of the crisp day faded, she grew stronger and clearer in his mind—intensely irresistible. The curtness of her morning greeting, after the night's cordiality, dug mercilessly into his vanity—the suspicion of her scorn hurt as if his physical self were pricked with a sharp lancet. He must have hasheesh. Stopping before a bar-room he wished he were twenty-one—but he did not go in.

Going straight to the dining-room as soon as he got home, he poured out a bumper and swallowed it, then he took the glass into the pantry, washed it, and turned it down on the pantry shelf.

The wine raised his self-esteem, made him feel better about Lettice Corbin—maybe he would go to see her after tea!

V

THE experience of that Christmas week waved like a red banner across two lives: as another Christmas week, a few years later, always fluttered like a pall. Curiously and easily Lettice Corbin and Randolph Turberville glided into the dim reaches of each other's lives, but the harmless demonstrations which Randolph practised with other girls were entirely left out of their sweet, young intercourse. He quickly saw the wonders of her nature, and although they had joke and badinage, there was never the least cheap sentiment between them.

Once they were off on a brisk walk with faces to a wild red sunset which flung the bare branches clean into space, and shot through the highest arch of the Cathedral tower like a burning message from the heart of God.

"Then fire was sky and sky was fire and both one ecstasy," she quoted slowly—meditatively.

"In youth I looked to these very skies, and probing their immensities, I found God there:—His visible power"—he responded.

"Comrad ' she whispered.

"Sweetheart," was his answer.

She was suddenly aloof, remote, gazing westward with a rapt devotion which he dare not in-

vade. Young as she was, she had a genius for retiring within her quaint young dignity, which sweetly forbade the least intrusion. She was only at home a week this Christmas-time, and yet that week ever hung over Randolph's life like a stretch of translucent atmosphere high above earthly care. In this wonderful "spirit-air" everything assumed a new and lovelier shape; it was a sort of heavenly mist which obscured the real day.

In these days the little Park between his house and hers became the sacred gateway to her presence; the trees, the statues standing so firmly in the grass which winter skies could not ungreen, the spires springing gladly beyond the trees, the fountain with its feeble stream, the rounding paths, even the rest-house under which he flung his skates—all became for his red young passion, question marks as to her probable reciprocation.

Their moments alone were not frequent, but they held eons of emotion which could never fade. Clouds rose, winds howled, ice and snow piled up between them, but back of them was the undying glow of youth's first, pure, roseate passion.

She had read voraciously as he had read. Her Francesca was his Francesca—her Beatrice his, too; a line from this, a line from that, would evoke another line from her mental "Lumber-room," as she called it; and they twain were one in the kingdom of books, on whose delicious spicy

borders they loved to stand. Sometimes they were two,—a very stern, very intolerant, very positive "two"; for neither was accustomed to yield an opinion. Then she would toss her little head and say with supreme finality: "Oh well—never mind—if you can't see."

Lettice took dinner one evening with some girl friends, and Mr. and Mrs. Corbin and the boys had tickets for the Academy. Mrs. Corbin asked Randolph as a great favor to fetch Lettice home and guard her till they got back. Her parents had rigid ideas for the deportment and protection of Lettice, but they felt no hesitation in leaving her to Randolph's care: a Turberville would always protect a Corbin.

Randolph brought Lettice in about ten, her parents and brothers returned from the Academy about a quarter to eleven. Their intercourse, in the Murray library, lasted exactly three-quarters of an hour—but it was young life.

The library was not especially distinctive or eloquent. There were books in heavy ornate walnut cases, tightly locked, like captives beyond prison bars—prisoners, not friends. Over the mantelpiece was a beautiful portrait of a woman with dark eyes, bright cheeks, and black hair scalloped around her face. Lettice had pulled the sofa from a corner where it slanted into place, to the front of the fire, and put a table behind it on which

was a lamp, a vase of flowers, some magazines, and the evening paper. The portrait, the so t, ample sofa, the fire, the lamp and the scattered books humanized the formal room and created a cheery coziness into which Lettice and Randolph merrily entered.

"Whe-ew!" she breathed as she threw her wrap on a chair, fell into the sofa and began to remove her hat and gloves. "A stupid dinner is exhausting and indigestible. Aren't the Trimble's hopeless? Help me to forget them!" The expression of her eyes conveyed the impression of actual pain, which had to be eased very quickly.

Lettice tucked herself into a corner of the sofa, tapped the seat, as an invitation to Randolph, and gave herself to enchanting friendliness.

The young man experienced an alluring nearness, a delicious "oneness" which he had never known before.

"How many people do you know," she asked, "with whom you are perfectly happy, or, perhaps better, perfectly comfortable?"

"Not a blessed one," he answered quickly.

"Not a blessed one?" she responded, her countenance teasing with its ripples of light, its tiny dimples of surprise.

"I am perfectly miserable with you." He was going to tease, too. "I am like an Alpine walker horribly near a crevasse; an aviator with hand

clutched on the valve, one move this or that way means death; an iron-worker knocking and drilling on a slippery roof—a hair's breadth this way or that way and he is gone."

"I don't understand," she said, looking straight into his eyes. "I don't see——"

"You don't?" He stood up before her. "Well——"

Immediately lowered lashes cried "Stop."

Her unspoken command was inviolate, and might have embarrassed them but for her immediate self-adjustment.

"Take the Trimbles," she began. "From the moment I meet them until I have left them, I am conscious of a terrible effort to please, and a sickening assurance that I can't do it. I like my friends to fit like a kimono—with nothing binding or scratching. In a minute after I met you—I knew you would do."

Was this another challenge?

"Indeed," she added very quickly, "I am spoilt. I have lived too much with books and myself."

"You flit from one thing to another like a careless red-bird, and seem to like everybody——"

"Red bird! buzzing, flitting. Good!" she laughed. "Let's talk sense! Where's the light-wood? We don't want gas or lamps, we want a chunk." She opened a big, brass box. "Throw it on, while I put out the lights. It is perfectly

right and proper, for Laneville does it." She turned out the lamp, lowered the gas, tucked herself back into the sofa and they both gazed at the spluttering blaze in silence.

"Isn't this nice?" she whispered. "Talk!"

The influence of the girl and the warm gold light melted Randolph into a dreamy monotone; words didn't matter, he meant them to declare—"I love you, I desire you, I need you!" They were snatches of Tennyson, of Byron, of Browning, of Emerson.

Her thoughts fled from cover, too. A pillow was between them and now and again she spread her hand upon it—her slender hand, with a ruby ring on her little finger—once it touched Randolph's hand and thrilled him.

"How did you, a strong, active boy, find time for it all?" she asked.

"I took it. How did you?" he answered.

"I?—I have had nothing but time. I have cheated, I have stolen, I have read, read—everything they told me not to; and I have thought. You see Laneville can only associate with Deer-Chase, Rosegill, Mt. Airy and Beverly Park. Sometimes the children at the various mansions come without precision, hit and miss; and then there is nobody at Deer-Chase for Laneville to play with—the other places are miles and miles away. Then Laneville has to play with herself

—so instead of playing always with myself or the boys, I have played with the fire of intellect, and I am burned—I am scared, I don't understand it all, but I want to." She put her vivid face close to the eager face of Randolph. "I want to know, I want to feel, I want to act—do!"

"Don't you feel?" A tell-tale cadence in Randolph's voice made her look—a quick question. She got a spontaneous but wordless answer which made her look away.

"Feel?" She spoke dreamily now. "I should think so. But I want to understand. It is all such a chaos—tangles of wishes, aspirations and ignorance. I can't sit at Laneville and dream and knit and feed chickens day after day, year after year, like mama. Dear mama—she has never failed to arise at seven o'clock; I never knew her to be sick; she has a precise minute for the smoke-house key, the garret keys, the store-room keys; a precise minute for each meal; a minute for the Bible and Prayer-Book; a minute for all of her reading, and she marks her places with a cross-stitch card; a more than precise minute for bed; and I am willing to express my solemn and religious opinion that at the stroke of a certain minute she falls to sleep. Papa is like her. I don't want to do things on the minute. I want to do them when I feel like it. See? Understand?"

Randolph nodded his assent—he was afraid

to speak lest he break the pretty sequence of her thoughts.

"Papa is just like mama, he and she are two exactly similar halves which make a harmonious and perfect whole. I stay by myself a lot, and I have thought of everything. Sometimes I am scared to death at the very mystery of life, and I have been thinking of death since I was a tiny child—haven't you?"

"No—it has never especially bothered me—it was just nature and law."

"I remember perfectly the very first day that I realized death. The sunlight was dimmed as if it were filled with smoke, the very world seemed suddenly cursed with a blight. I couldn't play. I hung around mama's chamber; she was darning papa's socks, and crooning old songs like a honey-bee's drone. The drone fell in tune with my gloom. 'Please stop,' I cried.

"Mamma looked at me in amazement. 'Why aren't you playing with your brothers?' she asked seriously.

"'Because I've got to die,' I answered. Oh, I remember it so well. Mama drew me to her and spoke volubly of the bliss of seeing God and the wonders of Paradise; but the gloomy fact obscured any heavenly anticipations, and I refused to be comforted.

"It has been that way with everything. Facts

attack me suddenly and puzzle me to desperation. Life is a furious eddy and I a tiny leaf—swirling and whirling; but to me the tiny leaf is the whole show. Life is knowledge, power, religion, love. I have to know all—haven't I?"

Randolph took up the strain and ambled on vaguely—trying to say something which he couldn't.

After some minutes Lettice began again: "My mammy was comfortable. I have never been perfectly easy since I grew out of her arms. Did you ever have a mammy?"

"Did I?" Randolph smiled. "Sure!"

"And did she pat you at night and sing 'sh—sh-ssh—sh?' Can't you feel the sand-man tussling with your obstinate eyes, and hear her faint, sibillant 'sh-ssh—sh-ssh—sh?' How I wish I could once more cuddle into her monotonous melody! In the summer dusk she would let me sit on the garden steps a few moments, before she put me to bed. Even then I was in a way conscious of mysteries: the third terrace with its tangle of vines and shrubs was the end of the world; and I would peer into its blackness and wonder and wonder; just as I am peering into those lightwood blazes and wondering and wondering and wondering now. You think me silly, don't you?"

And so the mighty minutes of that three-quarters of an hour ended. Not a personal senti-

ment had they uttered, but each word from each lip carried a world of meaning. Boy and girl, forced in the hot-house of precocious imagination, had handled subjects beyond their years. Around them fell a luminous veil of sentiment as real as the yellow blazes of the lightwood chunks. They let it hang and warm, they did not call its name. They did not acknowledge to themselves that it was there. The thrill of life shot like sparks through the smoke-clouds of thoughts; but the one was afraid to speak and the other afraid to hear.

After a pause it was her way to take up an entirely new subject as if the former was absolutely finished, and now with a little sigh, she began:

"There was a woman at the Trimble's that I could not stand. I suppose she is pretty in her glaring way; but I don't believe she is nice. She had a lot to say and she made eyes at a beautiful creature that she called 'Saint.' Her name is Nestles."

"Kitty Nestles—she is my cousin."

"Your cousin?" with surprise.

"Yes,—one's cousins are never a picked lot. She comes to our house and I went crazy over her for a little while." Randolph thought that a confession was imperative—he never intended to have a concealment from Lettice.

"You did?"

"Yes—for a little while," he repeated—looking down.

"Well—no accounting for taste, and a young boy is so foolish." Lettice laughed merrily as if for forgiveness.

At present Randolph thought that even the memory of Kitty was sacrilege to the transparent purity of the girl beside him.

"And the handsome young man who is studying medicine here—her Saint?"

"I don't really know, but I have a suspicion. She has a foster uncle in Albemarle who has two sons, Philip St. George and Robert. She used to stay a great deal with them. Mrs. Nestles told us that Philip was very clever and good-looking."

"Philip St. George—what?"

"Cocke-Catlett."

"Now I know all about them. Old 'Bremo' and 'Timberneck' people."

"Exactly."

"And that's where she gets her Saint?"

"Maybe so," indifferently.

"He reminds me of a porcelain Apollo in a pair of soiled hands."

"You are old."

"Perhaps so—there's papa!" as Mr. Corbin's latch-key scratched in the door. "He might be in an unfavorable mood." She sprung up and turned up the gas.

The charm of the play acted as an emollient upon Mr. Corbin, and his usual dignity was garnished with smiles like a ring of parsley around a well-browned joint. "Did we keep you too long?" he asked Randolph, almost affectionately, as he entered the warm, bright room.

And while the boy, somewhat shyly, was trying to emphasize the seeming brevity of his pleasant vigil, Mrs. Corbin was insisting that he should dine with them the next evening.

A sense of their friendliness touched Randolph's heart pleasantly and pungently, as a sip of peach-brandy steals into the physical man. He felt his future suddenly caught into theirs, by the spear of fate, as a crochet needle firmly twists a scarlet thread into the purple and gray of a half-done afghan.

He soon said good-bye, and Mr. and Mrs. Corbin discussed his unusual ease of manner and good looks long after they were in bed; while Lettice tingled and trembled with a sensation which she did not understand.

At home Randolph's sensations were like the buzzing of a million whipsaws—he could not stand them. He was not wicked, he hurt and he wanted ease; he was all impulse, not meditated wrong.

Down into the dining-room once more—this time to take the decanter up-stairs and put it on a table beside him. It was empty when he went to

bed. He had drained it unconsciously while wondering over Lettice Corbin. Strange that this was a thing he did not regard as a subject for confession, any more than the drinking a cup of tea or a glass of water.

With Lettice it was different—a million little bells were ringing in her soul and not one out of tune. She swung in a fresh spring world of mysterious bud and strange leaflet, and the landscape was veiled with a faint rosiness that would become royal crimson as the years wore on. It would not be all sunlight, there would be storm and shadows; but they would breast the storm together—and smile.

VI

THE year before young Randolph Turberville went to the University his mother met her second great disillusionment: instead of one ghastly secret, her heart held two: the boy had snapped her rein, and the elder Randolph was a ruin.

The vision of a savior-son had become a farce; for only a few days ago when she had, with tears in her eyes, begged Randolph to do something to save his father, the boy had almost contemptuously replied: "You might as well ask an eye-syringe to put out a fire, mother! Cut it out—it won't do!"

"You don't believe in personal influence, Son-Boy?"

"Oh, I believe in it when it acts; but I know my 'man,' mother—and I can see myself preaching to dad. He'd dismiss me with a fierce 'Go to ——.' I'd be entirely squelched, and as severely reprimanded as if I had received a slap in the face, and a disdainful—'Now will you be good?' No, ma'am, not me."

"I can't imagine anything more inspiring than one's son declaring his principles, and by the very force of his conviction and example drawing his

mistaken father from his sins." Chattie's firm mouth trembled with feeling.

"Oh, mother—you're a 'corker.' You're so—so——"

"So old, so silly, so archaic—I know little boy. And you are so young, so sure of yourself. Take care, take care, dear, lest you fall."

Randolph had a cunning way of silencing his mother with affection. Now he hugged and kissed her: it was his way of saying "Please stop!"

Charlotte understood and let the subject drop for the present.

Randolph was living and loving in his young, crude way. He and Lettice constantly wrote to each other, and he was studying much harder than usual because he wanted to go to the University the next year. His prime reason for going to this famous seat of learning was the conviction that he would make the "foot-ball" team. Daily he was forcing himself into the realm of Man: unknown to his parents, he belonged to a club—the "Green-Back"—organized primarily for innocent, boyish sport; but evolving into a snare—where pennies and dimes jingled merrily to the seductive tune of poker. Sometimes they had beer at the "Green-Back," and when they did, Randolph was very jolly—stimulation sharpened his wits.

As yet public opinion predicted great things for

this adorable youth. He was to recover the prestige of the Turbervilles, who had hitherto been Beacon Lights in old Virginia.

So when Randolph was eighteen, he went into his place at the University—as most men have done elsewhere—even Judas Iscariot. He got into the good-clothes, cock-sure, heart-breaking, jolly class commonly called good fellows. He was asked to join the Alpha-Omega Society, which required social standing and courage to run with the boys. Randolph was governed by that mysterious honor system, which apparently declares everything mete and right, except the performance of those vital duties, for the observance of which every young gentleman is supposed to enter college.

Randolph's life was now his own, and he liked it; he was like a half-broken colt, who has kicked off every strap and buckle that restrained him: and races along with head erect and nostrils distended upon a strange, sweet road. He went to bed late, and arose late. He knew every field and hill near the University before he had been there a month, and every pretty girl for miles around—although he had seen none who held a light to Lettice Corbin. He attended classes irregularly, and became intimate with bar-rooms and other inevitable irregularities of the wee sma' hours. He inveigled his mother into sending him a fine old desk and

table,—in the desk drawer he kept good cheer for his friends, and upon the circular dignity of the mahogany table he and his companions frequently gambled all night. Randolph was feeling his freedom—feeding upon the sweets of the honor-system—flying triumphantly, like an eaglet, into the ether of “do-as-you-please.”

Now and then he made brilliant, if spasmodic, dashes in his classes, and astonished the faculty with his mental agility. Randolph was plunging everywhere, instead of going plumb in the right direction.

He made half-back on the 'Varsity team, and one of the proudest moments of his life was the starting for Bolingbroke on November the twenty-eighth to tackle Chapel-Hill on Thanksgiving Day, the twenty-ninth.

Thanksgiving Day broke all crimson and gold over the chimney pots of Bolingbroke. The sun, at first a round, red Mars, bespoke a fierce encounter; but later it powdered Benjamin Street with gold, filled the air with hope, and turned the naked branches of the trees into polished steel against the cloudless sky.

The every-day noises of cart and broom, news-boy and milkman seemed almost impertinent; but presently Benjamin Street broke into all the poetry of voice and motion, and the merry treble of girlhood was lost in the basso-profundo of college

yells. The air was still and crisp, and in it the joyous train fairly danced: while everybody—old and young—prophesied either for Virginia or Chapel-Hill. The White and Blue of Chapel-Hill flashed gaily in motor-car or afoot; and the Orange and Blue of the University flashed, too, in brave security.

Then followed a sweeping, lonesome silence—why? Bolingbroke is taking its famous Thanksgiving lunch.

Presently everybody comes out, in waves of dual confidence: tallyhos, decked with Orange and Blue, draw up and move off from stately doorways in trails of laughter. Tallyhos, decked with White and Blue draw up and move off, too, and their gay loads laugh in even greater security.

Sound and motion die, tallyhos and carriages are no longer seen—the game is on! At William Byrd Park humanity—eager, electrified—strains the bleachers and packs the grand-stand. First it beholds the White and Blue with a thousand rooters and cheerful melody. They mean to win! But when from two busses the Orange and Blue leap, a wild shout fairly shakes the expectant multitude, while “Tow—Tow—Turberville—Turberville” sounds from ten thousand lips as Randolph Turberville, in contagious confidence, smiles upon the field. Megaphones magnify the cries of the cheer-leaders; brass bands blare, and

one universal voice seems to yell "Wah—who—wah! Vir-gin-ia-a-a-a!"

Listen! Carolina pierces Virginia's clamor with:

I'm a Tar-Heel born,
I'm a Tar-Heel bred,
And when I die,
I'll be a Tar-Heel dead.

All blood is tingling, all interest is as tense as a fiddle string. It is the extro-version of Bolingbroke's loyalty—the manifestation of Carolina's courage and zeal.

Randolph Turberville had no idea that Lettice was a witness of the game, until the short intermission between the halves; then he felt something warm as the play of fire. He looked over the field, and, strangely, caught the consecrated gaze of Lettice Corbin's eyes. The sympathy upon her face was glorious, startling. She waved a baton gay with Orange and Blue a dozen times and then settled herself suddenly to a fixed contemplation. Her attention was peculiar—entirely distinct from the commonplace interest of the big, still multitude. She had plainly disengaged herself from everything else in heaven above and earth beneath, and wound her will around Virginia's team.

One could tell quite as easily, by the interplay of her features, how her fear and hope ran—as

one could feel the joy and pain in the melody of a Kubelik or Paderewski; or see the sunlight and shadow in a Turner landscape. When Virginia scored elation stalked like a flamingo across her heart and sent its gorgeous plumage to her face. Her father beside her, grave and ponderous, was a massive oak frame for her reckless and defiant enjoyment.

The contesting teams were nearly enough matched to make the game interesting. It was now near its close. Virginia was six to Carolina's nothing; a chance play or rally could create the possibility of tying the score; and Carolina, with the ball, was fighting hard to tie it.

The multitude lost its breath, then caught it with a shrill inhalation: Virginia was seven—Carolina nothing. The enthusiasm of Lettice swept her face with ecstasy which almost blinded Randolph's parents, who greeted her as she was leaving the grand-stand. The girl's hair, slightly blown, crawled in red gladness from her close fur cap: the shell pink of her quiet hours had turned, from wind and feeling, to rich-red discs upon each cheek; and her long fur coat from neck to heel, threw the clean-cut joy of her face on the crisp, sun-swept day. It was disengaged from physical bondage, and trembled like a star in the soft tones of the closing afternoon.

"What a wonderful girl!" Chattie said to her husband when the Corbins were gone.

"Rather queer, but very pretty—and a 'sport'; I like her," was Randolph's commentary as Lettice and her father drove off behind a splendid pair of bays. "That's the finest team in town—it must be good to own it!"

As soon as possible young Randolph was at the Murray house which the Corbins had taken for the winter ever since the glad Christmas of the step-ladder episode. The Murray house was a landmark in Bolingbroke, its several Murray masters had been given to generous hospitality; and now that the only surviving child of the late master had to depend for subsistence on the once cozy home, she was content to retire to a boarding house where Mr. Corbin's generous rental kept her in ease and comfort.

The Turbervilles and Murrays were close friends and a path would no doubt have been beaten from the little gray house on one side of the Park to the red brick house on the other—even if the city had not laid off the broad walk across the park; even if a young gentleman in the gray house had not fancied a young lady in the red house on the other side.

"How did you come?" was Randolph's trite greeting to Lettice, as she entered the Murray drawing-room.

"On the 'choo-choo' train—how else?" she smiled.

"You know what I mean. How did you get off? I thought the rules of Sweet-Briar so hard and fast, that no girl would ever get off for a foot-ball game."

"For me, Randolph, there is an authority far above Sweet-Briar—the word of Mr. Henry Corbin. Papa let me, just for to-day. My reports have pleased him. I just had to; and oh, I'm so glad. Wasn't it great?"

"Fine—splendid, but I certainly was surprised to see you." Randolph was a delicious blur of confusion.

"When you played?" Lettice saucily asked. "Did you always expect to win?"

"I felt pretty sure all the time; but after I got in the game I had a sixth sensation—a queer, piercing prick in my determination: I cannot explain it. It was as sharp in my judgment as an arrow in my heart. It was pain and it was bliss—you needn't laugh."

"I'm not laughing, I'm thrilled." The girl drew a little nearer to Randolph. "You want to know what that queer thing was? It was I—ME. True! I willed you should win—and you won."

"Oh, Lettice—why don't you will me to all good?"

"I wish I could," she said slowly and tenderly.

"But wasn't it great? I can never forget the glory of victory—we tasted together of it—didn't we? Oh, those splendid shoulders, those delicious, tousled heads—if I were a man I'd play to the death. Oh, me, I am nothing but a miserable girl; and it's knitting, crochet, bridge or gossip. No wild tumult for me, but I'll never forget papa—it's the very first time in all my life that he let me do something just because I wanted to. God bless him for it! Randolph"—suddenly Lettice was very serious—"Randolph, I came to see you win, to help you to win; and I came for something else, too."

"What else, Lettice?"

"To ask you a question—will you answer?"

"I will." Randolph was serious, too; he felt something unpleasant coming.

"Do you drink—Randolph? Do you play cards for money? Are you very, very wild? Three questions instead of one." She smiled.

"Who told you such a lie?"

"A friend of yours."

"A friend of mine—bah!"

"I want you to tell me that you are not—so that I may contradict it." Her eyes were very steady as they met his.

"You must not believe all you hear, Lettice."

"I don't, but I'll believe you, if you tell me that you are not wild—dissipated."

"Of course I'm not, Lettice—it's bosh!"

"I'm so glad—so very, very glad." She held out her hand to him—he took it—and there's no telling what he might have said but for a rather stern "Lettice! Lettice!" from above.

"It's papa," she said. "I promised not to keep him waiting. He only let me come for the day, you see; and my train leaves at six-ten. Such a glorious, too-short day! Never mind—'Christmas er comin' soon.' Mama and papa are thinking of giving me a house-party at Laneville then, won't it be fine?"

"For those who are bidden—I——"

"You? You know—but I'm so glad you told me what you did."

"Come on, Lettice!" sounded rather ominous from above.

"Wait till I come down!" were the last words of the girl as she went up for her wraps: soon she returned with her father and mother.

She was slender even in furs, and her face hung like a rose against their sombre softness. She was putting on her gloves too deliberately, when her father rather impatiently said: "Hurry up, Lettice."

Her face puckered for a moment, as does the face of a little child when its nurse says bed-time, but it almost instantly cleared as she told Ran-

dolph good-bye, and between her parents, went out of the house.

Randolph returned to the University the next day, but before he went he called on Mrs. Corbin and went to the station with the Corbin boys, one of whom, James Parke, was left-tackle on the 'Varsity team.

Mrs. Corbin was inclined to be confidential, and after a few preliminaries remarked in a nerveless way: "We are not exactly satisfied about Lettice. She has queer ideas to which we will not submit. Laneville is restraining—no mischief there. We are going to have a Christmas house-party for her and our boys, and we are going to be very stern with ourselves about the invitations. Lettice is now seventeen; in another year she will be out, and it is very important for her to have just the right friends and only those of her own class." Then with exquisite condescension—"You will get an invitation, very soon, Randolph, for Mr. Corbin and I always do things in time. Irregularity of any kind would kill us."

Randolph regarded this pussy-cat lady critically. Her dress was gray, and her gray little voice was pitched in a pale-gray key; but her face, without a tell-tale line, did not change throughout her whole recital. If she were pale gray, Mr. Corbin was certainly deep purple; how could purple and gray have produced the kaleidoscope of

feeling that was called Lettice! She was surely a comet from a twilight sky.

As the young man walked back from the red house through the Park to the gray house to tell his mother good-bye, the swell of foot-ball glory yielded to the sweetest, tenderest sentiments for Lettice Corbin. He had lied to her in the Murray house drawing-room the night before, and he was sorry. But why should he harry her with miserable details when he had made up his mind to turn over a new leaf? The beautiful girl with her courage and gladness had put something wonderful in his soul—something too powerful and wonderful ever to permit him again to indulge in any questionable pastime. He, this blessed hour, had turned over a new leaf—and he never intended to soil it. He was young, his indiscretions were only wild oats, Lettice had delivered him.

VII

THEIR house-party for the coming Christmas had absorbed the energy of Mr. and Mrs. Henry Corbin ever since Thanksgiving. The list of those to be invited was expurgated day after day; and now, according to their inviolate opinion, the twenty young ladies and gentlemen finally chosen, were eloquent witnesses to the social sense of their hosts-to-be.

The task of selection had been a very serious business; each candidate for the honor had undergone a crucial genealogical and moral test—and now Mr. and Mrs. Corbin sighed with relief, for twenty invitations were addressed, sealed with the Corbin crest and now were sweetening in orris in Mrs. Corbin's desk drawer. The concluding words of each of these orris-scented notes were—"All must be at Laneville on Christmas eve to put up the wreaths, fill the stockings and make the egg-nog."

It was a great honor to be invited to Laneville for its reputation was national—to a degree international. Every President of the United States had been entertained there. During the summer season all sorts of tourists begged the privilege of its unusual and mellow charm, but the request was always politely declined. Therefore to be

bidden to partake of this feast of a roseate and exclusive past, for a whole week, was a courtesy not to be lightly treated.

"Henry,"—Mr. and Mrs. Corbin were toasting their feet before the fire of their bedroom in the Murray house, just before retiring—"I am just a little uncertain about Robert Catlett—as we have not seen him for so long, and I remember so well what a wet blanket his father was at our wedding." Mrs. Corbin was a woman who had to bother about something, and usually she bothered about the wrong thing.

"That was because he was so infatuated with Eleanor Cocke that he had no eyes for anybody else. He never was so serious or stupid before. Henry and James Parke," Mr. Corbin referred to his boys, "have excellent taste, and if they want Robert you may be sure he is all right."

"Maybe so," Mrs. Corbin sighed.

When the Corbins left Laneville in Middlesex, for the Murray house in Bolingbroke, early in November, they set it in good order for their return at Christmas. Every rug, curtain, screen and blanket was in place, and the stupendous details of kitchen and store-room were skilfully and minutely arranged. Accomplished servants, who still called them "Master" and "Mistiss," had inherited their customs from generation to generation; and during the Corbins' absence had

ceased not—day or night—to carry out their minute injunctions for drawing-room, dining-room, kitchen and stables.

Mrs. Corbin moved a little from the fire, her pink flannel dressing gown was about to scorch, and spoke again in a mauve key: "We have undertaken a risky business: six days of trying to make young people happy. I find myself depending upon Randolph Turberville. Don't you think him very unusual, Henry?"

"Remarkable! I never saw a more attractive fellow. I trust he will make up to his mother, what his father has so persistently denied."

"I just don't believe he can do anything else." After a pause Mrs. Corbin continued rather timidly, "He and Lettice are very fond of each other."

"Very." This was as much as Mr. Corbin's sense of propriety would allow him to say.

Lettice in a letter to Randolph poked a lot of innocent fun at her parents' efforts to exhibit her privately. "They are having a sort of fair," she wrote, "not of pincushions and needle-books, but of Virginia traditions—for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Traditions have been known to be stupid, and I am depending upon you to electrify them, when they collect at Laneville."

Randolph had replied: "Count upon me for anything—everything."

The plan, worked out with such minute precision by the elder Corbins, began with the gathering of their guests at the Murray house in Bolingbroke on December the twenty-third; or rather those of their guests who must pass through Bolingbroke in order to get to Laneville. All who were convenient to the Rappahannock River on which Laneville so proudly stood, would come by steamboat to the Laneville wharf.

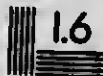
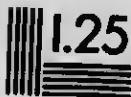
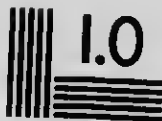
To the Corbins it was very meet and proper, for their hospitality and ciceronage to begin hours and hours before the young folk even started for Laneville. Mr. Corbin would not for worlds allow Lettice to travel a moment without a chaperone, and he had already fetched her from Sweet-Briar to Bolingbroke on the twenty-second.

Charlotte Turberville had seen much of the Corbins during this autumn and had heard much of their house-party. She knew that those who would go with the Corbins from the Murray house would leave the Southern Station in Bolingbroke at four o'clock on December the twenty-third. She also knew that Lester-Manor, the station at which the party would disembark, was about fifteen miles distant from Laneville, and that the carriage journey, to and fro, was no trifling undertaking: therefore, it would be very disconcerting for any guest not to appear. Suppose her own son were to disappoint the Corbins—horrible!



MICROCOPY RESOLUTION TEST CHART

(ANSI and ISO TEST CHART No. 2)



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As Chattie sat before her twinkling library fire, this twenty-third of December, Randolph's life was like a string of beads that she held in her hand: each bead an episode, a laugh, a cry, a kiss, a frown, a day, a month, a year.

Randolph did not appear at home all day, and when time came for the Corbin party to start from the red house, Chattie stole into the Park to watch—he might be there.

She saw Mr. and Mrs. Corbin come out of the iron gate, and lead the line of merry youth around the triangular fence to Main Street for the trolley, and she scarcely could restrain the cry: "Please stop and tell me where is Randolph—my boy?"

At half after three o'clock, the next day, Simon conducted a young man to Charlotte Turberville in the library.

"Randolph?" was her greeting.

"All right," was the young man's answer, for he was an optimist. "You remember Robert Catlett?"

"Of course, I never could forget 'Bill-Bob's' smile."

Robert Catlett hesitated for a moment, then with his characteristic directness informed Chattie that Randolph had sprained his ankle, and that he had run in to tell her so that she would not be frightened.

"Randolph is the whole show," he added, "and I don't know what we'll do without him. I wish I were not in such a hurry, but I've only fifteen minutes to catch my train and for two of us to disappoint the Corbins would be dreadful. Good-bye. Randolph's in the hall, he'll tell you the rest."

Robert Catlett was mistaken: Randolph never told.

This Christmastide was the first test of Lettice Corbin; and she found that she could suffer and yet seem to be glad. At the first word of Randolph's disaffection Mrs. Corbin simply flopped, but Lettice immediately administered an heroic remedy in the form of irresistible hilarity.

This house-party had to "go," and her mother had to keep step with her determination *nolens volens*. The ranks of her being cried: "Surrender!" but the little plumed captain, the god-in-her, marched boldly at the head of the disheartened troop, and it stepped quickly to the music of her strange, strong will. Lettice was crushed by Randolph's absence, for she had counted so trustfully on him: but she rallied her discomfited forces, dazzled and infatuated her guests, and at the end of that memorable Christmas time nine young men adored her, while nine young women, although fascinated also, called Lettice "a trifle queer."

Around the immense Laneville dinner-table, brought from England in 1710, sat a jolly party of twenty-five a few evenings after Christmas Day. Everybody was in the best humor, and subject after subject was generally and generously discussed.

Towards the close of the elaborate dinner a duel was fought by Lettice and Steve Harrison with the deep voice of Mr. Corbin remonstrating now and then like the blare of a kettle-drum.

"No intellectual giants at the University now," was Mr. Corbin's first note.

"Never were," was Harrison's rejoinder—"the Brobdingnags—Henry, Marshall, Jefferson—all went to William and Mary, and I always thought it mean in Jefferson to ruin his own Alma-Mater with a fine University."

Mr. Corbin cleared his throat, the sound was always ominous, and Buck Bernard, to save the hour, announced: "Randolph Turberville is the cleverest man at Virginia now."

"I differ with you." Steve Harrison was emphatic. "That man is at this table." All eyes turned to Robert Catlett, who was wrestling with a side-bone of the turkey. "Randolph is dippy—nutty."

"And so are you," Lettice spoke sharply. "Randolph at least is also fun: his ideas tag and one has to tag back."

"Instead of Laneville, he chose——" Steve was not going to allow himself to be squelched.

"A sprained ankle."

"Sprained ankle?" Steve snickered, and most of the table with him.

"What do you all mean?" Lettice was flushed. "Didn't Randolph sprain his ankle, Robert?"

"He did." Robert Catlett's tone was like a spoonful of powdered alum in a pail of muddy water.

The kettle-drum once more called to order: "What is the moral tone of Virginia, now?"

"Pretty good." Robert Catlett, as has been said before, was an optimist.

Steve snickered again: "In spite of idlers, fools and booze-artists."

"Isn't Charlottesville dry?" The kettle-drum was persistent.

"Yes, but Bolingbroke is not, or Baltimore. It's barrels now instead of glasses: and indecent bedrooms instead of decent bar-rooms."

"Steve!" from half a dozen.

"Turberville——"

"Imported a barrel of ginger-ale last week?" Catlett's voice fell on the good old name as snow falls on a soiled fleece.

"Let's change the subject!" The shrill tensity of Lettice popped like a toy-pistol—the table

jumped. "We girls don't care to hear any more of it."

"Please care!" The eyes of Catlett met those of Lettice. "You are the very one to care, for if you care, you will cure."

Again *Mr.* Corbin was inquisitive: "Most of you live in the Fraternity houses, I suppose?"

"Buck lives with Mrs. Nestles." Steve was still sore. A sly smile went around the table like a thistle chain.

"Yes, Saint Catlett and I know a good thing when we find it—Saint is Bill-Bob's pretty brother." Steve flushed a little in spite of his bravado.

"I thought Mrs. Nestles lived in Bolingbroke." Lettice was puzzled by Catlett's gravity.

Bill-Bob's voice cool as a lettuce leaf again brought momentary relief: "The old-fashioned boarding houses—where ladies like Mrs. Booker and Mrs. Berkeley mother the boys—are best."

"P-s-s-s-s-s-h!" softly hissed Steve Harrison.

Later in the evening, everybody gathered in the hall, where there was a fiddler and a bowl of eggnog. Old "Shines" could make the fiddle talk, and "Snow-bird-on-the-ash-bank," "I-got-another-one-chum-chum-a-loo," "Ole-sukey-blue-skin," "'Possum-up-the-gum-tree," and many another wild melody set the young folk into delirious motion. Old "Shines" kept time with his eyelids,

and called out the figures at the top of his voice.
Now and again he broke forth rapturously, into—

'Possum up de gum tree,
Cooney in de holler,
Shal e yo' foot an' tu'n aroun'?
I gie you harf a dollar.

or—

Ole Sukey Blueskin fell in love wid me,
She 'vited me to her house to hab a cup o' tea.
An' er what did Sukey git fer supper?
Chicken foot, duck foot, apple sass an' butter.

There is an inspiring, almost elemental merriment peculiar to vast halls in old Virginia Manor-houses. It is hasheesh to care, and expresses itself eloquently in sinuous motion and joyful laughter.

To-night the dance ended with the Virginia Reel, which Mr. and Mrs. Corbin led. Then to the big silver bowl, in which the golden eggnog foamed. Lettice in white with a green ribbon in her hair, flushed and radiant, wanted "Vive l'Amour," and Mrs. Corbin went to the piano to play the accompaniment. At first, as is generally the case, there was a momentary shyness, but presently Steve Harrison, who had not quite forgiven Lettice, raised his glass and began:

Some time, some people get a wee bit pettish,
Vive la compagnie.
But here's my forgiveness to pretty Miss Lettice,
Vive la compagnie.

With a glad rush came the chorus—

Vive l'amour, vive l'amour, vive la compagnie.

Lettice now quickly filled her glass,

Come fill up your glasses, but not with the best ;

Vive la compagnie

And drink to the health of our news-boy guest,

Vive la compagnie.

Vive l'amour, vive l'amour, vive la compagnie.

Maria Bland gaily took up the strain :

Come fill up your glasses, to an odious comparison,

Vive la compagnie.

The dear-little, sweet-little, critical Harrison,

Vive la compagnie.

Vive l'amour, vive l'amour, vive la compagnie !

Lettice was an adorable care-free siren, as she sang again :

Come fill up your glasses, and here is good luck,

Vive la compagnie.

To good-hearted, good-natured, merry young Buck,

Vive la compagnie.

Vive l'amour, vive l'amour, vive la compagnie !

And Buck Bernard, not to be outdone, replied lustily :

Come fill up your glasses (has any one caught her ?),

Vive la compagnie.

And drink to the health of the Corbins' fair daughter,

Vive la compagnie.

Vive l'amour, vive l'amour, vive la compagnie !

The spirit of fun and foolishness was contagious; every boy and girl, and even Mr. and Mrs. Corbin, made toast after toast: a kindly sally fell on every name, and when ideas got scarce

and laughter began to lower, Lettice struck a softer key:

Come fill up your glasses—a lovely job,
Vive la compagnie.

And drink to the health of brave Bill-Bob,
Vive la compagnie.

Vive l'amour, vive l'amour, vive la compagnie!

Steve nudged Buck and whispered: "Poor Randolph!" while a spurt of unchecked feeling crimsoned Robert Catlett's face; he was caught off guard.

Lettice noticed the telltale glow, and turned her face away—it hurt her.

They went their several ways at twelve o'clock: Lettice in her pretty room sat by the fire motionless, sad. She was the evening star burnt out. She was puzzled, wretched, aching with a queer, tingling smart. Something was the matter with poor Randolph; something awful, she reckoned: yet she couldn't permit a lot of miserable gossip at her father's dinner table to go unrebuked. Little tattling pests—she was going to teach every mother's son of them a lesson: she'd break their hearts as if they were china cups, and then throw every piece away.

Through the days that followed there was indeed devotion and then agony among the men, as Lettice with a bleeding heart bewitched them.

VIII

THE college career of Randolph Turberville was not peculiar, as there were scores of young men who led lives of even more reckless indulgence than did he. In the eyes of his fellows his mental and physical gifts made his frailties pardonable, yet within himself he knew that in the midst of his excesses there would come tormenting memories of Lettice,—only to be relieved by reaching for another glass.

It was during his last year at college that Lettice, at twilight, often made a ball of her slenderness in the corner of his mother's library sofa, and yielded to the confidences of trustful intimacy. The older woman's sense of duty constrained her one evening to tell the girl impersonally what havoc love could do.

"I understand, I understand." Lettice unwound herself from the sofa, stood up, drew a long breath and clasped her hands behind her. "But if one has it, one has it—and that's the end. Thou shalt not kill.' Love lives, breathes, feels, grows: if one kills love, one is a murderer." The girl's wild spirit disengaged itself from her slender self and entered the Holy of Holies of Chattie's soul.

"Of course love hurts," Lettice went on, "but if it is mine--I must take it. A hunchback child hurts; a blind son hurts; but how can a mother throw them away? No. Love lives, breathes, and if it ever comes to me, Mrs. Turberville, it is mine forever and forever. Bless your dear soul! I understand, it was mighty hard for you to speak, but you spoke. That is all right."

As Lettice was leaving that day she saw a new book on psychology lying on the table: "I am just crazy about this," she tapped the book affectionately. "I feel something strange and stinging here," touching her bosom. "I want to use it for those who haven't got it—I want to help, heal, cure." Then suddenly added: "Did you know that papa was going to take me to 'Virginia' for finals?"

Charlotte Turberville smiled her sympathy in the girl's pleasure.

And in June Lettice did go to the University to see Randolph graduate. Her father's class had a reunion and Mr. Corbin took her up; while Mrs. Corbin stopped in Bolingbroke to purchase fruit jars, pickling spices and other domestic odds and ends. When they arrived at the University, Mr. Corbin went to his dear Mrs. Berkeley's, and Lettice was put under the soft wing of Charlotte Turberville at the new Alpha-Omega Frat house. June was at her best, and under her rose-wreathed

dominion the charm of the University was deliciously enhanced.

No Turberville had ever failed to make his ticket, not even Randolph's father: so Randolph was only doing what his forefathers had done, except in the last tremendous vault over the heads of his fellow students. This gave him keen elation and fresh confidence in himself. He was going to forget all his crooked ways, and walk henceforward and forever in the straight and narrow path that leads to life everlasting. The appearance of Lettice, in her radiant assurance, tuned all discordant keys; and youth, life and love rejoiced exceedingly.

Everybody watched these lovers, for lovers they were, even to the naked eye. The rare distinction of the girl recalled the vital energy of her forefathers; and her vibrant beauty, her strange audacity, her perfect poise entranced young men, and recalled to soberer folk the belles of the old White Sulphur and Fortress Monroe, who had come from their fathers' plantations in their fathers' carriages with maids and bandboxes.

The love-making of this daughter of tidewater and this son of the city of seven-hills went well with the verdure and stately beauty of Thomas Jefferson's classic buildings. Under the trees Lettice, a piece of trembling gladness, rather

stilled than troubled Randolph's mad pulses; and the aureole of her pretty head, softened by the shadow-leaves, envisioned the gold of her inner self which he saw almost as plainly.

Lettice was not always with Randolph; she danced with everybody, challenged the attention of old and young; and her smiles, like swallows, skimmed hither, yonder, everywhere. She was thrilled with Randolph's valedictory speech; something within her burst its bonds, soared beyond her will, and drew her senses to a point of acute and exquisite delirium. At the close, from where she sat, she saw the crowd crown his efforts with hand-clasps and heartening words; and when she was leaving the hall with him they came face to face with Bill-Bob Catlett.

"Fine, Ran, fine!" was his greeting. "When I get into trouble I'll send for you to help me out."

"All right, Bill-Bob, I can promise to do so with impunity, for you will never get into trouble: but if ever you do—I'm your man."

When Catlett had passed, Randolph turned to Lettice very seriously: "He is the finest fellow in the world; no mollycoddle—either. Often and often he has tried to save me, and quite as often I have requested him to mind his own business and showed him the door of my room. His fidelity is beautiful—our families are very intimate, you know. It hurts you, Lettice, to think that I could

ever be rude to Bill-Bob Catlett, and I am sorry I ever was, and I certainly shall never be so again."

Finals were over, Randolph was a B.L. and an M.A., and the supreme moment was at hand. Never in the years of their rich acquaintance had Randolph told Lettice he loved her, but in action he had declared and redeclared his passion. Their young courtship was one of suppressed sentiment. The deed of their devotion was graven in letters of fire upon each heart, but it lacked their bold, full signatures.

The same thing hindered Randolph that had induced him to return the consecrated bread to the rector of the Holy Comforter: his ideal of the man worthy to partake of that sacred feast was not himself; his ideal of the man fit to pluck the white rose of Lettice Corbin's heart was not he. His aspiration was really high, and when attainment receded he ached spiritually and turned to artificial comfort.

His life at college had been lurid, tempestuous; but Lettice had never hectored or badgered him over it: her warning had been gentle as the evening breeze that fans a fevered brow. Her spirit, Randolph believed, had shrivelled at bad news as a flower cut from its life-giving stem wilts in a cruel sun.

Finals were over! Lettice was soon off to Laneville; Randolph would go the round of country

houses; he was a popular fellow. They had but one more evening together. For hours they had been dancing joyously—suddenly the dance wearied them, they wanted each other and the pale, wan night. There was a moon, but pile on pile of cloud obscured it.

They stole from the great ball-room, sense and soul quivering. As they stepped down the long, wide stairway to the lawn he touched her arm: it was cool, soft as an Easter lily; it made her young purity as real as the marble over which they trod. It put a prayer on his lips:

“God help me! God help me to be good!”

Lettice wore the gauzy dress with the silver butterflies, and in her hair was another silver butterfly fluttering with little white stones. For a while they wandered over the historic turf, wordless; up and down, up and down a dozen times; like little children they held a rosy apple in their hands—too good to eat. When, at last, they sat down upon an iron bench that stood under a low-spreading elm, Lettice began:

“I am so sorry it is almost over.”

“Over?” Randolph was emphatic. “Just begun.”

“Aren't you crazy to begin to work?” after a long pause.

“I ought to be. Of course I am.”

"You must not let a blade of grass grow under your legal feet, Randolph. Are you sure that Bolingbroke is the best place?"

"Yes, I reckon so. I have thought of Oklahoma and Texas, but oh, me, they are so far away from you and mother; besides, the Turbervilles have a season ticket to the Bolingbroke bar."

"Sometimes a man tries harder when he is far, far away from home, and——"

"Will you go far away with me?" Randolph interrupted.

"No." Lettice answered saucily as she tapped Randolph's arm with her fan.

"Well, then?" Another long silence.

Passion like a cataract was sweeping boldly over a dam of moss: above its roar sounded a clear, imperative whisper:

"Lettice! Lettice!" No more.

"Randolph." Breathed rather than whispered.

"You know, don't you?"

"A little bit."

"You never could know all, Lettice, because there are not words enough in every tongue. But I love you wildly, madly, dearly, so dearly. Lettice, sweetheart, blessed little sweetheart, will you be my wife?"

She could not speak. Her silence was emotion crystallized.

"Do you love me Lettice?"

"Y-e-e-s." Where was the color of the rose-flame?

"Will you be my wife?"

Again she could not speak.

A strong arm fell around her slender waist; her soft hand removed it.

"If you love me darling, why don't you speak?"

"I am afraid."

"Of me, Lettice?"

Randolph fairly felt the tremble of her lips; the surge of her senses: both the man and the woman were bent, tossed, alive to the great mystery.

"Lettice?"

"Randolph."

"Afraid of me?"

"Are you good, Randolph?"

"Who is good, darling?"

"Are you good as you can be?"

"I have been far from good, Lettice. You know." Very humbly. "But only try me, try me—see how good I'll be!"

There was another eloquent, teasing silence.

"Don't you love me enough, Lettice, to be my wife?" His strong arm once more encircled her waist. "Lettice. Sweetheart. Wife?"

The girl caught her breath and raised her face to the clustering elm leaves. There was not enough prudence in the universe to restrain them. They were one!

The night brightened—"the world received at once the full fruition of the moon's consummate apparition."

They had few words of their own. Great thoughts, absorbed long before, fell from their lips like snatches of hymns and Bible texts frequently fall from the lips of those on the edge of Paradise.

"Christ rises," Randolph whispered. "Mercy everywhere! Lettice, sweetheart, don't be afraid—I'm going to slay every demon in my path."

"Like a man, Randolph, like a man?"

Love's ways? So wonderful, so tender, so passionately pure. Still as the genius of Praxiteles, upon the iron bench they sat—invaded, sweetened, conquered by the precious carelessness of love—till the lights in the ball-room went out: then they had to return.

At the door of the Alpha Omega Frat house, where Mrs. Turberville awaited them, they stopped.

Lettice was very grave as they finally said good-night.

"It is done, Randolph, for good and all. No

matter what we are, what we do we cannot escape—while I am I, and you are you.”

To the ears of Mr. and Mrs. Henry Corbin floated rumor of the deplorable inclinations of Randolph Turberville, and their conscientious minds were divided as to the best course to pursue: whether to bind Lettice to the safe seclusion of Laneville, or to expose her to the constant temptation of Turberville's attraction and allow this young gentleman to run the gauntlet with others whose greater worthiness Lettice must at last perceive.

About mid-summer a chance decision of their daughter settled the question. A distant cousin who owned a cottage at Newport invited Lettice for a visit of two weeks: and at the same time another kinswoman asked her to spend the same two weeks at Virginia Beach. Lettice insisted upon accepting the latter invitation, notwithstanding the superior advantages of the former. The straw that deflected her usually good taste, the elder Corbins suspected, was Randolph Turberville: if he could make up the odds against Virginia Beach and Newport, Rhode-Island—he was indeed dangerous. Mr. Henry Corbin, therefore, did not lease the Murray house in Bolingbroke for the winter months after Randolph Turberville graduated from the University. If this young

man had been blessed with the immediate influence of Mr. Corbin's daughter, perhaps he might have been able to resist the allurements incident to his young manhood. The superlative emotion of the early winter was his passion for Lettice, and his dream of a home with her quickened his energies. Yet at the same time, he felt a strange timidity at the very thought of her. Her transcendent loyalty and purity awed him: she was snow upon the dizzy heights of his soul-hills: deep down in the valleys of his being were dank, soggy places where the reflection of the dazzling snow did not strike.

His office taken and well furnished by an adoring and ambitious mother, he began voraciously to read, to think, to write. His mind was a tempest of intention; and yet every moment of his life he had the sensation of being chased by a rabid beast. He had to do and do, go and go, to escape it. He attended the various courts to listen and learn; he studied great law cases; he considered social questions; he felt his pulses springing toward God. He wrote to Lettice Corbin daily, at first; he beheld life as opportunity—full and glorious; and yet he could not escape the deadly fangs of the beast.

These various interests, emotions, activities, made a continual whirligig in Randolph's soul. He needed tonic, bracing; and he loitered till the beast caught up and poisoned his intentions with

the red juice of his great jaws. There were disciples of the beast in Bolingbroke as well as at the University and they were waiting for Randolph with a glass and "Here's to you!"

The suggestion became at length too strong for Randolph's will, too seductive for his badly trained forces, and the "lidless eye of the hard world saw him fall."

Every afternoon he would call at his club, the Old Dominion, where the good-fellows gathered; Steve Harrison would invite a dozen or so to "have something"; Billy West could not let Steve get ahead of him; then Brown must treat, and Robinson, and Page and Turberville. Then they all did it all over again, and went home only when they could stay no longer. Up yonder above the fumes was the warning loveliness of Lettice, and Randolph had to take "another" to ease the disturbance caused by her phantom presence.

Before the young man knew it, business, literature, journalism (for Randolph had prepared several articles on vital questions which had created considerable comment), home life, social life, Lettice, love, had yielded to an implacable and sinister authority. Inch by inch he descended into the bottomless pit of unrestrained appetite. However he never was a brothel drunkard, a low gambler, a profane libertine. His "bouts" were confined to the secret chambers of the Old Domin-

ion, the secluded apartments of his boon companions, or his own office fitted so beautifully for the student and the lawyer, but degraded to a retreat for questionable hilarity.

Randolph was always going to stop. He was always perfectly able to stop, whenever he felt like it. This is the drunkard's battle-cry. The terrible monster, that grips him with a thousand teeth, is but a docile playmate, who will desist the moment he is sternly ordered to do so.

The existence of young Turberville was a sudden elevation, a fearful and quick depression. The chorus of his efforts and his temptations clanged through the cells of his being, now pealing the strophe of repentance, now the anti-strophe of license and sin. Still, although bound with the cords of a suggestion, he longed for a manhood that could protect Lettice Corbin; a sonship that could fold the cares of a glorious mother and put them aside forever. His higher sensations trembled beyond the slimy pools of his daily acts.

Weariness, stimulation, false ecstasy, prostration, more stimulation, exhilaration, a tumble, a floundering in the mud-holes, then more alcohol to soothe the broken tissues of bruised resolutions.

Husband and son went the same cloudy way; but like parallel lines they never met.

More than the pleading of Chattie and the warning of his real friends did the sight of his

father make Randolph realize the danger of the road on which he trod. Randolph so well remembered a confident, merry, delightful father, who, in his boy-eyes held the world in a sling. The sight of him now showed the hectic flush which told that consumption was in his blood.

The older Randolph no longer conveyed the slightest illusion: he was an undisputable fact. He, who was so dapper, so correct in dress and deportment, required Chattie's constant vigilance to be either neat or polite. Her son watched her solicitude with admiration and awe—of what remarkable stuff was she made? She yielded to his father a strange, gruesome deference which emphasized her scarred heart, her almost divine pity. Randolph was staggered by his mother's courage: well-dressed, calm, proud, gentle, she went un-murmuring her lonely way. Randolph, t'è father, was shaky from debauches, he ate not enough for a child, slept only when sodden with wine or opiates, and when with his family seldom emerged from a ghastly silence. His fortune had gone long ago and his maintenance was entirely from Chattie's bounty. And she gave her all, heart and purse so royally—so kindly.

Randolph, her husband, must always be neat shaven, new: nothing old or shabby would she for a moment allow. He was still herself. Once in a while, however, after days and nights away,

her son would shudder at the truth—shabbiness, slovenliness, decay: then the gray in the too-long beard was like snow upon some old stubblefield. His father—himself—doom—natural and inevitable consequence.

Randolph had not been to Laneville: he had spent several weeks with the Corbins at the White-Sulphur the past summer, but later in the year Mr. Corbin had been told certain things by James Parke and Henry which made him forbid Lettice to hold any communication with Randolph Turberville. At first Lettice rebelled terribly, and refused to believe the false gossip till she asked Charlotte, and Charlotte answered. Then she wrote the letter.

Randolph was not surprised: he knew it had to come, yet he trembled at its tremendous significance, its heroic calm.

DEAR RANDOLPH:

I should prefer to let things drift; but neither my self-respect nor papa will permit me to do so. You fooled me, and I have tried to help you, to keep you from fooling me again. I don't think I have said anything very clearly, but we had the faculty of thinking together, didn't we? Well, it is as if we had never spoken, never thought, never felt. It is all over.

It is hardest on me: our world will say "Randolph Turberville didn't play fair with Lettice Corbin." I prefer this. I would hate for the world to say that I didn't play fair with you. I would much prefer to be wounded by you, than to wound you.

What you and I thought by the fire, on the street, at

the University. is very sacred to me; holy as memorial flowers on a pure white altar. I could never mock it. Ah, well, good-bye, comrade, fellow-thinker, see: of the blazes—until when? Ever Never?

Good-bye,

LETTICE.

LANEVILLE, January 31st.

Randolph wrote many answers to this letter; but he never sent one.

It was late in the following March that Randolph met Lettice in the Capitol Square, near the State Library. The sight of her staggered him. She evinced no feeling, whatever, beyond a gentle cordiality. She had even in this little time since he saw her, grown away beyond the Lettice that Randolph knew. She offered a noble, strange kindness; her high voice had dropped to a soft fulness; her manner was almost parental, and her face no longer a flame but a steady, roseate glow. No broken heart about her—rather an infrangible spirit that was able to mend anything.

She carried a black book in her hand. Randolph referred to it.

"It is the 'Virginia Magazine of History and Biography,' for July, 1900; I am taking it back to get another," she explained. "I am studying Genealogy; I am trying to find out exactly what you and I come from."

"Do you care what I come from, Lettice?"

"Yes, I do." She answered very slowly.

"What one is depends in great measure upon

what one was. I care very much about what you were a hundred years ago, what you are now, and what you are going to be."

Randolph, bewildered by her gravity and self-possession, d'ld not say a word; and Lettice added in a cheerier mood: "I am here for a little shopping before sailing. Papa, mama and I are going to Germany for a year: poor papa has something that may be serious, and he is sent to Germany for the 'waters.'"

Their talk was brief, and as Randolph went down Bank Street, swept with a sickening regret, he remembered that she had not asked him to come to see her; indeed she had not mentioned where she was or who was with her.

No matter who was with her, even if a dozen fathers and mothers, he was going to find her, fall on his knees before her, confess his crimson sins, and swear to her and high Heaven that he would never fail her again. He could stop forever for her: he only needed the sight of her to make him forsake the evil, and cling to the good.

But a hurricane raged in the young man's soul, and only one thing could still it. His senses clamored for a comforter that was not Lettice Corbin. For the next day or two, he hid in one of those mysterious places into which those who "look upon the wine" may retire; to the despair of those that love them and await them at home.

IX

"IT is very nice to find our daughter a philosopher, Isabella! When I rendered my verdict against Randolph Turberville, I looked for a tempest that would rend our house asunder. Instead Lettice is more reasonable, more remarkable than she ever was: it shows that if one does one's duty all will be well." Mr. and Mrs. Corbin, on the river porch, were watching Lettice and Bill-Bob Catlett strolling slowly up the rose walk.

Bill-Bob Catlett had gone to the Theological Seminary from the University and had taken Holy Orders the previous June. His father's lack of finances had cut his University career short, and he was only there one year with Randolph Turberville: he was a visitor at the time of Randolph's graduation. As the friends of Bill-Bob scanned the upward climb of his years, they could discern nothing but ceaseless effort crowned with peaceful satisfaction. No apprehension or uneasiness for Robert Catlett! He was the comfortable sort.

This young man and Lettice, strolling along, did not seem especially to impress Mrs. Corbin. Rather did she think of the miscreant—Randolph. "Oh, it was dreadful, very dreadful, Henry: I can hardly believe, yet, that Randolph Turberville—

that beautiful, charming creature—ever did terrible things. I've often wondered if Jimmie and Henry were not overjealous for their sister. . . ." Mrs. Corbin's expression was distinctly regretful as she saw Bill-Bob and Lettice coming nearer and nearer.

"Tut, tut, Isabella! Nonsense! Facts are facts; and it may not be long before you'll see that there is no such thing as a broken heart." Mr. Corbin's grave countenance relaxed into prophetic satisfaction.

"Well, all I have to say"—Mrs. Corbin could go no further—the young people were at the door.

Upon the face of Lettice Corbin was undiluted astonishment: if the quiet serenity of Laneville had suddenly changed to the wild clamor of Wall Street no greater surprise could have pinched her features; while Catlett's firm step and steady eye betokened a will to accept a painful circumstance.

"Come in, Mr. Catlett." Mr. Corbin pushed a chair toward Bill-Bob. "Twenty-four hours are not enough for Laneville; why do you make your visit so short?"

"I won't get home, you see, before Friday afternoon and Saturday is always busy." Bill-Bob's hands grasping the arms of the old porch chair expressed coercion, control; "but I'm glad of even a day at Laneville. It—it——"

"Is too little pleasure for the trouble," Lettice broke in.

"Pleasure?" Catlett's low question only reached the ear of Lettice who had dropped into a chair beside him.

"You are looking thin, Mr. Catlett: a week of the 'salt' would give you a half-dozen pounds, and you need them. You know we are sailing on Saturday a week, and you will not be likely to find us here for a long time: 'a bird in the hand,' you know. I am afraid you are working too hard." Mr. Corbin was neither felicitous or facetious to people he did not like.

"Work never hurts, Mr. Corbin, and really I am very well. I tramp a lot up and down hill; my parish, you know, covers twelve miles of mountain country. I love my work; it is like rubbing a kettle that is covered with the 'black' of years.

"When the metal begins to shine, I feel like I am doing something sure enough. I can't stop rubbing for long and I must go back." The steadfast gleam of the young man's eye, as he spoke reminded Lettice of a beacon light in a battered tower: the rest of Bill-Bob's face was troubled in spite of himself.

"Do you live alone, Mr. Catlett?" Mrs. Corbin was always keen for domestic details; mountains and soul-saving did not especially appeal to her.

"I have been living alone," Bill-Bob took out his watch and then looked toward the stables, "but my only brother, Saint George, is with me now. He is not very robust, and we like to keep him in the country as much as possible; but he hankers for the excitements of the city. I have him now and I am going to try to keep him indefinitely. My father has a good farm near Charlotteville, and it seems a pity that neither of his sons chose his profession, which he quite set his heart upon."

"What is your brother's profession?" Mrs. Corbin asked.

Catlett smiled. "Saint is a near-writer, Mrs. Corbin,—a most unfortunate occupation. When one is a near-writer, one is even more tenacious than if one were a real writer."

"But if one is a near-writer, is there not always a chance of one becoming a real writer? Isn't it like every other near thing?" Lettice was interested in Saint.

"I don't think it is—it is a genus all by itself. Saint is a lovely nature." A peculiar softness diffused itself over Catlett's face. "You never met him?" turning to Lettice.

"Never," the tone of Lettice was regretful; "but every time I hear his name, I want to see him worse than ever. Is he susceptible, romantic, easily impressed?"

"I am afraid he is. Isn't that our 'trap'?" Bill-Bob arose as a nervous little sorrel to a run-about drew up to the door. "I am mighty sorry to say good-bye." He shook hands with Mr. and Mrs. Corbin, jumped in the run-about with Lettice, and they drove off to the post-office, where Catlett would join the mail-carrier and continue on to Lester Manor, the station on the Southern Railroad where the train passed for Bolingbroke and Albemarle.

Her parents called Lettice a philosopher, but to their harnessed minds the sort of philosopher that Lettice really was could never appear. Lettice was on a quest; the kind of a quest that a child of Laneville had never before dared to make.

When she was forced to send the letter to the man she loved, her heart would have withered but for this consolation, "I'll cure him yet."

A multitude of ideas had telescoped into one burning command from the lips of her God: "Go thou and find what is the obsession of drunkenness; and when thou hast found out, bring the answer to ME!"

So Lettice had begun her quest. She sat at the feet of science as far as she could in a secluded country place. She studied Randolph's genealogy. It touched hers in a dozen ways, although they were not nearer than sixth cousins; but their ances-

tors were Burwells, Carters, Robinsons, Pages, Nelsons, Digges. Her father's library was her first laboratory. Of course the written word is no end of a snob, and Lettice had to read between the lines; but, as we all know, neither history nor genealogy are worth anything without a vivid imagination.

Lettice watched the pageant closely as the brave adventurers came from England, to project a fascinating civilization, exemplified at Laneville even until to-day. The master was king; he rode under God's sky as if it were his own, and a day's march would not cover his principality. He builded, planted, gathered, made merry or serious as he wished.

Such a life made for clear political ideas, courage, hospitality unequalled, a personal freedom both picturesque and dangerous. The Virginia planter, dashing, fearless, compelling, romantic! Was the license of his appetite a menace to his race?

Lettice, the philosopher, in the dark days between the letter and her sailing, spent much time in her father's library when her father was out on the farm. She went through not only books, but manuscripts, diaries, account books, files and files of *Virginia Gazettes*. Randolph Turberville certainly had pride of birth. The voice of his people thundered in colonial council, revolutionary

recklessness, in the pulpit, in the press, through the poetry of plantation life.

Beneath the fanfare was every bit clean? Of course not, it never is. These old planters drank a lot of alcoholic beverages, witness the advertisements of their importations in the *Virginia Gazettes!* See how their vessels skim seaward and bring back rum and Madeira, butts and butts of it! And there their portraits hung at Laneville—these lavish importers.

Holding her conclusions jealously, Lettice fresh from the page would walk around and study the faces of the common ancestors of Randolph and herself.

King Carter! Did he like Madeira? His full lips might still be smacking from his last glass. John Robinson—a trifle bibulous? Very, very grand in scarlet velvet and powder! Lettice could almost hear his grandiloquent words, that memorable day when George Washington had just stumbled through a report in the House of Burgesses: "Sit down, Mr. Washington, your modesty is only equalled by your valor!" Fine gentleman was Mr. Speaker—but did he not love wine? Looks so.

How about John Chiswell with his clear-cut, patrician face? Lettice had the dots on him, just found them in the *Virginia Gazette*. In a fit of intoxication, cruelly chronicled, Mr. Chiswell had

drawn his sword and pierced Mr. Bouthwell in the vitals; because Mr. Bouthwell, a common fellow, had accosted Mr. Chiswell with familiarity.

Yes, the life that produced courage, intellect, judgment, would also produce a dangerous personal freedom. What did anybody have to do with the private life of a Virginia gentleman? If he chanced to imbibe more than was absolutely expedient, he could retire to the discreet attention of his loyal body-servant: time, family life, yea, even public service, could easily await his convenience.

So far as Lettice could discover, the immediate ancestors of Randolph, with the exception of his own father, were punctiliously sober. But heredity oozes slowly, and the characteristics, away behind, sometimes catch up and dominate those excellent qualities of the next-of-kin.

There was plenty behind Randolph, Lettice discovered, to justify and account for a tendency much more alarming and dangerous than such a tendency would have been in the fresh, free life of long ago.

Some tiny cell in Randolph's remarkable brain had come down to him from the ages, ready for a suggestion, a desire. His symptoms had been treated cruelly, unwisely.

The disease, diagnosed lightly, had developed steadily until the fever raged and burned. Poor

Randolph was a sick man, and yet he was called wicked, bad, terrible.

Day by day Lettice heard the call, saw the vision clearer and clearer. The voice was acutely distinct: "For every ill there is a cure. Go and seek, my child, till you find it. Go and do! Go and do!"

The Corbins crossed on the "Kron Prinz Wilhelm der Grosse," and while the older ones quickly succumbed to the sickness of the sea, Lettice did not miss a single meal, but spent six days of absolute self-forgetfulness and delirious enjoyment.

Back of her serious consecration to a questionable idea, was plenty of mischief and coquetry, and these alone were seen by her new friends aboard ship. The lack of ceremony in ocean etiquette brought her quickly in touch with interesting people, and before she landed in the old world her belt was full of new scalps.

Mr. and Mrs. Corbin settled at Carlsbad for the waters; and Lettice was put in the care of her cousin Mary Nicolson—wintering in Berlin—to hear music. At their hotel was also a ship acquaintance, Charles Harker, who was pursuing scientific studies—in which Lettice was deeply interested.

The two young people met daily and discussed

the theories of Suggestion, Counter-suggestion, Psychotherapy—all the trade winds in the vast zone of Alcoholism; while Harker saw the practice in the wonderful institutions for alcoholism in Berlin.

One evening Harker, worn with the wear of his quest, came to Lettice with a wonderful glory in his eyes.

"This has been a strange day," he began. "I've been in the brain of a victim. I've beheld that subtle miracle, God and not God, I've watched the alternating activity of its many cells—the counter-action of the psychical, physical, and spiritual in man—wonderful, wonderful! I saw science actually cut out evil with a knife."

"A knife? How wonderful! Go on!" The eyes of Lettice, black with interest, were onyxes shot with fire.

"First," Harker was as much excited as she, "I saw noble men overcome by a restlessness, a depression that demanded stimulation. I watched the victims as if they had been a line of moving pictures. Here was a man seeking relief by whiskey. Another in the wild delirium of complete intoxication. Another in the frenzy of partial awakening. Another eased by morphia swore vehemently, 'No more drink or drug for me!' But poor creatures, they are doomed by heredity or weakness—they are sick. The alcoholic sug-

gestion lodges, often, in a brain cell awaiting it, and this sinister power from its little citadel dominates and damns a life—unless it is extracted; mind what I say—unless extracted.

“A dipsomaniac cannot be a moderate drinker, the desire must be pulled up by the roots. I have seen this done to-day. I have seen mind dominate mind, I have seen righteousness cower evil. I have watched the God-in-man pluck the vile suggestion from its fostering cell, and fill that cell with a divine activity. Miss Corbin, mental medicine can relieve the acute form of dipsomania, destroy the pitiless dominion of abnormal thirst, build up new desires, and by enforcement and reinforcement of the curative idea, make the victim whole. Personal will is the only ultimate salvation, the only antagonistic principle; but the will must be put in splints, as it were, before it can walk alone.

“Of course, if there's no will,” Harker shrugged his shoulders; “but Miss Corbin, some wills are only sprained, our mind-splints will fix them, won't they?”

“Can't I see it, too—mind casting the evil spirit from a brother-mind? How can I operate unless I am taught how? Take me to them, that I may learn, too! Let me see the 'God-in-one' touching the 'God-in-another' and making light!”

“You shall.”

"To-morrow?"

"Yes, to-morrow, at twelve o'clock."

It was strange that the daughter of Henry Corbin, of Laneville, in Virginia, should be transfixed over mental experiments at an institution for the cure of alcoholism in the city of Berlin: but there she was intent, disengaged from all the world, while Cousin Mary Nicolson thought she was hearing music. Indeed, she was hearing heavenly music, and the stern German savants forgot the clinic for the sight of a rapt, exquisite personality.

Lettice was called coquettish, care-free; a Virginia red-bird darting through the copse of German seriousness. But this was the deep of the girl's soul: it was only the foam, the fine spray of her spirit that broke upon the spray of other spirits and melted into jest and laughter. Her genius was to do—and mostly for others than herself. The world sees the sparks from the furnace-fires of the soul; but no stranger can tell the names of those who sit and speak around the soul's cloistered hearthstone.

Lettice saw and benefited. Christ called his disciples and gave them power to cure all manner of disease. Would he not give her, one of the many millions who were striving to follow Him, a tiny bit of His mysterious medicine? If she had any curative quality in her being, she was going to

expend every particle of it upon Randolph Turberville. How or where she did not yet know: but time, place and efficiency would, she verily believed, appear in due time.

The great explorer, Determination, lighted by the torch of God, could hew its triumphant way through jungles of despair. She pinned her faith to the swaying standard of mental healing. She might not succeed in her trial test, but at least she was going to arrest Randolph's interest some day by a daring experiment. What glory, what delight to behold him that was dead risen again.

She, moreover, believed that she and Randolph were made for each other—and blighted, sick, was he any less her own? Must she cast him away because he was sick? But how was she ever to get to him to test her experiment, her power? They were separated by a wilderness of blackened hopes; by a stone wall of self-respect and pride; by the stern order of her father, who had declared the gates of Laneville forever shut to Randolph Turberville. How was she to get near enough to him for the supreme test?

He was just as much her love, sick unto death with sin, as he was her love sick unto death with pneumonia. In the latter case love would lift the curtain of propriety and walk in—why not now? This was life or death.

Often Lettice would lose heart, hesitate, doubt;
but

Doubts are traitors,
And make us lose the good we oft might win
By fearing to attempt.

What was Lettice to do? How was she to begin? Her father was getting well in an orthodox manner. Her mother had transferred her Laneville "Economics" to Carlsbad and went her placid way, while Lettice, the impatient explorer, was held by a frozen sea.

Her release came suddenly. She and Cousin Mary Nicolson were with the elder Corbins at Carlsbad when the great doctor pronounced Mr. Corbin practically well, but instead of sending him home to Virginia, he advised a change from daily guardianship and a return for further treatment in three months, when he hoped to find his patient well enough to be finally discharged.

Of course Mr. Corbin rebelled. His interests were suffering in his absence from home: what would become of Mrs. Corbin's gardens or the whole plantation with them so long away? His son Henry was off in a South American mine; James Parke was off at Madison, Wisconsin, studying agriculture in order to apply the latest discoveries to the Laneville estate: he must not be interrupted. What was to be done? If there

were only some one he could trust to see about his plantation.

"Here am I, papa." The pulses of Lettice tingled with hope. Suppose he should let her go! Suppose she could have Laneville for any experiment she might choose to undertake—Laneville with everybody far away—delicious! "I'm a pretty good boss, you know, papa, and the way I would prod Mr. Hudgens and the negroes would be a caution. If you would only let me go, papa, I'd never take my eye off anything; and I should be so pleased to help you. Please, dear papa, let me go! I am quite old enough to assume responsibility."

"Do you propose to go alone?" Mr. Corbin asked with dignity.

"Wouldn't Cousin Mary Nicolson go with me?"

"I never thought of that." Mr. Corbin showed signs of yielding. "I really think there are some things you might do for me, and with Mary—Mary is so safe; and I think Mary wouldn't mind going to Laneville for a financial rest. I'll think over it, Lettice, and have a talk with your mother."

Heaven only knows how it came about, but before Lettice could catch her breath, her parents were off to England to visit the head of the family at "Hall-End" in the county of Warwick, and

she and Cousin Mary Nicolson were racing across seas to Laneville in Virginia.

At last the ocean was behind and the travellers were steaming along on the Pennsylvania Railroad. Lettice, rather listless, watched the giant signs on the New Jersey and Delaware plains: a cow, milked by a woman in blue, cried "Jones's Malted Milk"; a big bull announced "Guernsey's Tobacco"; and a huge, dustless screen repelled a large black fly. Oh, the monotony of it all! Lettice must have a paper, something to divert her. A newsboy came along, with a pile of the great dailies, and she bought a *Washington Times*.

Nothing of vital interest until she turned the page, then she read under the head of "Deaths in Virginia"—"Randolph Turberville in Bolingbroke, March the first."

Not another word. To-day is March the second.

X

THE old world and the new world each had a hand to an ear—listening, listening: there were queer whisperings in the air—spirit was curing spirit—evil spirit was fleeing before the voice of God. Go and do! Go and do! Seek a cure, no matter what the ailment!

Lettice was listening, hearing, and away off in Germany she had been able to think of Randolph with a clarity of purpose. Randolph in Virginia was thinking of Lettice, too; but his thoughts were befogged, blurred, inarticulate.

The condition of the elder Randolph Turberville had remained so long about the same that neither his wife nor his son felt any unusual uneasiness. He was bloodless, bald, emaciated, irritable: but no more so than usual. Poor Ran, he was the memorial warning, the most convincing of all temperance lectures, eternally rejected and absolutely unheeded.

One day young Randolph, suffering with a terrible headache after several nights from home, went to his mother's room to ease himself on her big, soft sofa. His headache was quickly frightened away by a ghastly spectacle. His father, fallen from a chair, lay crumpled on the floor—white,

drawn, still. He had reached the limit of his resistance: every drop of blood had raced from his poor, will-less brain; he never spoke or breathed again.

The useless existence of Randolph Turberville was forgotten in that sublime pity that made the whole of Bolingbroke his kin. The city streamed to the door of the little gray house in tearful sympathy, and the rooms could hardly hold the flowers that Bolingbroke and all Virginia sent.

Of course, Ran was buried from the Holy Comforter: a Randolph Turberville had bought the first pew in the church, and Turbervilles had occupied it ever since. Everybody was at Ran's funeral: the judiciary, lawyers, doctors, the governor—a Turberville was dead.

The short time necessary for the reading of the service for the burial of the dead was eternity for Randolph, the son. Beyond the riot of splendid blossoms, the solemn words, the moan of the organ, he saw a pinched body and heard: "Too late! Too late!"

Every familiar object in the beautiful church enlarged itself. He could hear his own baby footsteps, his big-boy footsteps, slow footsteps following a flower-decked coffin. The window color was articulate sound; peals of exhortation, reproach, despair darted through the red robe of the priest in the chancel window; and fiery daggers mingled

with the soft eloquence of the wonderful records—Leonardo's Last Supper. Every blossom in the wreaths, crosses, broken lyres, sheaves, spoke with tongues of flame—"Why? Why? Why? Why? Too late? Eternally too late?"

Turbervilles, clean and unclean! How far self-responsible? How far pre-doomed, predestinated? Had infringement of the Mosaic law, though by but a tiny jot or tittle, done it? Could his father have been cured? This awful moment, Randolph could hear his mother distinctly pleading with him to try to save his father: but he had scorned even to try—"O God!"

Were he and his father victims of first-hand transgressors? Instead of writhing, tormented, receiving stripe for stripe, might not the weary soul be lifted from a pinched, scarred body, find mercy in the Father-arms? Suddenly he was in the city of Jerusalem on the left hand of the Master, who turned to him and said: "Sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not." "Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these—ye did it not to me." Randolph, himself, also seemed to slip away into everlasting punishment from which he was lifted by the organ's peal.

The music vibrated with a tender resonance: the brave mourner beside Randolph had chosen hymns that might have been sung at the funeral of a saint—"Paradise," "Just as I Am," "The

Strife is O'er, the Victory Won"—immemorial comforters! The hymns mingled mystically with the rich tints of the window on the right of the chancel placed in memory of Randolph's grandfather, who had been a vestryman for forty-eight years. The glory of this window and the leaping voices dazzled the young man: for a moment he was uplifted beyond flesh and sense. Our Saviour, in the window, lovingly touched the fair head of a child; and to Randolph the Christ and the child sang with the choir—"Alleluia! Alleluia!! Alleluia!!!" For a moment despair turned to triumph—"Christ! Christ! Salvation! Rescue! Health!" But only for a moment. His mother's grasp reminded him that the service was over, and in terrible reality he walked with her out of the church.

Lettice and Cousin Mary Nicolson reached Bolingbroke in time for the funeral to which, however, Cousin Mary refused to go. Her condemnation of human irregularity, not her own, extended away and beyond the grave; and she did not intend even to appear unmindful of the dereliction of anybody, living or dead.

Chattie's Son-Boy, her big bright Galahad, as Lettice loved to call Randolph to herself, was a dismal caricature of the sunshine boy who caught the heart of Lettice from the top of a step-ladder. With his overcoat collar turned up to his ears, he was

cruelly envisioned on the cold, raw day. His head was bare, and his mop of bright hair was lifeless, too long, and straighter than Lettice thought it could ever grow. His face was puffed, red and yellow-mottled; and his forehead was full of lines. Lettice was transfixed with pity and wholly unconscious of the tender solicitude of her gaze. "Oh, Randolph, soiled and broken, I've come to save you. Don't you feel me near?"

He raised his eyes and Lettice caught their pain, weariness and despair.

Randolph was, indeed, startled by the vision of Lettice Corbin: he thought she was still in Germany. Instead of furs, she wore a long surtout which took all the color from her face and made of her bright hair discord and mockery. Her lids, quickly lowered, gave to her face a crypt-like coldness; but crystal teardrops, struggling through her long lashes, offered a holy, pitying sympathy.

"Send her to me, O Christ; send her to me!" Poor Randolph prayed as the clods of earth fell heavily on his father's coffin.

From the grave Lettice hurried to Cousin Mary Nicolson who awaited her at the Southern Station.

Randolph expected Lettice all the evening: she always appeared at supreme moments, and how could she have the heart to fail him now? When she did not come, he was naturally crushed with a

bitter conclusion: "Lettice Corbin is done with me, and she is right."

His depression, when he and his mother had parted for the night, was terrible. How could he stand it? He felt himself a frailer bark than ever, blown by the whipping blast of destiny. He was nothing but an agonizing "sting" forever to hurt his mother and any other pitying one who might regard him. He could not stand it.

The implacable-suggestion-satisfied could not ease him to-night; momentarily it had lost its seduction; the higher emotions, quickened by the events of the last few days, feebly attacked the bestial proclivities. He was coerced by the memory of a wordless vision across an open grave. "Oh, God, I must see her once more!" he cried in despair.

The pall of death and finality, the realization of the fortitude of the magnificent mourner in the next room, the knowledge that he had flung aside the wealth of life like a filthy rag—maddened Randolph Turberville. He was going to end it all this very moment.

He got up from his chair and started to his wardrobe—the end was there. He paused in the middle of the floor: "He that was dead is risen again!" Dead? Risen again? Can anything dead rise again? A tiny shaft of hideous scorn

pierced his grief-marked face. "Dead? Risen again? No! No!"

Randolph, now at the wardrobe, opened its door. Four bottles stood on the middle shelf. One bottle was labelled "Old Scotch"; one, "Mountain Rye"; one, "Bumbgardner"; and the other, a white bottle containing a white fluid, was marked "Poison." A young doctor friend had left the white bottle there months ago, had forgotten it; a happy circumstance to Randolph now.

Randolph gazed pitiably at the four bottles. Which? Which? Should he empty the Old Scotch with a dozen gulps and forget for a few hours? Or should he pour the white fluid upon his handkerchief and sleep? Sleep forever?

"He that was dead is risen again."

"Rise again? He that is dead?"

"I have forfeited my place in this world, shall I try my luck in another?"

"He that was dead, is risen again."

Randolph pulled his handkerchief from his pocket and took the white bottle from the middle shelf of his wardrobe.

"He that is dead shall rise again?" Preposterous! Which—which—oblivion or ignominious resistance?

Which? Which shall it be?

PART II

XI

THE Laneville carriage met Lettice and Cousin Mary at Lester Manor. The new century was ten years old, but Laneville still rolled over the level roads of Middlesex in a cumbersome, family carriage. With Billy Dixon, the late driver, departed the high boot and the folding steps, but the carriage still remained to crunch the soft sand of the quiet roads.

There were piles of purple clouds in the evening sky, and where they parted a silver Venus flashed. In the open was occasionally the twinkle of home-lights and in the forest the chirp of wild things. Cousin Mary's thin questions broke against the rhythm of the horses' feet; and the answers of Lettice were like little bridges hanging lightly above the ravines where her thoughts hid. She was scarcely hearing, scarcely feeling; she was composing a letter. Once before she had written a letter; and this letter, burning her thoughts tonight, was pendent to it. One undid; this would do.

At last a halt, and a merry "How d'ye, Miss Lettice!"—from the little black gate-opener,

meant home. She was reaching the climax, she was coming nearer—nearer.

"How far from the house now?" Cousin Mary's voice was thinner.

"More'n a mile," Uncle Alec, the driver, answered. "You is done fergit, ain't yer, Miss Ma'y?"

Around they passed, under the arching cedars, in trustful security, in spite of the darkness; then through the arch of box, and at last to the Laneville lawn. The great trees flung their bare branches to the sky in hallelujahs for her homecoming. The dogs curved their spotted bodies and frisked and barked. From the windows gleams of light greeted Lettice and Cousin Mary; and the negroes, collected in the front porch, chirped like a flock of blackbirds.

The house was set as for a great company, and they had waffles and oysters for supper.

"Aren't negroes the best creatures in the world?" Lettice asked Cousin Mary as they walked down the wide fire-lit hall.

"I think they are trials and pests," she answered. "Lettice, dear, this hall is cold."

"Trials and pests? Look, Cousin Mary!—fires everywhere, lights, order, supper, smiles! What more?"

"How d'ye do!" Lettice cried, waving her

hands to the portraits on the walls. "Glad to have me back?"

Cousin Mary Nicolson miraculously praised the coffee, and yielded to the influence of waffles and oysters. She actually looked serene and drowsy as she and Lettice drew close to the library fire.

The spirits of Lettice shot skyward. Seriousness and precocity retreated before the impulsive gladness of youth and health. There seemed no hopeless condition in the universe. The delicious amplitude and beauty of her home overpowered her, flung out a challenge to the world. All inspiration was here. She had but to gather it and go forward. Laneville did not bind—it encouraged. It cried to her to-night, "We did our best in our day and generation, but our best is not your best. You have our lives to build upon, but your life shoots away and beyond into God's mysteries."

She could not contain herself. In her surcharged being circulated pools of clearest hope and intention. She seized Cousin Mary by her slim waist, pulled her from her chair, and twirled her into the immense hall. Her forefathers had given her space in which to think and be glad; she must dance out her satisfaction.

"Aren't you happy, glad, too?" she sang.
"Glad—glad—glad? Sing, Cousin Mary, sing!"

She rushed her unwilling cousin into a frantic,

unwilling two-step; singing at the top of her voice (to the tune of "Sally in the Garden")—

Cousin Mary Nicolson, Nicolson, Nicolson;

Cousin Mary Nicolson, Nicolson—Nick!

I'm so happy, happy, happy—

I'm so happy-e-e-e, Cousin Mary Nick!

Almost breathless, she deposited "Cousin Mary" into the softest chair in the large drawing-room. Logs were burning, blazes were dancing in brass and crystal, and Lettice tucked her vibrating self in the corner of the red velvet sofa and caught her breath. Then turning to Cousin Mary Nicolson, she asked naïvely: "Isn't Lanevia nice?"

Upstairs in her own dear room, with its clamoring roses and fluttering humming birds, she crouched for an hour or more by the fire; then she went to her desk and wrote the letter.

If she were opening a gate that her father had shut, Heaven, she believed, would give her absolute. How could she neglect so great an opportunity, even for a father's command?

Here was the "Great-God-in-her" clamoring for expression: to whom must she listen—to her God, to personal inspiration; or to her father to whom God seemed to speak in a monotonous undertone?

She earnestly believed that the evil she was doing was only a mote to the tremendous good

which would be accomplished by the "test" she hoped to make within the sacred quiet of her father's home.

A remark she had made to Charlotte Turberville long ago recurred to her in the pretty seclusion of her own room at Laneville: "Laneville was made for me, not me for Laneville."

What greater privilege would the departed mistresses and masters of Laneville wish for their wonderful home than the glory of trying to raise him that was dead? "I was sick and ye visited me." "I was sick and ye permitted me to visit you." All the same, the very, very same.

Yes, Lettice was sure she was right, and she was ready to face the consequence of her wild experiment. She was going to try to lay hold of Randolph Turberville, and bring him to his senses: if she failed she would have done her best, as she saw it: if she succeeded—oh, Glory! Oh, God!

Lettice knew she was right, and she left the fire to write the letter.

MY DEAR MRS. TURBERVILLE:

You and Randolph have been most tenderly in my mind ever since last Tuesday, when I had a glimpse of you at Holly-wood. I wish I could write all I feel; but I can't. I can only say I am so very, very sorry for Randolph and you.

I am writing especially to tell you this, but also to ask of you and Randolph a great favor. Papa and mamma are

still abroad, and will be for three months longer, and Cousin Mary Nicolson and I are alone at Laneville until they return.

The place will be enchanting soon, and I believe would help you and Randolph to forget. Already the jonquils and snow-drops are everywhere, and the lawn as green as an emerald. Can't you and Randolph come at once and stay as long as you choose? You will be no trouble to me whatever, there are too many servants and too much of everything for Cousin Mary and me.

Please come, dear Mrs. Turberville. I believe Laneville will do you both a lot of good; and I'll promise you to do my level best to cheer you after you come. If you don't come I shall think that neither you nor Randolph care for me any more.

Any day or hour will suit me—just drop me a line that Uncle Alec and the carriage may meet you.

Most affectionately yours,

LETTICE CORBIN.

LANEVILLE, March the tenth.

A "life-letter" comes slow. The morning asks, "Will it come to-day?" The night answers, "Maybe to-morrow."

The "rural deliverer" stopped at the Laneville gate any time between two and four o'clock in the afternoon, according to the inclination of the black horse that conveyed him: neither by lash or oath did he express any impatience at the deliberate indolence of his stubborn beast. He lived to chew tobacco and this he could do as well behind a slow horse as a fast one. His attitude to his occupation was resentful, he pulled papers and

letters from his leathern bag as if they were vicious, and stuffed them into the mail-box as if they were vanquished enemies. No reassuring smile for better things to-morrow ever lit the rugged face when an expected letter did not come: indeed, he considered letters rather foolish and superfluous and had remarked to his fellow-carriers at the post-office—"Pity some folks got nothin' to do but watch for the mail, 'specially Miss Lettice Corbin."

Lettice was trying to forget the letter, and to lose herself in plantation interests. Immediately after an early breakfast, to which Cousin Mary Nicolson never came, she, on Kitty Fisher—her bay mare—would flash over the fragrant brown of new-plowed fields, over green pastures dotted with mothering sheep, over pine-tagged road to gather the last words of other industries; she was earnestly holding the pulse of the plantation, and trying to diagnose wisely the various agricultural symptoms; while an acute, irresistible unrest pricked her energy like a relentless thorn.

About two o'clock she on Kitty Fisher daily awaited the "rural deliverer" at the outer gate. Every day he was a little later than he was the day before. Kitty did not care, she liked to munch the new grass around the post that held the letter-box. Lettice tried not to care, but—mercy—the fate of the tinkling, laughing, spring world was

in the keeping of the deliberate, unsympathizing mail man.

Why did not the letter come? "Even if Randolph refused to consider my overtures, why did his mother's courtesy fail her at such a time? I try not to care, but I do, I do; so very, very much," was the girl's heart-cry.

Two weeks passed, and the spring world was sulky. The sky was gray, the green things bedraggled, and the hopes of Lettice were crumpled and dreary, too.

But, at last, there came a day when Lettice and Kitty Fisher did not have to wait for the man who fetched the Laneville mail; for strange to say, he had come, stuffed the mail in the box and gone before they rode up. Lettice resented the appetite of Kitty Fisher which induced her to greedily nip the young grass before they reached the box, by giving her a sharp lash on her silken rump accompanied with a stern, "Get up, Kitty!" When the mare had unwillingly moved up, the girl leant over eagerly and pulled out first a batch of papers for Cousin Mary, a letter from her mother for herself, finally a black-bordered envelope bearing her name in characteristic elegance—this she opened first, quickly devouring its contents. They pleased her, made her let herself go, and she waved the letter in the wet air, and cried, "Hurrah, Hurrah!"

The little black gate-opener, safe in her house, started again to open the gate, but Lettice waved her back; she was going to save everybody to-day—for Randolph was coming.

Once more she stopped Kitty Fisher's feast, and to her insistent "S-s-s-s-s" the little mare flashed through the gate, down the long lane to the house. The girl's quickened pulses found expression in the horse's rapid footsteps, for a "dead paper mute and white" seemed "alive and quivering against her tremulous hands."

Mary Nicolson was in the library deep in the mysteries of a pale pink shawl, when Lettice burst in with: "We are going to have company, Cousin Mary."

"Who?" asked Cousin Mary, with interest.

"Mrs. Turberville and Randolph."

"What are you going to do with that disreputable fellow?"

Lettice, very grave by the fire, was reading the letter again to herself:

DEAR LETTICE:

I have not written before because I could not get Randolph to make up his mind. He has had quite a spell and is still miserable; but he is deeply touched by your invitation, and has consented to accept it. We will be at Lester Manor on the Monday afternoon train.

Thank you, so much, dear Lettice.

Affectionately your friend,

CHARLOTTE TURBERVILLE.

Then Lettice regarded her cousin intently for a moment before she asked, "Do you really wish to know, Cousin Mary? I and Laneville are going to cure him."

An exquisite sense of reconciliation, even for Mary Nicolson, overcame the earnest girl about to enter the retreat of passionless devotion. There was always somebody to mock and revile the explorer. Cousin Mary was conscientious, too—"Be ye reconciled to one another."

"Remember, Cousin Mary, how Mrs. Turberville supported her shattered son the day of the funeral—won't you be glad to see her with him in this great, blossoming sanctuary? I am not doing this thing that you condemn for caprice: before heaven, Cousin Mary, I hear the voice of Christ."

Mary Nicolson was silent, and Lettice began to hum a sacred melody; and presently a brightness broke over Laneville, and going to the window she beheld that "gracious thing made up of tears and light which was an answer to her soul."

Problems are worse than pain, only love can find their answers.

XII

LETTICE did not meet her guests at Lester-Manor, but sent Uncle Alec, the faithful Laneville driver, with the carriage.

It was a long, cold afternoon and the waning sun lay upon the lawn like a timid intruder. The shadows of the magnolia leaves danced wildly upon the sides of the house, and the trees screamed in the clutches of the March wind.

The confidence of Lettice had grown as pale as the sun, her pulses as wild as the wind. She ran upstairs and down a dozen times to see if the fires were at their best, and gave minute suggestions for the tea-table; demanding Mrs. Bell's crochet mats, Grandmother Digges's china, President Nelson's urn, and a bowl of jonquils.

She caught the dogs and whispered secrets in their ears, and their wagging tails accorded her genuine canine sympathy. She implored Miles, the cook, to have the coffee good and strong; and if she had been on the eve of a court ball she could not have taken her raiment more seriously; when she appeared in piles of hair and purple chiffon, Cousin Mary held up her hands: "Haven't you mistaken the occasion?" she asked sternly.

"It is the greatest occasion of my life," Lettice answered defiantly, as she went to the window, held her hands each side of her face and peered into the descending darkness for their coming.

They were very late. A dozen times the wind was a carriage rolling up, and the blessed dogs, contrary to their custom, barked a dozen times unnecessarily.

At last there was no mistake, the wheels were crunching the gravel and the horses making for the front door.

For a second the courage of the girl failed, but a second more it was red-hot again.

"Here they are, Cousin Mary!" she said as she left the room. Cousin Mary mumbled something but Lettice paid no attention; before the carriage stopped she was down the steps, and her own hand opened the carriage door.

She expressed her welcome in a kiss to Mrs. Turberville and a firm grasp of Randolph's hand. Very quickly she perceived that she had to save the situation—her guests needed tonic. She had to force them along with her spirit.

"Cousin Mary," she called, "here they are, just as tired as you were. Come on and abuse the Southern Railroad, and Laneville for being so far."

Her sensations were similar to those of a physician who has hopefully travelled miles and miles

to see a patient, and finds a dying man. There were deep shadows beneath a pair of absolutely weary eyes, and a wretched cynicism upon too-full lips—strangely removing Randolph from her assumed flippancies.

As Randolph and his mother went up to their rooms a sense of futility overcame Lettice; she felt herself a silly cur barking at the wheels of fate's chariot. "Things are as things are; as fate has willed, so shall they be fulfilled." She wondered if after all that were true.

At the table they somewhat recovered themselves. Cousin Mary Nicolson loved news, and listened with interest to the bits of urban gossip that Mrs. Turberville so quietly related.

A young Bolingbroke girl, whom they all knew, had been terribly injured in an automobile accident, and Lettice asked if her leg had ever been set, adding with feeling. "Poor Margaret Colston,—she loved to dance and danced so well!"

"Yes, it has been set at last after repeated failures, and they hope it is going to knit." Chattie's voice was sympathetic. "The dear child has gone through everything, but she may not be lame after all."

"It is awful to think of a young girl being maimed by carelessness." Cousin Mary was fast losing her horror of Randolph, and was enjoying his mother immensely. "I should never forgive

a person for laying any sort of spiritual or physical blemish on my child."

"Well," Chattie's experiences had filled her heart with an amazing charity unto all men. "I don't think it was carelessness; I think it was inevitable. I believe, too, that Jerry Donnan—poor fellow, he was driving the car at the time of the accident—would have lost his mind but for Bill-Bob Catlett. You know Bill-Bob is filling the pulpit of the Holy Comforter temporarily, and there is a strong suspicion that he will be called to be rector."

"Never! That callow youth?" Cousin Mary was astonished.

"Not such a callow youth as you would imagine." Randolph had scarcely opened his lips before. "Bill-Bob is good stuff; only difficulty is that the Holy Comforter people are so set in their ways that he'd never be able to carry out his ideas even if he was called. Bill-Bob is a crusader—a reformer. He is the very fellow for that church, but he'll be up against it when he gets there."

"I've heard," Charlotte, always temperate, was speaking again, "that at a meeting of the vestry for the purpose of talking things over with Robert—Bill-Bob seems almost too familiar—he made his convictions very plain. His watchword is Service, he is truly his brother's keeper and his

sister's keeper, too. His mind is full of human betterment, and I don't know how far the Holy Comforter will sustain him. Our beautiful and beloved church has been the church of the Classes, and Robert thinks every church should be the church of the Masses. That's where the trouble will come in. Think of Mrs. Nathaniel Norris having a pauper in her pew!"

"Pretty bad," Randolph spoke again, "but didn't you tell me, mother, that you heard—that at the end of that very meeting—Bill-Bob made an extempore prayer that drew tears from eyes that never before had realized that an unwritten supplication could reach the ear of God?"

"Yes, I heard that," said Mrs. Turberville.

"Well, I am surprised at nothing," Cousin Mary lay down her knife and fork; "but I would hate to think of the Holy Comforter being turned to a revival meeting house, where anybody who chose could come in and shout. I do think that something exclusive should be preserved."

"No corners in religion now, Miss Nicolson," Randolph smiled wearily. "They tell me Bill-Bob is the expression of the highest world-thought. He has worked wonders among the mountaineers and he may work wonders in Bolingbroke. I don't know," more wearily.

Randolph had no appetite for Laneville's

boasted food, but drank quickly three cups of creamless coffee.

"You asked us to make ourselves at home," he said to Lettice with a trace of his boyish sweetness, "and I am accepting your invitation in coffee."

This faint glimmer of his old self struck the core of Lettice Corbin's resolutions: "He should be entirely restored to his frankness, his charm. It was all there—every bit there—and the world would see it when the débris of indulgence was cleared away."

When they arose from the table they walked around the hall looking at the pictures of the Corbin race-horses. It was too cool to tarry there long and the ladies went into the drawing-room, while Randolph stayed in the dining-room to smoke.

For a few moments Mrs. Turberville moved about among the pictures and different pretty things, and then without any warning, asked: "Isn't Son-Boy changed, Lettice?"

Lettice, exhausted by her efforts at the table, which now seemed palpable and hollow, didn't have the strength to dissimulate.

"Yes," she answered almost in a whisper.

Mrs. Turberville sighed, and turning to Mary Nicolson, said very quietly: "You could hardly imagine what a brilliant fellow my son was."

Mary Nicolson could not answer a word.

Randolph did not join them, and at eleven, the Laneville bed-time, Lettice went to find him. He was still in the high-back dining-room chair—his head thrown back, and his hands clasped over it. "It is good for you to ask me here, I'm almost in despair—my nerves, everything. I can't stand it. The night of father's funeral I couldn't decide whether it should be laudanum or always whiskey. I chose the latter. Oh, Lettice!"

Lettice was not so brave as she had fancied. She could not call up one light word. She wanted to be kind but did not know how to begin. "Nerves?" she thought. "He needs something stimulating."

"I am not much of a doctor, Randolph, I am awfully ignorant about such things: but maybe you really need a-a-a-tonic," she said hesitatingly, "I—I have some ammonia, and some wine and whiskey."

"I have drunk gallons since my father's death," he answered, "and I brought some with me. It isn't a nice thing to do, but I might have killed myself if I hadn't. I am a miserable creature—don't despise me, Lettice!"

Where were the words of consolation and encouragement that Lettice Corbin had so faithfully rehearsed? She could not think of a single one. Silence enveloped them like a winding sheet. The

splendid appointments of the mahogany-panelled room suddenly became icebergs, its generous dimensions a frozen sea in the midst of which a man and woman stood—chilled, numb, suffering. The tremendous moment, long expected, was dumb, hopeless. The tongue of each was pinched, the heart of each hard. The girl could not reach a single thought to relieve the agony of her companion.

A door opened very easily and Amos stepped softly in.

"Mose bade-time?" he asked timidly, as he asked every night at this hour.

He went toward the hall—Randolph and Lettice following. Lettice called the other ladies from the drawing-room, and they followed Amos to the first landing, where on a Chippendale table stood four squat candlesticks. Amos lighted three, handed one to each of the ladies, and they passed on up.

Then he lighted the fourth and led the way up the broad stairway: "I'll show you yo' room, Marse Randuff," he said with kindness.

Amos could read the handwriting upon a man's face, and he knew that Randolph Turberville needed his attention.

XIII

THE next morning everything was easier and conversation much less strained. After breakfast Lettice and Randolph went over the place. He showed a little interest in the cattle, the garden, and especially the pigs.

"Don't you love them?" Lettice asked as they stood by a pen of squealing black and reds. "Charles Lamb did—when they were roasted."

In days gone by Randolph, perhaps, would have repeated Charles Lamb's immortal ideas on the roasted ears of a baby pig—not so to-day; he hadn't the energy.

From pigs to the dairy, to the garden where shy little eyes were opening from their winter's sleep, and finally to the stables: "Do you like to ride?" Lettice asked.

"Oh, yes! Once I liked everything, didn't I? That was the worst of it."

Very soon she on "Kitty Fisher" and he on Henry's "Hampton" were galloping over the new-plowed fields fragrant with the breath of mother earth. They were talking to the hands; scanning the far reaches of Mr. Corbin's estate; gaining little hillocks to get a view of the water, the oyster boats, the vessels going so leisurely on



YOUR DEEDS ARE ALL BEHIND

their pretty way; stepping slowly through awakening woods and then out on the main road, straight and wide, unlike the narrow Biblical path that leads to life everlasting.

There they put their horses out and ran without a word four even miles to old Christ Church.

"Fine!" Randolph uttered his first word of enthusiasm. "I'd like to go and go and go; far and away into forgetfulness, with all my deeds behind me."

Lettice looked at him steadily and answered, "Your deeds are all behind," her first words of healing! "Listen to the voices of the universe!" A pause. "Aren't they sweet?"

Randolph did not answer.

Almost in silence they studied the church and the graves, and then they rode back more slowly, not talking much—but the task had begun. Every inch of the road registered a subtle experiment. She was drawing him into the net that she had set for him—the wonderful, mystical net of mental and spiritual power. She was drawing on the wild wishes of the years, the multitude of stinging ideas that peopled her soul; and she was placing them in eye, on lips, in smiles, in gesture—the fight was on. She had gathered her mind into one supernatural, burning wish, which she turned boldly on Randolph Turberville.

It took a little while for bourgeoning spring to

change its timid smile into reckless laughter, but it broke at last ecstatically. Laneville was a pastel of softest pinks and whites and greens framed by the blue mist sky and the blue mist river. The ivy on the house, and the holly trees on the edge of the lawn were clustered with pale green baby leaves; bridal wreath leaped from the turf in plumes of purity; peach trees rang with pinkness; pyrus japonicas shot their red glory across the softer tints, and yellow jessamine wound around the stumps and ran up the porch pillars in yellow gladness.

Sweeps of grass soft enough for a soul to nestle in, and sweeps of sky, high and blue enough for the wildest hopes, held this riot of scent and beauty as a mighty cathedral holds its frescoes and melodies. These blues and greens, pinks and violets, reds and yellows—met mysteriously in the air, and made the crimson of passion, the royal purple of confidence and hope.

Randolph and Lettice and even Mary Nicolson and Charlotte grew dreamy with the dreaming air; they all wandered about till the east wind rose, then with armfuls of little blossoming things they came in to dream some more before the crackling evening fires.

Randolph was coming to Lettice just as true as the battered, storm-swept vessel sails to port. He was creeping into the old confidences which had

opened so strangely between them. Gradually they left the older women for longer periods, and talked low and earnestly in the quaint seclusion of Mr. Corbin's library. This library marked the different masters as clearly as the rock proclaims its period. Books ran from floor to ceiling, cut by the doors, two deep-seated windows and the chimney piece. The vital objects of the room were an oval mahogany table, a large sofa between the table and the fire, and two winged chairs each side of the fire-place. The chairs and the sofa were covered in bright chintz—peacocks and red roses. On the table were a lamp, a Bible, an ancestral illustrated Shakespeare, and a paper cutter; and over the mantel was a fine picture of the emigrant, Henry Corbin, painted in England when a youth. Two hunt dogs stood beside him in the picture and the cry of his soul, articulate in his young eyes—was victory. Just over the picture, burnt in the panelling, were the arms of the house, and below on the mantel shelf were three duelling pistols. The Corbins had believed in the Code of Honor.

“Fight, and fight hard, if one has to!” This was the motto of Laneville, and Lettice was born to uphold the tradition.

“Just the color of the rain across the river, so serious and tender,” was the thought of Lettice a few days afterwards, as she ran through the

river porch into the Laneville hall. It was the sight of Charlotte Turberville's eyes that produced it. She was standing at the window gazing over the long rose-walk, red with young wood and merry with new leaves, at the river, still and gray to-day as a dead eagle's wing. Her soft, black mourning hung straight as a streamer on a mourner's door-bell; it took the blue out of her eyes, and beyond their pale calm Lettice perceived misery, doubt, apprehension, perplexity. "I wonder what she is thinking about? I know what she is thinking about. I am thinking about it, too, old friend!"

"You've let the fire go out." Lettice, entering the room like a fresh breeze, went quickly to the chimney-piece and pulled the green bell-cord. "No wonder your eyes were gray; this dampness goes to your bones. Rolly"—the little negro's response was incredibly quick—"make haste and bring in some chips and a log, it is cold to-day."

Rolly's lightwood and chips were soon gambolling with the grave hickory log like care-free children in the lap of a grandfather—and Chattie and Lettice enjoying the game.

"There should be no April showers, Mrs. Turberville, only very pale, tepid sunshine, and we all should swing gently in it—no thinking, no doing, just living and dreaming. Wouldn't you like that?"

"Swinging always made me giddy, Lettice: I should like not to think."

"Thinking is horrible—so persistent—incurable. If one could only think directly to a conclusion, but thoughts go zig-zag in hog-paths: but you are not to think your eyes gray, I love the blue of them. Think aloud to me, maybe I can make it easier."

Chattie's eyes had turned bluer for the picture in the chair beside her. Lettice, with her boots on the fender and her slim hands toasting in the blaze, was living sympathy. Something winey emanated from the slim figure in her farming clothes, from the rain-rose of her face leaping from the restraint of her oil-cloth cap.

"You——" Charlotte began.

"Wait a minute. With the pale, tepid sunshine, the swinging and the dreams I would have always the fluting of Robin Hood. Listen—listen! Doesn't he make you feel better? I know his piping from all the rest. Bravo, bravo, little man!" as the bird stopped. "He has been singing to me all the morning—everywhere I went. He knows a thing or two."

The older woman's smile was a little bit discouraging, but she asked with interest: "What have you been doing out so long?"

"Everything. I'm trying to be a just steward. If there were an egg, or a calf, or a lamb less this

year than last year, I would feel like an unjust steward, and that papa would say, sternly, when he returned: 'Write quickly what thou owest!' I am on trial for my intelligence, my fidelity. I thought certainly there would be a calf less to-day; and I have been bringing a small baby-jersey back to life by means of a coffee-pot spout. Swathed with white linen and conveying drops of warm milk, that spout has saved my credit, I hope," looking at the clock. "Eleven-thirty, I've got to feed him again at one. I wonder where Randolph is; he generally helps me to resuscitate lambs and calves and gaping chickens—they are the most unresponsive of our dumb invalids."

"I thought Randolph was with you."

"Not since breakfast."

"I wonder where he is this rainy morning."

"In his room, I reckon."

In the heart of each woman was the desire to see where Randolph was, and also in each heart was the hesitation to intrude upon a man's liberty.

"Randolph is getting restless, Lettice; haven't you noticed it?"

"He has been restless—all the time."

"In a way, yes; but it was to me, or at least, I tried to see in it, the restlessness of convalescence. Now it seems to me the restlessness of 'no use' of despondence."

"I have not seen it that way. Last night he

seemed to enjoy our bridge—didn't you think so? And he chuckled over William Green Hill. Not the highest kind of humor, by any means; but if it amuses Randolph, it has done more than Dickens or Mark Twain have been able to do lately."

Neither spoke for a long time.

Then Charlotte almost whispered: "He wants to go home."

The five words meant to Lettice: "All for nothing—all for nothing!" A rebellious inner voice whispered, "God has fooled you."

"He hasn't," the girl said aloud.

"Hasn't what?" Mrs. Turberville was startled.

"Nothing. Did Randolph say he wanted to go, or do you just think so?"

"He said we had been here too long."

"When did he say so?"

"This morning." Charlotte clasped her hands very tightly, as if trying to make up her mind to say something. "Do you think he has been drinking since he has been here?" in a whisper.

"I do."

"Why?"

"I have noticed how spicy his breath was. He told me the night he came that he had brought whiskey, and Amos tells me he gives him a little to ease him off—that he can't do without it yet: Amos says if there is anything he knows about it's whiskey and religion, that too much of either

makes a man a fool, but that he knows exactly how much it takes—and that he is giving Randolph 'so much and no more—leetler and leetler every day.' ”

“ Oh, me! ” His mother sighed. “ I was so much in hopes he was taking none. ”

“ That would have been impossible, dear Mrs. Turberville, fever don't go off all at once; it lowers, and lowers,—and the doctor watches so very closely; and when the hour comes for heroic action, he acts. Do you know the way mama shortened my flannel petticoats when I was taking off long clothes? She snipped a bit off every day to keep me from catching cold—the abbreviation must not be too sudden. She snipped and snipped, until the flannel was away above my little feet: did you do Randolph's so, too? That's the way with drugs and whiskeys; snip, snip, snip a little every day: prepare the patient for the tremendous final test—the breaking off for good and all. That is what I am waiting for. Mrs. Turberville, I have a great big, audacious plan: I can't speak of it, even to you. Words might weaken it. I must concentrate all my will, all my zeal, all my hope, all my faith on that man: in a way, I am awfully superstitious—I am afraid if I tell, it will break the spell: but Mrs. Turberville, Randolph must stay here; you must not permit him to think of going away. ” The face of Lettice,

close to Chattie now, was tense with determination.

"How can I keep him, if he minds to go?"

"I don't know, but you must."

"We have been here three weeks, dear Lettice; a long time to impose on your father's hospitality. Mary Nicolson will——"

"That doesn't make a bit of difference; besides, Cousin Mary doesn't think when she is amused. And it's all tommyrot about papa's hospitality; he would have sailed on the next boat, if he had had to leave both kidneys behind, if he knew Randolph was here: but he don't know, and he won't know until I tell him: which I will do the minute I see him. In the meantime the only thing in the world to you and me at the present moment is to stop Randolph Turberville from drinking whiskey, or to try to stop him. There is no risk I wouldn't run to do it; I believe I would lie and steal—do anything. If we cannot ever do it, we can't, that's all about it. But Mrs. Turberville, I verily believe I can. It seems to me God tells me I can. Anyway, I am going to try, try my level best. You must not ask me a question, but you must do everything in your power to keep Randolph here. The very minute he leaves this place without giving himself a fair trial—I believe he is lost. With all your might and main, keep him here if you can!" The girl's weird earnestness lowered; she caught her breath and smiled, "Do you

think me crazy, dear, precious Mrs. Turberville?" She kissed the older woman on her forehead, adding, "God bless you!"

"Want more chips, Miss Lettice?" Rolly's restful face was in the door.

"Yes, a heap, Rolly." Lettice spoke with excitement. "I seem to get hot and cold in spots."

Neither Charlotte nor Lettice knew that Mary Nicolson had come in until she asked querulously: "Where did Randolph go on horseback?"

XIV

It was not a very cheerful trio that sat before the fire in the Laneville drawing-room at twilight of this rainy day. At Laneville nobody ever came to supper from the library, the sitting-room or a bed-room: the family and the guests, according to an unwritten law, always collected in the drawing-room just before the evening meal; and here Mrs. Turberville, Mary Nicolson and Lettice sat now—expectant. Each in her own way was uncomfortable; Mary Nicolson—because she could not with impunity tell her thoughts, speak her mind: every fold of her stiff silk dress, every line of her thin face, every hair of her severe head wore the expression—"I told you so."

Randolph's mother was generally miserable, chiefly to-night, however, because she knew that her staunch little friend was miserable, too. She would feel better if she were miserable all by herself. Lettice was miserable because she was afraid that Randolph, with the slyness of the diseased and drunken, had fled her custody and thus put an end to her experiment—the thing for which she had lived; and for which she was ready to die.

The rain beat the windows, as if crying to be let in: and the wind moaned and then waited for

strength to moan louder: at last the supper bell, in cheery distinctness, gave them all something pleasant to do.

When the three were seated, Amos came in as usual with the bread.

The old colored servant had a code of conduct peculiarly his own which he very highly respected: it would have been improper for him to say what he had to say to either of the ladies alone. This might suggest that Randolph was doing something of which he or they might be ashamed, and therefore no way to treat a gentleman. What he had to say must be said quietly to them all, as if nothing were to pay. He stood a moment behind the chair of Lettice, the silver bread basket in his hand, and deliberately stated "Marse Randuff won't be home to-night: it's raining too hard, and de roads too bad for a city gemmen what's not used to 'em. He be home to-morrer jes soon's I kin fotch him. I brung Hampton home case he got a tech o' dis-temper anyhow, an' needs he own stall. Marse Randuff is all right, ladies, all right!"

"But where is Randolph, Uncle Amos?"

Lettice was very serious.

"Nowhere in de wurld, Miss Lettice, but wid de gemmen at de cote house."

"I have always noticed"—Cousin Mary Nicolson would have died to have held her tongue any longer—"that court houses have a strange fascin-

ation for men, even when there is no court—I wonder why?"

"There is much about men that we women can't understand." Charlotte was trying to be pleasant and impersonal. "They are enigmas without many good answers."

"I don't think Randolph is a bit of an enigma: he simply was worn out with us and had to see somebody else. I don't much blame him," thus Lettice defended with spirit.

"You don't?" asked Mary Nicolson icily.

That night was a bad one for Lettice. If only she could be sincere! If only she could abandon herself to diatribes upon Randolph's condition, his needs, the possibility of his recovery: instead, she must, according to convention, talk of everything beneath the sun except Randolph Turberville: he was too delicate a subject to be broached. So they played bridge with dummy, and the only way she could express her feeling was to beat Charlotte and Cousin Mary out of their boots.

At eleven, Amos, the candles and bed—but no sleep for Lettice! She had the sensation of having missed a railroad train or a steamboat; or of having put a letter in the box without a stamp. Had she missed her chance?

Free from stays and hairpins and wrapped like a mummy in her thick, well-worn dressing gown, she crouched close to the fender and peered into

the fire. She wanted a tongue of flame in every pore. She wanted to blaze: she had dillydallied long enough: three precious weeks gone and not one thing accomplished—rather the contrary. She knew what she intended to do; why had not she done it?

“I can, I can,—if only he will let me try. Has he run away because he suspects? Why should there be any suspicion or secrecy? Why should not I say, right out, ‘Hold still, Randolph, hold still and let me cure you’?”

Piece after piece of wood did the girl throw on her fire till not a stick was left: she put the chunks together again and again, and they all had burnt to one glowing coal. She went to her window to raise it, but waited a moment: there was power and eloquence in the wild night, and before she let it in to strengthen her lungs, to hasten sleep, she would study its strange methods. Why the angry wind, the thousand rain-fingers beating gruesome discord? Why? Why? Why the fierce human will, subjugating, healing, curing? The wind and rain—out there: the fierceness of a woman's will here.

Through the storm she saw the tall monument to Henry Corbin in the graveyard at the back of the garden: the willow tree, towering over it, had gone mad and was lashing the marble with long supple withes—lashing it furiously; it knew no

better. The rain sinking into the April flowers had a reason for its frenzy—buds and blossoms, perhaps to-morrow. Was she going to play with flint, beat vainly against stone? Or like the furious rain would frantic energy mean light, color, fragrance, peace?

In bed she and the storm were partners dancing to the quick tune of inevitable action: the wind swept from its caverns and embraced her waiting forces and whirled them far from prudence and conventionality: the rain gathered her reluctance and her fear into a merry insinuating waltz; and then placed them in the mighty arms of the wind which swayed and guided them far from the contempt of men to a luminous acclivity, where all things are expedient that can be done in the name of God.

No sleep! First a terrible "Suppose,—suppose Randolph never comes back." Then a confident—"He will, I know he will." A young brain throbbing with courage and fear, a young heart aching for pity and regret!

Randolph did come back, and perhaps in a better frame of mind. His mother's eyes regained their limpid blue; flowers sprung gladly after days of rain; Mary Nicolson, even, responded to the bewildering loveliness of the April earth; and Amos informed Lettice that "Marse Randuff were git-tin' more better good-natured ev'y day. He

'low he hongry, he 'low he sleep, he feel, he feel like 'tother folks feel—dat how he feel. He 'gin-nin' to think sump'n of heself, an' ef a pusson don' think er heap er heself—who gwineter? An' mosoever an' betternall Marse Randuff is slowin' down on he dram."

Unmistakably, Randolph was responding to silent treatment. His skin was clearer, the fine red lines in the white of his eyes had almost disappeared; and his hair, though worn too long, had lost some of its dryness and was actually trying once more to wave around his forehead. The first shoots of his dead self evidently were springing.

His affection for his mother had assumed its old demonstrative freedom: he laughed involuntarily at the jokes of Lettice: and actually, in good nature, teased Cousin Mary Nicolson.

Upon a wonderful morning, about ten days after the rainy day, he announced, "I did not touch a drop of whiskey yesterday, and I slept like a baby all night."

Cousin Mary stiffened and looked in her plate: she'd rather one talked of committing adultery than of drinking whiskey.

Lettice, who had lifted the top of the urn to see why the coffee did not pour, let it fly back with a snap: then she clapped her hands with a cheerful "Good."

"Lettice!" Cousin Mary was very stern.

"What is the matter, Cousin Mary? Why should we be always saying what we don't think, and especially thinking what we don't say? It isn't to keep awful things secret, but to run them to the open, and try to get rid of them—am I right, Randolph?"

"You are right," he answered soberly, but with spirit. The subject was not continued.

Lettice and Randolph were soon out seeing to this and that and everything: the calf had been saved by the coffee-pot spout and was well on its four legs: lambs dotted the green meadow like splotches of foam on a pea-green sea: plowmen slowly tracked the wide brown fields: and singing birds and clucking hens told the old, old story of maternity and care.

Sweet, new life was peeping: by the barns they gathered the careless children of nature's garden—stolid toothwort, pale carydalis, saxifrage and henbane: at least Lettice gathered them and displayed their unobtrusive beauty to Randolph. Every smile of God was a little life-line.

In the fowlyard the big Plymouth Rocks were jealous of their restless chicks; and one fluffy mother walked all over her brood.

"Step-mothers," Lettice smiled.

Randolph held up his hands: it was too bad, but he quickly answered, "The mother of the chicken is the hen that lays the egg."

"And this hen did not lay the egg, because she step——"

"Oh, pshaw," he interrupted, "no way of proving it!"

Everything was easier this crisp, spring morning. Randolph's morbid self-consciousness was less apparent, and both of them were dashing at everything with the old, merry spirit. Randolph had not yet displayed a bit of physical agility, and Lettice could but compare his present indolence with the activity of her foot-ball hero: would Randolph ever show his athletic side again?

Somebody had left the garden gate open and a frisky colt was rollicking over the flower beds.

"Let's drive him out Randolph!" Lettice was already in the blossoming old garden.

"Me against the colt—what chance for me?" Randolph was waving a stick, and uttering violent threats which the beautiful young animal utterly disregarded.

"Come on, Randolph; run him out!"

"Run!" Randolph's tone was sarcastic.

"Yes, run. Why not? You can if you try. I believe you would like never to try. Come on; don't you see the colt is about to trample the peonies? Peonies are papa's darlings: there must not be a bud less this year. Run, Randolph; drive the colt away!"

Lettice had been darting hither and yonder; she

had raced the sunbonnet off her head—the little blue sunbonnet she had promised her mother to wear on account of freckles—and now breathless and bonnetless, she sat on a garden bench commanding Randolph to run: and he ran.

No use to fear for Randolph's lost agility: Lettice could not tell which was the nimbler, he or the colt. A boyish energy had superseded Randolph's indolence and Lettice cheered his recovered spirit, chuckling gleefully over the victory he at last won.

Later they went for the mail. Instead of waiting for the rural deliverer, it was now the custom of Randolph to go to the post-office and fetch it. Usually Lettice went with him.

This morning they stepped along the embowered bridle paths in silence: the ecstasy of nature was enough: the crimson on the dove's breast, the warm, intoxicating air, the blend of insinuating odor produced delicious little thrills which surprised Randolph. He did not like even this faint tingle; it must be repressed; he must talk—silence encouraged it.

"I be dogged if you didn't make me run. I didn't believe I could do it."

"I'll make you do something else, before I get through, see if I don't."

"Something else?" Slowly.

"Umph—umph"—dreamily, and then as if

suddenly awaking—"Randolph, I've got designs on you! When you leave Laneville, you—will—have—become able—to—dispense with all—things—that—hurt—you."

Lettice did not look at Randolph, but at the sky; and her words were like bolts of conviction slowly hurled at him. They possessed a solemnity that Randolph dare not resist.

"All right," he said, solemnly, too. "You are queer, Lettice; sometimes I am afraid of you."

"Not afraid, impressed, rather; that's what I want you to be."

"You know I always fancied mysticism; aren't you a bit of a mystic?"

"I don't know what I am; wish I did. Elsie Vennerish, maybe."

"Never," emphatically. "Archangelish, a-a-a-a-a——"

Their eyes met, color rose to the cheek of each, and both quickly looked the other way, and forced their horses to a canter.

Presently they passed through a magnificent skirt of wood; beeches, oaks and hickories arched the quiet roadway. Their horses fell from a canter to a walk, as if in reverence. Randolph removed his close riding cap; Lettice was already bare-headed.

"These trees seem to take hold of your hair

and press from it as many shades of gold as they have green."

Lettice was surprised: it was the first time he had alluded to her personally. In the old days, now so very, very old, he often openly admired her hair, her eyes, her smile, her mental pyrotechnics; but never yet during this strange, pivotal visit.

"To me, Randolph, these trees with their majestic dignity, draw the very soul from me and send it upward, upward, to——" She was overcome with emotion, and could not finish.

"It's a shame, a crying shame——" Randolph could not finish either.

"What's a shame, Randolph?"

"Nothing," very quickly.

The horses stepped slowly along as if giving them time to hear the appeal of the towering trees, the melody of the "Quaker ladies" so thick upon the way, the benediction of the far-off sky.

Out of the wood Laneville burst upon them through a vista of trees.

"It is splendid in its silence." Randolph took off his cap again.

"The sight of it means everything on earth to me." Lettice was still serious. "There is no holy sensation that it does not revive. I used to kick hard against the pricks of Laneville, the ceaseless admonitions, the never-ending restrictions:

I am reconciled to them all now. Beyond these infinitesimal aggravations are depths which it took me a long time to sound. I would not be doing what I am doing now but for the courage, the consecration of Laneville. I am doing something of which Laneville never heard, and yet I am trying to do what Laneville teaches."

"What are you trying to do, Lettice?" Randolph was very serious, too.

She was not afraid to look straight at him now. "I am trying to thrust my will into your will, Randolph. I am trying to get at a man's soul; instead of blood transfusion it is soul transfusion. Won't you, can't you——" She could not say any more, but tightened her rein on Kitty Fisher and far outdistanced Randolph to the house gate.

XV

FOR about a week longer they moved along, as they had moved for over a month. Charlotte thought she should be going home and Randolph, too. It was all Lettice could do to stay them. She herself was physically depleted by her strange and as yet ineffectual task. Her color was fading, she had no appetite, her whole being was yielding to the clutch of her high-keyed soul.

After the ride through the sweet spring world Randolph's usual depression returned, there was a pleading weariness in his eyes, his talk was forced: and the feelings of Lettice were similar to those of a mother, who had been trying hard to keep her babe from a sucking-bottle by every diversion known to the baby world, and who had at last concluded that the hour had come for heroic measures: she could not stand the whining and the fretting any longer.

The day had been long and trying, the nerves of everybody were on edge; and Lettice was sure that if she did not do something quick she would never do it at all: they would all fly apart like sparks from a condemned sky-rocket.

She noticed that Randolph ate no supper, and she herself had forced every mouthful. Well,

perhaps a starved body would quicken the action of her spirit; anyway, she believed the hour could be no longer delayed, and immediately after supper she said to Randolph: "Let's go into the library."

A wood fire sensed the spirit of the room and voiced the impression it distilled. Amidst its inspiration Lettice Corbin was actually going to begin to tap Randolph Turberville's soul. She need fear no interruption; evening visitors were almost unknown to Laneville unless invited, and Chattie and Mary Nicolson were fastened to the drawing-room lamp and new stitches, which they were learning from a knitting book just come through the mail.

Randolph took one of the winged chairs, and Lettice made herself small in the corner of the sofa. Neither spoke at first, they were as fixed as if in a game of chess—both gazing in the fire wordless, wondering.

The young man's gaze revolved to Lettice after a while and was as steady as a star. Lettice felt it and purposely held it.

"Just in this position in the Murray library on West Benjamin Street, six years ago! You shot up, I down." He almost whispered.

She did not move or speak. She was a medium with hands on the table.

"I let go something, lost my balance, gave up

to a queer and potent suggestion," Randolph continued in a low monotone.

"You believe in suggestion?"

"Yes."

"And in unsuggestion? Counter-suggestion, uprooting suggestion?"

"You're getting too deep for me now." He looked from Lettice to the fire and then drowsily at her again. "Of course there was a cell ready for the suggestion, else it could not have lodged; a cup for the poisonous drop, else it were wasted."

"I know." She held his eyes steadily. She willed to steep his senses with herself.

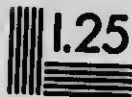
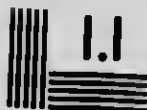
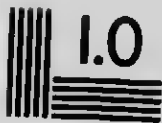
"Where did the suggestion come from?" she asked.

"I can't tell: it would be disloyal. I received it when I was very young: I know the moment. It was night, I was worn out and troubled: from a legitimate source I got the idea of the soothing and resuscitating power of whiskey (I might as well be plain)—and that idea, that suggestion has been the strongest part of me ever since. Nothing I could do would daunt it. Neither the cell nor the suggestion were my fault." The cynical tendency enlarged itself upon his lips, and upon the fine curve of his nose—grown thicker in these shadow years; his tones were nasal; his emphasis sharp: a bitter taste was in his mouth. "If my adversary had been outside, I might have



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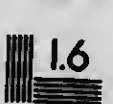
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slain him: but he was within, encased, he fought me in ambush, unfairly."

"There's ammunition for the hidden foe; why didn't you use it?"

"I seemed not to know about it; I was not able to find it."

"You mean to say you did not want to find it."

"Try not to be hard on me, Lettice; I am a miserable creature, shrinking, ungrowing, failing. I am conscious of abusing my nature until it is like a saucepan eaten into holes by rust and exposure; it cannot hold a gill of permanent resolution."

"You see if it can't. I'll show you it can."

"I am a spiritual beggar, not a spiritual brute. I have never given myself to greed, injustice, cruelty, gross egoism; it has been stimulation, frenzy, depression, more stimulation: the invincible suggestion has made me lopsided, lacking will either way you took me, with no superlativity of bad or good. Long ago between the clouds was a vision of restored manliness: the clouds have come together, the vision has forever departed." Randolph put his face in his hands and groaned.

"Go on, Ra, go on," Lettice urged with amazing kindness; she was trying to put into her tones the soothing quality of mammy's "shh-sh-sh-sh-

sh-sh-sh" when her own baby self had been peevish and difficult.

Not discerning the subtle power which was encompassing him, Randolph spoke on: "Once in a while the nerve centres of my being have rebelled, and I have seen light breaking on the top of my soul-hills: remember how you and I used to prate about soul-hills? Then I would try harder than you will ever know to turn over a new leaf, but even with the consciousness of your precious sympathy, I'd get weary: I couldn't do it. Like a whipped dog I followed my master, Suggestion, and drank more whiskey than ever before. I felt so much better drunk than sober: my intelligence would immediately revive: I was 'hail-fellow-well-met' with Marcus Aurelius, Plato, Charles Lamb, Sidney Smith and our beloved Robert Browning; and a 'jolly-good-fellow' with all my boon companions. Reaction, of course, came in its own time. Then the old high-brows scampered off, and my friends-of-the-cup followed their example when my jokes were less pungent. When alone, Lettice, it was you that gave me hope, and you that drove hope away."

"Me?" drawing closer. "Me? How?"

"In the dusk of returning sobriety your face would shine, lips parted, eyes irresistible, hair waving 'never mind'—'here are we to save you.'

Then your face would fade, hard common sense was pulling it back—back, until nothing could I see but the breath of your prayers, floating like white birds over the dark chasm which divided us." He caught his breath as if in pain. "You prayed for me?"

"Unceasingly, when I knew I was praying and when I didn't know I was praying—always."

"God bless you," falteringly.

"After a long, long time I found out that prayer is action—not only feathery lip-service, but mental activity."

"Then?" somewhat puzzled.

"Oh, when I realized that 'wordy' prayer is no more than a handful of goose feathers in the face of a roaring beast, I began to pull red-hot missiles from my heart and brain and hurl them with all my strength against your difficulties. Nothing worth while is easy, but Randolph, if I had had an idea of the terrible strain of my task, perhaps I would never have undertaken it—I don't know."

"You mean that my condition is altogether hopeless?" with pitiful emphasis.

"Hopeless? Of course not, Randolph!" Her sparkling eyes, varnished storm-clouds, gathered up all the agony and depression of his face and returned it to him explained and diminished. "I am going to cure you." A long, tense pause.

"I have something in me strong enough to enter you and extract that terrible suggestion by the roots. Randolph Turberville," very slowly and softly, "God put me in this world to save you."

Both had risen. The man trembled; the woman exalted, unafraid, went closer to him and laid her hand upon his arm.

"God!" broke the rigid stillness of the listening room. "You can't, it's too bad for you to fool yourself." He drew away from her, went back to the winged chair, grasping its firm arms as if for help. "I am too old, too old, too hard; I can't stop, I haven't the strength. 'The habit!' How your words at the table the first night we were here dug into my heart! I cannot stop, Lettice, no use to waste your splendid young life on me. I have tried; you may not believe me—but I have: if I stop to-day I'll drink more to-morrow. If I gain the fight as done to-day, as I do every now and then, the sly suggestion whispers: 'Bad for your health, very bad; you've gone too far, you can't do without stimulant.' If I see a ray of hope, as I sometimes do when talking with you, it fades before I seize it."

Lettice had listened patiently, shaking her head slowly, firmly, in disagreement. Yet the expression of his face absolutely disarmed her. She had seen the same look on the face of a suffering ani-

mal, or in the puckers on the countenance of a sobbing, heart-broken little child.

Then she summoned her retiring forces again.

"The suggestion whispers? We must shut its mouth." She tried to smile. He didn't smile back. "Your ideals are above your power of action. You need all sorts of help, and I am going to give it to you."

Now he did smile faintly.

"There's nothing uncanny or irregular in what I intend to do, Randolph dear; it is a fact that suggestion, good or bad, subtly, surely, rules our lives. You are coerced by the whiskey suggestion: I am going to eradicate that and fill you with the anti-whiskey suggestion. You've got to help me to do it, you gave your heart to me once, Randolph," with heavenly sweetness, her words fell. "Now you've got to give me more than your heart: you've got to give me your heart, your head, everything."

"Take all!" he breathed rather than said.

"I want you to live in me for a little while. I want you to feel that all I am trying to do for you is in—in—" She could not exactly express herself.

"L——" he began, but he could not finish; the word was too big for him.

"Habit makes crooked paths in the soul; my spirit is going to dig a ditch beneath those ugly

paths and cast the soil of which they are made entirely out of your existence." She moved her hands up and down, above her head and down to her lap. There was certainly less resistance about Randolph; he was unconsciously yielding to her opinion. She realized his plasticity and took fresh heart.

"I am going to show you, Randolph, that you really detest intoxication—and I am going to make this idea rule you: all that you've got to do is to believe. Won't you try to believe?"

"Y-e-e-s." His weary eyes, stirred with a faint hope, met hers appealingly.

"Only believe!" Lettice was near him again, her hands outstretched.

With a cry he arose and clasped them as if for life or death; then he let them go and stood trembling, puzzled; his arms limp and helpless at his side.

The look of his white, strained face, so yearning in its weakness, overwhelmed Lettice; she could hardly restrain the sob in her throat; every instinct of her nature rose to succor and help—he should not perish!

She now swung her words a little more impersonally: "Do you remember the day at the University that we read Heine on the west lawn? I can hear you now. It is not we who master our ideas. It is our ideas that master us, and

drive us into the arena where as gladiators we must fight for them. I am your gladiator, Son-Boy, and my idea will never let me go." She rose and waved her right arm triumphantly. "Your gladiator, Son-Boy, dashing, plunging, with lance extended for my idea!"

He was very grave, almost bewildered, irresponsible, painfully silent.

A burnt log broke and fell on the coals: it startled them both. Lettice went to the hearth, took up the tongs, and put the pieces together. Then she opened the wood-box, picked out two lightwood knots, laid them on the glowing chunks, lowered the lamp and blew it out. She had done the same thing in the Murray library years ago.

The knots hissed, spluttered and blazed yellow in the faces of these interlacing personalities, sending gyrating shadows on the high ceiling. Neither spoke: Lettice fixed her eyes on Randolph until he seemed to contract, lose himself in her senses. She liked this; she wished to let him steep in her individuality.

Presently she began in a dull monotone: "We are partners, by God's will, and we must do the best we can. Our firm is burdened with mortgages, debts: must we go into bankruptcy? That's an easy way of doing. I think we had better gather up all our assets and see what we can do first; try to restore our firm to respectability be-

fore we entirely give up. I've got a lot of good securities and I am perfectly willing to use them all to save our firm—its name is too good to sink into ignominy and disrepute. But you have got to help me, Randolph. Your part is to believe, my part is to do. Won't you try to believe that I can cure you? Won't you put yourself into my hands for a little while? Mine are a woman's weak hands, mine is a woman's infrangible will." Once more she was up and close to him. "But in them is healing, if you will believe."

Through his blue eyes shot lines of hope, like a sick baby suddenly stretching its reviving limbs. Lettice sunk on the wide arm of his winged chair and he put his hand on her bare arm. His fingers were hot and trembled: "I should like to tell you something," he whispered, "but, but——"

"Never mind, never mind," she interrupted; "don't talk, don't try, just believe as I believe."

Suddenly he gave Lettice the impression of drawing himself from her, and on his face was a strange look, either of apprehension or of suspicion—she could not tell which; but it banished hesitation and made her solicitude, her determination, at once professional.

She fell on her knees at the feet of the big chair with her white hands on its arms, her face, like a prayer, upturned to Randolph. She did not speak for a minute or two, but her spirit was

lashing the man's spirit in fierce waves until she began: "You and I, you and I, moving in a mysterious will-sphere, my will in your will, grappling, tussling with the whiskey idea—trying to cast it out. The Master helped Peter and John to cast out devils: He is my Master as well as theirs, will He not help me, too? He is, I know. He is going to help me to subdue, to vanquish a terrible suggestion." These words passed the girl's lips with the solemn beat of a muffled drum. Her spirit had really entered Randolph's senses, in spite of himself. His eyes were now large and luminous with a wild astonishment, he was fastened to the subtle movement of this absorbing play.

There was a pause, a lull of feeling, the astonishment of the man died into slow resignation: he and Lettice breathed together like French clocks ticking softly; he very still in the chair; she even stiller on her knees.

When Lettice finally arose and went across the hearth (no longer a blaze, but a red blur of coals) she had lived a life of intense concentration. She lifted the lid of the wood-box and threw on another lightwood chunk, then sank in the other big chair. Her head thrown back, and gazing at Randolph through low-lidded eyes, she began to croon like a distant flute:

Swing low, sweet c-h-a-r-i-o-t,
A comin' fer to car y me h-o-m-e,
Swing low, sweet c-h-a-r-i-o-t,
A comin' fer to carry me home.

She sang the old melody several times, patting time with her foot: her eyes never leaving Randolph until his fine, fair head was easy on the back of his chair, and his eyes as gentle and willing as the eyes of a child.

The door opened: "Mose bade-time, Miss Lettice?"

"Yes, Uncle Amos," and Lettice went out.

"Still knitting?" she asked the older ladies in the drawing-room, and saw through the open door Amos following Randolph up the broad stair.

XVI

LETTICE felt as if she held Randolph by a chain and that if she allowed her thoughts to leave him for a second he would break loose. She was so enveloped, entangled in her mystical experiment, that all life was but a thought-wire between herself and her subject. She was afraid to go to bed lest sleep, like a sharp knife, break this thought-wire, so she sat in a chair by her window all the livelong night.

No breath of wind swayed the trees: their green to-night was palest silver, and the little, lapping waves of the quiet Rappahannock might have been the soft lips of babies at their mother's breast. Nature was soothing, but the girl did not wish to be soothed, rather she wished to be tightened by a keener vision, coerced by a flaming confidence. Her will must be as stern and hard as the blacksmith's defiant anvil: and her brain must send forth the anvil's red, glowing sparks.

Towards dawn the muted birds, the cradled flowers began to stir; and she, like a prophet after the mountain's fast, girded herself for the battle. She went down early, but she was afraid to give the old plantation even an edge of her energy: instead she sought the chair in which Randolph

had sat the night before, and hugged her purpose lest the sensuous languor of the April day drive it away.

Charlotte and Randolph came down rather late; Cousin Mary would not come down at all on account of her cold.

"Isn't April stupefying?" Randolph was sleepily stirring his coffee. "I could hardly get my eyes open at all this morning."

"You couldn't?" Lettice drew his glance well into hers. "A little while ago you couldn't get them to shut—remember?" Her smile was as insinuating as the April warmth.

Randolph looked at her inquisitively without speaking; he was pensive, not moody, very gentle, but not a bit querulous.

"I think we must be going home soon." Charlotte, since she came in, had looked as if something were on her mind.

"Oh, no!" Lettice was not surprised, but like one who awaited a certainty, she winced at the final word. "Why?"

"First and foremost, because we must not wear our welcome out. But for your unselfishness we might have done it long ago: now the time has really come—on that account and others."

"Well, I can't chain you," Lettice playing with her breakfast spoke with genuine feeling, "but I would if I could."

"You have done us both a lot of good, dear Lettice. We can never tell you how much."

"A lot of good?" Randolph looked at Lettice as if upon her answer hung life—hope.

Lettice pressed her lips firmly together and nodded her head up and down as if to say: "Of course, all the good in the world." Randolph went on with his breakfast as if perfectly satisfied.

"We are going to have a complete change of diversion to-day and we are not going to do one bit of work." The words of Lettice fell like a new movement in a familiar sonata. "We are going a-fishing!"

"Fishing?" Randolph, in a measure, had waked up. "Why haven't we been before?"

"Because the fish have not been biting. Uncle Amos says there are shoals of them off Cedar-Bush now, and we are going there just as fast as our arms can carry us. You can row, can't you, Randolph?"

"I used to; I don't know."

"If you can't, I can," Lettice announced as she arose from the table.

They all had been out on the river day after day, but always in Mr. Corbin's fine canoe manned by Mr. Corbin's careful boatmen. Then there was a-plenty of wind; there was none to-day and besides Lettice wanted neither boatmen nor any other lady besides herself.

Adown the rose walk with fishing tackle, lunch, a rug and a volume of Tennyson—fit weapons to fight the hours of a bright spring day.

Lettice's small row-boat was bobbing to its anchor at the foot of the lawn. Its oars ready under the gnarled paper-mulberry that stood near the shore. Randolph pulled in the boat with one of the oars, Lettice jumped in and he followed.

At first he rowed, rather laboriously: then Lettice took a hand, or better, two hands.

She used the slender paddles as easily as a Chinaman his chop sticks. In and out, gracefully, rhythmically as swallows skim; catching the sun on their thin blades and ducking it quickly in the sparkling water.

"I learned when I was a child, you didn't." The eyes of Lettice twinkled. "There are four things that must be learned early to be well done: swimming, dancing, skating and rowing."

They went very slowly up the river and then around a bend to Cedar-Bush. The sun sweetened them, the easy motion was full of a strange comfort. They did not talk; Lettice was afraid of antagonistic ideas—she must reinforce the pivotal idea every moment.

The fish did not bite, but they sat with lines extended, waiting, patient. To Lettice the fish were inconsequent, and usually she was a good sport: to-day the fish were merely a common and

lazy interest for Randolph and herself. As they sat on the side of the boat very close together, Lettice was pouring her idea into his lulled senses: and he, unconsciously, was giving his weary will to hers.

The hours passed like a passive flock wending their calm way to a peaceful fold. Randolph showed no impatience; Lettice was satisfied because earth seemed to hold its breath in respect for her sacred ritual.

They had lunch on the bank strewed with early buttercups, and Randolph lay on a pile of "sea-ore" * while Lettice read, droning like a bumble-bee:

And some had visions out of golden youth,
 And some beheld the faces of old ghosts
 Look in upon the battle; and in the mist
 Was many a noble deed, many a base,
 And chance and craft and strength in single fights,
 And ever and anon with host to ho
 Shocks, and the splintering spear, the hard mail hewn,
 Shield-breakings, and the clash of brands, the crash
 Of battle-axes on shattered helms, and shrieks
 After the Christ—

"After the Christ!" Randolph interrupted dreamily. Lettice did not answer, but read on:

Pray for my soul. More things are wrought by prayer
 Than this world dreams of. Wherefore let thy voice rise,
 Rise like a fountain for me night and day.
 For what are men better than sheep or goats

* A sort of grass washed up by the waves.

That nourish a blind life within the brain,
If knowing God, they lift not hands of prayer
Both for themselves and those who call them friend?
For so the whole round earth is every way
Bound by gold chains about the feet of God.

She closed the book: it was enough.

Randolph still on the "seaore" with closed eyes murmured, "I hear and I don't hear. I am resting in you, Lettice; I don't want to think. Oh, Lettice, keep on trying to save me!"

They rowed slowly back to Laneville: the east wind was against them and they took turns, gliding leisurely over the sunset sea.

When the boat grated, at last, near the old mulberry, Randolph drew a long breath: "I am tired; I haven't the energy to walk to the house," he said.

"That is just how I want you to be," Lettice answered cheerily as she led the way.

Soon after tea Charlotte went up to Cousin Mary, who was sneezing and blowing in her bed. Lettice and Randolph, as on the night before, retired to the library. The hour had come: it was supreme. Lettice had a little stage-fright: she felt her solitary experiment intensely. Old Henry Corbin, above the mantelpiece, gave her courage; and her zeal, which hitherto had spluttered and sizzled, had become steady and blinding as the head-light of a great engine.

Randolph was disposed to talk of himself, sadly—his empty hands, his dark and useless future. And he referred to his mother's chastened, cheerless existence. "She would be much better off if poor old daddy and I had gone off together; you, too," looking into the girl's eyes guiltily.

"Nonsense!" She patted the seat of the sofa on which she sat as a sign for him to come and sit beside her. "Sheer nonsense! I cannot say that you have always been a very good boy; but all that is passed—gone forever. You have been a little bad——"

"A l-i-t-t-l-e b-a-d," very wearily.

"But henceforward and forever you are going to be a heap good," with startling confidence. "You are going to will, work, believe, be glad." The wonder of human influence possessed the girl. "I am going to take out the offending principle. I—I, Lettice Corbin, the girl whom you once loved——"

"Once?" he sighed as if in real pain.

"Shh-sh-sh-sh-sh! 'And these signs shall follow them; they shall cast out devils.' Now, as then, Randolph to those who believe and act."

"Oh, Lettice, don't, don't deceive——"

"Shh-sh-sh-sh-sh!" she whispered again, as she put her arm around his shoulder with the tenderness of a mother. "Don't think, look at me and rest!" She touched his eyelids, now flutter-

ing, with her gentle fingers, then she smoothed his lined forehead as she would have smoothed James Parke's and Henry's.

His whole being was relaxing, sinking unwillingly into unresistance. A large part of himself was actually asleep; a tiny bit of him was awake, and that part of him swung in the girl's voice waves. His consciousness had been vanquished by a woman's consecrated determination. He was mental dough to be kneaded into mental steel. The low words of Lettice reached layer after layer of his soul, striking through the mazes of his sensibility to the cell of the sinister suggestion.

Lettice, holding Randolph's waning interest close to herself, removed the Suggestion with reassuring words, red-hot from a furnace, heated seven times by the fire of love.

"Son-Boy, you don't like whiskey, you don't like whiskey, you don't like whiskey! Son-Boy, you hate whiskey, you hate whiskey, you hate whiskey! Whiskey kills, whiskey makes Chattie's love pain, whiskey makes the love of Lettice pain, whiskey kills, destroys; you hate it as Chattie and I hate it, Randolph, Son-Boy. Do you hear, Randolph? Do you realize that you hate whiskey as I hate it?"

As on the night before, she had fallen on her knees before her bewildered patient; she held his hands now; it was all right, for the glad eye of

Henry Corbin protected her; the thoughts of all the sages, phalanxes of encouragement in their strong bookcases, protected her; the traditions of Laneville to minister to all that were in need protected and justified her.

"You hate whiskey, Son-Boy, hate it, hate it, hate it! Whiskey is hell. It kills. Say what I say in your soul, your innermost soul! Whiskey kills. You hate it." Her words were pickaxes cleaving a stubborn root; they exhausted her, took more than human strength to sway them up and down, up and down, like a woodman.

As she had subdued Randolph, so she released him, but the sparks from the furnace fires of Love's sacrifice were blazing in his soul. When he was wide-awake she stood up, lifted her hands high above her head, and exclaimed: "Randolph, something wonderful has happened. You are a man again, a conqueror!"

Randolph stood up, too. His eyes were strained as if he had seen a vision.

Lettice, blown as if by a mighty wind, fell wearily into the big chair. Randolph looked at her wondering.

A terrible sensation of danger overpowered the girl. "Don't look at me, Randolph," she said, trembling. "Look the other way!" She was pitifully unstrung, all her nerves tingling.

She felt as if she, herself, held the evil sug-

gestion as one holds a rabid beast, and that if she let it go, it would dig its awful fangs into Randolph again. Could she hold it? Could she keep it from him? She arose from the chair and almost tottered into the hall, clenching the beast in the teeth of her will. Her mental attitude was painfully magnified and supersensitive.

"Mrs. Turberville! Oh, Mrs. Turberville!" Her voice sounded weird, strange. It had returned to the fine shrillness of her younger days. "Mrs. Turberville, come to Randolph, he wants you!"

She heard Mrs. Turberville's quick footsteps coming down, then she drew the bolt of the front door and almost fell into the night. Such a night! The breath of flowers spicy sweet, the river one "wan wave," and the crescent moon hand in hand with the evening star. Abundant mercy everywhere!

Still clutching the poisonous beast, the evil suggestion, in her feverish will, she raised her eyes to heaven and handed it to God.

XVII

THE carriage, Alec on the boot, stood at the Laneville door an hour after breakfast on the following day while Anos, Mammy, Rolly and several other negroes came out with bags, shawls, flowers and lunch—some useless, some necessary impedimenta.

Charlotte stood in the hall telling the servants good-bye as they passed along, and delighting their simple hearts with coin: Mary Nicolson was writing a letter to send by the Turbervilles to Bolingbroke—there are some of us who take an economical pride in sending a letter without a stamp, and of such is not the kingdom of heaven.

Lettice, bewitching in riding habit and stiff hat, was on the porch earnestly gazing into Randolph's eyes and beating her words with her crop: "I am just like a nagging mother when her little boy is going to have a day off; I am bristling with do's and don'ts. You think me silly and——"

"No, I don't," very earnestly.

"I am glad, you encourage me to say that—that——" She hesitated, her eyes on the old porch floor now; she raised her head defiantly, in a moment, gazed back into inquisitive blue eyes and

went on: "That my will, like a stiff brush, has swept the suggestion out of your mind—or heart, or—or—wherever it was, just as sure as you stand there: and my will put the 'Good Disposition' in. Now your part, old fellow," she smiled, "is to keep the 'Good Disposition' at home. The minute you allow it to run around there'll be the mischief to pay. Remember the seven devils? They are roaming about still. Good Disposition is a gad-about and must be restrained. The seven devils are not so brave as you might think: a stern 'I won't—I won't' will be to them like 'seat' to a cat. This is no hocus-pocus, it is—is——"

"Randolph," Charlotte's crêpe cameoed her face on the side-post of the front door, "come on, it is time!"

The old carriage swung around the circle, through the gate, and down the level lane: Lettice on Kitty Fisher swerving along in front. Kitty Fisher was frisky to-day: she neither kept in the road nor on her feet; now and then she would rear and lift her head as if to steal more gladness from the sky.

"Good-bye!" The little gate-opener, on the lowest rung of the last gate, had swung it to with a bang; the carriage was outside, Lettice and Kitty Fisher within. Kitty's little feet tapping the sand were like interrogation points; and each second, like a cat-o'-nine-tails, whipped the visible Lettice

Corbin and Randolph Turberville further and further apart.

Randolph, locked with his mother in the ample, gray-padded carriage, was silent. He was dazed like one merging from etherization: in the blur of awakening a vivid girl shone like a star in a midnight sky. In a fraction of time a sequence of mental flashlights threw the whole of Lettice Corbin in his mental view—as plain as a flight of red birds against the solemn pines. He saw her little and sweet, racing through the Park with rings of red running over her head. He saw her bigger and wiser—the red rings grown to auburn ringlets. He felt her spirit leaping beyond prudence and wrapping him in its rich, red folds. He almost saw this spirit snapping and sputtering and then burning down to a steady glow which blinded him. Away and away in the future was another Lettice, his wife, with velvet, baby hands upon her mother-face. “Oh, God,” to himself. “Oh, God!”

He was afraid; he reached for his mother's lap, found her hand and clasped it.

Chattie responded tenderly, and as if carrying on his very thoughts, began: “These weeks have made her very plain, before she was a darling puzzle. Son-Boy, do you remember the first Christmas they were in the Murray house?”

“Do I remember?”

"She was so enchanting that night, wayward, saucy, irresistible."

"She is a good sport, as s as you're born. Her asking us down shows that. Doesn't it, mother?"

"You mean she ran the risk of her parents not liking it? I never thought of that before we came, but constantly since."

"She didn't care. She firmly believes her mission is to cure me; and even parents don't cut much of a figure with her where I am concerned. This seems conceited, but it is true. She believes in mental medicine, mother, and she has administered it to me." A long pause. Charlotte did not know exactly what to say: after a while Randolph kept on: "The night she called you, she had inserted her will into mine."

"You really believe she had?"

"I believe in—in—Lettice Corbin."

"And so do I," emphatically.

"You know, mother, there is a science of psychotherapy"—as if in argument, then, wearily—"I don't know. The thing that touches me beyond expression is her effort. She has gone every length to help me. She studied, planned, acted according to a queer, exalted faith absolutely contrary to the wishes of her parents. This fact, tremendous, almost unbelievable, demands co-

operation; but I am so—so—undependable—so inadequate.”

“But, Son-Boy, you are going to do——”

“What?” he broke in, almost fiercely. “Anything?”

Charlotte's trump-card was consolation rather than argument. “Lettice is wonderful.” She knew Randolph wanted to hear that. “She told me once, I remember, that when she loved it would be like Francesca looked at Paolo in our picture.”

“She did?” A long, long silence—field, meadow, wood all in languorous stillness! Then: “Of the efficacy of will against will I cannot tell yet: but when a girl like Lettice Corbin puts aside every thought of herself to save a man, her very consecration and confidence have their effect.

“I shall never, no matter what I do, be able to forget two evenings in the Laneville library. Mother, Lettice Corbin is a crusader, a reformer, a follower of”—and the sacred name fell from the young man's lips with shy reverence—“the Christ.”

It is very hard for a mother and son who have never spoken plainly to begin to do so, and Randolph's strange confidence somewhat disarmed Charlotte. She began to speak away from the subject: “Mary Nicolson——”

Randolph kept to his line: “I feel as if it were impossible for me ever to fight: somebody's got

to fight for me: I am all jelly, not a bit of whale-bone from bottom to top. Maybe it's leaving Laneville, but this very moment, I am as if a candle-extinguisher were over my head: I'm about to smother."

"We don't like to leave: I'm all let down, too."

"You are, Mumsy? That's a comfort. If you feel so, it is all right." Randolph took his mother's hand again. "I've got to try, haven't I? My task is harder than you or Lettice could ever imagine. I have thrown away all friendship that could help me; I never see Threshly, or Dame, or Morris. Two or three times I borrowed money from them." Chattie winced at this. "Thanks to you, I've paid them back, but they are still afraid of me," and with touching sadness, "We were so intimate as boys."

"Be yourself, darling, and your old friends will return."

"Myself, mother? Which is myself? Lettice thinks she has revived myself; has she? Or is that distorted creature that has staggered along the streets of Bolingbroke, me? Is there in me a thing that can force me on? I want to so badly, but have I the strength?"

Chattie could not speak; really she had not the aggressive optimism of Lettice of Laneville.

On they rolled over sweet, woodsy roads a mile or two in silence: then Randolph again thought

aloud: "She is obsessed with curing me, and she believes in the potency of the spirit. I reckon she is right. She has a message like Joan of Arc and Madame Curie. She is no everyday girl—I am in good hands. If I can only bring her energy with me. She is praying for me this minute, mother, no matter what is doing. She bent over me, mother," he was whispering now, "and touched my brow and my cheeks: sense was out of it; I was passionless yet adoring; and she, a marble goddess lit with the lamp of God."

"No, no, Son-Boy, a woman with emotions——"

"I feel as if I had killed them all except the one for *service!* I have no plan: I'm just me, a man with my release! A queer condition without a parallel."

"This is the beginning, Son-Boy, convalescence. You will soon be robust in every way; and Lettice and you will be young lovers again. You will find yourself, and your old friends will find you. I wish you had ever fancied Bill-Bob Catlett; if he comes to our church he can help you."

"Bill-Bob is great, but he and I were on opposite sides, you see. What a pair he and Lettice would make!"

"Was he ever in love with her?"

"Some thought so." Randolph did not care to continue this subject.

"By the way, Son-Boy, I had a letter from Kitty Nestles yesterday. She is back in Bolingbroke and wretched. Would it do for me to ask her to pay me a little visit?"

"No. I don't believe, mother, that even you are good enough to have Mrs. Nestles stay with you. I wouldn't like to trust myself with her a single day. She is a siren—the judge on his bench; the preacher in his pulpit; the doctor in his office—had all better beware of Kitty. I am sorry she is in Bolingbroke. Keep her from starvation if you can, but don't trust her with your men-folk—she has awfully winning ways."

"Poor creature." Charlotte's voice was softly reminiscent.

The fat, bay mares took their time, the off one teasing the "near" with a playful bite on the neck, which Alec reproved with a touch of his long, black whip. Alec wished to be polite, and when his honored passengers were silent, he would turn his kindly face to the window at his back and explain the fields and things: "Mr. Corr's wheat sorter backward," "Mr. Newcomb's oats—a little thin in spots," "Marse Doctor Nelson's office—he gone up yonder and nobody like him dese days."

Randolph was interested, but Chattie had yielded to the magic of the spring and gazed with sleepy eyes at the peaceful panorama. The horses

slowed up and took long breaths for a steep hill, and Randolph was minded to get out and walk the ascent: afterward he sat on the boot with Alec, smoked a cigarette, and listened, with pleasure, to the vivid speech of the old negro.

"Dey done ruint Marse Warner place," pointing to a winged mansion gay with awning and paint. "Dey even wants to move he and Mis' Betsy out'n de own gyarden. Our folks allers buries in de gyardens: dey never keered fer church-yards—dey's too conspic'us."

"What Warner lived there last, Uncle Alec?"

"Marse Alexander Warner, suh."

"Your name is Alexander, too?"

"Naw, suh—not mine. I ain't got no Zander in mine. I'se Alec Singleton, jes so." They were now passing a cabin with a yard full of excited negroes. "Trubble dar! De corpse cum in dis mawnin' fum Baltimo'. Our gals goes off keerless, and cums back foot-fo'mus'. Lisson! Dat's Lindy de corpse daughter a hollerin'. She ain't useter de lossin' ob mothers as I is to de lossin' ob wives. I'se had three, and whin my Jinnie died las' fall a year, I done found out dat hollerin' ain't no use; but Lindy is young yet, she dunno."

Like a baby's prattle did Alec's simple talk soothe and amuse.

It was three hours before they reached Lester-

Manor, and just three minutes before the Southern train pulled in. The last glances of Mrs. Turberville and her son fell on Alec, his tall hat in hand and his hair as close and white as sheeps' wool, he was the last cry of plantation "raising." His words echoed in their ears well on their way: "Sarvent, Miss Charlotte! Sarvent Marse Randolph, J sho' does regret yo' department!"

PART III

XVIII

It was after sunset when our weary travellers reached their little gray house on the edge of the Park: new-painted, it was looking like a nesting dove with a snow-white breast; while the red sky flamed through the Cathedral arches with royal cordiality and the children in the Park twittered like a cage of birds.

Within, a restful vision of chintz and flowers greeted them kindly; but the small space against the breadth of Laneville stifled Randolph. Temperament flings high and low, now it pinned Randolph to the dust—all exhilaration had died and his spiritual twilight was deeper than spring could ever make.

The unruffled neatness of his own room was as windless water to eager sails: the things on his bureau, the regular chairs irritated him with unre-sistance: he wanted to be buffeted, bruised, licked into shape.

Even the spirit of his mother's dining-room was contrary; too nice, too smooth for his mood. Instead of hot muffins and chicken, iced tea and salad, he wanted big loaves to part with a sword, and joints in which a man might stick a spear.

The table talk of the bewildered mother and son was forced: both felt an unspoken apprehension: it was the terrible pause just after the knife, when one trembles and wonders if the malignant horror will return.

In the library after supper the books were not even consoling. Randolph discovered sufficient energy to pull Montaigne from a shelf, and he turned to his favorite essay—the twenty-fifth of the first book; but he couldn't read it, so he put the old philosopher back and took Shelley out. No, not even Shelley. He felt harnessed like a shying horse: or, like a small boy all trigged up in stiff collar and patent-leather shoes, he couldn't move lest his elegance crease or wrinkle. He lighted a cigarette, puffed a few times, then threw it in the fireplace. What must he do? He was so fidgety, so nervous! He wanted the street and a half dozen places he knew well. He wanted a strong glass, a game, a good story, the "boys."

Charlotte had on her hands a peevish child who must be amused. What must she do first? There was an unopened letter on her desk; she unsealed it and took from it a photograph which she held for some moments in her hand, in pathetic contemplation. Then she went to Randolph—sitting loosely and glum in a chair across the room.

"Tom Randolph sent me this and a touching note," holding " photograph to her son. "I am

so glad to have it. It was taken when Tom and Ran were at the University; it is more like you, Son-Boy, than Ran."

Randolph took the *carte-de-visite* and held it under the nankeen shade of the droplight. The face was singularly handsome, the eyes large and bright, the forehead pure and broad—but the weakness of the mouth! Within his memory his father had always worn a moustache, and this was the first time Randolph had seen his mouth uncovered. It hurt him, it announced plainly that his father had from his youth up suffered with—an incurable disease.

Randolph raised his eyes to the mantel mirror. His own mouth was different, he thought: it looked to him like a piece of metal horribly dented, while his father's mouth was a piece of dough.

He was suddenly conscious of his mother's gaze—were their thoughts identical?

"A beautiful face," he said reverently as he gave back the picture.

"Beautiful." His mother got up as if she were in pain, and went to the side wall where hung Randolph's baby self; blue eyes, bright curls, dimples, innocence, gladness! Her wistfulness melted Randolph's soul. He went to her and took her in his arms: "Mumsey, blessed little Mumsey, believe that I love you! But mother, you don't know, there are times when a man's will is nothing but

feathers: you, women, don't know, Murnsey—you never can. And if a man's will is only feathers—can it ever turn to steel?"

In a moment Chattie Turberville was Lettice Corbin: "He turned water into wine—it is just as easy for Him to turn feathers into steel!"

Randolph was glad when alone in his own room. He paced up and down, up and down, and wished that his room was a mountain that he might climb and climb—and at last fall exhausted at the top.

"You want to spar and play and drink," something sinister said within him.

"I don't want to spar, and play, and drink. Before heaven, I don't!" he answered boldly, as he flung himself into a chair, clasped his hands above his head, and tried to draw his whole consciousness to Lettice at Laneville. He tried to grasp her body and soul and put her in a chair beside him.

Presently the clouds parted and he saw a face all entreaty—all ange!: Lettice was in the room sustaining him. "Swept and garnished, Randolph, ready for the seven devils, don't let them in! Try as hard as you can, Son-Boy!"

He was trying, but he was weak; he ached, he wanted tonic or something. And he could get it so easily; it was only to steal out as he had so often done before, go south two blocks, give the counter-sign (a Bob-white whistle) and Billy West would open his door. All the jolly crowd was there to—

night and it missed him, he knew; he had not been to Billy's private saloon for over two months. There they were now—the merry, care-free lot! Dick Tribbett, the “apron-string-boy-untied,” clever, scintillating, never weary of his liberty; Lawrence Stone, the cleverest man in town, perhaps, clean as a whip except for whiskey; old Steve Harrison, apostle of “Poquet,” as he called the roystering game he played so well; all there but he! They needed him, and his merry songs to fill up the shuffling time:

The raccoon got a bushy tail,
 'Possun tail am b'ar,
 Rabbit got no tail at all,
 But a little bit a bunch o' h'ar.
 Git along 'Liza, po' gal: git along 'Liza Jane.

Yes, the boys needed Randolph and he needed them—he had to go. But—the old library at Laneville, and the “victory” eyes of the first Henry Corbin clutched Randolph, held him as in a vise—crying, “For shame! For shame!”

“I am so thirsty, I must moisten my lips.”

“With water, then.”

“Bah, water is too thin.” Randolph shook off the master stare of the first Henry's eyes as if it were a pestering gnat, and before he knew it he was in his mother's dining-room. He struck a match and held it close to the sideboard—where was the ancestral decanter? Gone.

No longer the first Henry's eyes, but the soft, strong hand of Lettice, his ever so many times great-grand-child! The touch of this soft hand was invincible; it gently led Randolph back to his room and a siren voice bade "Good Disposition" stand guard all night.

Thirst demanded a glass, pleasure beckoned with a handful of cards, but Randolph was able to say, "Thirst! Suffer! Thirst! Suffer! What matter? I'll not breathe if breath be yielding. Thirst? Desire? What matter? Lettice of Laneville is behind me—she is helping me to-night." Randolph strung these words on a red-hot wire, and twirled and twirled them until they made a ring of fire in his soul's vision: round and round he twirled them, fast and faster; then slower, slower, till out of this red wing of words a soothing, smiling Lettice came.

Randolph's senses ceased to twirl and jerk; he was once more calm, even thought stopped beating for him to hear—"He that was dead can rise again."

Some dead had risen; oh, yes; but how could he—so absolute, mentally and financially dead?

For several years he had not appeared in the courts; and granted that his dissipations were put in perpetual limbo, how long would it take the "light" to so shine before men that they would

realize his sincerity and encourage him with their confidence? Could he wait for it? He was not sure of himself.

And what about Lettice, and her active, unparalleled devotion?

Randolph Turberville was, by no means, without superstition. He got it from his own family as well as from the negroes. He would never tell a bad "Friday-night" dream before breakfast on Saturday morning; he avoided the thirteenth of everything; and he did not like to turn back when once started, without making a ring and spitting in it. The best teacher he ever had, Dr. Decolb, a martyr to superstition, never permitted a pin to lie in his path without picking it up—and that was where the school-boys got their inning. They would scatter a paperful on the brick walk, between his house and the school-room, and crack their sides laughing at his efforts to pick them up. Clever people were influenced by the occult, the mysterious, so it was not altogether impossible for Randolph to believe that the wonderful spirit of Lettice Corbin could enter the shattered metropolis of his life, the toppling city of his soul, and with an almost supernatural power pick up the evil spirit and cast it into the sea that it might perish in the water. This, strangely, was not too much for Randolph's superstition. Besides her act was so ineffably devoted and vital that he felt

constrained to try to believe, even if he had to cry—"Lord—help Thou mine unbelief!"

Those tense hours in the Laneville library were not only dramatic but coercive; and the ripples of the pebble, which Lettice cast in the dark pool of his soul, were even now beating against his will. But he did not have the faith to perch carelessly upon her mental telepathy like a red bird upon a green limb—he must scratch, and peck, and grub for his spirit's food.

Day after day—the almost invincible temptation; day after day—the almost supernatural resistance!

As true as God she had led him into the open, but his own eyes must see the vision, too; his own feet must climb the mountain, his own will must fight shoulder to shoulder with hers. It must subjugate the tatterdemalions of the flesh; the gnats and hornets of the spirit; and the magazine, from which he must draw the munitions for this terrible warfare, was deep-down in the mysterious organism of his own personal self.

Did he possess the strength? Did he have enough aboriginal marrow to stand the siege? He had repulsed the enemy up to this moment: but each hour the enemy seemed to gain.

An uprush of confidence heartened him for a moment, then a minatory retrospect would dash him to the earth. He saw the things undone that

he should have done; the things done that should have been left undone. Horrible! Horrible! Every little deviating act was distinct in the high light of a girl's purity.

A young man of twenty-eight who has practically wasted his life is, in any case, in a deplorable condition, but especially so if he has wilfully destroyed every intention of his earlier years. A young man who has worked and caroused antiphonally is much better off, for when he finds his sane self—he can simply leave off the debauch and continue his work: but Randolph, keenly conscious that he had thrown all of his business fat in the fire, also keenly realized that the task of reconstruction was colossal.

One of his most distressing symptoms was sleeplessness: he awoke before dawn, tossed this way and that until sunrise, then dressed and went down. Before his world was astir he would stand on his mother's front porch—the clean breast of the gray dove—thrust his hands in his pockets and think and think What can I do?

A divided self? Terrible! Evil against good and a one-sided game. The first half played—the devil the winner! The second half on: still a divided self—good against evil—which was to be the winner?

Night, the hour when tom-cats prowl was his worst time. Then the teeming world was far,

far away, and he and his mother stranded in the little gray house. One moment he was overpowered by a dizzying passion, the next everything was fiddle-faddle, and nothing for the prodigal to do but to return to his husks.

Evening after evening this experience was repeated, until upon a certain night—when the awful silences of a lonely soul were swept with a haunting melody from Laneville—the telephone rang. Billy West was at the other end: "Did you know that Tom Boyd had the gout?" he asked.

Randolph had not heard, he was sorry; what was the cause?

"Don't know, unless it is because I fleeced him at 'poquet' the other night," Billy replied. "Anyway, he is flat of his back, foot as red as blood, and as big as a bushel. Come on around and see the poor fellow!"

It was eleven-thirty of a Saturday night; but Randolph went.

XIX

THE crowd was boisterous in Tom's sitting-room on the second floor of his handsome house, built by the sweat and prudence of a self-made, pious father. It greeted Randolph as if a constant intercourse had never been broken by death and absence.

"Hello, Ran!"

"We're waiting for you."

"Tom thinks he wants you; and when he can't get what he wants, he blubbers; and we don't want any blubbering to-night." Three good-fellows all spoke at once.

"Blubber—the devil! Better say Ran needs *us*." Tom Boyd, sprawled on a wide couch under an oriental cover, like a huge beast under a palanquin, held out to Randolph his right hand, slightly palsied by excess. "You're white, boy." Tom did not have the tact of his companions; Tom was rather new. "You look as if you had not 'tasted' for ages. You need us, you need it! Remember what old George the Third said to one of his favorites? 'They tell me, Sir John, that you love a glass of wine.' 'Those who have so informed your Majesty,' Sir John replied, 'have done me great injustice: they should have said a bottle.'"

You need bottles, I andolph, jugfuls, demijohns—and here they are: Scotch, 'Eye,' 'Rum,' 'Gin,'—every old darn thing: and the whole 'gang' but Jim Johnson. What's more, Ran, I've got a body-servant, the real thing—brought up in Middlesex County; just from Middlesex County yourself, ain't you?" with a wink.

Randolph was grave: "Where is Jimmy Johnson?" he asked.

"My body-servant's name is Lazarus; sounds good, don't it? Lazarus of Middlesex." Tom winked again. "Knows how to rub, and talk, and lets me cuss him when I choose. Middlesex is a good place to come from, ain't it, Ran?"

"Where is Jimmy Johnson?" Ran asked again.

"Speeding with Fanny Lark in old Lark's car, while poor old Lark is away making more money. Jimmy will tango to-night, and trot and maybe commit——"

"Oh, Tom," from several units of the "crowd."

"Maybe not; but none of you can deny that Jimmy would have been safer with us. Help yourself, Ran!" Tom did not relish Turberville's unusual aloofness.

"Billy has got above himself in your absence." Dick Tribbett was taking some pretty bottles out of the sideboard, and putting them on top. "He calls himself the king of 'poquet.' We'll uncrown him to-night, with your assistance, Ran."

"Fill up, boys!" Tom Boyd was impatient for the fun to begin. "Do the honors, Billy! Damn this foot, it has kept me on the 'wagon' for a month. I haven't got that much time to spare."

The memorial red-hot stove and the child poking its finger closer and closer. Randolph must know once more how it felt.

Tom's rooms were very luxurious: rugs, pictures good and coarse, easy chairs, mahogany furniture, and the evidence of a good cellar standing seductively on the Chippendale side-table. His card-table was also claw-foot Chippendale; he never used a deck but once: his decanters were of the strawberry pattern, his glasses, too.

"You know," Tom was fond of gossip, "Jimmy Johnson is divided in his affection between Fanny Lark and that big blonde Nestles woman—he shares the latter with that little milk-sop Saint George Catlett, brother to the preacher,—Lord, ain't this a funny world? Fill up, boys, fill up; don't feel badly because you can and I can't! Fill up!" Tom's voice was whiny.

Randolph filled up. It was Scotch, and the burn of it was good: in a minute he was another Randolph Turberville. He told with fine effect a true story of an old oysterman with a large toothless mouth who had a bad habit of sleeping with it open: "He not only, boys, had a large open mouth, but also sleek inquisitive mice: and in the

dead of night when Mr. Foxwell was peacefully pursuing his nocturnal privilege of snoring, who should hear and become interested but Mr. Mouse. He proceeded to investigate, coming nearer and nearer the round, warm orifice whence proceeded the martial, horn-like sound. To Mr. Mouse it had the quality of a patriotic air. He stepped in time to it, nearer—nearer—nearer. Mercy, what a warm, luxurious hole! And Mr. Mouse walked in. Then the fire-works! The snore that went into Mr. Foxwell's nose could not get out of his mouth—this discomfited Mr. Foxwell into 'chh-chh-chh!! ssh-ssh s!!' spluttering and fighting and kicking. Mr. Mouse was never so surprised in his short existence—he scratched for life like a cat on a carpet, tried his very best to pass the Scylla and Charybdis of Mr. Foxwell's tonsils, absolutely failed, couldn't turn around and continued to scratch. Mr. Foxwell tried to pull him out by the tail, but the tail came off: Mr. Foxwell actually had to get up and go to the house of old Alec, the Laneville driver, who told me the tale and ended with these words: 'Marse Randuff, whin Misto Foxwell got to my house in de dade er night, I didn't do nuttin' in de wurll, but job my two fo'-fingers cl'ar in he mouf an' prize dat varmint out'n it. Ef mices gwi' try to make nesses in folks' thoats, what gwinter come o' inny er us?' I saw Mr. Foxwell, boys, and the tale is true."

"Just what I wanted." The whine was gone from Boyd's voice. "I'll be all right to-morrow. I haven't laughed so much since Ran's last story: tell another, please, Ran. Fill up again and it will come. I'll promise to laugh again, no matter what you say."

Randolph filled up again, and the story came. It was not so clean as the first, indeed it was rather lurid. Applause was instantaneous and violent. But over the merriment fell a purple mist, a mystic reproof for Ran. He shouldn't have mentioned Laneville now and here. Laneville and Tom Boyd's room were as different as Heaven and Hell: but they kept on laughing.

"Like old times. We've all missed you, Turberville. Fill up again, we are about a dozen ahead of you still, and you will talk better as you get more in." Billy West pushed the decanter of the strawberry cut towards Randolph, who held a glass of the same pattern in his hand.

"When you all get warmed up"—Tom Boyd was leaning over the side of his couch, like a beast poking his head out of its cage—"I want you fellows to beat Billy at his own 'poquet.' He had a cinch without 'Tubby' to hold him down."

The sound of the nick-name of his carousals was now distasteful to Randolph, his joviality had received a chill. He had not touched the de-

canter, but the glass was still in his hand. Things were slowing down somewhat.

Lawrence Stone began to hum: "If you got a gray cat, shave her, shave her! If you got a gray cat, shave her to the bone!"

Dick Tribbett told an incident of the week concerning Jimmy Johnson: "Went home drunk as a b'iled owl night before last, ripped out his pocket-knife and slashed his great-grandfather's portrait across the face; then went up to his mother's door and yelled: 'Been kicking up hell with my ancestors!' True, old Mrs. Johnson told my sister all about it. The portrait was a *St. Memin*, valuable and all that."

Between the story and the song all drank freely, except Randolph and Tom.

"Going to wait all night?" Allan Darrow asked as he began to shuffle the brand-new cards on the Chippendale table.

"Hurry up," said Boyd impatiently. "Why don't you fill up again, Ran?"

"Have I had two or three?" Randolph's uplifted eyes were dreamy, distrait. "Epictetus says, you remember, that he is a drunkard that takes more than three glasses."

"To the devil with old 'Pic'!" Boyd moved suddenly and screamed with pain. "Play the game! What's the use of so much nonsense?"

Limber up with a jugful! Tubby, sit down and begin. Go on!"

There sometimes comes a moment in the middle of the day, in the high tide of traffic, when there is a pause; everything for a second standstill: one fairly hears the silence before the city roars again. It was so now. The pause of the talk, in the midst of the wine and the game, was audible. Ran's will was suspended, for upon his next move hung the fate of the man's life-game. A vision of consequences was as plain as the log fire leaping in the decanter, and the glasses.

"Tom or Lettice? Lettice or Tom—which?" The questions crossed like steel blades in Randolph's brain. "If I touch another glass I'll touch a thousand; I'll never stop through all the years. Do I want to reel into the ferry-boat when I cross the river Styx? Shall I pollute the influence of those hallowed weeks in one mad evening?"

"Hurry up, Tubby! Did that old place down yonder make you so d—d slow?" Tom was at the limit of his endurance. "Toss off and begin! You look as if you had the jimjams, Tubby."

"Move the decanter, please, Ran, and let me deal!" Darrow held the new "deck."

The glass was still in Turberville's hand; his will was to raise the decanter, fill it and quench his thirst, moisten his lips; again his will was to

keep the glass dry; his will moved too quickly for his muscles to answer.

"Oh, move the bottle, Billy." Darrow motioned to West with the cards. "Let's have a clean board."

Not Billy, but Ran, took the bottle of the strawberry cut by its short, thick neck, with his right hand. The glass was still in his left. He squeezed the bottle hard, as if it had been a chicken that he wished to choke: then he raised it with his right hand—high above his head, and whanged its podgy crystal, with all his might, against the mottled "finish" of the Chippendale table. The decanter came in two, the "Scotch" ran over the polished mahogany and turned it white. With his left hand Ran threw the glass into the red lap of the hickory fire—then laughed.

"I'll be damned!" said Boyd.

"Crazy?" asked Darrow.

"My strawberry cut!" Tom Boyd was furious. "What in the devil is the matter with you, Ran?"

Ran's answer was uncannily slow. "N-o-o-o, I am not crazy, I'm getting sane. I'll return your glass, Tom, and some day I'll explain my action. Maybe I was rather—rather—oh, well, I'll tell you all about it when I can." He put his hand to his forehead as if it ached. The "crowd" sat in mute astonishment: Darrow whiffled the cards once or twice aimlessly, then got up and put them

on the mantelpiece. It was as if a wind-swept lake had suddenly stilled.

To Boyd's entreaty Darrow picked up the cards again: while Randolph wiped the table with his pocket-handkerchief—wiped it hard till the white disappeared and the sheen of the mahogany gleamed again. They played without snap and Randolph did not win.

"Drink don't seem to count to-night." Tom fairly groaned with disappointment. "Let's have something to eat!"

He rang for Lazarus, who soon appeared with waiter after waiter of rich food.

"I counted on Jimmy for his salad dressing"—Tom's whine had returned—"but as he is also renegade, I'll have to make it myself. You forgot the oil, Lazarus."

Lazarus, briskly, proceeded to fetch the oil—but in a second his head was in the door: "Does you want de keerosene or de castor ile, Marse Torm?"

"Even the nigger's mind is wandering—which of them do they use at Laneville, Ran? Lazarus does things as they do them in Middlesex, you know." Boyd reached to the table, took a devilled crab from a silver dish and hurled it at Lazarus. "D—n you," he yelled, "I'll pour a gallon of kerosene over you, and a pint of castor oil in you and set you afire, if you don't mind."

The five young men, struggling to find a lost

chord, were readers and thinkers as well as drinkers and cardplayers, and when at last they put the cards aside they talked for hours, all drinking a great deal except Ran and Tom.

Randolph, at dawn, made the move to go.

"Don't bother about the 'glass,' Tom," was his farewell. "Mother has a lot just like it: it shall be returned; and remember, I've got a story to tell you some of these days."

"It's you more than the 'glass' that bothers me." Tom's eyes were staring with cynical inquisitiveness into the eyes of Randolph Turberville. "Been at the Corbins. Old flame burning still?"

"Don't speak of that, Tom," Randolph almost whispered.

"Stay all night with me, Tubby, and I'll forgive you everything, and not ask you another question." Tom Boyd adored this uncertain young gentleman—Randolph Turberville.

"No, thank you, Tom! It's time I was going. Good-bye!"

"High time." Darrow gave Ran a contemptuous scrutiny. "I detect a psalm-singing note in your once manly voice; going to join the church, Ran?"

"Not yet." Ran smiled as alone he left the room.

XX

DAY, timid and indefinite had broken when Randolph Turberville left Tom Boyd's house: he walked down to Belvedere Street, crossed over, and stopped by the house in the triangular yard. There he stood and clutched the iron railing: it was Sunday morning and not one soul was on the street; even the little box across Belvedere Street, where the one-legged man sat all day to guard the crossing, was close shut. He had never seen it shut before, and Belvedere Street was lonesome without the one-legged man. With the young day upon it, the red house in which he and Lettice had so often, at random, talked—breathed the first sympathy and congratulation.

"Is it all a dream, an hallucination? Is there a Lettice, in truth? Is there any absolute reality beyond appearances? Does anything make any difference? Oh, God!" Randolph's clutch of the iron rail was harder, more desperate. He prayed, not petitionally, but something within him held on to God as his hand held the iron railing. Gradually, very gradually, his spirit rose, as a man is lifted up by putting his hands on a high, strong beam, and raised by inches until his head, shoulders, thigh, leg and foot are all on the same

level: all of Randolph was there. His mind, for a moment, took in a more extensive and inclusive world; he heard a full, deep, compelling—"Don't give up. Don't!"

Max Nordau calls mysticism any sudden perception of hidden significance. It was here. All "otherness" was quiet, and Randolph felt a strange, ready, tremendous force which might push it entirely out of the way. This awaiting force was dynamogenic. It had flared suddenly and broken the glass of the strawberry cut, and like a lion it had delivered Randolph from the other beasts in the jungle. It was polarized with an intangible current which had hurled him into the sky-sphere. Its aliveness had reduced the Tempter's power—might it not eventually altogether destroy it?

He let go the iron railing and walked slowly across Belvedere Street and into the Park. In his dear old gray playground he sank down on an iron bench; an overwhelming elation took hold of him; his soul assumed an athletic attitude—he verily believed for a moment that he could fight. The dynamogenic quality enveloped him like a gust: he saw the sun, like a miracle on tip-toe, edging its blood above the house-tops—and he longed to twist up by its roots one of the wine-glass elms nearby, dip it like a paint brush into the sun's crimson, and write in giant letters upon the hollowed opal of the sky, "I'll never, never, never,

never touch another drop!" He needed a tremendous prop, a transcendental bond to hold him.

But as he sat on the iron bench, with his back to the Cathedral and his face to the shimmering East, the gust stilled; the inner light faded, his soul got gray. What if his measure were already taken? What if his growth could only reach cocktails, high-balls, whiskey straight? The bite of the Scotch was still on his tongue, and it made his soul blush as the kiss of the libertine reddens a maiden's cheek.

A strong hand fell kindly on Randolph's shoulder—whose could it be this time of day? Turning, he saw a young man in a gray clerical suit.

"Bill-Bob! What on earth!" Randolph held out his hand.

Catlett grasped it cordially: "We have certainly got it all to ourselves."

"What in the world are you doing up so early?"

"I have been watching a soul go," very sadly.

"And I have been feeling a soul come." Randolph was serious also. "Whose soul went?"

"I'll tell you presently. Let me get my breath in this sweet, spring air. Remember our bare-foot races here? And our kid foot-ball on the lot where the Lutheran Church stands now? The Hoboes against the Hellamites? Great."

"Now you are the rector of the Holy Comforter, and I—I——"

"Never mind, never mind, old man." Catlett sat down on the iron bench, too, removed his hat, and ran his long fingers through his short, brown hair, which roached a little on the left side, and sighed: "That was a long time ago."

"Yes, a long time, but you have carried your boy-face right along, Bill-Bob." Randolph seemed to smile at his thoughts, then continued: "Remember how we geyed you about your long trousers when ours were so short, and your nick-name 'farmer'?"

"Yes, indeed. 'Twas Albemarle against Bolingbroke. Kitty Nestles used to burn up father's old trousers to keep mother from cutting them off for me."

"Kitty Nestles." Randolph's words were not exactly a question, but rather an effort to remember something.

"Kitty, you know, is our cousin and stayed with us a great deal." Robert Catlett looked grave again, and picking up a twig on the ground, he snapped it quickly in two. Then he asked—the twinkle in his eye returning—"Remember the cat-money and the candy?"

"That I bought for Lettice Corbin?"

There was a subtle challenge in the eye of Robert Catlett as it caught the eye of Randolph Turberville: and each face, in an instant, was as red as blood.

Randolph changed the subject: "Ready to tell me why you are out so early?"

"I have been watching a spirit go," Robert mechanically repeated—the red of his face was fading.

"Whose?" Turberville had lost the intimacy of childish memories, a restraint took hold of him, his whole self was as if weak eyes were straining through too-strong glasses.

"Jimmy Johnson's. He used to play with us." Catlett's tone was pitiful regret.

"Jimmy Johnson? Automobile?" Randolph's horror fell on the spring day like a drop of ink in a cup of clear water.

"Yes. And all drunk. Chauffeur, Jimmy, Mrs. Lark, another man and—and—and—Kitty, poor Kitty—all. Of course this is confidential, Ran."

"Of course. When did it happen—where?"

Robert Catlett slowly, calmly told the ghastly tale. Just as he finished, he sobbed. Never in all his life had Randolph heard such a commentary as that sob of Robert Catlett's.

"Who was the other young man?" Turberville asked after a long, heavy pause.

Catlett for a moment looked steadily on the ground, then he turned away slightly, and Randolph saw his lip tremble. After a while he spoke. "Poor Jimmy. He never had one moment

of consciousness. He was simply jellied—mangled—quick. I had to tell Mrs. Johnson; she had been praying all his life for her only son—with such an answer. Poor woman!

"God didn't pay much attention to her—did He?" Randolph's words were biting, bitter. "Didn't hear her?"

"Of course He did." There was magnificent confidence upon Robert's face: he needed somebody else's doubt to show his faith.

At a quarter after seven Robert looked at his watch. "I've just got time to get to the early service—walk down with me!"

They started down the street, and began to talk more freely.

No thoroughfare on God's green earth is lovelier than Benjamin Street in Bolingbroke of a "dew-tipped," "flower-decked" Sunday morning in May. The fourteen squares from Belvedere to Ninth and Peace were short to Randolph and Robert. Of course the terrible accident and the cause of it directed the course of their conversation. Death and alcohol, in the abstract, absorbed the too-short moments.

Catlett was a strenuous advocate of "State-wide." Randolph was not, and he cited many instances of contemptible deception.

"Yes, I know. It will not be perfect at once. What is? But the law will be against the traffic."

"What's the use, if the law is broken?"

"'Thou shalt do no murder.' People kill each other, in spite of the law, don't they, Randolph? But I am very certain that they would kill each other oftener if there were no law against it."

Very calm and friendly was their talk as they walked down Benjamin Street. Back again they came to death, sudden death.

"Only absolute badness is absolute death." They were now by the beautiful Turberville house, and Robert pulled a leaf of ivy saucily hanging over the high, gray wall. "Maybe there is no absolute badness."

Randolph hoped not, but it looked mighty like it, sometimes. "Taine says, you remember, Robert, that vice and virtue are products like vitriol and sugar."

"Yes, and the sugar, virtue, increases as the vitriol, sin, decreases. All there is to it, Ran, is that we must be as good as we know how to be, and if we are—we'll get better and better all the time. We've got to fight and fight hard. Remember what the spirit said to Luther? 'Martin, thou shalt not be utterly without sin, for thou hast flesh. Thou shalt therefore always feel the battle thereof.'"

They stood on Ninth Street with the freshness of the Capitol Square full in their nostrils: Washington's uplifted hand suggested courage and hope.

"Yet the broken law can be the elementary education of the soul," were Catlett's words as he went toward the church. But he turned back and added, "Won't you come in?" Then with a reassuring smile, as Randolph shook his head, "Anyway we must see a lot of each other. I went to your house several times while you were out of town." Did he know where Randolph had been? "And I want you to realize that there's a game that beats foot-ball all to pieces."

Randolph walked up the street slowly, through the Park, across "Laurel"—home. His mother, her face drawn, haggard, met him at the door.

"Where? Again?" was her greeting.

"Never again, maybe!" Randolph kissed her.

"I have just walked down to the Holy Comforter with Robert Catlett."

"Sure enough?"

"Sure enough."

The next morning Randolph received a letter from Lettice Corbin.

LANEVILLE, URBANNA,
Middlesex County, Virginia.

This is the first time I have been able to harness my thoughts to a pen. It is like squeezing coveys of wild birds into a tiny dove-cote.

A letter is generally extremely intimate or very formal. Yours was formal, mine is going to be the exception—betwixt and between. Yours was formal, because you were afraid to be otherwise: I am not a bit afraid of "otherwise"—but I believe betwixt and between saner.

It was queer how I missed your mother and you: it was as if two children had strayed off alone—it was maternal. (I am getting intimate.)

I've been very busy, and Cousin Mary Nicolson has been my amusement as well as my despair. She is improving, but still considers herself my missionary—and I have been a cannibal to her spirit. I've torn the flesh from her platitudes and crunched their bones. She is lots of fun, and our opinions play hide-and-seek every evening.

She disapproves of you—can't you guess why? And when I have been very mean to her, I show my repentance by letting her abuse you. When she exceeds the limit I rein her in pretty sharply.

I am still farming fiercely, for I want papa's commendation when he returns; at the same time I am convinced that "a fo' de war" farmer has a hard time these days. We need at least twenty hands. Friday we had fifteen and to-day we have two. The Dukes of England are not half so independent as the negroes of Virginia; they work or not—just as they please. The old ones received such an impetus from bondage that they keep on because they can't stop, but the impetus of the young ones is the flesh and the devil.

I've had a class of little "Island" children every Sunday afternoon since you left. I never used to love children, but I do now. Indeed, I am tenderer than I was, to all living things. I was so intolerant, so cock-sure of myself—not so now. I realize fully that "only one thing counts—only one thing—Love. It is the only thing that tells in the long run. Nothing else endures to the end."

I am going to bed, Randolph, I am lonesome. I am going to sing myself to sleep like mammy used to sing to me on the garden steps and in my nursery:

Ride on! Winter's er comin',
 Ride on! Winter soon'll be heah.
 Ride on! Summer's a-goin';
 Ride on, Gawd's w-irl-er-win'! Sh-ssh-ssh-ssssh-sh-sssss!

This is an awfully stupid, meandering letter. I did it to be doing something. It reminds me of an old maid sitting with crossed feet and folded hands. Having said prunes and prisms she will say nothing else for fear of ruffling her thin lips. But I couldn't do any better. I wonder why?

Faithfully yours,

LETTICE PARKE CORBIN.

P. S.—I wish I had a Geomantic table and a pen of brass, that I might know just what you are about.

L. P. C.

“You wonder why, Lettice? I can tell you, little girl. You are in the house of the afflicted; and for fear of mentioning the corpse that lies in silent dignity in an upper chamber, you are talking at random. That's all. Now and then you come mighty near mentioning the corpse, but you shy off. All the same, God bless you, Lettice, little sweetheart!”

Randolph folded the letter, returned it to the violet envelope with the Corbin crest, and put it in his pocket.

XXI

COUSIN MARY NICOLSON, on the river porch at Laneville, was playing "Ram-rod" to the "Supple jack" of Lettice Corbin. On the turf to the right of the rose walk a stiff ceremonial was in progress, for thirty children from "Carmines" and "Dog-town," awkward, embarrassed, and also enchanted, were assisting in a "Queen-of-May." Almira Hogg was queen, Billy Crowwell king. Almira, in limp and apologetic ecstasy, stood on a Persian rug; Billy, lover as well as yokel—with coarse and trembling hands upheld the coronet, while his voice staggered through a speech, which Lettice, radiant in pale blue and garlanded with "Flowering-Almond," was, with contagious feeling, handing to him word by word.

The children in coarse blues, yellows and reds, each with his or her little part, curved like a circle of zinnias from the leading lady and gentleman; while father, mother, aunt and uncle in wrinkled and astonished silence gazed at the unusual scene.

Lettice soon eased the rigidity of the coronation with "Ring-around-the-rosey," "All around the mulberry bush," and "Chick-a-me-Charmy-crow." She, the leader in the simple games, raised her sweet voice in elemental gladness,

danced and pranced with the youngest: allowed each child to clutch and rumple her pretty frock, and did not flinch when old Mrs. Croswell, grandmother of the proud king, kissed her, plumb on her smiling lips.

This finished Cousin Mary Nicolson, and she flounced in the house, and up to her room.

Lettice watched the crowd as it gabbled and wobbled over the green meadow—home. Then she went in and flung her blue weariness on the settee in the hall, her blue-slipped feet well up on its sturdy arms. She was glad, for she almost saw tiny shoots of aspiration on the sandy hearts of the Dog-town people.

Cousin Mary Nicolson's feet, in stern and deliberate quickness, sensed her feelings as she stepped down the stair.

"Strenuous afternoon, Cousin Mary," came crisply from the relaxed figure as the footsteps drew near.

"Should think so." Some moments after Lettice had spoken. Indeed Lettice had begun to think her cousin was not going to answer at all.

"'Twas worth the trouble, though; such 'first-hand' joy is so beautiful. I can hardly wait for another May-Day, or—or—something." The words of Lettice seemed to taper off into the wonder—what next? "They were so happy, so hungry, so grateful!"

"I hope the servants will get all their trash off the lawn to-night; I don't believe I could sleep with Dog-town chicken bones on Cousin Henry's lawn."

"They are not Dog-town chicken bones, Cousin Mary." Lettice was very good-natured and tried to be consoling.

"There is a place for everything, even for the Dog-town children to be happy in, but that place is not Cousin Henry Corbin's lawn." Cousin Mary Nicolson was cryptic. "This is another caper of yours that exactly matches the Randolph Turberville caper."

"If it pays as well as the Randolph Turberville caper, I shall be satisfied." Lettice was not in the least ruffled.

"And pray, how did that remarkable escapade pay?"

"Didn't you see a poor sick man improve, Cousin Mary?"

"I did not." More cryptic. "All the time that self-indulgent creature was here he reminded me of those wretched picture puzzles in the newspapers: 'Find the duck,' 'Find the frog,' 'Find the girl;' at first I could not see a trace of the boy I used to know—it was all concealed in a whirligig of lines. However, being of an inquisitive nature, I looked and looked: after a long

time I saw the wing of the duck, the leg of the frog, the foot of the girl. In other words, little bits of Chattie's son would struggle through the ghastly confusion."

"Wasn't it nice to see the little bits?"

"Oh, I don't know."

"If you don't know, I am sorry for you. Let's go in to supper." Lettice rather languidly left the settee for the dining-room.

Later the two sat in silence by the drawing-room lamp, Cousin Mary's tireless needles a little on the girl's nerves.

The evening was far spent when Lettice announced suddenly: "The Bible told me to have Randolph here; and then it told me to have a 'Queen-of-May' for Almira and Dog-town."

"I didn't know you ever read the Bible."

"You didn't? Why didn't you?"

Cousin Mary knit frantically with tight lips.

"Why didn't you?" Lettice asked again, and again Cousin Mary would not answer. So Lettice went on: "I have been always quite a Bible reader, but for a long time, Cousin Mary, I read it like you read it."

"Like I read it?"

This time Lettice took the liberty of not answering.

"When I was confirmed, mamma told me it

was very necessary for me to read my Bible through every year: she had read hers through and through twenty-five times. I did as she told me to do—it took about seven chapters a day, but I kept on keeping on. How I did rattle through those chapters! After a long, long time I got awfully tired, and finally stopped reading the Bible altogether. But when I was in Bolingbroke some years ago I met a wonderful young Scotch clergyman, and he convinced me that the Bible would tell me how to live if I read it right. I have been trying to do this, and I don't pay much attention to the number of chapters. The Bible is full of the poor and needy, the sick and the afflicted; the Bible says we can cast out devils if we try."

Mary Nicolson flung her knitting on the floor, and gasped as she announced:

"If there were any insanity in our family, I should think you were mad. You had better keep a sharp watch on yourself, Lettice."

"And was there insanity anywhere, Cousin Mary?"

"I must confess," hesitatingly, "that I did hear of a great-grandmother who thought she was a teapot: she crooked one arm for the handle, and lifted the other for a spout; and so she sat day after day: she was perfectly harmless—poor thing."

"But so uncomfortable. How long did she keep it up, Cousin Mary?"

"Until she got what she wanted. The story goes that her husband refused to give her a new bonnet and some other things, but that the teapot ruse got on his nerves, and he not only told her to get a new bonnet but everything else she wanted. I believe she was all right after that."

"A most brilliant ancestor. May I have her name, please, Cousin Mary?"

"No, that would not be respectful."

"Anyway I shall erect a little shrine in my heart to her memory. She had the courage of her convictions: she evidently thought for herself." For some moments Lettice tapped the table with an ivory paper-cutter, then looking earnestly at Cousin Mary, she asked: "Do you ever listen to Christ? Does He ever tell you what to do?"

Cousin Mary drew a long breath: "Lettice, you positively amaze and shock me. You venture to ask questions that are only fit for the emotional confusion of a camp-meeting. There are certain things that are never spoken of in polite society."

"But this is a thing that should be constantly spoken: I think I've cast out a devil and Christ told me to do it." Sincerity like a chain held the eyes of Lettice fast and still.

"If I were the proper person I would cable for your father and mother without a moment's hesitation. I never heard such blasphemy—such audacity." The older woman panted with indignation.

"You have to be audacious, Cousin Mary, to accomplish anything. I have only done what I couldn't help doing to save my life. It seemed to me such a pity for—for——" Lettice could not speak for some moments, then as if frantic for some sort of approval or sympathy she went on in her nervous intensity, "I love Randolph, Cousin Mary, I cannot help it, and I must try to save him."

"Poor child!" came hesitatingly from Mary Nicolson's thin lips.

"I have looked everywhere for remedies all by myself; I have feebly tried to strike my divine spark and hold it to the candle in his soul. Will it ever light, Cousin Mary? I have done all I could—my very, very best." The restraint of the last months broke into jagged fragments, and Lettice sobbed with her bright head on Mary Nicolson's lap. She found comfort in confession, even to a frozen priest.

But wonderful, strange Mary Nicolson is not a frozen priest.

"Lettice," she began, "I wish, I—w-i-s-h I——" Mary was sobbing, too."

"Did you ever love as I love Randolph, Cousin Mary?" The tiny crack in the high wall of a lonely woman's reserve revealed to Lettice a far-away disappointment still sharp and cruel; and her question was broidered with a touching tenderness that pulled the curtain from Mary's heart.

"I loved, Lettice, but not as you love. I let my love go out in the darkness, all alone. God pity me!"

XXII

BOLINGBROKE fights the battle of the heat in August. Her battle-cry—"W-a-t-e-r-r-r M-i-l-l-i-o-n-n-s. W-a-t-e-r M-i-l-l-i-o-n-n-s. H-a-n-o-v-e-r-r-r-W-a-t-e-r-m-i-l-l-i-o-n-s!" The battle-crier, a Hanover negro, in a green tumbrel cart with a white hood, drawn by a Hanover mule with a piece of red flannel dangling from his bridle. The same negro, the same cart, the same hood, the same mule—all day long and far into the night—from time immemorial.

It was one o'clock at night, the whole city was panting, when Randolph rang for Simon. The sharp twang of the bell roused his mother; she first called, then got up, and went to Randolph's room.

"Anything the matter, Son-Boy?" she asked.

"Nothing," Randolph spoke testily. "I rang for Simon, mother, not for you."

Charlotte, a little uneasy, left quietly; and Simon, very drowsy, appeared.

"Bring me some mint from the bed, Simon, some sugar and cracked ice and——" Randolph's words scurried guiltily like the feet of a little child racing to mischief before prevented by maternal solicitude.

Simon's expression made him add, "Nothing in the house?"

"Not a single Gordless." Simon understood the language.

"Mother always keeps a little."

"Yes, sir, but not sence she tu'n temp'runce."

"I've got to have some from somewhere."

"I dunno whar dat whar is, Marse Randuff. It sho' did hu't my feelin's, but Miss Charlotte make me kyar ev'ry drap to dem sick folks."

"What sick folks?"

"Dem memorials, an' Retreat, an' Sheltering Armies. You may not believe me, Marse Randuff, but it hu't me as much as it hu't you, fo' Gawd."

"I have got to have some, Simon."

"Whar fu'm, Marse Randuff?"

"You go as fast as you can to Mr. Boyd's and whistle! You know our call as well as I do. Whistle loud, tell Tom Boyd when he raises his window that I want a bottle of whiskey quick! Make haste, Simon!"

Simon soon came back with a bottle, but in the meantime the blatant, begging, continuing screech of a fire-alarm had quickly put Randolph into his clothes and out of the house.

Down Benjamin Street he ran with the excited crowd. Men of his own age and size easily out-distanced him. "The efficiency of soberness," Randolph thought as he panted along.

"Colonel Ambler's," "Mr. Middleton's," "All Angels' Church," the crowd guessed as it rushed eastward. Then throbbing with one intense lament: "The Jefferson! The Jefferson!"

The Jefferson! The last word of an opulent philanthropist, now beyond the drama of flame, the pride of Bolingbroke, the most artistic hotel in America! On fire! Bolingbroke raced, cried, and took off its coat to divert the calamity.

"Save the things! The hotel is doomed!" rang like a cracked bell.

"Try to save Colonel Ambler's things, too—his house is gone."

Flame waved from roof and window of the Mooresque symphony, smoke soared high and ran along the quiet sky like a scudding cloud: voice, hammer, feet, water orchestrated; while pictures, rugs, vases and tables huddled in the street like tearful emigrants.

Thirst was gone, mint julep dethroned by reckless energy. Randolph pitched in with the rest, rushing, lifting, pulling down, giving orders like the captain that he was. After awhile he found himself again one of the old gang—the Hoboes, and Robert Catlett had left the Hellamites and joined them. He heard Threshley, Dame and the rest call "Turberville! Turberville!" as in the old glorious days when "Virginia" played "Chapel Hill" to a finish.

Together they made a ring and lifted Valentine's Thomas Jefferson from the smoking rotunda. The statue was heavy and unwieldy and the noble, wavy head struck a column, cracked, broke, and fell on the marble floor.

Randolph let go quickly, picked up the head, and cried: "Not hurt, the old boy just broke his neck. It can be fixed all right!" He bore the head out, deposited it gently in a weeping lady's lap, and went back hand to hand, shoulder to shoulder, brain to brain, heart to heart with his old friends, the Hoboes, who had made men of themselves.

They fought till morning, the old Hoboes, the merchants, the preachers, the street sweepers, the ladies, the children of Bolingbroke, all for the Jefferson: they saved some of it; they could not save all. It was a lurid night that ushered in a windless, sun-baked day, but Randolph's thirst was gone into a community of interest and energy.

"Have you seen Robert Catlett's brother, Saint George, lately?" he asked his mother when talking over the fire the next morning at breakfast.

"O-o-o-h, not for years. Why?"

"Last night, when every man was working his tongue out, I noticed a pale-faced man fairly hanging on to Kitty Nestles. I believe 'twas Saint Catlett. I don't remember the last time I

saw him: but I too well recall the little curly-haired boy who was always sucking candy and I think I would know him now. He looked, last night, like a half of a man, who was still sucking candy made out of glucose and awful poisonous things."

"I hope not. Were you sure it was Kitty?"

"Perfectly."

"How did she look?"

"Like a blood-sucker—a soul destroyer. She is fat, and her pink cheeks are purple; she has lost perspective, values; her hair is the color of a pumpkin—but, but in spite of all this, there's a faint suggestion of that radiant Kitty who took tea and danced so divinely here long, long ago."

These words were not cold on Randolph's lips before Bill-Bob Catlett ran in to tell Mrs. Turberville that his parents were in town; and she hospitably true to the South forthwith invited them all to supper the next evening.

The Catlett family was prompt to accept the cordial invitation and Charlotte's supper-table on the occasion was an interesting one on account of the difference in personalities with which it was surrounded. She, herself, still beautiful as a rose that has lost some petals in a storm, smiled behind a fortress of old muskmelon silver. The penciling of care upon her face was fine as the stroke of a humming-bird's wing; the sadness of her eyes

was veiled with love, patience, hope, as layers and layers of chiffon soften the scarlet of a woman's gown. A brave smile obscured the jabs of disappointment around her mouth. Her hair, graying, was exquisitely coiffured and her surplined gown revealed the girlish ivory of her neck.

Eleanor Catlett sat on her left. Time had shirred her face like puckered satin, and washed her eyes with apprehension. Her front tooth was gone, and when she smiled she drew her top lip down to hide the aperture. Chattie met Time with a sturdy vidette; Eleanor let Time have its way with no interference. On Chattie's right sat Robert Catlett, Senior: bearded, wrinkled, bald; his hard, rough hands witnesses of his tireless efforts for his boys; and in order to shield the inefficacy of one, he was apt to minimize the energy of the other. He emphasized the ease of a preacher's life, and spoke with some bitterness of the struggle for a livelihood that his son Saint George always had to make.

Beside his mother was Robert, Junior, a prop, a comfort, a delight—a glad source whence anxiety could never come.

At the foot was Randolph emerging from danger like some young lieutenant from a sunken submarine.

The Sally Lunn had not fallen, the waffles were

as light as foam, the soft crabs brown to a turn, and the coffee ambered nectar.

The taciturnity of Robert Catlett's youth had become the loquacity of age, while the brilliancy of Eleanor's girlhood had smouldered to habitual seriousness. At first the husband delivered diatribes against everything in Bolingbroke—motor-busses, have-your-fare-ready cars, stationary basins; while Eleanor to make things pleasanter inquired after everybody who was sick or dead.

"Have you seen Cousin Carlotta lately?" Eleanor interrupted her husband to ask—Carlotta was the mistress of Shirley, and Chattie's aunt.

"She is ill in Norfolk, was taken sick at Mary Randolph's house." Chattie spoke with feeling.

"Very ill?"

"Yes, with erysipelas—very bad at Aunt Carlotta's age."

After supper the young men went out in the yard to smoke, and the two women resigned themselves to the older man's continued conversation. The unavoidable stiffness of the re-acquaintance of Randolph and Robert had gradually yielded to the deep-rooted affection of their earlier years. They talked, or not, as they chose.

The moon filtered spangles through the thick linden leaves and the white faces of the moonflowers starred the lattice by the kitchen door like

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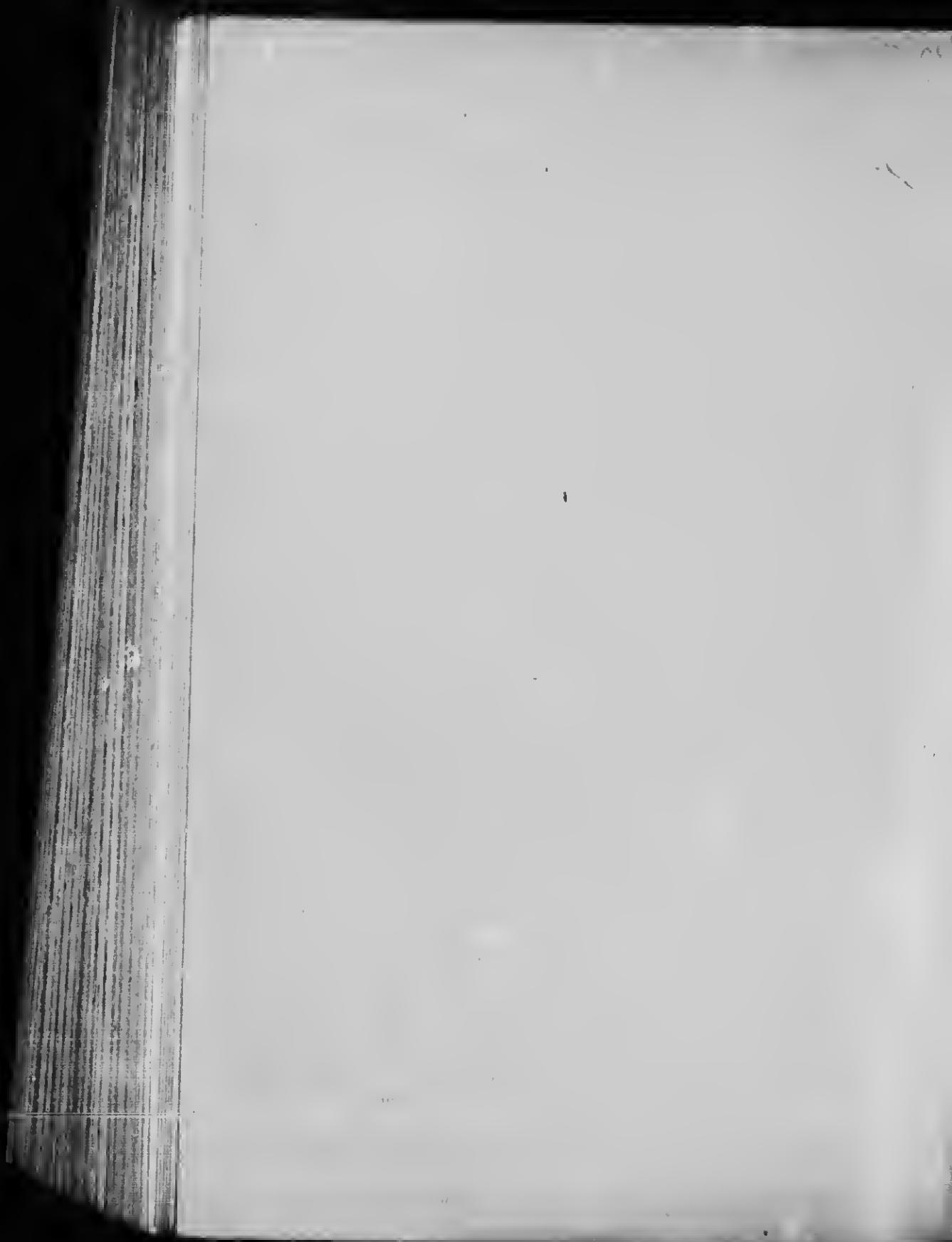
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"BE CAREFUL ABOUT KITTY, BILL-BOB."



carven pearl. Robert pulled out his pipe as he sat down on the green bench and began to fill it. "An easy job?" he began. "Dear old dad is on the wrong track. The success of any business, Ran, depends upon how badly people want your goods: my goods are unpopular, people don't want to invest in them, so I have a hard time 'drumming'—see?"

"U-m-p-h, u-m-p-h!" The smoke of Ran's briarwood cut the moonlight like a gray curl.

"When I show my samples to the Magdalenes, the Rich, the Cunning, the Profane—they don't want to buy. If I advocate 'State-wide' I'm destroying the prosperity of the city; if I refer to 'Child-Labor' or the 'Double-Standard,' I'm an advocate for Woman Suffrage; if I offer an extempore prayer I'm unorthodox; if—if I try to redeem a fallen woman, I'm touching pitch and will be defiled. Not an easy job, Ran!"

"You bet it's not!" Randolph puffed on.

"But I love it. What do you think? Mr. Didlake, one of my vestry, came after me about going to see Kitty Nestles. Poor Kitty lives in an awful rookery on Ninth Street and is forlorn and miserable—I must try to do something for her."

"Be careful about Kitty, Bill-Bob!" Randolph's briarwood was in his hand now.

Neither spoke for some time, when Catlett began again: "And there's Saint, his poor, soft

heart was swept and garnished up in Albemarle, and now I'm afraid 'reporting' is one, at least, of the seven devils for him, poor fellow!" with a sigh.

Randolph did not reply for some moments; the subject was a delicate one.

At last he broke the summer silence with: "How that expression—swept and garnished—has taken hold of the world!"

"Because it is so wonderfully true. We take the little devil by the scruff of his neck and sling him out of comfortable quarters and clean up the place carefully—but don't put anything in to watch it. The little devil returns, hangs around: the house is nice, clean, empty: and the little devil goes off and gets other little devils and they all enter his old quarters and live there and kick up Ned. Nothing more deadly than emptiness, idleness. You know how boys steal lead pipe and things out of an empty house; and how the rats, roaches, water bugs and things take possession."

"Is there not sometimes unavoidable idleness, emptiness?" Randolph was very serious.

"Never," said Bill-Bob emphatically.

Randolph sighed.

"You're a common-sense Jasper, Bill-Bob. Remember how contemptuous my crowd at 'Virginia' was to a fellow who affected the Y.M.C.A., and dubbed him 'Jasper'?"

Bill-Bob nodded.

"Clergymen are great snobs, sometimes, but you are a man. You would not be afraid to call a Rockefeller a 'tight-wad' if he was: or to shake hands with a murderer, would you?"

"If my hand would do him any good he should have it. I am a man, all right, Ran, and I glory in it. I have felt the crimson of passion, but the hand of God held fast the ivory door. I have felt the bite of thirst, but the hand of God put the glass of berry-red wine out of my reach. I love to spend on myself, but God takes my gold and gives it to the poor. I'm no namby-pamby eunuch, Ran, but I've seen God—that is all."

Again they were silent in the moon-warm, summer-scented night.

"Know Tagore?" Ran asked.

"I love the 'Gardener'—'Mine is heart, my beloved.'"

Ran was startled by the feeling in Robert Catlett's voice, and stunned by his words:

"I like Tagore, mystic, sinuous, tender: but we cold occidentals can't half understand him unless we, too, are thrilled by passion. I am afraid of myself when"—he stopped—"when—where love for a woman comes in. I know that if I were ever called upon to help a fellow get the girl I loved and couldn't get, I should be found wanting."

"You mean, even if she did not love you, you would not be able to make it easy for the other fellow to get her?"

"I am afraid I wouldn't, and I hope I will not be tried."

"I suppose only a real saint could do it."

"'Twould be—" Catlett paused. "Your mother is calling you!"

Chattie met Robert and Randolph at the back door: "Aunt Carlotta is dead," she spoke tearfully, holding a telegram in her hand. "She died at ten o'clock in Norfolk."

The five of them sat in the library and talked of Carlotta Carter.

"Is that twelve o'clock?" Eleanor asked as the clock chimed.

"Who would have thought it was so late? Robert is an owl, but Bill-Bob needs rest. I hear his tossing and mumbling all through the night: last night he cried out, 'Let Saint George alone, Kitty; let Saint alone!' I expect he thought they were all playing and squabbling again, in Albe-marle."

XXIII

BOLINGBROKE offered the city tug to convey the friends and relatives of Carlotta Carter to her funeral. This action of Bolingbroke emphasized the social importance of Mrs. Carlotta Louisa Carter, late mistress of Shirley.

Randolph and his mother were next of kin, and they joined twenty-two others of the elect at the dock upon a gold-dust September day. The twenty-two did not approve of Randolph, he had gone contrary to Carlotta's counsel; but Charlotte Turberville, in her creaseless mourning and eloquent reserve, visualized Carlotta's gospel, and held her hand on Randolph's arm most of the way.

Like those regretful Bible women, Carlotta's friends upon the city tug spoke of her virtues, and metaphorically spread out the garments she had made.

"She was a personage, indeed," the Governor of Virginia announced.

"The only Chatelaine of Virginia," Bishop Randolph was tearful, and positive.

"I adored her;" a rosy young girl had found her tongue, hitherto tied by the awe in which she held the small but distinguished company. "I thrilled when she told of the Prince of Wales

visiting Shirley, and about General Lee standing in the drawing-room just upon the spot where his parents, Light Horse Harry and Anne Carter had plighted their troth. Who will inherit the place?"

"Diana and Felicia, of course." Charlotte always spoke when she believed it necessary.

"But after they are gone?" The rosy girl involuntarily turned to Randolph, as did several others of the party.

Randolph was detached, remote, gazing at the white ruffles on the tawny water. He felt himself an experiment which his self-satisfied cousins were watching skeptically. He saw the zeal of Lettice on the face of the water; and from this wonderful lighthouse little red ropes leaped and knotted themselves around him,—to keep him up. The very fact of his being a part, even though unwelcome, of this proud party, was tonic.

The city tug reached Shirley wharf at two o'clock: the Norfolk boat which had borne Carlotta's body up the James lay there, still and silent—an imposing catafalque with flags at half-staff.

They landed, two and two, walked up the shady road, across the lawn, under the tulip poplars (trembling balls of gold to-day) to the Shirley door. Charlotte's hand was still on Randolph's arm.

Clergyman and chief mourners had awaited

the party coming on the city tug, and they all went down the great hall to the drawing-room decked with Carlotta's garden flowers—where lay Carlotta, close in her narrow, black bed.

"I am the resurrection and the life!" Randolph raised his eyes to the portraits on the wall,—a flock of souls winged their disembodied way in his mental vision—Aunt Carlotta well behind: his mother would follow after a while, then Cousin Felicia and Cousin Diana and himself. His thoughts were sweet, they gave him a sense of spirituality; he was a link in an endless chain.

"I know that my Redeemer liveth!"—these stately words had been said at least sixteen times in this mellow drawing-room over Randolph's immediate ancestors. The thought was inspiring, it effaced the memory of the chill formality of the elect on the city tug. It twisted another life-line to pull him ashore.

From the portraits Randolph shifted his gaze to Carlotta's neighbors, whose grief for their friend was so genuine: he saw their battered pride capsuled in straight, thin noses, in heads held high by the check-rein of memory. He felt something very tender that was lacking in his newer world.

"Peace, perfect peace," was too new for this inherited ceremony, but when the old clergyman

read, "I would not live alway, I ask not to stay," not a voice refused to join the chorus:

"Home, home, sweet, sweet home!

There's no place like heaven, there's no place like home!"

Young cousins of Carlotta tenderly bore her body from the drawing-room to the wagonette with four horses which stood at the Shirley door. At the head of each horse a stalwart negro stepped; behind walked the representatives of great houses—two and two, two and two: Shirley and Brandon; Tuckahoe and Deer-Chase; Berkeley and Timberneck; Rosegill and Laneville; and others.

"Dust to dust. Ashes to ashes!" The close, black bed went slowly down, and the representatives of the great houses took up the spades and lovingly covered Carlotta. As Randolph swung the spade in and out, he, to himself, seemed to be burying the crimson of his past in Aunt Carlotta's love, filtering the dregs of his soul through her, shaping the scheme of an earnest life.

He walked back with his mother through the garden, an ecstasy of dahlias, cosmos and chrysanthemums; a requiem of pale, autumn roses. It soothed him like ethereal balm and reconciled him to the aloofness of his relatives; he could expect nothing else until he convinced them that "he that was dead is risen again."

As he unlatched the garden gate opening to the lawn, a motor car chugged up to the door and Henry Corbin, of Laneville, aged since he last saw him, came out of the Shirley house, followed by a svelt figure in a dark cloth suit.

Lettice! In a moment the ethereal balm changed to croton oil. Where was she before, that Randolph had not seen her?

Ah, but she sees him now, and the fluttering of her tiny handkerchief is another life-line.

Soon everybody had gone but Chattie and Randolph; Chattie was a daughter of the house.

Felicia and Diana, Carlotta's daughters, came down to supper with the composure of good breeding, and took the head and foot of the table, while Charlotte and Randolph sat on either side. The table seemed big and lonely.

"Mother was always wishing you would come down, Randolph." Felicia's voice was low. "She was afraid you did not care for the old place; but you do, don't you?"

"I love it, Cousin Felicia, and I loved Aunt Carlotta: I was no end of a fool not to come oftener."

"I am sure you loved her, Randolph. One or two lumps, Chattie?" Diana's hand grasping the old sugar tongs was long and white as her mother's.

"Mamma knew how gay and busy a young

city man is and understood: she just wanted to see more of you." Felicia's smile was like winter sunlight.

Nobody spoke for some moments: each one was at attention for Carlotta. Then Diana timidly told of her last hours; her words tipping carefully on the edge of tears.

After supper, back into the drawing-room where the black bed had stood! They all walked reverently over the carpet patterned with red and pink roses, tumbling from brown baskets. Felicia spied white petals from the coffin roses spilled on the unfading reds and pinks of the room: in a second she was on her knees, sobbing: "Mother! Mother!" and pressing the sacred leaves to her quivering cheeks.

Randolph fell on his knees beside her: "Dear, dear Cousin Felicia, I'm so sorry!" When had he wept before?

At bed-time each cousin kissed Randolph: "Good-night, dear," Diana whispered. "Be a good boy!"

"Be a good boy. Be a good boy." Randolph could not get the words out of his mind. "How could a fellow who has such a hinterland as I ever forget it?"

The old chaps, below, in their dull gold frames, had chided him: his Cousins Diana and Felicia made him blush.

In Carlotta's carved bed, Felicia and Diana lay. They must be close together to-night.

"I believe Randolph is all right, Diana."

"I do, too, Felicia. People love to tell horrid things, but he is just as sweet and loving as he can be. I wish mother had never heard anything disagreeable about him."

"So do I. He doesn't look to me as if he ever tasted a drop, Diana."

"He certainly doesn't, Felicia."

"He loves the old things, too, Diana."

"He looks like the Master of Shirley should, doesn't he, Felicia?"

"Indeed he does."

In a few days, Randolph and his mother returned to Bolingbroke on the good ship Pocahontas; and before they reached the city Randolph had asked Charlotte to lend him enough money to begin again.

XXIV

A SENSE of faint security came at last to Randolph: he found that he was willing to avail himself of the subtlest remedies for his relief. He was constantly off in the fields: he read Spinoza, Bourignon, Emerson, the Bible—and his favorite texts were “He who puts on purity shall put off impurity,” and “He that was dead is risen again.”

He felt his heterogeneous personality yielding to a unifying power; instead of trying—at last, something was beginning to act.

His office was the same in which he and other “good-fellows” had so recklessly caroused; and the same sign-painter, who had put “Randolph Turberville” on the glass door seven years ago, remarked brutally: “I have painted your name on twice and taken it off once; wonder who will take it off next time!”

“No next time, friend!” Randolph’s earnestness impressed Mr. Sign-Painter.

“The ‘hole-in-the-wall’s’ mighty close: one finger to-day, two—to-morrer, is the way with young fellows like you.”

“No finger to-day and none to-morrow is safer.”

“Not a God’s doubt er that,” said Mr. Sign-Painter.

Business was desperately slow; Randolph began with a little collecting, made a few feeble steps on the misdemeanors of negroes, and Robert Catlett got him to make his will. "Bill-Bob would gladly be guilty of some indiscretion to help me along," thought Randolph, "but no chance, even, of indiscretion in Bill-Bob's sane self."

The psalmist scorns the man who sitteth by himself. Randolph sat by himself a great part of his office hours; but with him was a "Libanus" that skipped like a calf; a "Sirion" that was as care-free as a young Unicorn—the Boadicean will of Lettice Corbin.

The busy, somewhat scornful barristers in the Mutual Building—where was also the office of Randolph—occasionally threw him stale crumbs from their full tables which he greedily devoured; and well-picked bones which he as eagerly gnawed. Then upon a stormy, dreary day two Greeks, fighting, were arrested, and one, who had seen Randolph play ball, sent for him to defend him.

When Randolph appeared before Justice John, in behalf of the young exile, he was as self-conscious as a debutante, and unfortunately fell into the snare of poetry—closing his speech with:

"The mountains look on Marathon,
And Marathon looks on the sea,
And musing there an hour alone
I dreamed that Greeks might yet be free."

The justice shifted his quid contemptuously and withered Randolph with—"A darned foolish dream. Sixty days!"

His second case was not as disastrous.

Mandy, the cook and true wife of Simon, the Lutler, was his next client. Mandy had shut the door in the face of the census man.

"He was too questionsome," she explained to Charlotte—horrified at Mandy's summons to the police court.

"About what, Mandy?"

"You, Miss Chattie."

"Me?" somewhat astonished.

"Yes, ma'am, dat scandrel say how he wanted yo' age—a young no-count devil; in course I shet de do'."

Mandy's appearance at the police court was a little disconcerting—apron as white as snow, face as honest as the day—the Justice, an arch reader of negro character, knew she was innocent; but he was going to have some fun before he discharged her.

"Your name?" very sternly.

"Yessuh! My name Mandy Moore, yessuh."

"How old?"

"Old as Hector."

"Who, in the devil, is Hector?"

"De Tubbeville's old setter dawg; we born de same day."

"How old is Hector?"

"The Lord know, suh, I don't."

"Where do you live, Mandy?"

"Right here wid Mis' Charlotte." Mandy drew a long breath. "An' dat whar dat yuther white gemmen got inter trubble. I lives wid Mis' Charlotte Tubbeville; you done hear 'bout de Tubbeviles—ain't yer?"

"I think so."

"You knows so," under her breath.

"Are you married, Mandy?"

"Twice, suh. My fuss husban' dade, an' ef Simon, he's my second, 'd die, I'd nuvver have any man Christ died for agin'."

"Any children?"

"Yessuh—Jeter, and a couple er twins."

"Two sets of twins or one pair?"

"Jes' two gals, suh, Nora and Cora. Cora de bes' one; she dade. Nora gone out yonder, and Jeter, too."

"Can you read, Mandy?"

"No more'n a goat, suh."

"Born a slave?"

"Dat's mouty like assin' 'bout age, suh. De Tubbeviles is my folks, dem at Six and Benjamin. You done hear of 'em, ain't yer? I done raise ebry chile dey had an' Marse Randuff beside, a sottin' yonder. An' I have yer to know you mout take a fine tooth comb an' rake dis wurrl, an' nuvver

fine a nicer gemmen den Marse Randuff. He's a Tubbeville an' he ma's a Kyarter, an' fo' Gawd so long's my hade's hot I nuvver gwi' 'low no sententious man to as' no unfair question 'bout Mis' Charlotte. Dat's why, suh; dat's why!"

The case was dismissed.

One rainy day Randolph found himself umbrella-less on the street; and he huddled with some negroes and white people under an awning let down over vegetables in front of a green grocery.

"Is you got nobody to' fen yo' pappy, yit?" one negro asked another.

"Not yit." The negro took off his cap and began to scratch his head. "Lawyer Hopper 'low he too busy: he mean he know I ain't got no money. Niggers ain' no mo' den sheep: I know pappy ain' nuvver kilt nobody, but ef he is he'll be kilt an' ef he ain't he'll be kilt, 'cause 'tain't nobody but de 'Commonwell' an' he ain't er keerin'. Dey got me comin' an' goin', an' I better keep my mouf shet an' leave pappy in de han's er Gawd."

"Good 'nuff han's," the first speaker remarked, "ef—ef——"

"Ef what—brer' Torm, you sho' ain' gwine put no slur on Gawd."

"'Cose not, boy, it jes' 'pear to me dat in de way er de law, Gawd allers uses a slick white-folks' tongue. Dat all I mean."

Randolph was interested. He remembered every circumstance now: Jacob Spurlark, a very old negro, had been accused of the murder of Mrs. Saddler, a white woman of Chesterfield County. The negro had borne a splendid reputation, and his arrest and imprisonment had caused a lot of speculation.

Mrs. Saddler lived about three miles from old Jacob. Evidently she had a package of vermilion in a drawer with her money, for its stain was upon a sheet, some bacon found in Jacob's house, and also upon Jacob's hand. Randolph remembered the whole story now, and he listened attentively as Jacob's son went on dramatically to his comrades: "He say he dunno huccum his rheumatiz ain' keep him 'wake dat night, he sleep soun', an' whin he look out in de mawnin' an' seen de white sheet wid red 'pon it, near he do', an' de meat, he jes' natchelly got plum skeered; an' he crope out'n he house an' got de meat an' de sheet, an' hide 'em in he lof', dat's huccome he hans red. My pappy wouldn't kill a fly, hardly—let 'lone Mis' Saddler. He ain' nuvver did it."

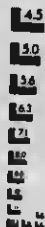
The rain had stopped, and Randolph started home, but something restrained him, and he made a sign to the shiftless son of Jacob. In another moment he had offered to defend his father.

Randolph Turberville had been eating syllabub, now he could chew meat. He plunged with his



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old fighting spirit into the hideous details of a murder. At dead of night he found himself in imagination in the dark woods between Mrs. Saddler's house and old Jacob's shanty. He read voraciously, thought with violence. He talked day after day with the old negro, and went over his past life with his friends and acquaintances.

Old Jacob's trembling explanation touched Randolph's tender heart: "Fo' Gawd, Marse L'y-yer, why ain't I lef' dat meat an' dat sheet 'lone, an' stay in my bade like I orter? But you know, marster, my bent laigs ain' nuvver crope thoo dem dark woods in de dade er night an' kilt Mis' Saddler. I ain' able to kill a chicken fer my Sunday dinner; an' de mos' I'se uvver dun in de wrong way, Gawd know, is in de borrowin' chickens, now an' den, fum de white folks; but dat ain't nuttin' like sho' nuff killin'."

The day of old Jacob's trial, Chesterfield Court-House was packed with living curiosity, not on account of old Jacob but of Randolph Turber-ville. The voice of a singer had been stilled; the pen of a writer had stopped; the legs of an athlete were broken. Could the voice return, the pen write again, the broken bone and muscle knit?

Randolph felt it all: but the reporters were living rowels to his determination; the lawyers with their doubtful faces—tonic; while Lettice and Charlotte threw to him ropes of confidence from

Laneville and from Laurel Street. His world would know to-morrow that "he that was dead is risen again"—at last he had gotten a chance! He was a fearless matador teasing the stubborn bull—public opinion: twisting twelve stalwart farmers to his way of thinking.

"Look at the prisoner's face! Is he a murderer, or a simple-hearted old baby, already beholding the Paradise of his crude faith? Look at his distorted, knotty feet! Are they strong to plunge through the rough darkness of three long miles? Look at his crumpled hands! Are they able to strike the blade true in the neck of a woman whose hands could master him? How far had old Jacob been from his cabin this whole winter? Not one hundred yards."

As Randolph pleaded for Jacob, he pleaded with himself for himself.

"A lonely sufferer spends his long days in a humble shanty, but neither hunger nor thirst nor cold assail him—why? Because Jacob for years and years was a good citizen, and the good citizens of Chesterfield County do not forget good citizens. They remember with gratitude the good deeds of Jacob when he was strong. Jacob dug their garden beds, Jacob planted their corn, Jacob was no eye-servant but did what his hands could do with all his might. Is not this true—citizens of Chesterfield? Of Sunday afternoons young

Chesterfield girls sing along the road with baskets in their hands—where are they going? To carry a part of their dinner to old Jacob Spurlark. Matrons of Chesterfield, we meet, with Bibles in their hands. Where are they going? To read to old Jacob Spurlark. Does Jacob come to them? Oh, no, he cannot walk a quarter of a mile on account of rheumatism—how could he walk three miles to Mrs. Saddler's house? Has any citizen of Chesterfield seen old Jacob with a horse in the last ten years? Would any citizen of Chesterfield County have been so considerate as to have taken old Jacob these three miles, for Jacob to have thrust a deadly blade in Mrs. Saddler's throat?

“Young girls of Chesterfield, who share your dainty food with the prisoner—did he kill Mrs. Saddler? Matrons who read the Word of God to old Jacob Spurlark—did he kill Mrs. Saddler? Men, who say to-day, nobody to prune our trees, and clean our wells, or shear our sheep as well as Jacob Spurlark—did he kill Mrs. Saddler?”

Randolph seemed to pause for an answer.

“In this audience is a citizen of Chesterfield with palsied hands and snowy hair. It was many years ago that he had a fine, handsome boy. That boy one day went out on a mill-pond fishing: Jacob Spurlark, not old and feeble but strong

and active then, went, too, that day to the mill on that pond carrying corn to grind.

"The boat with the boy capsized; the boy could not swim and the pond was deep. Who saved the boy? Surely there are people in this room besides the father of the boy, who remember the heroism of Jacob that day. And yet in his trembling, weak old days he turned a murderer. Impossible! There are witnesses here who have sworn that they saw Jacob in the woods, creeping towards Mrs. Saddler's. Are these witnesses still sure and certain of the accuracy of their depositions? This is between them and their God. There is another witness that saw old Jacob enter Mrs. Saddler's house. Are you still sure of the truth of your assertion?"

"Who killed Mrs. Saddler?" A fearful accusing pause.

"Who killed Mrs. Saddler? Old Jacob Spurlark did not do it—who did?"

One of the witnesses twisted, trembled, and finally fell into a hysterical heap on the floor.

Old Jacob was acquitted; the fighting Greeks a step, Mandy—a step, old Jacob—a step on the long ladder of reinstatement in the mazy labyrinth of public opinion!

The taste of appreciation and praise was sweet to Randolph's hungry soul: he was like an ox that had been grazing in parched pastures while a

field of succulent corn was growing just over a high fence. Now he had leaped the fence and filled his empty stomach with the long sweet blades and the juicy ears.

Two days after the acquittal of old Jacob he received a telegram from Lettice Corbin. The "rural-deliverer" was still slow and she had wired as soon as the news reached her.

The satisfaction of Charlotte Turberville was restrained. She had to contemplate her joy a long time before she realized it; as a turkey hen looks and looks at a plump grain before she decides to pick it up.

Randolph's state of mind was peculiar: he was afraid, and humble, and yet he rejoiced. Like a baby who finds that she can step across the nursery floor all by herself, he wanted to keep on doing it. He almost wished that somebody would commit murder every day—that he might defend the murderer. Nothing especially exciting happened for several months, but he was slowly getting up the stair of life by way of commonplace practice, invitations from prominent people, and long walks with Robert Catlett.

Catlett was preaching a series of sermons that had received much adverse criticism, and the last of the series from the text—"She Was a Sinner"—drew fierce open letters to the columns of the newspapers.

The meaning of this discourse of the young rector of the Holy Comforter was intensely obvious from start to finish. In conclusion he had said with unrestrained feeling: "My friends, do you recall the incident of the man going down from Jerusalem to Jericho—who fell among thieves? They stripped him of his raiment, wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. Priest and Levite passed by on the other side—but thank God there was a good Samaritan who bound up his wounds, set him on his own beast, brought him to an inn, and took care of him.

"In this city to-day are dozens of women who have fallen among thieves—naked, more than half dead, their nefarious industry taken from them by the closing of the red-light district—they are bewildered, bitter, shelterless, literally upon the streets. Each of you to these wretched sisters can be a good Samaritan, can bind up their wounds, and bring them to an inn. 'For she is a sinner,' and it was for sinners that Christ died. It is the sacred duty of every man and woman in this church to endeavor to bring these bleeding, wayward sisters to an inn—it is the Father's business, and therefore yours!"

Radical advice, it is true, and not exactly palatable to the members of the congregation: one of the vestrymen remarked as he was going down

the aisle to another vestryman, "Mr. Catlett knows more of that class of people than anybody I ever met!"

Lettice wrote to Randolph about every four weeks; that was often enough to jerk the rein and keep him in the road. Her sentiments were like flocks of restless chickens in a tight-barred coop, and so were Randolph's. Pride held the door to keep hers in; and Honor squared its broad shoulders and prevented Randolph's from running out.

The letters of the daughter of Laneville piled the details of a free, simple life upon her elemental emotions; but the real heart-beats of Lettice made the "pile" tremble, as the wriggling of a mole cracks the soil under which it gropes. Sometimes the real Randolph peeped through the vagueness of his letters, as the real Lettice flashed through the subterfuges of hers.

Lettice was the exteriorization of Virginia aristocracy, but her mind was prophetic; and her heart a Socialist if her nose was Greek. The problem of her class held her—would it disappear entirely from its realm like the great sturgeon from Virginia waters? Or would it be diluted or strengthened by intermarriage with the stranger or the middle class? Would the future of Virginia rise from the soil? If so, must she not give to this class such as she had? All of these subtle-

ties she put in her letters, and on the page which Randolph now held in his hand was——

“These strangers will never take root, Randolph—these rich butchers, bakers, candlestick-makers, and divorcées, who creep into the old houses as they have crept into their seal-skins and limousines. They expect the blessed old places to make of them gentlemen—too much to ask, between you and me—they’ll get tired before they have tried long enough, and return to their moving-picture, café world: just as they get tired of trying to like batter-bread and roe-herring, and go back to cold bread and codfish balls.”

In the middle of this letter she came so near being sentimental that she quickly scampered off to an impersonal anecdote. Of such elusive trifles she made her tantalizing letters—straws to show the way the wind did not blow.

Randolph laughed and sighed over them, while his impatient soul was afraid that the echo of old Jacob’s trial would die before another Jacob or Esau—he did not care which—appeared.

XXV

BOLINGBROKE did not care to punish Randolph a moment longer than was necessary, so very soon, as in years past, he was the bright, particular star at the most exclusive dinner-tables.

Lettice Corbin was often discussed in his presence, and people who saw her at "Old Point," New York and other places wondered why she never came to Bolingbroke. One evening at a large dinner at the Andersons' somebody announced that she was positively engaged to Macauley Berkeley—a rich Bostonian. And the very next morning Randolph received this very disconcerting letter:

I have been investigating old tomb-stones, Randolph dear, and I really find them fascinating literature. I have discovered one in the hollow by Fox-mill run—you remember the locality?

The slab was covered with briars which I painfully removed, and read with queer sympathy, these lines:

Beneath this stone,
Lies Martha Gwyn,
Who burst the outer shell of sin,
And found herself a cherubim.

Martha did just what I would like to do: I am tired. I have got to go to the "White Sulphur" and I don't want to. Ever hear of Macauley Berkeley? He is the milk-in-the-cocoanut.

I think silence with regard to unaccepted suitors should be one of the first articles of a girl's creed; but I think it is necessary for me to enter into some particulars regarding Macauley—"perpendiculars," as Uncle Alec calls them.

Macauley is our cousin. Our great-grandmothers were sisters: his father was one of the Barn-Elm Berkeleys—born there. He was wise enough to migrate to Boston and enlist the affection of one of the Boston Motts. She rejoiced in many millions and Macauley is her only child. More than one child would be considered wilful extravagance by a Boston Mott. Our acquaintance with Macauley was genealogical; he wanted to know all about Barn-Elms and the Berkeleys—he wanted to get even paternally with the Motts. Papa had the supply equal to his demand, if demand it was, for Macauley could never demand—it would be too harsh for his constitution. Macauley would always make a buttered request.

Macauley deserves a little explanation. In appearance, waspish. Whistler would have revelled in his shape. Dilcie says: "Miss Lettice, 'pear to me Mr. Buckley laces hisself."

I don't know about that, but in every other respect he is exceedingly lady-like; I should call him a rubber-shoe man; he would certainly go around any puddles in his way. His words pass his lips as if they were tip-toeing, and his sentences end just like he folds up his handkerchief after he uses it. His waistcoats are wonderful. I never saw any like them; and his neckties correspond invariably with his socks. His bureau is loaded with monogrammed mysteries; indeed, I believe he thinks in monograms—they (or it) are on everything. Macauley knows a lot, is terribly educated and travelled, but he reads Browning as if he were eating ice-cream, and Shakespeare as if he were chewing gum. Randolph, you approach Browning as if you were intoxicated, and I rather like your Shakespeare jag.

"What in the devil is Lettice driving at?" Randolph thought as he turned a page.

If you meet him, I am sure you would know that he would make a painless if monotonous husband.

"Whose damned husband does she mean?" Randolph impatiently asked himself.

Macauley never broke any of the ten Commandments—

"He'll make me break the sixth Commandment, if Lettice don't mind." Randolph scarcely had patience to read to the end of the letter.

—and never said "damn" in his life. I am not going to take any liberty with the ten Commandments, but I verily believe, before a man is quite a man, he has got to say "damn."

Macauley and I met in Berlin; did I ever tell you we did? I quickly impressed him, and he asked me to be his wife. He asked me in the same manner in which he folds his handkerchief above referred to; his attitude was timid, careful, he took a step and stopped—like a spavined horse advancing to a clump of clover. He said he loved me with about as much snap as a toy pistol. I felt as if he were blowing bubbles. He is now at Laneville reiterating his oily statements. I tell you all this because papa insists that I marry Macauley. He is so frantic for me to do it that he is comparing Macauley with you, a thing papa would never do unless in an emergency.

"Emergency, the devil." Randolph, alone in his office, got up and paced the floor crumpling the letter viciously in his hand. "I'll go to Laneville to-morrow, and ask Lettice to share the comforts

of our little gray house. Only three hours apart as the crow flies, and no more than a glimpse of her for two years! With a spidery millionaire trespassing on my preserves—I'll take it out of father's and mother's hands as quick as possible. I'll claim her as forfeit for my regeneration now, not a day to spare. We will live on love and pot-boilers, and snap our fingers at the rest of the world."

He went on reading the letter:

Papa has unburdened his heart to me, and God knows I'd like to accommodate him. Poor fellow he has lost money; everybody does sooner or later, don't they? Then James Parke is recalcitrant—James Parke, who went to Madison, Wisconsin, to learn how to make Laneville pay. Jimmy has fallen in love—execrable practice—with a girl with a ranch—thousands and thousands of acres of irrigated fertility, which she would not exchange for all the history and romance of Laneville, and Jimmy has decided that he don't care especially for Laneville either, but prefers to ranch it with Evangeline Holdsclaw.

There's no accounting for taste, and Jimmy's taste has upset papa dreadfully. Henry always vowed he didn't want an acre of Laneville, and that he had no idea of sacrificing his life to the weather and the negroes: so there's nobody else but me. And I can't have it unless I can find some money to go with it, and Macauley has the money.

"If she wants the varmint, let her have him!" Randolph fairly hissed.

Papa has been awfully plain. He says there's only one thing in Macauley's way, and that is you. He has

given me his views on you pretty plainly, and that is why I speak so frankly.

I have been intensely obdurate. Papa asked me if I wrote to you—I told him. He requested me not to write to you again for six months. I would not promise.

Randolph crumpled up the letter again and kissed it this time.

He says you are fooling me as many a dissipated man has fooled other girls.

“An old sucker.” Randolph clenched his teeth and read on.

I told him you were not dissipated, fiercely.

“God bless you.” Now Randolph smiled.

He smiled. Oh, the irony of an irate father's smile. He said a six months' silence on my part would prove it. I answered, “Then I'll prove it after one letter.” Now I am miserable. I don't know whether to take it back or not. You and your letters *versus* the White-Sulphur and Macauley: I don't know what to do. I shall be in Bolingbroke on the ten-thirty train next Wednesday. Meet me. Don't fail.

It is only to see how you look, to touch your hand, to hear a voice silent for me over a year—a long time when the voice is one I love to hear. No matter who is with me—come! There will be few words—only the joy of a look—I need it. My courage dips daily. I must have tonic. I don't know what you think of me, rather obvious like the pink and blue. I can't help it—I am sincere.

My experiment in the Laneville library told you everything—what's left to be said?

At ten-thirty on Wednesday.

Faithfully yours,

L. P. C.

"To-morrow at ten-thirty Lettice would be in Bolingbroke? With Macauley Berkeley? Damn Macauley Berkeley! Lettice in Bolingbroke to-morrow!"

Randolph did not mention the letter to his mother, but strangely that very evening she talked as if she had read it.

"Isn't it almost time to go for Lettice, Son-Boy?" she asked. "Youth is the time for loving—you know."

"I know, mumsey."

Randolph got closer to his mother and took her hand. He wanted to tell of the letter, but he still felt its meaning too keenly for words. The lights in the Park hung like low moons, and beneath the children were singing in piercing falsetto, "Tisket-tasket, red and yellow basket," people walked the summer street slowly, and the trolley—every few moments—put a full stop to conversation.

"You loved to play in the Park, and I want your children to play there, too."

From sacred sentiment the talk of mother and son turned to the gossip of the town: the last engagement, the hopeless illness of the Governor's son, and Robert Catlett's efforts to get up a petition for the release of a negro convict whom he thought had been unjustly sentenced. It was past twelve o'clock when Randolph got in bed—really

Wednesday—the day that Lettice would come.

His sleep was gossamer painted with dreams. Once he was at the station—no Lettice, no Corbins, nobody: then he was wrestling with Mr. Corbin for Lettice: and last he and Lettice were in a cab alone, she saying over and over again—“My brand new Ran, my brand new Ran!” The words created a swarm of real fireflies in the taxi. They blinded Lettice and she hid her face on Ran's shoulder. “What are they?” Ran asked loudly. “The sentiments of a human soul,” a small voice answered. “Love broken into bits of moving gold.”

Suddenly a terrible raucous yell tore Lettice from Randolph's dream-arms. Was he awake or asleep?

“E-X-T-R-A-! E-X-T-R-A-A-A L-E-A-D-E-R-R-R!
E-X-T-R-A L-E-A-D-E-R-R-R! E-X-T-R-A-A. E-X-
T-R-A-A-A!”

Randolph was wide awake; the noise was away beyond his dreams. It was the cry of a frantic new day, the fore-word of calamity or death.

“E-X-T-R-A-L-E-A-D-E-R-R-R!”

Randolph caught a name yelled by the newsy with fearful emphasis; he jumped from his bed, rushed to his window, raised it, screamed “Boy! Boy!” and ran down to the front door to receive the extra, which he grabbed viciously but did not unfold until he got back in his own room. Then

he only read the headlines—he could stand no more. In an agony of vengeance he twisted the newspaper into a tight rope, threw it in a corner of his room, and flung himself on his bed, with a groan. “How could God have rewarded his young prophet with such a stab? Oh, God! Oh, God!”

Simon came up as usual at a quarter to eight with the morning paper, but Randolph did not touch it till he was ready to go down, then he picked it up as if it were a snake.

“What in the world is all this about?” His mother met him in the upper hall. “Something dreadful?”

Randolph was trying to tell her, when the doorbell pealed, and Simon announced Dr. Roslyn, the senior warden of the Holy Comforter.

“Where did such a lie come from?” Randolph, much excited, ran down quickly. Dr. Roslyn was standing in the hall with a newspaper in his hand. Randolph, without a word, led the way to the library, where Charlotte joined them.

Dr. Roslyn spread the newspaper on the table and tapped the headlines firmly with his open palm. “Robert Catlett, rector of the Holy Comforter, at about two o’clock this morning shot and instantly killed Kitty Nestles, one of the most beautiful and notorious women of the underworld,

in his own library in the rectory, at Ninth and Peace Streets."

"It's a lie!" Randolph's voice trembled.

"It is not," the senior warden answered, and proceeded to read the sensational account with deliberation and occasional emphasis:

"At two o'clock this morning a convivial party in the Bolingbroke Hotel, just opposite the rectory of the Holy Comforter, was startled by two pistol shots. The rectory windows were open and this party distinctly saw the rector place a smoking pistol, which he held in his hand for a second or two after the shooting, on the window ledge, and then turn and kneel before something on the floor. Two members of this party ran to the rectory, through the front door, which was not locked, upstairs. On the floor of the rector's study was the form of a beautiful woman and zig-zagging over her white shirt-waist was a stream of blood. A packet of letters lay, half-burnt, on the hearth. Robert Catlett was at the 'phone: 'Gentlemen,' was his quiet greeting, 'the police will be here in a moment take a seat, etc., etc., etc.'"

When Dr. Roslyn had finished reading, he added: "I have been with Catlett for hours, and he sent me for you. I should tell you, I suppose, Randolph, that Catlett had a mad idea of your defending him without any other legal assistance.

We could not allow that, of course, but Catlett insists upon your being retained as associate counsel. I trust that you are fully sensible of the gravity and responsibility of—of——” Dr. Roslyn blew his nose.

Randolph paced the floor for some minutes without speaking, and when his mother and her old friend took up the conversation, he went to the dining-room and bowed his head upon the breakfast table: “Robert Catlett, Robert Catlett, Bill-Bob,” he sobbed. “Honest, earnest, merry Bill-Bob!” He raised his head. “Rot! He never did it! But in his despair he remembered me, tried to push me along with his dilemma, showed his faith in the man he helped to make—and I’ll stand by you old fellow to the end! I can hear his very thoughts, ‘I’ll help Turberville. I’ll show him how I believe in him. I’ll trust him with my life.’ And you can trust me, Bill-Bob. I’ll show the whole world how impossible it was for you to do it.”

Randolph could only swallow a cup of coffee, and then he and Dr. Roslyn walked over to Wide Street, and took the car to the city jail. The doctor never ceased talking, but Randolph did not hear half he said. He was reading the wretched headlines “alluring, enticing, beautiful, young, a ward of his parents, the æsthetic and ascetic clergyman had always loved her, but when she

thrust herself between him and his duties and persisted in claiming him, he lost self-control and ended her poisonous life." These words flamed in another extra which Randolph purchased in the car.

Randolph remembered that Catlett went to see Kitty, that he was a man, that—that—"he is the one man on earth upon whose innocence I'd stake my soul," he suddenly and with indignation blurted out to the crowded and excited street car. "Bill-Bob couldn't help being all right, if he tried not to. If all the twelve Apostles swore that they saw him shoot Kitty Nestles, I'd prove them a pack of liars."

"There were only eleven Apostles constant, you know." Dr. Roslyn's face wore a deprecating look; it never would have done for such a wild fellow as Turberville to have been anything but associate counsel.

"I don't care a hoot how many they were; but even if they accused Robert Catlett, I'd show them a thing or two."

The car stopped. Randolph Turberville left Dr. Roslyn—who would be back later—and walked alone to Catlett's cell in the city jail.

XXVI

THE pinched gloom of a felon's cell threw into high relief the young beauty of Robert Catlett's face: white, haggard, unafraid, it was as startling as the image of a marble saint on a reeking dunghill. The situation for a moment stunned this stricken friendship, this wounded Damon and Pythias. They grasped hands with voices clotted with emotion.

Catlett spoke first: "I didn't shoot Kitty, Ran."

"No." Randolph's negation was a passionate outburst.

"She killed herself, Ran." Catlett's voice trembled with compassion. "Poor creature, I tried to stop her, but I was not quick enough."

"Why did she kill herself, Bill-Bob?"

The old name touched him more than any word spoken since the sudden tragedy of the early morning. Catlett closed his eyes and pressed his lips together: "Turberville, for what does such a woman, generally, kill herself?"

"Tell me everything, old man!"

Robert Catlett was always concise and direct: he wasted no words either on the street or in the pulpit. "It is a short story," he began. "I always sit up late, and the front door is never

locked; from force of habit, maybe, country people, you know, never lock their front doors. About one o'clock Kitty, with the slyness and softness of a cat, stole up to my study. She startled me, I must confess. She wanted what she had promised never to touch again. She made a pitiful appeal with a faint tinge of logic in it. She was very desperate. She thought she had a mortgage on a man's flesh and she wanted the interest, pound for pound. I tried to show her that the mortgage was lifted, for just two weeks ago I had, with my own hands, given her a handsome sum for relinquishment. She listened, impatiently, like some quivering beast who had lost a race. Her frenzy gradually faded into despair. I talked to her as gently as I could, assured her that I would always help her as far as possible, and that I thought I knew people who would help her to find another life. I showed her the ruin she had wrought and endeavored to convince her that the only way to repair it was in absolute self-denial and a sincere effort to pursue a legitimate energy. I used in argument the youth and weakness of the man she loved—I believe it was the real thing, Ran, as tragic and unhappy as it was. Passion was smouldering like a bed of dying coals. I actually thought I saw God break on her face. She really seemed to be listening, thinking, when—like a fearful S. O. S. upon a smoother sea—

she shrieked, 'I can't, I can't, I can't!' and before I could reach her, Ran, she had ripped the pistol out and it was done—that is all that I can tell!"

"But the man, Ran, the scoundrel, I must know all about him. You shall not ruin yourself to save him."

For a fleeting moment a light broke on Robert Catlett's face. "He'll tell," he whispered. Then with strange compassion, "Don't judge him too harshly, Ran; remember Kitty was—was—never mind, that is all over now."

Catlett, during this dramatic interview, never budged an inch from his original reticence regarding the man's identity.

"Maybe, you will do for the other lawyers what you refuse to do for me, Bill-Bob."

"Never," said Catlett firmly. "I have said what I have said."

Randoiph took out his watch, and timidly, as if his words were almost profane at such a time, whispered: "Lettice Corbin is passing through town to-day, and I am going to run down to the station to catch a glimpse of her: I am coming back, old boy."

"Life is so full of queer things—to think of Lettice coming to Bolingbroke to-day! Did you know that I loved Lettice once, Ran?"

Turberville, almost as startled as he was by the

death of Kitty Nestles, gasped, "No, I never dreamed of such a thing."

"Always so heavenly kind and frank." Catlett's words were set in a faint minor key. "She told me from the very first that my case was hopeless and that no other man had even slightly touched her heart but you. I told her I would not stand it—not her indifference to me but her affection for you. I told her that it was sacrilege for you to dare to love her and hurt her as you were doing. 'Don't abuse him, Bill-Bob,' she pleaded with me: rare, incomparable sweetness, 'but help me to save him.' 'Save him for you?' I asked. 'Yes,' so earnestly, I can see the prayer of her eyes now, Ran."

Turberville could not speak; he actually forgot that time was going, and ten-thirty drawing dangerously near.

"I have always been fond of doing hard things, Ran, but the hardest task I ever attempted was to try to save you for Lettice: to relinquish Lettice to you. Tell her to-day, Ran—that—that——" Catlett's voice choked. "Oh, well, I can't talk freely to-day, Ran, but you are going to manage my case so well that there will no longer be any doubt of your superlative ability—I am going to make it easy for you to marry Lettice Corbin."

Randolph Turberville took Robert Catlett in his arms, hugged him as a mother might hold her

little boy, and tried to speak. He could not, and the silence was majestic, stupendous.

"Do one other thing for me, B' Bob, one more to add to the rest—tell me the name of the man that Kitty Nestles loved. If you say so, I'll never breathe his name, but I can work better if you will tell me."

"He will tell, Ran, if we give him time—I'm sure he will, and that will be better. Go on, Ran, and do your best with what you have. I've told you all I can. It couldn't have happened at a worse time for me. The 'Good-Air-Home' case comes up to-morrow—I should certainly be there. I promised poor old Mr. Thomson to play checkers with him to-night; he can't live long—cancer on the face. To-morrow is Saturday and I know Jim Dutton will get drunk without our regular week-end supper."

"I'll manage Jim Dutton," Randolph replied brusquely.

He met Mr. Didlake, a member of the vestry of the Holy Comforter, as he went out, and they walked to the street car together. Mr. Didlake was eager to know everything; what Catlett said, how he looked—and so forth.

"I could not make up my mind to go in," he said. "I have never put my foot inside the door of a jail—and what's more, I never intend to. This is an awful reflection on our church, Tur-

berville—most unfortunate. Mr. Catlett's life has seemed exemplary—as far as anybody knew. But this is a black situation, eye-witnesses, no guess-work whatever it would seem! I have always regretted Mr. Catlett's idiosyncrasies: he undertook such preposterous things; you can't touch pitch and not be defiled. He certainly affected degenerate girls and got himself all mixed up in that 'Good-Air-Home.' What business was that of our rector? I detest this modern way of mixing up with all sorts of people: foreign missions are safest, anyhow. I like the old-fashioned way of minding your own business. What business has the rector of the Holy Comforter with juvenile courts, politics, or the Red Light district? He meddled with the last too much for his own good. I really suspect that he leans to Woman Suffrage, and, of course, when a clergyman forsakes his legitimate business to fight wind-mills, such as fallen women, degenerates, crooked politics, we feel that he is very near the edge of—of——"

"True religion," Randolph snapped viciously.

Mr. Didlake was astonished, but proceeded unctuously to defend himself: "I don't pretend to deny that Mr. Catlett is an eloquent speaker, but—but——"

"He upsets one of your fundamental 'articles' that the Episcopal Church neither meddles with politics nor religion." Randolph lifted his hat, and

jumped on the car for the C. and O. Station; he had so little time that he was afraid to trust to making the "Southern" before the train arrived.

His watch was too slow, and when he reached the C. and O. the train bearing the Corbins and Macauley Berkeley had pulled out just five minutes ago by the clock.

Macauley Berkeley had no original personality, but he was a faithful copy of a perfectly correct young gentleman, and as otherwise fools are frequently bridge-friends, so was Macauley, in other respects commonplace and stereotyped, a genius for the reading of faces.

He felt, resentfully, the expectancy on the face of Lettice as the train approached Bolingbroke: he saw the fearful collapse of her anticipation, the futile search of her eye the moment of their arrival at the Southern Station, the play of her interest on the street as their "taxi" hurried to the C. and O. Station—the Southern train was as usual late—and the death of her hope as their train departed westward.

"For whom was she looking? Man or woman? Would a woman ever look for another woman with such pungent interest?" Macauley was somewhat disconcerted.

The first clamor of the morning newsies was over, but Macauley before boarding the train had

purchased four copies of the *Times-Dispatch*. Afterward the Corbin party remembered that there was some excitement among the passengers on the Southern, but they had been too much exhausted by their midnight start from Laneville to pay much attention to it.

Just before the train reached Acca station the whole car was startled by a shrill ejaculation from Lettice. Her voice had harked back to its old intensive pitch. For the first time in years, she lost hold of herself.

"That's the reason Randolph did not come," went crystal clear from one end of the coach to the other, and drew the attention of the crowd to the blue-lipped girl with closed eyes, whose head had fallen back on the clean linen of the Pullman chair.

The rest of the car had read about the murder earlier in the day; its first surprise and commentary were over, but the first agony and astonishment of the Corbins were awful.

"I feel as if we should go straight back," Mrs. Corbin mumbled.

"Please let's——" Intensive shrillness had lowered to the quavering weakness of an invalid.

"The further we get away from such a loathsome incident the better," was Mr. Corbin's fiat.

"One never knows who is inwardly clean." Macauley's words minced like ladies' slippers.

Lettice could only give him a contemptuous glance.

Three of the party discussed the awful affair in all its bearings: the fourth did not open her lips until her father ominously remarked: "I have always felt that hideous things should never be stirred up more than absolutely necessary. It is like taking a silver spoon and digging into the very depths of a coffee boiler: up to the nice, clear top—the very top, mind you—come the thick black grounds. I like the coffee clear; I dislike to see the thick, black grounds on the top. Let them stay where they should be! Poor Catlett had very exalted notions, but at the bottom he was like other men, we see."

"Hush!" The voice of Lettice was stronger, and Macauley Berkeley wondered if it was Robert Catlett for whom she looked this morning.

Through the warm August day the C. and O. train crawled toward the Blue-Ridge: Lettice was leagues and leagues behind the panting car, worlds above the inanities of a sentimental millionaire, miles and miles further up the slopes of the spirit's highway than her conventional parents would ever climb now. Lettice thought, and thought, wondered, trembled, thought again—

"Robert Catlett, dear, devoted Bill-Bob! Never, never! Always the cross, the crown of thorns, and the 'Away with him' for the

friends of sinners—the sons of God.” Still she believed that Bill-Bob could almost kill to save. She had, for years, recoiled from even the suspicion of what Kitty Nestles was. She could see her now at the dinner party of her Christmas childhood; hear the boys’ comments on her at the Laneville Christmas dinner. Beautiful, lithe, seductive, soulless; and Bill-Bob trying with all his splendid detachment to save had—iost? “Oh, God, no, it could not be!”

For the first time in her life innocence, purity, was overshadowed by a vivid fancy of what the momentary madness of the flesh might be. It came to her suddenly like a sinister inspiration. “And Bill-Bob? To think of Bill-Bob being—of all people in the world—Bill-Bob!” Again the frantic, irrefragible refutation—“Never, never, never, never.”

“Of course that was why Randolph did not come. I wish he had—it would not have taken many minutes,” was the chorus to the wild discord of her grief and perplexity.

It was night when the glad strains of a brass band welcomed the Corbins to the White Sulphur. As soon as Mr. Corbin registered, the clerk handed him a telegram addressed to Lettice. Mr. Corbin had his suspicions, but he never asked Lettice a question—and even Mrs. Corbin was silenced by the dignity of the face of her daughter as she

tore up the message and threw the scraps in the waste-basket.

For six weeks Lettice Corbin was an actress of the first magnitude. She distracted every unmarried man at the "White," and made the married men afraid of themselves.

"She is as cold as poor Scott's ice, and as dangerous as a forest fire," one distinguished jurist said to a famous Senator, one morning at the spring. Lettice was giving a benefit performance under the trees; six young swells sat around her while Macauley Berkeley stood nearby.

"Talking about the Robert Catlett case, I'll wager five to one," the Senator observed.

"Not at all; she announced long ago that she would neither listen to nor speak of it. It has struck me that she was in love with Catlett; he used to go to Laneville constantly, I am told. She is under high pressure over something—I can see that. She is acting all the time; never shows one shadow of her real self."

"I don't agree with you a bit." The Senator was positive, too. "She is a cool philosopher—it's herself and nobody else. She is just the woman to marry a rich ass like Macauley Berkeley, if a quite as rich Solomon did not appear. Petered-out old families must have money for social power. She couldn't love Berkeley, to save her

life, but she will be happy and virtuous with him. She don't love him but she is smart enough to make people think she does—at least some people."

"She is about the most fascinating little devil I ever saw." The Jurist had known swarms of charming women. "And if she ever loved—Jerusalem! But she never will; men with millions rarely have much else and Lettice loves the millions, you bet."

XXVII

LIKE Joshua's moon at Ajalon, everything, even Lettice, must stand aside till Robert Catlett passed through: so Randolph folded his sweetheart up like a precious pearl, and put her in a velvet case—the holiest corner of his loyal heart, there to abide constant and undisturbed till this new and awful tyranny was overpast.

Like the stout captain of a man-of-war which flounders in a terrible gale, Randolph must leave everything below, and stand watchful upon the bridge till the storm is over and the ship is safe.

There was a grim sort of pleasure in the case for the young attorney and he drew upon all the forces of his teeming mind and drilled them day and night for the prisoner. His mind was full of little red foxes—darting, restless ideas—and his fancies were fox-hounds with strange, true scent, which drove the red foxes to the open, for his judgment—master of hounds—to chase to the death. Adverse public sentiment, and the wild slander of the daily press whipped him to herculean confidence.

The stricken parents of Bill-Bob laid what was left of pretty Kitty Nestles—their half-sister's child—in a grave on their Albemarle farm;

and removed themselves and Saint George to the Holy Comforter Rectory in Bolingbroke, where like emaciated pelicans they fed their shadowed boy with blood drops from their breaking hearts.

The press as usual was rabid and boisterous, maintaining that Kitty Nestles had for months lived at the rectory, that she certainly was staying there at the time of her death, as was evidenced by her wearing a pair of bedroom slippers on the fatal night; that the unusual fact of a handsome and merry young clergyman never affecting the company of any young lady was entirely accounted for now—he had as much female on his hands as he could with convenience manage; that his sympathy with women of Kitty's class was caused by his intimate connection with and his knowledge of their strange and ghastly lives.

These bitter accusations made Randolph gnash his teeth and plunge with violence into the intricate labyrinths of circumstantial evidence. He made every experience of his life a hand-maiden to his efforts—his fall, his new birth, his mother, his love for Lettice Corbin, Robert Catlett—all joined in a fiery ring to help him to find the man who was the cause of Kitty Nestles's death. There must have been a man, Bill-Bob had almost acknowledged that.

Randolph began to study the block on Peace Street, from Ninth to Eighth, as a Mohammedan

studies his Koran—day after day with no especial inspiration. First, there was the church with its anachronistic spire, the church of the "four-year-Republic," window, pew and bronze dedicated to that tragic period. There the President used to sit, up that long aisle the sexton took the tragic note that paralyzed a nation, from that circular pulpit a young Paul of Tarsus preached last Sunday—memory, space, beauty—but not a whisper of the coward who was hiding behind Robert Catlett.

Next door to the church was the rectory—close shut to-day. The cook was fast asleep at the crucial hour of that August night: the man was off the lot; neither knew much of the character of the rector's visitors—they just came and went all the time. The cook thought "they wuz rich an' pc". Mr. Catlett nuvver said 'no' to nobody." If they rang the bell, she opened the door, but generally they just walked in—so. The man never remembered seeing a very pretty lady there, "the sort that came oftenest to see Mr. Catlett was mostly old and pinched-like. Mr. Catlett was always helping somebody—he was queer about that: seemed as he couldn't bear to turn nobody down."

Next door to the rectory a human rookery—voluble, bitter: "Never in all their living on Peace Street had they ever seen such onnery people

as went in to the rectory since Mr. Catlett came. They were not surprised at anything: old men with handkerchiefs around their necks would sit with him in the evening; boys in blue flannel shirts seemed perfectly at home: it was a pleasure to watch the friends of the last rector; they wore fine clothes and had beautiful carriages and horses, and the rectory, then, was as nice as any house on West Benjamin Street—not so now. All the lower floor given up to poor boys and noisy girls and wretched mothers with crying babies! They all laughed and sang and did most any old thing as soon as they got there. Mr. Catlett didn't seem so bad, but more like he was plum crazy. Of course if people had seen him kill the woman—that was the end of that."

Nothing very encouraging at the rookery.

From the rookery to the corner were shops—a beautiful drug store with bon-bons and perfumes in the windows; a pretty cake shop where pretty young Jewesses always smiled at their customers; tailor shops—one for ladies and the other for gentlemen; above the shops were small apartments, but nobody living in them nor working in the shops had even heard a pistol shot the night of Kitty Nestles's death. They all went home or to bed early—and if they had heard a dozen shots they would never have connected them with Mr. Catlett.

On the corner opposite the shops stood St. John's Roman Catholic Cathedral. Nobody there at night! Next door the priests' house. What did the priests know? Had they all been asleep? Yes, they were asleep—knew absolutely nothing about it. From the priests' house to the corner was the Bolingbroke Hotel—proud successor to the old St. Claire.

The foremost lawyers of old Virginia were retained to defend Robert Catlett—David Tinsley, of Tinsley & Coke; Alfred Lester, of Lester & Montague; and William Stanard, who never in his brilliant career had ever had a partner. Tinsley and Lester knew law; Stanard was the most effective pleader in the South, while Lester could get evidence to fit his case out of a turnip.

The prosecution consisted of the city attorney, Mordecai Cooke—a rabid and successful lawyer—and his partner, Levi Funkhouser, who would have sold his soul for a thousand dollars.

While the older men were splitting the fine hairs of the law, Randolph was turning his imagination—like a stream of water shot with a thousand hues—into every crevice and crack of the lives of Robert Catlett and Kitty Nestles. The witnesses against Catlett were making fresh contributions daily, according to the press, they not only saw Catlett deliberately kill the woman, but beheld his

terrible rage as he pulled his beautiful victim about, beat and cuffed her.

Against this lurid background Robert Catlett stood in incredible dignity; he tried not to wince even when he read an open letter from a member of his church demanding "What will become of the church, of society, if such a man goes unscathed?"

In contrast to this pernicious query was the procession that came to his counsel to testify of Catlett's life. The Governor of the State announced, "I have put many of my burdens on his young shoulders, and what would I have done without him during the strain of the Adam trial?"

The Bishop of the Roman Catholic diocese wished to do something to testify his esteem of the accused clergyman. "I have lived thirty years in Rome," he averred, "and seen many high-bred criminals—but none with an eye like Robert Catlett's."

The richest man in Bolingbroke, and not a member of the Holy Comforter, put his fortune at Catlett's disposal.

But the poor, the shawled women, the laboring men, the rough boys—even the negroes! They didn't know how to restrain themselves: and they wept out what he had done for them.

It was a mighty experience for Randolph Turberville.

He had his line of defence straight as a shingle: to much of it the older lawyers objected—he held his point tenaciously. “I am going to depart somewhat from the path of my forefathers,” he informed his distinguished fellow-counsel. “I am going to get absolute pardon for our client by my imagination. I am going to show the jury exactly what happened—I’m going to make them see it as plainly as I do.”

At twilight one week after the murder Randolph was standing just outside the Bolingbroke Hotel with his face toward the rectory—thinking, building his defence on the air, making bricks without straw—when he heard a curious scraping on the pavement, which proved to be the dragging of a paralytic limb by an old, bent man, who passed by toward the priests’ house, stopped there as if to get breath, then wearily climbed the steps and went in.

“Suppose the old priest was wakeful at nights! Had anybody asked him what he knew about Robert Catlett?”

Randolph was going to find out, so every day at a different hour he walked through the Capitol Square with the hope of seeing the afflicted old man. It was not long before he found out that the priest’s habit was to sit on one of the iron benches in the Capitol Square—near the Peace Street gate—from noon till one o’clock; and again

from four to five in the afternoon. Then he fed the sparrows and the squirrels, and gazed dreamily at the sky through the bare November trees.

One day Randolph, standing near the quiet priest, said softly to himself: "What an improvement to the old St. Claire!"

He was hoping for a rejoinder—it did not come. Why had he never seen this priest before? He thought he had interviewed all the inmates of the house—why had this one escaped him?

The next day at noon Randolph entered the Square by the Bank Street gate, threading the winding paths to the old priest's accustomed seat. It was a glistening autumn day, and the brilliant trees shouted glad color to the tranquil sky. Randolph sat on the bench, his eyes fixed to the noon edition of the *News-Leader*, and presently heard the pitiful scraping of the worn-out sacerdotal foot. The priest sat down beside him—a part, at least, of the bench near the Peace Street gate was his prerogative.

In a moment the turf, always green, was covered with squirrels and sparrows, the former nibbling the peanuts which the priest scattered from a bag: the latter picking the crumbs which he broke in tiny bits from a stale slice.

Randolph openly admired the priest's pensioners, the old man was grateful and the ice was broken.

They talked first of squirrels and sparrows, then of other animals, and fields and woods—the priest was country-bred and Irish.

Finally something suggested Robert Catlett and his approaching trial—this brought the two men strangely together: each knew instinctively where the heart and hope of the other lay.

"I wish that house could talk." The priest pointed with his stick to the rectory. "Such a pardon were never known if it could. Fine, young, Christian gentleman—I miss his cheerful smile, his daily word as he passed by. All sorts of people went to him—from my little room at the corner there;" he pointed, this time, to the window at the end of the priest's house opposite the rectory. "I could see them come and go—come and go. Some were bothered—others happy. I have laid on my bed night after night and watched him talking kindly to each one with his study window wide open. He had no secrets. Frequently a slim young man would be there, who always sat with his back to the window: his hair was light and he parted it in the middle—from crown to brow. I became interested in this young man, although I never saw his face; he was in trouble, or—or—in—need; well, need is trouble, too."

The old priest was crumbling the last of the slice, and Randolph was afraid to breathe lest he

say no more, but he soon began as if he were only thinking:

· "If I only had not been so sick that night—I could have seen it all, too. I did see the woman come in about half-after seven—she had come from the train, I think, for she had a satchel in her hand. Catlett was not there and she went out. She returned about one; I was in awful agony and I had just rung for the nurse who sometimes helps me, and who was with another priest that night who had pneumonia. The nurse went to get me some aspirin—I was in pain: and before she returned I saw the woman speaking frantically, and Mr. Catlett speaking more earnestly than I ever saw him speak before. The woman waved her hand at something at a distance, and then pointed to her shoes.

"This touched Mr. Catlett, and he went out and got something and handed it to her, and took up something, I don't know what, and again went out of the room. By this time the nurse was back; she gave me the aspirin and pulled down my shade. I soon got quiet and heard nothing else—I am a little deaf—till the next morning."

A slim young gentleman—Randolph understood; gave something to Kitty and took something away—Randolph understood: he was going to clear Robert mostly by imagination and he had the whole thing straight as a shingle now: his

ideas were in a strong frame like tiny bits of Florentine mosaic—he needed a few more bits, he had gotten them from the old priest, and they were made of Albanian clay.

Randolph was in Robert's cell the last time before the day of Bill-Bob's trial—and the prisoner held in his hand a paper with an absurd cartoon of himself, which was also an excellent likeness. In the right hand of the cruel cartoon was the sacred cup, while in the left arm was a bedizened woman, and in the heart—exposed—a smoking pistol.

"This was thrown in, by permission of authority, of course, and it hurts: I wish I had not seen it, for I may not be able to get rid of it; up to this moment I have been strong enough to think that I could bear my cross, but this foolish satire has weakened me. It is beneath the dignity of the cloth—it emphasizes horribly what might be true. It is the last straw, Ran!" Bill-Bob could not restrain the elemental anguish which crowded his narrow cell. "My gospel was, 'He that was dead is risen again,' will my own experience entirely refute it?"

XXVIII

THE day of the trial opened—rain-sodden, ill-omened, dismal—gloomy enough to congeal the marrow of a free man's hope. Before a furious wind the gusts of rain scudded against the windows like lost tears; and leafless Bolingbroke quivered and groaned like a naked child under a giant's strokes. Yet the court-house was packed to its breathless capacity, for the case was unusually interesting and had attracted general attention. Reporters from the greatest newspapers of this country crowded the space reserved for the press, and the *London Times* had sent over its own man. The details of the trial would flash everywhere simultaneously, millions would daily read them: how would "Randolph Turberville" sound as it rang over-world?

Judge, jury and counsel, formidable and restrained, walked in and took their seats. Robert Catlett entered with his parents on either side and his brother, Saint George, behind. He might have been a modern John Baptist, lean, but undaunted, from his wilderness feast: his mother—in her tight little bonnet with its blighted white rose—was another Mary at the tomb: Saint George was a startled plaster-of-Paris statue;

while the elder Robert Catlett tried to assume a careless confidence that he did not have. The quiet family party, for any expression of dismay, might have been taking their seats at a dinner table.

The jury was called and the indictment read. The lawyers for the defense and the Commonwealth examined their separate witnesses. The State's witnesses were the four strangers who happened to be at the Bolingbroke Hotel that fatal night, and who claimed to have seen the shooting, the woman in whose miserable home Kitty Nestles rented a room, the human crows in the rookery, a drunken loafer from whose cruelty Robert Catlett had rescued a consumptive wife, the charred letter, the bedroom's slippers and a check of Robert Catlett's made payable to the firm of Carlin & Fulton, and unhappily transferred by them to Mrs. Nestles.

The prosecuting attorney opened the argument, followed by Tinsley for the defense. Then Mordecai Cooke for the Commonwealth and Lester for the defence: Levi Funkhouser would then speak, followed by Turberville. Stanard's reputation demanded that he close the defense, and the Commonwealth's attorney would, of course, close the case.

Tinsley was never more astute or more logical; he consumed the whole of the first day: if he had

been doing legal legerdemain for the despair of the jury he could not have been less intelligible to them. His reasoning was marvellous, but absolutely beyond the comprehension of the laity.

Mordecai Cooke made a thrilling series of word-pictures: first of a Christian, then of a dastardly hypocrite, and last of a trusting, desperate woman. His were legal pyrotechnics, legal finesse, and a lot of legal slush: his arguments and villifications consumed the morning of the third day and the jury followed him with evident interest.

Lester began in the afternoon of the third day, gave the jury pure law till court adjourned, and went over into the morning of the fourth day. Randolph rejoiced in his reasoning—the bored jury yawned.

In the afternoon of the fourth day Funkhouser was heard: he filled three hours with vulgar rhapsodies and followed the lead of Cooke in canonizing a desperate woman; the tide of sympathy already with Kitty Nestles gained perceptible strength. Funkhouser played upon the crowd with the screech and blare of a hurdy-gurdy, made capital of the bedroom slippers, the charred letter and a check of Robert Catlett's found uncashed among Kitty's things. He showed quite plainly that it was not unusual, but quite ordinary, for a minister to commit crime; and cited two instances

in the past year, where clergymen had first ruined then murdered their victims.

At ten o'clock of the fifth day of the argument in the case of the Commonwealth against Robert Catlett, Randolph Turberville arose, with the confidence of a June sun, to add his contribution to the defense of Robert Catlett. Immaculate, robust, the blue of his eye oriental sapphire, browning hair still shot with gold, the dents about his mouth all gone to purpose, his voice full and round as a well-tuned 'cello—he immediately fastened, as if with lock and key, the interest of judge, jury, opposing as well as associate counsel, and court-room.

At first something terrific, strange, hot, coursed through and through his being like forked lightning, blinded his mental vision and forced his ideas to recede like an outgoing tide: it was, however, only for a moment; then his ideas came rushing back, full-capped with a subtle confidence—almost as audible as the equinoctial surf.

"It is with a mixture of sadness and exultation that I stand before you, my friends, to-day. Sadness over the first 'rigor' of a sickening circumstance: exultation, inexpressible, over the irrefutable fact—that the thrust of the spear, the stream of blood, the cry of agony, and a dark and trembling world opened the way to a sun-lit universe in which we work to-day.

"It is impossible for me to add a point to the law that the other counsel have so skilfully explained; a drop to the eloquence that has fallen from their lips. Mine is but a simple statement of truth as I know it; the revelation of a character that it has been my privilege to consider from its frank and merry youth, to its sincere and consecrated manhood. I shall not try to change the stream of evidence, but to 'gain my goal by going with it.'

"We have heard day after day as we sat here, the cry of Hypocrite! Reformer! Profligate! Christian! I shall pass over the first three epithets for the present, and only affirm that if it is a crime to be a Christian, my friends, Robert Catlett is—guilty. With him it is not 'I fast once a week—I give tithes to the poor,' but I love—I serve."

Turberville caught Catlett's eye: it called as in the old foot-ball days—"Come on, Ran—when you are on the team we always beat!" Robert Catlett, in the distance of doubt, called Ran and Ran came.

William Pitt was once called the "King of the Company." With no vanity, but rather with a strange humility, Randolph felt himself so now. The cruel suspicion and ante-condemnation that had poisoned the court-room was lifting, and the

mocking audience, perhaps, more willing to be convinced.

"Sin in the purple is much more horrible than sin in rags: and when even the least suspicion falls upon a confessed Soldier of Christ, it is far blacker than pitch upon a fleece of wool.

"Once many years ago—there was in Samaria a well; and by the well was a woman. She was not a good woman, but there was One who longed to make her so. Near Him were twelve men who asked—'Why talkest Thou with her?' To-day, in this city twelve times twelve are asking 'Why talkest thou with her?'

"Just such a woman wiped His feet with her hair: just such a woman trembled at these words—'Neither do I condemn thee, go, and sin no more.' If the woman of Samaria turned over a new leaf, why not Kitty Nestles? It was worth trying. And failing in his efforts for rescue, Robert Catlett was determined, if possible, to deliver a modern Samson from the green withes of this modern Delilah."

The audience, less sullen, drew a long breath. Randolph felt firm in the saddle, an exhilarating security took hold on him.

"Robert Catlett and I, barefoot urchins, scampered over the red gulches and rocky hills of Albemarle; and the same spirit that climbed the mountain, broke the headstrong colt, and dug his

mother's flower-beds—bruised my young face because I cut in two a harmless caterpillar. The same spirit that streaked like a flash through Monroe Park, threw rocks recklessly and broke Mr. Caskie's window—fairly pulled another boy from the firm clutch of a 'cop' and cried loudly, 'That boy didn't break the window, 'twas m-e-e-e, mister. I'm awful sorry, I didn't go to do it; my father is Robert Catlett—lives in Albemarle.' The same spirit that burst forth in astonishing power in the Holy Comforter threatened its influence by listening to the wild heart-beats of Kitty Nestles—by talking with her.

"Robert Catlett couldn't tell a lie, but he never failed to try to give good reasons for his misdemeanors. Once he went, entirely contrary to his mother's orders, into the house of a little friend who had whooping cough, but he explained his action with much satisfaction to himself. 'Billy was lonesome, mother, and I know I didn't ketch it, 'cause I kept behind his back.' Well do I remember Bill-Bob and I seeing his favorite cow writhing and choking on the sweet spring clover. Bill-Bob never hesitated a moment, but thrust his little arm down 'Kilo's' throat—bringing nothing up but 'Kilo's' painful tooth-prints on his arm. Soon the cry from a servant, 'You ain' nuvver ought to run yo' arm in "Kilo's" thote; Lucy-cat done gone mad an' done bite Beppo dog

an' I seen Beppo bite "Kilo" plum on her bag—
"Kilo" mad, dat's what.' Such a commotion,
such a rush for the madstone man who lived over
in Amherst County. But Bill-Bob came out all
right."

The court-room laughed, the jury smiled—good
signs! Randolph was driven by something mys-
terious, warm, beautiful: was it Lettice Corbin
who was putting glittering thoughts, like winged
butterflies, into his mind? Was it the heart of
Lettice calling to the heart of Ran? He let go
law, and took hold of love. Life had renewed
his blood; and he was pouring it forth for Robert
Catlett this dark November day.

"All sorts of folk came to Robert Catlett—
clean and unclean he talked with all, offered his
strong arm for support and relief. He might not
have been prudent in talking with Kitty Nestles,
but he forgot the danger of her disease in his
desire to cure her.

"Kitty Nestles was like an older sister to Robert
Catlett. For years she was a daughter in his
Albemarle home; Robert liked her merry ways,
her seat in the saddle, her trickles of laughter
over the quiet place. He never dreamed that Kitty
could be anything but good, until at the University
she made a prey of one nearer to Robert Catlett
than Kitty Nestles could ever be."

Mr. and Mrs. Catlett flinched slightly: Saint

George Catlett moved his foot, the scrape of it was like the fall of a prayer-book at a funeral—the court-room caught its breath.

“Robert Catlett, not for one moment, spared the rod of stern remonstrance; he wouldn't stand it—but he had to. He was not the fellow to stop because he did not seem to succeed, and he kept on trying to restrain the sinister influence of his foster-sister. He endeavored to remove her prey. Robert Catlett was not going to see any soul die of foul atmosphere, without an effort to remove it to a purer air. His fight was one-sided, difficult in spite of his energy. From the University Kitty Nestles removed herself to Bolingbroke; here from time to time she had all sorts of prey, but by degrees each escaped—all but a single, belated victim.

“It is this victim for whom Robert Catlett is here to-day.” Randolph caught Robert's eye again: it said this time “Don't, Ran. Don't!” but Ran kept on. No time for mincing matters now.

“After a desperate fight the victim was removed far from the clutches of the vampire, and Robert Catlett's heart filled with pity for the woman, and he talked with her once more. She was very poor and desolate: in a way he could help her.

“Years ago the grandfather of Robert Catlett—Philip Cocke—was a large landholder, and some

of his possessions lay just outside of Bolingbroke. Catlett, by the will of this grandfather, inherited a portion of this land and he sold it just about the time that he removed Kitty Nestles's lover to a point of safety."

From the fair hair of Saint George Catlett to his pointed chin a wave of crimson rushed: he never dreamed that Turberville would speak so plainly; he considered it cruel, almost illegitimate. Twelve stalwart farmers very nearly winced as they saw the unmistakable confusion; each man of the twelve involuntarily straightened himself—the defense had scored.

"'Poor Kitty,' thought Robert; 'it must be terrible to go under without a cent; perhaps if she had just enough for daily bread she might be able to be a better woman, stronger to keep her hands off her prey.' So Catlett took a five thousand-dollar first mortgage on Bolingbroke real estate, and arranged with the firm of Carlin & Fulton that the six per cent. interest be paid to Kitty Nestles in monthly instalments. The transaction is open to the public and may be examined by any person in this room. Catlett and Kitty Nestles entered into a solemn bargain: the woman was to be rewarded for keeping hands off.

"But the transaction would not come immediately into effect, and Robert Catlett, with Christ-like pity, sent his personal check to Carlin

& Fulton; which they, perhaps unfortunately, transferred, as it was, to Kitty Nestles.

"Catlett draws a long breath, he can go to his work now, without a personal sorrow casting its shadow between him and his daily task. He reckoned badly: Kitty Nestles, lonely in her poor room on Ninth Street, repents of her bargain: she determines to break her contract and follow her prey to Albemarle. She well knows the softness of at least two Albemarle hearts.

"But Kitty's vision is blurred, she overestimates human endurance. Although she knocks at the door of the modest home in Albemarle, it is shut in her face: there is in that house one nearer and dearer to the mistress and master than a hysterical, sobbing, homeless woman—their erring son." A rustle in that court-room like wind in the trees!

"Kitty, in her despairing fury refused to be sent to the station and stumbled over the red, rain-soaked roads of Albemarle. These are the witnesses of her agony." Turberville removed from a box a pair of mud-encrusted little boots. "Look at her poor, well-worn shoes—emblems of her scarred, soiled life!" Saint George's eyes begged Ran to take them away. "These high-heeled, patent leather shoes, my friends, are covered with Albemarle mud, which tells the way that Kitty went.

"Frantic, repentant—not of her sins but of her promises—she returned to Bolingbroke, and straight to the one person in the wide world who she thought might listen. She found pity, but absolute sincerity. The mortgage on a man's flesh was raised—Kitty could claim nothing else.

"We have explained the check—these pathetic echoes of a tawdry life account for the bedroom slippers; don't they my friends—don't they? Not one thing condemnatory for Mr. Catlett in them!"

Randolph Turberville quickly took in the faces before him: he was getting them—judge, jury, mocking audience and serious lawyers—all!

"Just across Peace Street from the rectory, as you all well know, is the home of Roman Catholic priests; the night that Kitty Nestles passed from a turbid life to eternity a suffering old priest lay awake in his bed. His room is in the eastern corner of the priests' house, directly opposite to Robert Catlett's study. This old priest saw Kitty enter the rectory, with a satchel in her hand, about seven o'clock: he saw her go out and return about twelve o'clock—this time to her tragic death.

"He saw Robert Catlett speak gently to her; he saw him very grave and sad; he saw him go to Kitty, pick up something, and take it out of the room; he saw him come back and give something to Kitty. What did he take out? What did he bring in? Robert Catlett took out a pair of sop-

ping wet, worn shoes: he brought back—all he had—a pair of bedroom slippers. He put the shoes on the radiator in his upper hall—to dry; they fell between the radiator and the wall as if to hide their shame—but will anybody in this room deny that they are Catlett's most eloquent witnesses?"

Randolph now picked up the half-burnt letter, of which the prosecution had made such tremendous capital.

"Twelve experts upon handwriting have examined this fragment of a letter. Nine say that it looks like Catlett's; two affirm that it is Catlett's; one says that it is not Catlett's. That one knows what he is talking about; I will show you that he does. The post-mark is torn off the letter—as you see. Robert Catlett could never have written such a letter, or such a fragment of a letter—he never could have descended to sickly sentimentality. This letter is branded with the same substance that clung so tenaciously to the patent-leather shoes—Albemarle mud. Yes, Kitty could have dropped it; you see I am feeling your very thoughts; but she didn't. Why not? How do I know that she did not? I know because it was picked up, by the mistress of Redlands (pretty reliable witness—eh?) and given to the postmistress at Cobham exactly three days before Kitty went to Albemarle. Here's the proof! Read it! The chemical analysis

reveals the exact substance branding the letter that branded the boots."

Randolph swept back over his quiet argument with a burning brush; massing the color like a young Titian.

The canvas glowed in that sombre court-room, every figure distinct, compelling. One saw the lust of the flesh, temptation, weakness, beauty, youth, scars, pallor, a splash of regret, greater despair—then coursing along the canvas like an avenging sky-rocket—the ringing shot.

"Kitty Nestles on one side of the room, my friends, the young rector heavy-hearted, bewildered, pitying still, on the other.

"'I won't give him up! Take back your money! He belongs to me, I want him!' The woman hissed."

Saint George was restless.

"'Never, so long as I can keep him away!' Catlett quietly answered.

"A cry of agony as of some wild bird kept from its prey. 'Then I'll damn you, stop all of your good works.'

"'You can't do that.' Catlett was very quiet still.

"'I can't.' The pistol was the answer—the end!

"Greater love hath no man than this—that he lay down his life for a friend.

"Gentlemen of the jury, your Honor, brothers of the law, kind and patient listeners—I am done. My case is submitted."

The clock struck four; nobody had remembered dinner to-day.

Stanard arose. Never did even he, himself, ever show greater nobility, greater unselfishness: "Gentlemen of the jury," he said, "I have nothing to say." The Commonwealth's attorney stumbled, floundered, soon stopped.

The judge made his charge to the jury—and they filed out at four-thirty and returned at four-thirty-five.

When the prisoner stood up for their last word, Saint George stood beside him. The eloquence of his silent confession was greater than the pleading of Randolph Turberville.

At four-thirty-seven, Robert Catlett was free. His face, as he left the court-room, had not relaxed; white, pain-chiselled, yet fearless—it might have been the face of some twelfth century Florentine, persecuted for a creed.

The memory of the first moments were never clear to Randolph, the smoke from the guns clung to the atmosphere. But to his dying day he never forgot the face of Robert Catlett, as he clasped his hand; or the ring of Stanard's voice—"Ran, oh, Ran!"

He had started home, but he returned to the steps of the City Hall.

"Ran," Stanard's voice was not altogether clear, "I have been looking for a partner for thirty years. I want to offer you full partnership in my concern. Stanard & Turberville. Sounds good to me."

He that was dead is risen again.

Ran walked home; he wondered if the sun had been shining all day: he had not noticed it. The glory of a dying but ecstatic world, banners and torches, armies in red and gold saluted him from the Capitol Square to Monroe Park. The sunset hailed him from the Cathedral tower, and Chattie met him at the door of the little gray house and held his hand as they walked in.

XXIX

THE Bolingbroke newsies were yelling—"E-x-T-R-A-A-A-L-E-A-D-E-R-E-R-R-R," as they had one memorable day nearly three months ago—but one now caught, "Catlett free! Catlett free!" "Turberville's effective pleading," etc. Yet Charlotte and Randolph were talking as quietly as if there were no outside din. Randolph was stretched on the couch at the foot of his mother's bed, Chattie beside him in a little rocking-chair.

"High time for a wife, dear."

His mother's words entered the procession of ideas marching through his mind, and at once kept step with the rest.

Of course it was time, high time. Lettice had been with him all the evening singing "Glory Hallelujah" in a clear treble. He felt as keenly as if he could touch it—her reckless sincerity, her audacious affection, her rare, almost eccentric beauty: he seemed to realize, as if for the first time, her fidelity, her heavenly aspiration. She had with wonderful discretion retired, sweetly, through the weeks of Bill-Bob's necessity—to-night she was all here.

"Yes, it is time—not a moment to lose." Randolph jumped from the couch, went to his mother's

bed-table where stood an extension 'phone, and called "Randolph 765," waited a second, then—"Send a taxi to 120 South Laurel to-morrow at five-thirty." He hung up the receiver and turning to his mother smiled. "I don't mind getting up before day for her."

"I didn't know there was such a train for Lester-Manor." His mother was getting excited.

"Yes, indeed, mumsey—the old freight. Daddy and I used to take that for the fishing club—remember?"

"I believe I do."

"I'll get to Lester-Manor about seven-thirty. I shall wire for a trap to meet me and convey me to Laneville. I'll get to Laneville, probably, before twelve. Oh, mother." Ran took her in his arms and squeezed her. Between mother and son there was perfect clarity at last. When there is sorrow that we can't speak about, affection and confidence split upon it like clear water upon a frowning rock. Not so now, the love and intimacy of mother and son flowed swiftly all the way through.

Randolph felt older, much older, as he stood with his back to the fire; his right hand, deep in the pocket of his trousers fumbling with his knife and a little silver corkscrew; his other hand playing with some loose coin in his left trouser pocket. The jingle made thought-steps—he could

hear his mind marching. He was in the Laneville library—picturesque, interesting, vital—where the real conflict had begun. How very far it seemed then to—now. What did it? What helped him to win? He had no more desire to play the “cup” or the “game” than he had to spin a top or ride a stick horse.

Was this he, himself, standing before his mother's blazing fire, square financially with the world, the hateful little debts of a wild man on his uppers—paid, a comfortable bank account, his mother's respect, Lettice——?” A blast tore through his body fiercer than any November gale. Passion held him, not the sugared poesy of a mystic, but the raging hunger of a man—the delicious heavenly madness that forced Adam to eat the forbidden fruit. It was nothing in the world but love, the same old, human-divine mystery, that had saved or ruined millions, had delivered him. “Lettice, I'm coming to you just as fast as I can,” to himself. Aloud, “Oh, mother!”

“Yes, yes, dear Son-Boy.”

Another long, long pause then. “We must pack your things, dear!”

And looking down at his trousers Randolph added, “These should certainly be pressed.”

“Before to-morrow morning, Son-Boy? How on earth—I wonder if I could do it?”

"Maybe I could!" laughing.

"Son-Boy, I forgot to tell you—Jeter has come back."

"The devil, he has—a black Prodigal!"

"He used to press your knickerbockers, you know."

"Let's have him up: I should like to see the rascal; we have had good times together—he and I and Bill-Bob; we liked his black face. I'll go out and whistle, and I bet he'll come."

Soon Randolph returned to his mother's chamber, followed by Jeter—little changed from his care-free unstable boyhood.

Jeter was inclined to be tantalizingly voluble, and to Chattie's innocent question: "Where have you been all this time, Jeter?" replied:

"In Paterson, New Jersey, 'bout de mos' onneres place for a preacher in de world. I wuz more a 'zorter den a reg'lar preacher, no how. Dis is de way dem Paterson niggers treat me. I hadn't got no celery sence I cum dar 'cep a few driblets, an' I natchelly assed de whyfo'. Den dey 'low datef I had lef' whin I oughter lef', dey wouldn' owe me no celery. Den I up an' 'low dat dey owe me more'n a year celery; an' what's mo' I wouldn' lef' one step till dey pay me my celery—cent fer cent. Warn't I right, Marse Randuff—Miss Charlotte?"

It was with difficulty that Randolph could get him downstairs with the trousers.

As Chattie and Randolph packed his satchel, they joked and giggled like happy children.

"Suppose Mr. Corbin won't let me in!" Randolph was shaving and the half of his face, well lathered, gave him a clownish look.

"Of course, he will be too glad, Son-Boy."

"Suppose they make a barricade of Macauley Berkeley's waistcoats!"

"Or his pedigree?"

"I can match him there, maybe!"

"But laying all joking aside, Son-Boy, I want you to tell Lettice that everything is ready for her, and that the house is hers except for some little corner where I may, sometimes, get out of your way."

"Get out of our way? Silly! Will you be lonesome while I am gone, mumsey? Hadn't you better have Miss Mary Nicolson to keep you company?"

"Mary Nicolson?" with a proud smile. "I won't mind seeing Mary—now."

The satchel packed, they went back to Charlotte's room. She went to her work-table and unlocking the top-drawer, drew out a package very carefully tied up. She unwrapped and unwrapped, and finally uncovered a worn, leather ring-case.

Opened—from its white velvet nest, a pigeon blood ruby flashed in a rim of plain gold.

"This is for Lettice, Son-Boy. Uncle Carter brought it to mamma from India—the time he took that wonderful voyage as a young midshipman. It always seemed too grand for me, but it just suits Lettice."

Randolph took the rare gem and held it under the reading-lamp.

"What does it look like, Son-Boy?"

"Love, Life, Blood, Lettice! In the rich experience of to-day she glows like a ruby in a chain of aquamarines. She——"

The bell rang viciously, and Randolph putting the ring in his mother's hand, ran down to open the door.

A messenger boy handed him a letter, by special delivery, from Lettice Corbin:

LANEVILLE, URBANNA,

Middlesex County, Virginia.

First and foremost, Ran dear, I must confess my sins—tell you about the only thing that you do not know about me. I have been really jealous of Bill-Bob in these terrible anxious weeks. Did you ever hear of anything so absurd—so wicked? There has been a horrid little tempest in my heart because you were thinking of Bill-Bob more than you were thinking of me. I would not have taken you from him for the world, but I was hateful all the same. I believe Bill-Bob is going to be cleared triumphantly, and I also believe that when the trial is over, you are going to write and say—"I'm coming, Lettice." But I am going

to say it first. I would come to you, Ran dear, if it was the thing to do; but as it isn't—you come to me as fast as you can. I don't intend to do without you a moment longer. There!

Remember Birdie Peters, the yellow-haired child who used to watch us ride by so wistfully? She has been awfully sick and I nursed her last night; and it brought me to my senses.

Old Mr. Peters is blind and old Mrs. Peters is deaf, and when we heard that Birdie was sick, I knew they couldn't nurse their grandchild properly. Papa and mamma sent them something, and well satisfied settled themselves to their papers and knitting.

It rained off and on till night, then a high wind and a cold white moon kept company. Laneville didn't mind the wind, the heavy curtains kept out the cold white moon, but the little child, in her mean bed with her feeble, incompetent nurses, called me.

Mamma and papa were asleep, and I made up my mind as quick as a flash to go to Birdie Peters. I got my rubber boots and my big coat and crept down and out. The night was wildly clear, the trees bent with a shout and rose with a yell. The sheep huddled in a corner of the field, the stars were as big as moons. I was not myself, but Hamadryad out on a lark! The main road greeted me in white surprise: it was sand-dough between the stubble-fields and my feet went in and out, like spoons in a batter; my shadow was long and narrow, weird and witchlike; and an owl cried in the thicket back of the Peters's house.

But I got there all right: nursed Birdie all night; and she led me to see that I couldn't wait for you any longer. You need me and I need you, and we are ready for each other.

I stayed with Birdie all to-day, and late this afternoon I came home with Doctor Phil. You recollect Doctor Phil? He was in his gig, with his big flea-bitten "Hog-fish"—what a name for a horse! I jumped behind and stood on

the bar, holding to Doctor Phil's shoulders, and we went quickly home.

The bark of the dogs brought papa and mamma to the door. If I had broken all of the Ten Commandments they could not have been more depressed. They led me to my room as if I were a criminal.

I am alone there now, calling you, calling you, as Birdle called me. Make haste! Make haste! You can't be too quick. I shall tell papa the first thing to-morrow that you are coming.

My hair is all down over my blue kimono; my fire is glowing like a good man's heart; I am so warm, so glad. My brain is full of little sparks, something is dancing through me like velvet-wine. Now I am going to say my prayers: but first I am going to take hold of the crinkly ends of my long hair, and dance before the Lord as Mirlam did, in pure thanksgiving joy. I have asked you to come, and know you are coming. I am so happy, please come quick!

LETTICE



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